

Ministry of Education

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Ministère de l'Éducation

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September 3, 2010

Dear School Council Chairs,

I am pleased to share with you two key ministry initiatives that will further the government's efforts to support parent engagement in Ontario:

- the release of *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, and
- the amendment of Regulation 612: *School Councils* to include provisions for Parent Involvement Committees (PICs).

The policy is attached for your convenience, and can also be found on the ministry website at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/index.html>.

The regulation O. Reg. 330/10 can be found on the e-Laws website at

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2010/elaws_src_regs_r10330_e.htm.

We believe that good schools are even better when they have involved and engaged parents. By engaging more parents in their children's education to help their children achieve more, we will boost confidence and pride in public education in Ontario. The policy and the regulation complement one another, and support the government's commitment to improve student achievement and well-being, to close the gap in student achievement, and to build public confidence in publicly funded education.

Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario formally recognizes and supports a vision of parents as both valued partners and active participants in their children's education. Building on the essential relationships between parents and schools, school boards and the Ministry, the policy:

- recognizes, encourages and supports many forms of parent engagement
- recognizes and supports the important role parents have in contributing to their children's learning at home and at school
- identifies strategies to remove barriers to parent involvement (e.g. communications and language)
- supports parents in acquiring the skills and knowledge they need to be engaged and involved in their child's learning
- provides a parent voice at the local level (e.g. PICs and school councils as well as individual parents talking to teachers and principals).

Regulatory requirements relating to Parent Involvement Committees, including the requirement that each board establish a PIC, and provisions about the composition and functions of PICs, have been made under the *Student Achievement and School Board Governance Act (2009)*.

Our government's approach to publicly funded education continues to be one of respect, collaboration and consultation. In the development of both the policy and the regulation, extensive consultation took place to gather input from our education partners. Through consultation, we have learned of a great number of effective parent engagement practices throughout the province, and know that many established PICs are actively working together with school councils. We have seen the beneficial effects of the involvement of PICs and school councils at the school and board level to enhance parent engagement. I have heard positive feedback from parents, directors and chairs, principals, teachers, trustees, students and community members about this grassroots approach to parent involvement. The policy and the regulation reflect a supportive approach that recognizes the complexity and differences among school boards and their communities.

The release of the policy and regulation are just two of many initiatives that demonstrate the government's commitment to parent engagement in support of student achievement and well-being. The ministry's Parent Engagement Office continues to develop and implement parent engagement initiatives that support learning and student achievement across the province. The government currently provides boards with base funding of \$5,000 and 17 cents per student for a PIC and an additional \$500 per school council to support parent engagement activities.

The Parent Reaching Out (PRO) grants program continues to support enhanced parent engagement at the local, regional and provincial levels with a particular focus on parents who face barriers to parent engagement. Since 2006, the ministry has invested more than \$10 million, funding thousands of school council and regional projects.

I am pleased to be moving forward with these important initiatives. From time to time in the coming year, I will send further information to PICs about ministry initiatives, so that it may be shared with school council. Thank you for the time and effort you put into your role on the school council and the very meaningful role you play in helping Ontario achieve the best education system in the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leona Dombrowsky". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leona Dombrowsky
Minister of Education

Enclosure

c: Directors of Education
Principals
Regional Office contacts