

Ministry of Education

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Ministère de l'Éducation

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Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to share with you two key ministry initiatives that will further the government's efforts to support parent engagement in Ontario: *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, and the newly amended Regulation 612, O. Reg. 330/10: *School Councils and 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 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.

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).

The policy provides the vision of parent involvement, sets out four strategies to support parent engagement, and includes an action plan for schools, boards and the ministry. The policy also showcases some of the many exemplary practices across the province.

Regulation 612 has been amended to include provisions for Parent Involvement Committees (PICs), O. Reg. 330/10, *School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees*, was filed on September 1, 2010. 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. As PICs have grown across the province, we have seen the beneficial effects of their involvement at the 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. From time to time in the coming year, I will send further information to PICs about ministry initiatives.

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.

A handbook for PIC members is also in development. Our consultations on the draft policy and proposed regulation have provided us with many suggestions on information to include in a PIC guide which will be a practical, helpful and user-friendly handbook for PIC members. We hope to have the guide ready for use for the next school year in draft form, and will invite the feedback of users to inform the development of the final product.

I would like to acknowledge the valuable input and collaborative efforts that have informed the development of both the policy and the regulation. I look forward to continued collaboration in the year ahead as together we strive to foster parent engagement to support student achievement and well-being.

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