

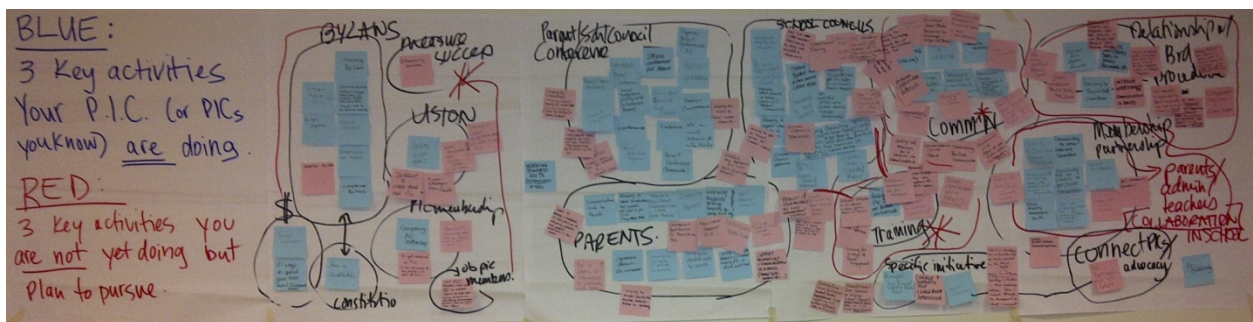
Parent Involvement Committees: From mandate to action plan

Notes from the session

Professional facilitators worked with participants to translate the PIC mandate into “action items” that PIC members could bring back to their committees.

Professional facilitators: Nicole Swerhun and Bianca Wylie, Swerhun Facilitation & Decision Support
Attending from the Ministry of Education Parent Engagement Office: Penny Patrician, Education Officer

1. Participants identified **their current PIC activities, using BLUE post it notes** and **activities PIC's are NOT currently doing but would like to do in the future, using PINK post it notes**. The photo below reflects the results as posted on the wall in the workshop room. Every point listed in either blue or pink below reflects what was written on a post-it note.



CURRENT PIC ACTIVITIES:

BYLAWS

- Finishing By-laws
- Working on Bylaws
- Drafting Bylaws
- Trying to understand how to evolve under the new regulations, struggling to redefine our role
- By-laws completed
- Write By-laws
- Establishing our By-laws
- Completed By-laws

ACTIVITIES PIC's WOULD LIKE TO DO:

- Develop By-laws
- Have a constitution

CURRENT PIC ACTIVITIES:

ACTIVITIES PIC’s WOULD LIKE TO DO:

MONEY

- Budget discussions
- 21 ways to spend your \$500 Parent Involvement money

MEASURING SUCCESS

- Measuring success

VISION

- Setting vision goals

- Develop good understanding of role in PIC
- Work towards our vision goals/5 year plan
- 3 strategic plans/goals
- Develop a strategic plan for PIC

PIC MEMBERSHIP

- Composing PIC membership

- Name up to three community reps – who can help us most in our work?
- To get involved in PIC (I am not sure if /my school is a part of PIC)
- Get PIC members who are NOT on school council and who are willing to work on welcoming and encouraging parents who are NOT like them.

PARENT/SCHOOL/COUNCIL CONFERENCE

- Spring conference for parents
- Parent conference
- Parent conference
- School/Board sponsored parent conference
- Outreach (Parent’s conference)
- Regional Parent Conferences
- Hold our annual conference for Parents/Teachers/Principals
- Parent conference
- Parent/Council conference
- Outreach (Parent’s conference)
- Annual conference jointly with co-terminus Board
- Conference
- Conference
- Parent/School Council conferences
- Parent conference (Board-wide)

- Holding an event to “train” schools councils
- Plan and implement “Real” events on top of the things the ministry requires us to do
- Parent Education – areas they can be involved
- Trying to get in touch with all the council chairs
- Engage all parents... not just self-selecting parents

CURRENT PIC ACTIVITIES:

ACTIVITIES PIC’s WOULD LIKE TO DO:

PARENT COMMUNICATIONS

- Host parent event
- Working towards getting parents to come out to meetings
- Engaging parents
- Planning a major parent involvement event called “Ignite Parents”
- Attempting to create conversations that parents will want to join in on (Energy drinks)
- Communication links to parents
- Working toward 100% representation
- Coordinating/bringing in speakers for parents
- Hosting regional information events for parents
- Offer engaged parents (S.C. Members) ongoing P.D and social activities
- Celebrate parent volunteers

- Facilitate parent P.D.
- Addressing Transitions
- Development Opportunities for parents on PIC
- Engage “hard-to-reach” parents more
- Increase parent engagement in low engagement schools
- Trying to make ourselves more accessible to parents
- Be a source of information to parents, wide-scale
- Want to develop a handbook of best practices for welcoming parents and parent involvement in the school
- Diversity Education – helping Schools council’s understanding of Equity/Inclusion and how to integrate to home/school

SCHOOL COUNCIL

- Speakers series events with school councils / parent community
- Three Board-wide school council chair meetings
- Provide monthly meetings with school council chairs (collectively)
- Monthly presentations at PIC meetings for all school council members
- Meetings to help councils
- PIC as a support network for school council’s Board
- Workshops for school councils and principals
- Attempting to support other schools to start councils
- Working with school councils to plan for a successful regional meeting
- School council dinner/event
- SC411 school council Outreach
- School council training
- Connecting all school councils in our Board with each other via School Council Network meetings
- Strategies on successful engagement of parents on council

- Be more involved in the individual school councils (Also Board level)
- School council training
- School council training
- School council/Principal relations
- Want to be a better resource to school councils by being more accessible to school councils
- Area council network meetings to address issues common to those councils-facilitated by PIC member for area

ACTIVITIES PIC’S WOULD LIKE TO DO:

TRAINING

- Regular PIC “PD” on Board initiatives

- Professional Development for PIC members to become effective resources for councils
- Training for 6 keys of parent engagement
- Training (In-service)
- Professional Development for PIC members
- Professional Development for leading a school council
- Professional Development – upgrade diversity policy to be a complement between parents and administration

COMMUNICATION

- Self-branding (logo, etc.)
- Develop a website
- Website revamp
- Communication strategy:
 - email addresses of all chairs
 - website update
 - e-newsletter
- -Council resources by USB to all schools
- Have logo, newsletter, website
- Increasing awareness by a new website and Twitter account

- Supporting online attendance of PIC meetings (barrier) – ie. Skype video-conferencing
- Support websites for each school
- Trying to make technology work for us as a communications tool
- Support technology and communication in schools (email lists, websites...)
- Establish a PIC website
- Better parent/school communications
- Increased social media presence to encourage dialogue with parents
- Explore communications vehicles
- Better/More communications with parents
- Getting info, resources etc. to parents via Board website
- Publicizing PIC to all parents
- Establishing effective communication
- Effectively reaching out to regional councils and school councils
- Communicating with parents at the school level
- Better communication
- Translation
- Identify Board strengths and areas for growth requiring support
- Communicating with media
- Broad communications with parents (Action plan)

CURRENT PIC ACTIVITIES:

ACTIVITIES PIC’S WOULD LIKE TO DO:

SPECIFIC INITIATIVES

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principal/vice principal selection process pilot• Special Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change supports for lunchroom supervision• Building the school/parent/community paradigm• Growing from parent involvement toward parent engagement through supporting S.C.’s in their advisory roles with principals• Develop and nurture a true partnership between home and school through the development of trust and respect• Work on developing an understanding of each member of the triad – Parents/Admin/Teachers
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RELATIONSHIP WITH BOARD/PROCEDURE

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review all Board policies• Motions that carry through to Board (following up)• Advisory to Board staff/committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research and identify the barriers that are specific to our Board that prevent good parental engagement• “Unalienate” trustees and school Board• Collecting feedback from councils re: Board policies in time for comments to be included in policy – requires timely request from Board and effective communication with councils• Build a framework for how our new PIC will work at the Board level to engage parents• Advise the Board formally (in a report, suggestions) on strategies that will diminish the barriers for parents to be engaged in their kid’s education• Have meaningful discussions about the Board’s improvement plan and sources of evidence (i.e., report cards, attendance, EQAO)• Improve inter-committee communication in Board• Be more involved at the Board Level• Improve consultative process – Board, PIC, Schools
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CURRENT PIC ACTIVITIES:

ACTIVITIES PIC'S WOULD LIKE TO DO:

MEMBERSHIP/PARTNERSHIP

- Exploring PIC/School Board collaboration in regions of Board
- Communicating to other advisory committees
- Dialoguing with pre-existing Board-wide parent/school council organizations
- Seek members
- Reaching out to schools to get/have representation
- Actively recruiting membership to the PIC
- Liaise with co-terminus Board PICs "The students of Ottawa are all our students"

- Get community members
- Engage more parents – diverse
- PIC Members to visit all schools at Parent Council meetings to explain parental involvement
- PIC outreach across Ontario

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS THEM

Participants in the workshop split into four groups to discuss four topic areas related to PIC activities, including: Establishing a PIC/Internal PIC set up; Strengthening the connection between PICs, parents, teachers and school administrators; Working with the Board of Education; and Communications. The following notes were taken as each of the four groups reported the highlights of their discussions in plenary.

1. Internal PIC set up

- Talked about make-up of PIC. Parent portion – how parents are selected – representation by geography or skills or organization. CHALLENGE – figure out the best way given the individual board, history and make up.
- SOLUTIONS: shared different struggles and solutions – talking about it helped solidify options to address. Sharing was the solution. SOLUTION OPTION: Create a selection committee and a proper, transparent process to ensure everyone has a chance to reply. Remove "grey" area.
- SUGGESTION: Set up criteria what PIC member looks like. E.g. Minimum one year on parent council
- I'LL TAKE ANYONE
- TD shooting for 100% representation – worked when appealed to Trustees to (1) create Ward council and (2) elect or appoint someone from that group to appoint someone to PIC
- SUGGESTION: Central repository of promising practices – for PIC to share information ("go to" site at Ministry) – issues intersect and we're all learning as we go

2. Increasing volunteerism (not only parents, principals and teachers too) – parents not involved in PICs if not involved in Councils and if not involved in schools not involved in Councils

- Help principals and teachers understand that parents will help not hinder *Comment on this: there are reasons why some teachers are reluctant to have some parents in. Need to also help parents understand how they can help and not hinder teachers (needs to be explained/understood both ways). Role of PIC is to help parents – HANDBOOK FOR THIS.*
- Have handbook or reference about rights around involvement
- Getting parents to come to meetings – have food, have fun, not just long drudgery

- Principal support at school level always helpful – if Principal resistant likely won't have parent involvement
- Have a meeting where people's time isn't wasted – Chair balanced between Robert's rules making it awful versus just having cookies and coffee
- Invite across borders – works at PIC and School Council – worry that teachers thinking that parents are conspiring to undermine teachers – create opportunities to share success stories. Invite diverse groups of people together to share and increase understanding that parents there to help
- Make sure two way communication – so school BOTH hearing from parents and sharing info with parents (with translation)
- Great value of face to face connections
- Invite parents to meetings – I got more parents to come to meetings by standing and talking to them. Go where they go for coffee after they drop off. One school has walk to school Wednesday's followed by a coffee group with baked goods and coffee – all stay and all talk. Once they do that, maybe they'll come to school council meeting.
- Invite people that parents want to meet (e.g. Trustees, Board members) and that will entice people to come to meeting
- Offering child care is a solution (used \$500 to provide child care at any school council event)

3. Working with the Board of Education

- CHALLENGES:
- Too short timeline for true consultation – need more time built in before decisions are made – talking about PIC needs to get word to Councils, then to parents, then to meeting, then needs to be fed back to the PIC SOLUTION LONGER TIMELINE
- Board and parents come together come together to discuss upcoming initiatives (question and answer so people know what's coming)
- Lot of lead time before final decisions made and give more time if needed
- Developing better understanding at Board for role and expectations of PIC and parent involvement. E.g. no conflict between role of Trustees and role of PIC – lot of confusion still here – need a clear definition
- SOLUTION to get more parent feedback. PIC-led survey got better response than Board-led survey.
- SOLUTION – need to see that Board buys into parent involvement, Board support and promo of PIC. Letting parents know that PICs exist.
- PICs need to develop trusting relationship with Board – all need to work together as a team – not undermining your work, we're here to help you – not always fighting about roles or who's doing what – it's actually a team
- PIC role is new and growing, its emerging – huge increase over last year in sheer awareness of PICs but still may take some more time.
- How PIC connects to Board improvement plan – what's the role of the PIC? SOLUTION – get PIC involved in discussions and making sure topic brought to table.
- Question – PICs received parent involvement handbook – has handbook been given to Boards on what Boards are supposed to be doing with the PICs. How to work with PICs how to support them.

4. Communications

- First part of discussion – things not getting from Board to PIC to parent council. THIS IS A CHALLENGE: Limited channels
- Wonder who we contact to get info out (that has to be Board approved) – how does it get back to us to get to parents
- SOLUTION – establish procedure with trustees to help make this happen/connect these actors
- COMMUNICATION resources. PIC only has access to chairs of each school council, it's dependent on Councils to get to every parent. We need to ensure that we have access to school council membership emails/contact information.
- SOLUTION – in our board we used principals to get school council chair email – if not school council chair then principal gets info.
- CHALLENGE – info from Ministry goes to Director and PIC only gets info when Director forwards it. SUGGESTION – Info go to PIC at same time as Director gets it.

REFERENCES FROM PENNY PATRICIAN, Ontario Ministry of Education

- The link for *Making a Difference: A practical handbook for Parent Involvement Committee members – draft version* can be found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/PIC.html>

Links to the resources I mentioned on Saturday:

- *The Capsule Family Gets Involved* (animations and discussion Guide) is on the Centre ontarien de prévention des agressions (COPA) website: <http://infocopa.com>
- *Planning Parent Engagement* (Parent Tool Kit and Guide) is on the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) website at <http://www.ontariodirectors.ca>

Contact: Penny Patrician
Education Officer, Parent Engagement Office
12th floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street, Toronto
M7A 1L2
(416) 327-7988