

Ministry of Education

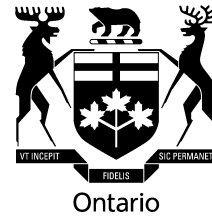
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January 24, 2012

Dear PIC Chairs/Co-chairs,

As Minister of Education, and a mother of twin boys in Grade 1 this year, I know that parent engagement is vital to the success of our children and our education system.

I am pleased to extend an invitation to two parent members of each Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) to attend the Third Annual PIC Symposium being held in Toronto on April 20 and 21, 2012. The symposium provides opportunities for PIC representatives to learn more about the parent engagement policy and other new initiatives, programs and resources. There will also be time to discuss challenges, opportunities, ideas and effective practices for parent engagement with each other and with the ministry. You will be contacted in the near future with more details about the symposium.

Our government has committed to strengthening parent engagement since we came into office, and I am committed to continuing our excellent record. Research shows a positive link between parent engagement and student achievement and well-being. The greater the support that families provide for their children's learning and education progress, the more likely their children will do well in school and continue their education.

Creating safer, inclusive and more accepting schools is part of our government's plan to support student success while securing a brighter future for all Ontarians. Last November, we introduced Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, 2011, which, if passed, will require all school boards to take preventative measures against bullying and support students who want to promote understanding and respect for all.

We have also introduced a comprehensive action plan that calls for bringing mental health workers into schools, as well as the creation of an Accepting Schools Expert Panel to provide advice about resources to support a whole school approach, including prevention and early intervention. The plan also includes a public awareness campaign that will stress that all Ontarians have a role in preventing and ending bullying.

Through these and other initiatives, we will continue to direct our efforts to increasing student achievement and well-being, closing the gap in achievement for students who are struggling, increasing graduation rates, and building confidence in our publicly funded education system.

We are committed to investing in practical, user-friendly tools and resources that support parents, PIC chairs and co-chairs, boards, school councils and schools in order to increase parents' involvement in their children's education.

One of the most popular resources is our bullying prevention pamphlet for parents (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/safeKit.html>) that is available in multiple languages. It tells parents what to watch for, what to do and where to go for help. We also continue to work with the Kids Help Phone to provide support and resources for students.

Our Parents Reaching Out Grants initiative continues to support parent engagement at the local level. Your leadership and support for this initiative are greatly appreciated. In 2011/12, we approved 1,763 grants totalling \$2 million. A significant number of PIC initiatives and 93 percent of school council applications were approved – this is the highest number and percentage of approvals ever. We will notify you when the announcement of the application process for the 2012/13 grants is made so that you can continue to support the opportunity for outreach initiatives for parents in your area.

Last fall, *The Capsule Family Gets Involved*, a DVD of short original animated film vignettes with accompanying discussion guides, was distributed to all PICs and school boards. As a result of feedback received during the consultation for *Building Parent Engagement: Parent Tool Kit*, a supplementary resource for the parents of teens and adolescents is being developed in consultation with parents across the province. The *School Administrator's Guide to Parent Engagement*, a resource for school leaders, was launched with the support of a web conference for school teams.

We appreciate the thoughtful feedback that PICs provided to the draft version of *Making a Difference – A Practical Handbook for Parent Involvement Committee Members*. The handbook is intended to be a practical, helpful and user-friendly resource for PIC members, and your feedback will inform the development of the final product.

I am confident that with your support, advice and enthusiasm the Third Annual PIC Symposium will be another tremendous opportunity for us to learn from each other and continue to enhance parent engagement in support of student achievement and well-being. I look forward to meeting with you.

Yours truly,



Laurel Broten
Minister

c: Directors of Education