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*A Practical Handbook for Parent Involvement Committee Members*

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*Making a  
Difference*



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Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant :

*Pour faire une différence : Guide pratique à l'intention des membres des Comités de participation des parents, 2012.*

This publication is available on the Ministry of Education website, at [www.ontario.ca/eduparents](http://www.ontario.ca/eduparents).

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# Welcome!

*Education is a partnership involving students, parents<sup>1</sup>, teachers, principals, trustees, school boards, government, and the community. As a member of a Parent Involvement Committee, you have an opportunity to strengthen this partnership and become part of a dedicated team committed to helping every student achieve. Parents are making a difference!*

## About This Handbook

*Making a Difference: A Practical Handbook for Parent Involvement Committee Members* is designed to support you in your role as a Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) member by providing you with:

- ◆ an understanding of the important role played by parents as partners in their children's education;
- ◆ knowledge of the purpose, organization, and functions of a PIC;
- ◆ tips, information, and resources that will help you contribute to the success of your PIC.

"... strong and effective parent engagement begins with parents supporting parents at the local and regional levels – through vehicles such as school councils and PICs."

*Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, 2010, p. 11*

## What It Contains

*Making a Difference* contains essential information to help you participate effectively as a PIC member. In it, you will find the following sections:

**Orientation:** A discussion of the important role played by parents as education partners.

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1. *Parent* is used throughout this handbook to refer to parent(s) and guardian(s).

**A Closer Look:** A detailed look at the responsibilities of PICs, and the mandate and organization of a PIC.

**Getting Into Action:** Guidelines for the most common functions and tasks undertaken by a PIC.

**Process and Procedure:** A review of effective practices developed by PICs and other groups across Ontario.

**More Tools and Information:** Additional resources and information you will find helpful.

## *Look for These Text Features*

Throughout this handbook, you will find many practical tips, tools, and techniques you can use in your work as a PIC member. Look for these text features:



### **PRACTICES**

Examples of effective practice



### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

Links to useful tools and information



### **YOU SHOULD KNOW**

Key information you should be aware of



### **TIP**

Helpful suggestions

# *Orientation:*

## *Understanding the Big Picture*

*As a PIC member, you are making an important contribution to one of the finest education systems in the world. To support you in that role, this section of the handbook provides an overview of the policies that guide parent involvement in Ontario schools and school boards.*

## *Provincial Goals for Education*

### **Key Goals**

Ontario has one of the finest education systems in the world. In order to continuously improve the education of its students, the province is focused on the following key goals:

- ◆ high levels of student achievement;
- ◆ reduced gaps in student achievement;
- ◆ high levels of public confidence in public education.



### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

For a description of Ontario's education system, and the roles and responsibilities of education partners, visit the Ministry of Education website at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/whosresp.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/whosresp.html).

### **The Role of Parents**

Parents have an important role to play in achieving these goals. Helping parents become involved in their children's learning – and in the life of our schools – is a key provincial priority.

Our schools have inherited a rich tradition of parent and community involvement in education. Parents have a primary influence on their children's attitudes towards school,

their learning, and their future success. There are many ways parents make a difference in their children's success at school: talking with their children about their day at school, making sure there is a quiet place set aside to do homework, reading with their children, meeting with teachers, or volunteering in the school or on school trips. Good schools become even better when there is a strong connection with parents as part of the learning community.



### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

The ministry website includes links for parents, at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/links.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/links.html).

Research has shown that positive parental aspirations and expectations for their children's educational achievement have a strong relationship with children's actual achievement. The more support families provide for their children's learning and educational progress, the greater the likelihood that their children will do well in school and continue on with their education.<sup>2</sup>

PICs and school councils provide opportunities for parents to be more involved in the important work of enhancing all parents' engagement in their children's learning. School councils focus on the local school and community. PICs work at the board level to support parent engagement across the school board.

### **Parent Involvement Committees**

The PIC acts as a direct link for parents to the director of education and the board of trustees. The PIC participates at the board level to support, encourage, and enhance the engagement of parents in improving student achievement and well-being. The PIC does this by providing information and advice to the board on parent engagement, communicating with and supporting school councils, and undertaking activities to help parents support their children's learning at home and at school.

The manner in which a PIC achieves these goals depends on the local needs of its board and community, and on how the PIC is organized.

### **School Councils**

School councils are local bodies that support improved student achievement and well-being through the involvement of parents and enhance the accountability of the education system to parents. They advise principals and, where appropriate, school boards on issues affecting education programs and the operation of individual schools. School councils focus on increasing parent involvement within the school community as a key factor in improving student achievement and well-being.

2. K.L. Mapp, "Having Their Say: Parents Describe Why and How They Are Engaged in Their Children's Learning", *School Community Journal* 13, no. 1 (2002), pp. 35–64.



To achieve this goal, school councils work with the school principal to create a welcoming environment, increase opportunities for parents to provide input on and respond to school and board initiatives, identify barriers to parents' engagement in their children's education, and implement strategies to overcome the barriers.

## Ontario's Parent Engagement Policy

Introduced in 2010, Ontario's parent engagement policy, as set out in the document *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*, articulates a vision of parent engagement in Ontario schools. The policy recognizes that parent involvement is multi-dimensional and that parents have a role to play in fulfilling each of Ontario's core priorities for educational excellence. The policy identifies four key strategies designed to support parents as partners so that they have the opportunity – and the knowledge, skills, and tools – to work together with all education partners and contribute fully to the success of Ontario's students and our education system.

### Ontario's Vision of Parent Engagement

In Ontario's education system, all partners acknowledge the positive impact of parent engagement on student achievement. Students are supported and inspired to learn in a culture of high expectations in which parents:

- ◆ are welcomed, respected, and valued by the school community as partners in their children's learning and development;
- ◆ have opportunities to be involved, and also a full range of choices about how to be involved, in the educational community to support student success;
- ◆ are engaged through ongoing communication and dialogue with other educational partners to support a positive learning environment at home and at school;
- ◆ are supported with the information and tools necessary to participate in school life.

*Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, 2010, p. 7*

Equally important, the policy acknowledges that developing effective parent engagement practices and programs requires action on the part of education partners at every level of the education system. Accordingly, it sets out actions for schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education that will, individually and collectively, contribute to realizing Ontario's vision for parent engagement across the province.



### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

*Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools* is available on the ministry website at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/index.html).

## French-Language Education in Ontario

### Aménagement linguistique: A Policy for Ontario's French-Language Schools and Francophone Community

Parent Involvement Committees in French-language school boards should operate within the guidelines of the local Politique d'aménagement linguistique developed by their school board.

Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the French or English linguistic minority populations of a province the right to instruction in their own language. Ontario has enacted laws to protect these rights in this province. To help French-language schools fulfil their mandate, Ontario bases its policies on these rights, as well as on relevant federal statutes. The Politique d'aménagement linguistique falls within this legal framework.

The Politique d'aménagement linguistique is in place for the French-language system schools and the broader community. Its intention is to help the province's French-language educational institutions and settings optimize the transmission of French language and culture among young people and to help their students reach their full potential in school and society. It is important that all institutions responsible for providing French-language education in Ontario adopt the guidelines provided through the Politique d'aménagement linguistique. The objectives of the policy are to:

- ♦ deliver high quality instruction in French-language schools adapted to the minority setting;
- ♦ educate young francophones to become competent and responsible citizens empowered by their linguistic and cultural identity;
- ♦ increase the capacity of learning communities, including school staff, students, and parents, to support students' linguistic, educational, and cultural development throughout their lives;
- ♦ expand and enrich the francophone environment through solid partnerships among the school, the family, and the community as a whole;
- ♦ increase the vitality of educational institutions by focusing on student retention and increased enrolment, thus contributing to the sustainable development of the French-language community in Ontario.



#### YOU SHOULD KNOW

The Politique d'aménagement linguistique for French-language schools, set out in the ministry document *Aménagement linguistique: A Policy for Ontario's French-Language Schools and Francophone Community, 2004*, promotes strong collaboration between educational institutions, parents, families, and the community.

## Admission, Welcoming, and Support of Students in French-Language Schools

Over the past thirty years, the ethno-linguistic profile of the French-speaking community in Ontario has undergone a major transformation. For this reason, and in order to ensure that admission to French-language schools is inclusive and that the process is transparent, the ministry issues guidelines and administrative directives to streamline the admission process for three groups whose parents are not French-language education rights holders: French-speaking immigrants who do not have rights to French-language education under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; children whose grandparents were holders of French-language education rights; and immigrant children whose parents' mother tongue is neither French nor English (allophones). School boards' revised local admission policies came into effect on January 15, 2010 and were based on the *Policy Statement and Guidelines on the Admission, Welcoming, and Support of Students in French-Language Schools in Ontario (2009)*. School boards have also developed local protocols for welcoming students and parents that are aligned with Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009). In September 2011, French-language schools put in place their welcoming teams. Boards are implementing supporting strategies for students and parents, including communication with parents. These strategies focus on student retention within the French-language education system.



### TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The document *Policy Statement and Guidelines on the Admission, Welcoming, and Support of Students in French-Language Schools in Ontario* is available on the ministry website at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/Admission.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/Admission.pdf).

# *A Closer Look: The Mandate of a PIC*

*This section of the handbook describes the mandate and organization of a PIC, as set out in Ontario Regulation 612/00.*

## *PIC Mandate*

The mandate of the PIC is to:

- ◆ support, encourage, and enhance meaningful parent engagement at the board level to improve student achievement and well-being;
- ◆ provide information and advice to the board on parent engagement;
- ◆ communicate with and support school councils;
- ◆ undertake activities to help parents support their children’s learning at home and at school.



### **YOU SHOULD KNOW**

In the regulation, and throughout this handbook, “will”, “shall”, and “must” refer to regulatory requirements. “Should” is used in this handbook to signify suggestions for effective practice.

## *Responsibilities of the PIC*

Ontario Regulation 612/00 requires every school board in Ontario to establish a PIC with a direct link between parents and the director of education and the board of trustees. The PIC’s responsibilities are:

- ◆ to develop strategies and initiatives that the board and the board’s director could use to communicate effectively with parents and to engage parents in support of their children’s learning at home and at school, and to advise on the use of these strategies;

- ♦ to communicate information from the ministry to school councils and parents;
- ♦ to determine, in consultation with the director of education, how ministry funding, if any, for parent engagement initiatives is to be allocated;
- ♦ to work with school councils:
  - to share effective practices to help engage parents in their children’s learning, identify and reduce barriers to parent engagement, and help ensure that schools are welcoming to parents;
  - to support initiatives that help build knowledge and skills that will assist the PIC and school councils of the board with their work.



### **PRACTICES**

Many PICs hold annual conferences for school councils and parents, featuring inspirational speakers, workshops, and displays presented by parents, board personnel, and community associations. Some also produce newsletters with helpful tips for parents on how to become involved in their children’s learning at home and at school.



### **YOU SHOULD KNOW**

Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grants are available to school councils and PICs to support local initiatives to increase parent involvement. More information, along with PRO grant success stories, can be found on the ministry website, at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/reaching.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/reaching.html).

## *PIC Membership*

The PIC is a parent-led committee. The chair or co-chairs are parents, and the majority of members are parents. To provide a direct link to the director of education and the board, the director and a trustee are also members of the PIC. PICs decide whether to include other members, such as a principal, a teacher, and/or support staff, and also determine the number of community members to be included (up to three), to suit local needs.

**Director of Education:** The director of education is a member of the PIC. The director may delegate any of his or her powers or duties as a member of the PIC to a supervisory officer of the board and may designate a supervisory officer to attend a PIC meeting in his or her place. The director is a non-voting member.

**Trustee Member:** A trustee is a member of the PIC. The trustee may delegate any of his or her powers or duties as a member of the PIC to another member of the board and may designate a fellow trustee to attend a PIC meeting in his or her place. The trustee is a non-voting member.

**Parent Members:** Each parent member must be the parent of a pupil enrolled in a school of the board that established the PIC. Employees of the board may serve as parent members and must inform the committee of their employment at the first committee meeting they attend.

The majority of PIC members must be parents. Although the regulation does not stipulate the number of parent members, all regions of the board and the diversity of the parent population should be represented.

**Community Members:** Members of the community bring an important perspective to the work of the PIC. These members are voting members. The PIC must make a by-law regarding community members (up to three) and develop a process to select community members. A community member cannot be a board member or an employee of the board that the PIC serves.



**TIP**

The success of initiatives that seek to engage parents in their children's education is often enhanced when additional partners are included. Community organizations can be valuable partners in programs such as parenting and health and nutrition, and in safety workshops and family fun and learning nights.

**Principal, Teacher, and Staff Members:** The PIC has the option of including some or all of the following board staff, who will be non-voting members, appointed by the board:

- ♦ one elementary school principal
- ♦ one secondary school principal
- ♦ one elementary teacher, other than a principal or vice-principal
- ♦ one secondary teacher, other than a principal or vice-principal
- ♦ one board employee, other than a principal, vice-principal, or teacher

## Other Considerations

### Officers

**Chair or Co-chairs:** A PIC will, according to its by-laws, have a chair or a number of co-chairs. The chair or co-chairs of the PIC are parent members, elected by the parent members of the PIC. The term of office for the chair or co-chairs is two years, and an individual cannot serve more than two consecutive terms as chair or co-chair. The chair or co-chairs act as spokespersons for the PIC when providing advice to the director and board.

**Other Officers:** PICs may make by-laws to permit the election of other officers, such as a treasurer and/or a secretary.

### Selection

PIC parent members may be selected by appointment or by election. The selection of parent members and the appointment of community members are subject to PIC by-laws. The board appoints the representatives of board staff prescribed in the PIC by-law and the trustee PIC member. The selection of PIC members is to occur prior to November 15 in each school year. All selections should be made prior to the first PIC meeting of the school year.

### Vacancies

For meetings, the majority of the members present must be parent members, and the director and trustee, or their designates, must be present. PIC by-laws determine the process for filling vacancies for parent members and community representatives, and as long as there is a parent majority, the PIC can continue to meet while these vacancies are being filled.

### Number of Meetings

PICs meet at least four times during the school year. Meetings are open to the public and are held at a location that is accessible to the public. The board makes facilities available for PIC meetings and makes efforts to enable PIC members to attend by electronic means. Notices of meetings are sent to members by mail or e-mail and are posted on the board's website at least five days before the meeting.

### Terms of Office

The term of office for parent members shall be either one or two years. Parent members are eligible for reselection at the end of the term, provided that the member continues to have a child enrolled in a school of the board. PICs will develop a process to provide continuity through the staggering of terms of membership. In its by-laws, the committee will establish the number of one- and two-year terms for parent members and terms for community members and board staff representatives.

### Subcommittees

A PIC may establish subcommittees to make recommendations to it on particular matters. Subcommittees may include members who are not PIC members, but each PIC subcommittee must include at least one PIC parent member.

## By-laws

Each PIC is required to develop a set of by-laws that governs its affairs. Mandatory by-laws are listed on page A5. The PIC may make by-laws in addition to the mandated by-laws.

## Consultation

It is the role of the PIC to reflect the views of parents from across the school board when giving advice and information to the director and the board. In order to do this, the PIC may solicit the advice of parents of pupils enrolled in the board about matters under its consideration.

The board may solicit the advice of its PIC on matters that relate to student achievement and well-being. Likewise, the ministry may also solicit the advice of PICs on these matters.

## Remuneration

No PIC member will receive remuneration for serving as a member of the committee. Ministry funds must not be used to cover any part of the salary of any person sitting on this committee or associated with this committee in any way. This does not preclude the possible payment of a trustee honorarium, as set out in section 191 of the Education Act.



### YOU SHOULD KNOW

Each board shall establish a policy for reimbursing members who incur expenses as part of committee business while serving on the PIC. This policy should include guidelines for the eligibility of expenses and procedures for requesting reimbursement. A board will reimburse PIC members in keeping with its policy.

## Incorporation

PICs are advisory groups that represent parents and act as a liaison between parents on the one hand and trustees and directors of education on the other. The school board is a legal entity. The PIC is associated with the school board that established it and, as such, is not allowed to incorporate.

## Minutes and Financial Records

The PIC must keep minutes of all its meetings and records of its financial transactions. The minutes are to be posted on the board's website and sent electronically to each school council in the board.



### Annual Summary of Activities

One of the ways in which the PIC demonstrates its accountability is through the annual submission, to the chair of the board and the board's director of education, of a written summary of its activities and a record of how funding from the ministry to support the activities of the PIC was spent. The director will post the summary on the website of the board and provide it to each school council in the board.



#### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

Ontario Regulation 612/00, "School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees", can be found at [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_000612\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_000612_e.htm).



#### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

A one-page fact sheet about PICs is available on the ministry website at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/factSheet\\_Fall2010.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/factSheet_Fall2010.pdf).

# Getting Into Action: Key Tasks

*This section of the handbook provides guidelines for the essential tasks your PIC will need to undertake, from establishing by-laws and priorities to writing the annual summary of activities.*

## Developing By-laws

### The Regulation Governing PICs

PICs are not required to develop constitutions, as their roles and responsibilities are outlined in Ontario Regulation 612/00.

PICs are, however, required to create by-laws that govern their affairs, as set out in Ontario Regulation 612/00. The creation of by-laws allows each PIC to establish operational procedures that reflect the needs of its local communities.



#### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

See “More Tools and Information” for a helpful checklist of mandatory by-laws and samples of mandatory by-laws.



### **YOU SHOULD KNOW**

#### **Mandatory By-laws**

The regulation requires that, at a minimum, PICs develop by-laws that specify:

- the number of parent members on the PIC;
- the number of community representatives (up to three) on the PIC;
- procedures for the election or appointment of parent members, for the appointment of community members (up to three), and for the filling of vacancies in these positions;
- the number of optional members (representatives of the board's employee groups) the board may appoint;
- the election of members to offices;
- the length of members' terms;
- the rules for conflict of interest;
- a conflict resolution process for internal disputes.

### **Additional By-laws and Terms of Reference**

Transparency in operation is essential to the running of an effective committee. Although it is not required to do so, the PIC may choose to make additional by-laws or terms of reference to provide members with direction to guide their operations and help them work effectively. These may include by-laws or terms of reference concerning:

- ♦ general guidelines regarding meetings (such as those related to attendance and promptness);
- ♦ the number and types of subcommittees that may be established;
- ♦ timelines and processes for submitting agenda items;
- ♦ the process for placing emergency items on the agenda;
- ♦ the process for calling special meetings to deal with time-sensitive matters;
- ♦ a code of ethics.



### **TIP**

In addition to by-laws, a PIC may find it useful to establish a code of ethics that outlines the PIC's expectations of its members. The code may address matters such as:

- the boundaries of the role and responsibilities of the committee;
- the manner in which members are to interact in order for democratic principles to be followed and potential conflict minimized.

### Special Considerations: Membership

Additional by-laws or terms of reference may include a process for making supplemental appointments to address diversity.



#### TIP

Once by-laws and any terms of reference have been developed, your PIC may want to review them from time to time. However, they do not need to be rewritten each year. Keep in mind also that by-laws and any terms of reference must be written in accordance with applicable policies established by the board.

## Establishing Selection Procedures

As noted above, the PIC is required to make by-laws governing procedures for the selection of parent members by election or appointment, and for the appointment of community members. The selection of new PIC members is to occur prior to November 15 each year, and prior to the first PIC meeting of the school year.



#### YOU SHOULD KNOW

New PIC members must be selected by November 15 every year, and before the first PIC meeting of the school year.

### Director of Education

The director of education may choose to name a supervisory officer of the board as designate to attend on his or her behalf.

### Trustee Member

The appointment of the trustee member will be subject to the procedures of the board. The trustee on the PIC may name a fellow trustee as designate to attend on his or her behalf.

### Parent Members By-law

The selection of parent members, whether by appointment or election, is governed by a PIC by-law. This by-law, combined with the by-law pertaining to one- and two-year terms, should result in the staggering of terms to help promote continuity in the membership of the PIC. To be eligible for membership as a parent member, an individual must have a child in a school of the board that established the PIC. In addition, the following attributes should be considered:

- ♦ experience working with a school council or another education-related parent organization;
- ♦ an understanding of the importance of parent, family, and community engagement gained through professional or volunteer experience;
- ♦ a commitment to keeping up with educational initiatives at the local, district, and provincial levels;
- ♦ strong communication skills;
- ♦ a commitment to engaging parents in supporting their children’s learning;
- ♦ an ability to work as a team player, resolve conflict, and generate ideas.



### **YOU SHOULD KNOW**

Under Ontario Regulation 612/00, the board shall ensure that vacancies for parent member positions are advertised using a variety of methods. Methods of advertising include advertisements in school and school council newsletters, advertisements in local newspapers and on radio or television stations that broadcast in the local area, and notices in schools of the board and on board and school websites.



### **TIP**

The following guidelines should be observed when selecting parent members:

- The PIC by-law outlining the process for the appointment or election of parent members is to be fair and equitable to all parents in the board, and should help ensure that the composition of the committee reflects the demographics of the board.
- The PIC may determine that supplemental appointments are necessary to reflect the diversity of parents in the board. To meet this need, the by-law could include a process for making supplemental appointments.

## **Principal, Teacher, and Staff Members By-law**

The committee will develop a by-law specifying the number of optional members (representatives of the board’s employee groups) who may be invited to sit on the committee. The board is responsible for these appointments. There can be a maximum of one representative from each of the following five employee groups:

- ♦ elementary school principals
- ♦ secondary school principals
- ♦ elementary teachers, other than principals or vice-principals
- ♦ secondary teachers, other than principals or vice-principals
- ♦ board employees, other than principals, vice-principals, or teachers



### **PRACTICES**

Although the appointment of principals, teachers, and support staff is optional, many PICs have found that these individuals bring important perspectives to the work of the PIC and can provide valuable insight and advice.

## **Community Members By-law**

Every PIC includes up to three community members. The PIC must develop a by-law to govern their appointment. A community member may not be a member of the board or an employee of the board that the PIC serves.



### **YOU SHOULD KNOW**

In addition to including up to three community representatives, the PIC may also solicit the views of the community by inviting representatives to its meetings as needed on an ad-hoc, non-voting basis.

## **Officers By-law**

The PIC is required to have a by-law to describe its officers and the process for their selection. The PIC will determine whether it will have a chair or a number of co-chairs and will stipulate this in its by-law. The chair/co-chairs of the committee shall be elected from parent members serving two-year terms, for a two-year term, by the parent members of the committee at the first meeting of the school year in which there is a vacancy. Members cannot serve more than two consecutive terms as chair or co-chair. Unless the PIC by-laws provide otherwise, an individual who has served two terms may continue to stand for selection as a parent member of the PIC as long as that individual is eligible. In addition, the by-law may provide for other officers (such as a secretary and/or a treasurer) and their selection processes.



### **PRACTICES**

Many PICs find it useful to stagger the terms of co-chairs to provide for succession planning and to help ensure continuity for the leadership of the PIC.

## *Filling Vacancies*

### **Vacancy By-law**

In addition to selection procedures, PICs must develop procedures for filling vacancies for parent and community representative members and must specify these procedures in by-laws.

### **Exercising Authority During a Vacancy**

During a period of a vacancy, the PIC is not prevented from operating. It can continue to meet as long as the majority of PIC members are parents and the director and trustee, or their designates, are present.

## *Establishing Terms*

### **Term By-law**

The PIC is required to make a by-law to establish the number of one- and two-year terms for parent members so that terms do not all start and stop at the same time. In addition, a second by-law will establish terms for community members and board staff representatives. The objective is to provide continuity of membership through the staggering of terms.

## *Understanding Conflict of Interest*

### **About Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest for a PIC member is any situation in which the individual's personal or pecuniary interests may be incompatible with his or her responsibilities to the PIC. Conflicts of interest may be actual or perceived. A PIC is an advisory body that mainly provides information and advice; nonetheless, a conflict of interest may arise where an advantage or perceived advantage may be conferred on a PIC member or his or her family as a result of communications or activities undertaken by the PIC.



### **YOU SHOULD KNOW**

A conflict of interest may be actual, perceived, or potential:

**Actual:** A PIC member has a private interest that is sufficiently connected to his or her duties and responsibilities as a PIC member that it influences the exercise of these duties and responsibilities.

**Perceived:** Reasonably well-informed persons could reasonably believe that a PIC member has a conflict of interest, even where there may be no actual conflict of interest.

**Potential:** A PIC member has a private interest that could affect his or her position on matters on which advice is to be given or activities undertaken by the PIC.

### **Conflict of Interest By-law**

Because a conflict of interest can arise in a variety of situations, it is mandatory that all PICs have a conflict of interest by-law to help ensure the objective involvement of PIC members in both appearance and fact.



### **TIP**

Refer to your school board's conflict of interest guidelines as a foundation for developing your PIC by-law.

### **Avoiding Conflict of Interest**

A PIC member should try to avoid situations in which a conflict of interest is likely to result, such as situations in which:

- ♦ the member's ability to carry out his or her duties and responsibilities on the committee may be influenced or jeopardized;
- ♦ he or she or a relative could benefit directly or indirectly;
- ♦ any family member, friend, person, organization, or business entity that he or she is associated with would or could be favoured.

To avoid a collective conflict of interest, the committee may not accept favours or economic benefits from any individuals, organizations, or entities known to be seeking business contracts with the board or its schools.



### **Duty to Declare Conflict of Interest**

PIC members have a duty to declare to the chair/co-chairs that they are in a conflict of interest situation, whether the conflict of interest is actual, perceived, or potential.

A PIC member may occasionally find himself or herself in a conflict of interest position in regard to a particular issue under consideration by the PIC. When this happens, the member should declare that he or she is in a conflict of interest situation, and refrain from participating in any discussion of the matter by leaving the room for that part of the meeting. The member should not participate in any discussion of the issue and, if a vote is taken on the issue, the member must not vote.

## *Handling Conflict*

PICs are required to have a by-law specifying a conflict resolution procedure for internal disputes. The by-law must be in keeping with any board policies on this topic.

### **About Conflict**

Conflict is a natural part of human existence. When mutual trust and respect prevail, conflict can be a positive force. It can encourage people to find creative solutions, clarify an issue, increase the involvement of members, encourage growth, and strengthen relationships. However, if left uncontrolled, conflict can divert energy from the group, destroy morale, polarize individuals, deepen differences, obstruct progress, and create suspicion and distrust.

### **Conflict Resolution By-laws**

Each PIC must have a by-law that outlines a process for addressing internal conflict. When conflict is resolved collaboratively, the whole group and the individuals within the group are strengthened.

### **Dealing With Conflict**

Open, clear communication is essential to conflict resolution. To a large degree, conflict can be prevented or diffused at an early stage if differing points of view are handled carefully by the chair or co-chairs. Here are a few simple strategies for those chairing meetings to help ensure that these differences are accommodated in a constructive manner:

- ♦ See that the PIC adheres to its mandate.
- ♦ Solicit input from all members.
- ♦ Provide opportunities for clarification.
- ♦ Treat all members' concerns with respect.
- ♦ Encourage the entire PIC to be part of the solution.
- ♦ Ensure common understanding of the issue, question, or concern.
- ♦ Review membership expectations and the PIC by-law outlining the conflict resolution process for internal committee disputes at the beginning of each year.

### **Avoiding Conflict**

Conflict can often be avoided, and solutions more readily achieved, when positive working relationships exist. It is important that PIC members take the time to get to know each

other's values, beliefs, and interests. The use of good communication skills will help clarify the PIC's discussions and help prevent misunderstanding and conflict. If the PIC chooses to create or adopt one, a code of ethics for PIC members will also help all members understand what is expected.



### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

See "More Tools and Information" for a sample code of ethics.

From time to time, PICs may find that they are not able to come to an agreement on matters under their consideration. In such cases, it is important that the PIC take time to identify the issues that seem to be triggering disputes. The volume of disputes may be reflective of dissatisfaction among members of the PIC. Alternatively, the existence of a few disputes could be a healthy sign of growth and development in your PIC.



### **PRACTICES**

**Acknowledge the conflict:** As a group, acknowledge when a conflict exists and determine the source of the conflict. For example, is it related to facts, goals, processes, values, personal preferences, beliefs, or communication?

**Plan how to deal with the conflict:** Once the source of the conflict is determined, decide how to deal with it in a manner that is respectful to all parties. This may be done by the chair or a co-chair, another individual on the committee, or the entire PIC. (In particularly difficult times, it may be best to engage a person who has no association with the PIC to facilitate discussion and problem solving.) At this stage, all PIC members should reflect on the problem and be prepared to state their viewpoints and/or concerns.

**Provide time for discussion:** The chair or whoever is facilitating the discussion should introduce the problem and ask each member for input so that the nature and source of the conflict are clear. Acknowledging each person by listening attentively sets the tone for problem solving and opens the PIC to a variety of solutions. Emotions should be accepted and dealt with since they are a part of conflict.

**Seek the best solution:** As viewpoints and solutions are described, the individual facilitating the discussion deals with them one at a time. Following the discussion, ask PIC members: Can you live with this solution? Will you support the solution? Should we reflect on this and resolve it at a future meeting? Can we resolve this as a group, or do we need outside help from the board?

## Setting Goals

To establish priorities, PICs may find it helpful to begin by reviewing the vision of parent engagement in Ontario that is articulated in the parent engagement policy document and discussing questions such as the following:

- ♦ Who are our parents?
- ♦ What is our community like?
- ♦ Have parents been invited to be engaged in their children’s learning?
- ♦ What have we done to give parents the tools necessary to support their children’s learning?
- ♦ What are the emerging trends in parent engagement?

Once priorities have been established, goals can be set.



### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

See “More Tools and Information” for additional information about setting goals and priorities.

### **Establishing Timelines**

Once the priorities have been determined and goals set, PICs will want to establish a timeline for the implementation of their goals. Timelines should be realistic and include checkpoints – dates or points at which the PIC will look at its progress and determine if it is on target or if the timeline needs to be revised.

## Developing an Action Plan

### **Content of the Action Plan**

The action plan should include:

- ♦ goals identified by the PIC;
- ♦ actions that will be taken to achieve the goals;
- ♦ who is responsible for taking each action;
- ♦ when actions will be taken;
- ♦ checkpoint dates for monitoring progress;
- ♦ when and how success will be determined.



### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

See “More Tools and Information” for additional tips about developing an action plan.

## Implementing the Action Plan

When the committee has developed a plan that reflects the input of all members and of which all members have ownership, the process should be put in motion.



### TIP

The following types of questions will help guide the thinking of the committee while it develops its action plan:

- Which schools have created parent engagement opportunities that are closest to our vision? What can we learn from them?
- Which of their strategies have been most successful? How do they know?
- How can we share and support effective strategies to increase parent engagement and enhance communication with school councils across the board?
- How do we encourage school councils to continue to raise the bar by reflecting on successful practices and building in “next steps” in the school councils’ plans?
- How do we know parents are getting the information they need?
- What are the barriers that prevent effective communication in our educational communities?
- Are our schools welcoming places for parents?
- How do we celebrate effective practices and create “next steps” based on them?

## Evaluating Implementation of the Action Plan

PICs need to include an evaluation component in the action plan that will provide them with a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation and give them direction for future work. PICs will want to assess, for example, the degree to which barriers to parent engagement have been identified and addressed.

## Communication

### The Importance of Communication

In all organizations, communication is the key to success. An important part of the role the PIC has been given is providing information and advice on parent engagement to the director of education and trustees on behalf of parents throughout the board. There is a responsibility to ensure that effective communication occurs. The PIC will communicate with many education partners within the board as well as other PICs across the province. Information obtained in all of these exchanges will need to be conveyed to the appropriate audiences at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner.

### School Councils

To carry out their mandate of providing information and advice on parent engagement to the director and trustees, PICs rely on information from school councils. The PIC mandate also includes communicating with and supporting school councils. From time to time PICs will be required to disseminate information on various topics from the board or ministry to school councils. For example, they might convey information about:

- ♦ board-level student achievement and well-being;
- ♦ board and provincial parent engagement initiatives;
- ♦ board and provincial parent engagement skill-building opportunities;
- ♦ board and provincial funding;

and/or advice about successful practices for:

- ♦ engaging parents in their children's learning at home and at school;
- ♦ communicating with parents;
- ♦ creating welcoming environments;
- ♦ learning about and reflecting diversity;
- ♦ building consensus and resolving issues.

PICs should also communicate with school councils to arrange opportunities for councils to network to develop ideas, learn about board/provincial initiatives, and share challenges, opportunities, and effective practices. PICs should determine a process by which they will disseminate information received from the ministry.

### Directors and Trustees

From time to time, it may be necessary for the chair/co-chairs to communicate with the director of education and trustee outside of scheduled meetings. For example, agenda items may need to be discussed or prioritized, or matters requiring a response or clarification may arise. It is important to establish a process to facilitate such communication as well as to report back to the membership about it.

## Other PICs

Networking with other PICs can be beneficial, as it gives all PICs the opportunity to share best practices; learn what is happening locally, regionally, and provincially; participate in training opportunities; and feel supported and connected to a larger community. The PIC should take advantage of opportunities to meet with other PICs and should reflect this communication channel in its communications protocols.



### TIP

Communications protocols are rules or guidelines based on standards or principles to be followed for effective communications management. These standards or principles include:

**Integrity and honesty** – never knowingly misleading any person or group on an issue. Building trust in what is communicated is important for maintaining your committee’s reputation and credibility.

**Openness and accessibility** – promoting openness and accessibility while respecting confidentiality. Endeavour to be as open as possible in your decision-making process, not just making meetings “open to the public” but also designing them to encourage the community to attend, feel welcome, and understand the proceedings.

**Member involvement** – encouraging all members to actively participate in initiatives. Members should be given the opportunity to view and provide input on all communications to and from the board, school councils, the ministry, community and other groups, and parents.

**Clarity** – using plain, jargon-free language in all communications and having a process in place to help ensure the accuracy of the message. Consider translating materials to accommodate diverse communities.

**Timeliness** – communicating information without delay. Timely communication is more likely to achieve its purpose. Make every effort to respond to issues in a timely manner.

**Fairness** – addressing all issues and treating all who are involved or affected with respect, integrity, and sensitivity.

## Consultation

### By the PIC

As noted earlier, the PIC may solicit the advice of parents of pupils enrolled in the board about matters under the PIC's consideration. The views of parents may be gathered through the consolidated views of school councils or directly from individual parents. There are a variety of ways to gather input, such as surveys, focus group sessions, questionnaires, and web-based data gathering. The gathered information is discussed at a PIC meeting, and appropriate follow-up occurs. It is important to keep in mind that PICs are concerned with the needs, views, and input of all parents, rather than the needs of a specific individual, which are more appropriately dealt with at the school level.



### YOU SHOULD KNOW

*Planning Parent Engagement: A Guidebook for Parents and Schools* is a resource developed by the Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association and the Council of Ontario Directors of Education, with the support of the Ministry of Education. The guide contains two sample surveys outlining questions that may be useful in the development of a local PIC survey. This resource is available at [www.ontariodirectors.ca/Parent\\_Engagement/Parent\\_Engagement.html](http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/Parent_Engagement/Parent_Engagement.html).

### By the Board

Part of the PIC's role is to provide information and advice to the board about how to engage parents in support of student achievement and well-being. In addition, the board may solicit the advice of its PIC on matters that relate to student achievement and well-being, and shall advise the PIC of its response to the advice given by the committee.

### By the Ministry

The ministry may solicit the advice of PICs on matters that relate to student achievement and well-being.

## Accountability

### Ministry Funding Reporting

In consultation with the director and in keeping with board policies, the PIC will determine how ministry funding, if any, to support the parent engagement activities of the PIC will be allocated. Accurate records of all funds dispersed must be kept so that all requests for financial reports from the ministry can be complied with promptly and accurately.

### Summary of Activities

Each year, the PIC shall submit a written summary of its activities to the chair of the board and the director of education. The report must include information about how any funding it received from the ministry was spent, and a summary of activities undertaken by the PIC, which should include:

- ♦ a summary of the information and advice given to the board;
- ♦ a summary of strategies and initiatives developed that the board could use to communicate effectively with parents and to engage parents to support their children's learning at home and at school;
- ♦ information communicated to school councils and parents;
- ♦ support provided to school councils;
- ♦ other support for parent engagement, including consultations and conferences.

The report may also include future plans. The director will post the summary on the website of the board and provide it to the school councils of the board.



#### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

See "More Tools and Information" for a sample summary of activities and a sample financial statement.



# *Process and Procedure: Effective Practices*

*This section of the handbook highlights effective practices used by PICs and other successful committees across Ontario.*

## *Characteristics of Effective PICs*

### **Focusing on the Mandate**

The PIC will provide advice to the director of education and trustees based on input received from parents, usually through school councils. Although the PIC may receive advice on a variety of issues, it must focus on those issues that fall within the parameters of its mandate.

### **Summary of Effective Practices**

Effective PICs are those that:

- ◆ keep student achievement and well-being as their first priority;
- ◆ focus on the needs and interests of all students;
- ◆ are composed of members who represent the diversity of the board;
- ◆ are actively involved in assisting school councils in the areas of engaging parents in their children's education, creating a welcoming environment, and recognizing the diversity of the parents in their school community;
- ◆ promote effective, ongoing communication among all partners in education;
- ◆ establish a positive relationship with the director of education and trustees;
- ◆ provide feedback to parents, letting them know how their advice and ideas have been used;
- ◆ have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities;
- ◆ have a clear and consistent process for decision making and conflict resolution;
- ◆ are familiar with funding opportunities and resources provided by the Parent Engagement Office (PEO) of the Ministry of Education and with the initiatives of the PEO;
- ◆ maintain high ethical standards.

## Running Effective Meetings

### Establishing Meeting Dates

The PIC must meet a minimum of four times per year. It is advisable to set the dates for the entire year at the first meeting. From time to time, scheduling conflicts may cause members to be absent from a meeting. The chair will be required to reschedule the meeting if any one of the following occurs:

- ♦ parents are not the majority of members present;
- ♦ the director of education (or designate) is not present;
- ♦ the trustee (or designate) is not present.



#### TIP

Committees may choose to establish alternative dates at the same time as they set their regular meetings to avoid the difficulties involved in rescheduling meetings.

### Publicizing Meetings

#### Extending an Open Invitation

PIC meetings are to be open to the public. Meetings should be advertised so that those who have an interest in matters before the PIC know that there is an open invitation for them to attend.

#### How to Publicize Meetings

Meetings can be publicized within the board community in various ways.

These may include:

- ♦ circulating the year's meeting schedule as widely as possible, including to all school councils, as soon as possible after the dates are established;
- ♦ publicizing meetings at community events.

#### Notice of a Meeting

The chair or a co-chair must ensure that notice of a meeting is provided to members at least five days before the meeting by e-mail or regular mail and that the notice is posted on the board website.

### The Meeting Place

#### Where Meetings Are Held

The PIC should strive to find a location that is central or rotate the meeting location. The committee may also want to provide alternative means for participation in meetings

such as tele- or videoconferencing. This would allow committee members as well as local parents, school council members, and members of the public to attend without having to travel long distances.

A member of a PIC who participates in a meeting through electronic means shall be deemed to be present at the meeting.



### **PRACTICES**

Some PICs rotate the locations of meetings at different schools in the board and encourage host school councils to showcase effective practices for engaging parents in support of student achievement and well-being as part of the regular meeting.

## **Keeping Minutes and Financial Records**

### **Requirement to Keep Minutes**

PICs must keep minutes of all PIC meetings and records of all financial transactions in accordance with the policies of the board, if any, respecting the retention of documents by committees of the board.

### **Distribution of Minutes**

Minutes of the PIC meeting must be posted on the board website and sent to each school council. Each school council chair should make the minutes available to parents by posting them on the school council bulletin board (if there is one in the school) or on the school's website. Minutes of the PIC posted on the website of the board shall remain on the website for four years.



### **YOU SHOULD KNOW**

Timely distribution and posting of minutes will demonstrate the PIC's commitment to open communication with school councils and the public, and can make a positive contribution to the recruitment of new members of the PIC.

### **Content of Minutes**

Minutes should begin with a list of those attending and regrets. Minutes should reflect the topics of discussion, but not the details of the discussion. Effective minutes will provide PIC members, school councils, and parents with a brief but clear summary of what occurred at a meeting, including decisions, plans, reports, and who is responsible for what.

## Making Decisions

### Choosing a Decision-Making Process

Your PIC will have to make many decisions. Determining how decisions will be made is the first order of business for a new PIC. While PICs, like many organizations, aim to make decisions by consensus, ultimately some PIC decisions may have to be arrived at through a vote by parent and community members of the PIC.



#### YOU SHOULD KNOW

Any decisions that contradict provincial laws and regulations, ministry or board policy, or PIC by-laws are out of order and invalid.



#### TIP

The most effective teamwork is achieved when all members on the team consider themselves team players, working towards a common goal.

Successful team players:

- **listen** to create an environment where all ideas are heard;
- **discuss** and try to reach consensus;
- **clarify** and provide an opportunity to question/confirm information;
- **respect** each other so that they can build a “safe” environment to generate and voice new ideas;
- **participate** and allow all views and ideas to be considered;
- **review** to help ensure that everyone on the team clearly understands a decision.

### The Benefits of Consensus

Reaching consensus requires members to find common ground. Everyone helps reach the final decision and everyone must agree to it. Because all members have the chance to influence and understand the final decision, it may be reached with less conflict than might be the case with a formal vote and should receive everyone’s support. Many PICs indicate that this is their preferred approach.

Making decisions by consensus:

- ♦ allows members to take different perspectives and values into account when examining issues;
- ♦ allows for flexibility and compromise in arriving at solutions;
- ♦ is based on respect for all members and their values;
- ♦ can result in decisions that are more creative and balanced because they take account of a range of views and that are more effective because they are made by members who are informed about all aspects of the question;

- ◆ helps ensure that final decisions have the support of everyone, thus promoting a sense of commitment to and ownership of the decisions and resulting in decisions that are more enduring;
- ◆ creates a sense of common purpose;
- ◆ allows all PIC members to maintain the integrity of their personal values while agreeing to a resolution.

When making decisions by consensus, the chair or co-chairs should try to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to be heard.

### Reaching Decisions by Consensus

In working towards a decision by consensus, participants need to:

- ◆ identify the issue or problem;
- ◆ relate the issue to goals;
- ◆ list the options or proposed actions;
- ◆ explore the options and evaluate their appropriateness and effectiveness as ways to achieve agreed-upon goals;
- ◆ choose the option(s) most likely to achieve the goals;
- ◆ make a plan for implementing the option(s).

Consensus takes time, commitment, patience, and persistence. Using this process will strengthen your team by building trust, establishing an atmosphere in which diverse opinions are valued, and energizing and involving all members by helping ensure that they see themselves as equal participants. Once a decision is reached by consensus, your PIC may choose to formalize the decision through a motion.

### Reaching Decisions by Voting

Decisions reached by voting often expedite the business of a meeting as they usually take less time to arrive at than decisions reached by consensus. If your PIC chooses to reach decisions by majority vote, everyone on the PIC should be well informed about the item being voted on, and the PIC as a group should discuss all of the implications of voting for or against the item before a vote is called by the chair or a co-chair.



#### YOU SHOULD KNOW

- When electing a chair or co-chairs, only parent members may vote.
- On all other occasions when a vote is being taken, only parent and community members may vote. All other members of the PIC are non-voting.

**TIP**

- Most PICs prefer to make decisions by consensus.
- Some PICs find it useful to follow Robert's Rules of Order at their meetings. For simplified rules of order, see the "More Tools and Information" section of this handbook.

## Ongoing Recruitment of Members

### Encouraging Broad Participation

All PICs should strive to represent the diversity of their region and encourage school councils to reflect the diversity of their school communities. To help accomplish this, the committee will need to spend some time finding out more about the people who live in the district, and identify barriers to participation and strategies for outreach. By doing so, the PIC will establish the connections necessary to reach all parents.

**PRACTICES**

Some PICs have developed online parent involvement information sites, which may include a directory of PIC members, a list of dates and locations of meetings for the school year, information about PICs, resources, and newsletters.

### Orientation of New Members

Every year, the PIC has new members who bring unique strengths, expertise, and perspectives to the committee. It is important that these members be given the opportunity to learn about the roles and responsibilities of the committee, realize the importance of the commitment they are making, understand their duties, and become effective participants. They should also be given the opportunity to talk about the expertise and strengths they bring to the committee. In addition, each new member should receive hard copy or links to electronic versions of:

- ♦ this handbook;
- ♦ *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*;
- ♦ Ontario Regulation 612/00, "School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees";
- ♦ *School Councils: A Guide for Members*;
- ♦ the PIC's by-laws and, if applicable, its terms of reference and code of ethics;
- ♦ a list of schools in the board;
- ♦ information on provincial funding for parent engagement initiatives;
- ♦ a "who's who" list of the board's trustees and staff.



### PRACTICES

The first meeting of each new school year is an important opportunity to orient and welcome new members and also to review the PIC's mandate and operational procedures. Agenda items at this meeting might include the following:

- a presentation summarizing the mandate of the PIC and outlining its responsibilities
- a welcome to members and an invitation to all members to introduce themselves, identify what they feel they bring to the committee, and summarize their experience
- a presentation reviewing the PIC's past priorities, goals, and successes
- a review of the work undertaken by various subcommittees and an update on future needs
- a discussion about and determination of the frequency of meetings, and of the dates, times, and locations of meetings for the year
- the election of the chair or co-chairs, and any other officers provided for in the PIC's by-laws

## Building Participation Through Subcommittees

### Benefits of Subcommittees

The PIC has a large number of responsibilities that could require a substantial time commitment from members. Establishing subcommittees will enable committee members to divide the workload according to members' interests, expertise, and available time.

Having subcommittees also allows the PIC to draw on the expertise and experience of individuals and groups who are not members of the PIC, and provides an avenue for the PIC to reach out to and involve others. Each PIC subcommittee must include at least one PIC parent member and may include others invited by the PIC on an ad-hoc basis.

### Types of Subcommittees

A number of subcommittees may be established. Each PIC may determine which subcommittees would best suit its needs. For example, some committees may decide to have four subcommittees, each of which focuses on one of the four strategies outlined in the Parent Engagement Policy document, *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools* (i.e., school climate, eliminating barriers, supports for parents, and parent outreach). Others may have subcommittees for areas such as selection of members, best practices, and communication.

## Assessing the Effectiveness of the PIC

### Evaluation Forms or Surveys

When an initiative is concluded, it is recommended that evaluation forms or surveys be used to collect information from participants and school councils for the purpose of improvement and to determine next steps based on needs expressed in the forms or surveys.

The committee should also consider using a self-evaluation process every year or two to assess its effectiveness in areas such as meetings, goal setting, and conflict resolution.

Evaluation forms or surveys are one way to collect information for the purpose of improving meetings or PIC processes. An impartial observer who attends a meeting and is asked about what he or she observed at the meeting may also play a valuable role in assessing the PIC's effectiveness. The committee should also make time on a regular basis to discuss progress with respect to its action plan.



#### **TOOLS AND RESOURCES**

See "More Tools and Information" for a sample questionnaire on PIC effectiveness that PIC members can complete. The answers could be used to help make the PIC more effective. PIC members should be told that they can complete the questionnaire anonymously.



#### **YOU SHOULD KNOW**

Questions? Additional information is available from your school board, the local regional office of the ministry, and the ministry's Parent Engagement Office.



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# APPENDICES: MORE TOOLS AND INFORMATION

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# Useful Resources

Visit the “Parents” section of the Ministry of Education website at [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca) and select “Parent Engagement” to find more useful resources for Parent Involvement Committees and school councils.

## Publications

*Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, 2010,*  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/involvement/index.html)

*Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009,*  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.html)

*School Councils: A Guide for Members, rev. 2002,*  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/guide.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/guide.html)

## PIC regulation

Ontario Regulation 612/00,  
[www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_000612\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_000612_e.htm)

## School council regulations

Ontario Regulation 612/00,  
[www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_000612\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_000612_e.htm)

Ontario Regulation 298,  
[www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_900298\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900298_e.htm)

# Mandatory By-laws

## O. Reg. 612/00, "By-laws"

### By-laws

43. A parent involvement committee,
- (a) may make by-laws governing the conduct of the committee's affairs; and
  - (b) shall make by-laws,
    - i. specifying the number of parent members to be appointed or elected to the committee, governing the process of appointment or election of parent members and governing the filling of vacancies in parent membership,
    - ii. specifying the number of community representatives, up to three, to be appointed to the committee, governing the process of appointment of community representatives and governing the filling of vacancies in community representative membership,
    - iii. governing the election of members of the committee to the offices of chair or co-chair, and any offices provided for in the by-laws, and governing the filling of vacancies in the offices of the committee,
    - iv. specifying the number of parent members of the parent involvement committee that will hold office for one year and the number of parent members that will hold office for two years,
    - v. specifying how many, if any, of the persons listed in subsection 33 (2) may be appointed by the board to the parent involvement committee,
    - vi. specifying the length of the term of office for the community representative members of the parent involvement committee and the members appointed by the board, if any, under subsection 33 (2),
    - vii. establishing rules respecting conflicts of interest of the members of the parent involvement committee, and
    - viii. establishing a process for resolving conflicts internal to the committee, consistent with any conflict resolution policies of the board.

## Checklist of Mandatory By-laws\*

By-law		Completion date	Review date
Mandatory by-law 1	Parent members		
Mandatory by-law 2	Community members		
Mandatory by-law 3	Offices		
Mandatory by-law 4	Parent members – term of membership		
Mandatory by-law 5	Board employee group members		
Mandatory by-law 6	Community members and board employee group members – term of membership		
Mandatory by-law 7	Conflict of interest		
Mandatory by-law 8	Conflict resolution		

\*Committees may also write optional by-laws.

# Sample By-laws

This section provides sample by-laws for your consideration. Each PIC is responsible for the development of its own by-laws in compliance with O. Reg. 612/00.

## By-law 1: Parent Members

### Parent members:

A parent member must be the parent of a pupil enrolled in a school of the board that established the PIC. Employees of the board may serve as parent members and must inform the committee of their employment at their first committee meeting.

The majority of PIC members must be parents.

Members will include up to XX parents representing each of the XX *<Insert: wards/families of schools/regions>* of the board.

### Selection of new parent members:

A selection subcommittee comprising one of the co-chairs and at least three parent members of the *<Insert PIC name>* will determine the selection process for committee approval and will manage the recruitment and selection of parent members. Efforts will be made to represent the diverse communities of the board.

### Supplemental appointments:

The diversity of the parent population, and all regions of the board, should be represented. Up to three supplemental appointments, drawn from the school council chairs of the schools of the board, may be made by consensus of the *<Insert PIC name>* in order to help ensure that the membership of the *<Insert PIC name>* represents the parent population of the board.

## APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES

### Sample 1

1. When there is a vacancy at the beginning of a school year, each *<Insert: ward/family of schools/region>* assembly of school councils will be asked to name a/X parent

representative(s) as a member/members of the *<Insert PIC name>*. The term of the PIC parent member(s) so appointed will be one or two years.

2. Parent members entering the second year of a two-year appointment will be affirmed.

### Sample 2

1. Within the first 15 days of the school year, each *<Insert: ward/family of schools/region>* assembly of school councils will be asked to fill its allotment of XX parent members of the *<Insert PIC name>*.
2. Parent members entering the second year of a two-year appointment will be affirmed.

## ELECTION PROCEDURES

### Sample 1

1. Elections of parent members shall occur prior to November 15 each school year, and prior to the first meeting of the school year of the *<Insert PIC name>*.
2. Each parent seeking election must be nominated or self-nominated in writing, and must have a child enrolled in a school of the board.
3. Each parent member of the *<Insert PIC name>* shall be entitled to one vote for each vacant parent member position on the PIC.
4. An election subcommittee of the *<Insert PIC name>* shall be struck by the PIC in May to help plan the election process, gather nominations, and run the election. No one standing for election, or the spouse or immediate family member of anyone standing for election, shall be a member of the election subcommittee.
5. The election subcommittee shall:
  - provide nomination forms;
  - provide advice to the board concerning the advertisement of vacancies;
  - notify PIC members of election procedures and election date(s), location, and time, at least fourteen days in advance of the election;
  - request a profile from all candidates and make these profiles available to the PIC;
  - conduct the elections by secret ballot;
  - help the director notify all candidates of the results.
6. Only the names of the successful candidates shall be made public. A list of candidates and the vote results will be kept on file by the PIC for use in the event that a vacancy on the PIC occurs later during the school year. In the event of such an occurrence, the individual on the list who has the most votes and who is willing to serve as a PIC member shall fill the vacancy.
7. All other information related to the election shall be kept confidential.
8. All individuals standing for election shall be notified of the results before the results are released.
9. The director shall post the names of new members on the board website within 30 days of the election.

Source: Adapted from the by-laws of Holy Name of Mary School Council, Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, Almonte, Ontario.



## Sample 2

1. The <Insert PIC name> will establish a selection subcommittee in May of each year. The subcommittee must ensure that a new PIC is in place by November 15, and prior to the first meeting of the school year.
2.
  - a. To be eligible to stand for a parent member position, the parent must have a child enrolled in a school of the board. Self-nomination will suffice. Candidates should be prepared to summarize their reasons for running for the PIC.
  - b. Nomination forms shall be filed by all parent-candidates for positions on the PIC. Parents may nominate themselves or other parents.
  - c. Information about candidates shall be made available to the current PIC at least one week before the election.
  - d. If the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of positions, the candidates shall be acclaimed.
  - e. No individual campaign literature for PIC elections may be distributed or posted in a building or on a website of the board.
  - f. The election proceedings shall be supervised by the director or designate.
  - g. Elections shall be conducted by secret ballot.
  - h. Each parent member and community member of the <Insert PIC name> shall be entitled to cast one vote for each position available.
  - i. Ballots shall be counted by the director or designate in the presence of at least two parents who are not election candidates.
  - j. If there is a tie for the final position for a representative on the PIC, the winner shall be determined by lot.

Source: Adapted from the "Thames Valley District School Board School Council Handbook".

## FILLING VACANCIES

### Sample 1

1. Should a parent member position become vacant before the next selection process, the <Insert PIC name> shall fill the vacancy by appointment from the pool of candidates from the previous selection process.
2. If none of these candidates remain interested in becoming a PIC member, the PIC may request that interested parents of the board submit their names for consideration. The committee shall then appoint one of those who indicate an interest.
3. When a vacant spot on the committee is filled, the new member's term shall expire at the time the previous member's term would have ended.

Source: Adapted from the by-laws of Holy Name of Mary School Council, Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, Almonte, Ontario.

## Sample 2

If any <Insert PIC name> parent member position becomes vacant because of resignation, inability of a member to fulfil his or her roles and responsibilities, or other cause, the PIC shall invite the school councils in the region of the member being replaced to select an alternative member to fill the vacancy. The PIC shall appoint this individual to the vacant parent member position for the remainder of the term held by the member vacating the position.

Source: Adapted from the "School Council Operating Guidelines" of St. Francis Catholic School, Paris, Ontario.

## By-law 2: Community Members

### APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES

Members of the community can bring an important perspective to the work of the PIC.

The <Insert PIC name> shall include two community members:

- ♦ a representative of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), selected by the SEAC; and
- ♦ a representative of the diocese [or, in a non-Catholic board, an appropriate community group], selected by the diocese [or the group].

Community members may not be a member of the board of trustees or an employee of the board.

Community members are voting members.

Community members shall serve on the PIC for a term of one year. An individual may serve a maximum of three consecutive terms.

### FILLING VACANCIES

#### Sample 1

Should a vacancy occur, the sending group (the SEAC or the diocese or the community group) will be invited to name another representative to serve the remainder of the term of the vacant position.

#### Sample 2

Vacant positions for community representatives may be filled by appointment of the PIC for the remaining term of office, from among members of the community who meet the requirements set for the vacant positions.

## By-law 3: Offices

### Sample 1

#### Chair:

The PIC will have a chair elected by the parent members of the <Insert PIC name> for a two-year term. Only a parent member who is beginning a two-year term is eligible to stand for the position of chair. An individual cannot serve more than two consecutive terms in this office.

### Sample 2

#### Co-chairs:

The PIC will have two co-chairs, each elected by the parent members of the <Insert PIC name> for a two-year term. To promote continuity, terms shall be staggered such that one of the two positions is open at the beginning of each school year. Only a parent member who is beginning a two-year term is eligible to stand for the position of co-chair. An individual cannot serve more than two consecutive terms in this office.

#### Treasurer:

At the first meeting of alternate school years, or earlier if a vacancy arises, parent members of the PIC shall elect a parent member to serve as treasurer. The term of office shall be two years. An individual cannot serve more than two consecutive terms in this office.

#### Vacancies:

1. Should an officer position become vacant before the next election process, the PIC shall fill the vacancy by election of a parent member. Only parent members of the PIC may vote in an election to fill an officer position.
2. When a vacant spot on the PIC is filled, the new officer's term will expire at the time the previous officer's term would have ended.

## By-law 4: Parent Members – Term of Membership

#### Parent members – term of membership:

Terms of membership for parent members of the committee are for one or two years. Terms will be staggered so that parent positions become available each year. Terms will begin October 1 and end September 30. Upon application, candidates will indicate whether they would like to serve on the <Insert PIC name> for one or two years. Committee members may apply for additional terms as long as they are eligible.

## *By-law 5: Board Employee Group Members*

### **Board employee group members:**

To bring the perspectives of board employee groups from both elementary and secondary schools, one representative of each of the following board staff groups will be invited to join the *<Insert PIC name>*:

- ♦ one elementary school principal
- ♦ one secondary school principal
- ♦ one elementary teacher, other than a principal or vice-principal
- ♦ one secondary teacher, other than a principal or vice-principal
- ♦ one board employee, other than a principal, vice-principal, or teacher

As per O. Reg. 612/00, the board will be responsible for these appointments. These members are non-voting. The term for these members shall be one year, and may be renewed for one additional term.

## *By-law 6: Community Members and Board Employee Group Members – Term of Membership*

### **Community members:**

Up to three community members appointed by the PIC will serve on the committee for one or two years. Terms will be staggered so that community positions become available each year.

### **Principal, teacher, and staff members:**

Up to five representatives, one from each of the following five board staff groups, appointed by the board, will serve on the PIC for one year:

- ♦ one elementary school principal
- ♦ one secondary school principal
- ♦ one elementary teacher, other than a principal or vice-principal
- ♦ one secondary teacher, other than a principal or vice-principal
- ♦ one board employee, other than a principal, vice-principal, or teacher

The one-year term may be renewed for an additional year at the discretion of the board and the employee.

## By-law 7: Conflict of Interest

### Sample 1

#### Conflict of Interest:

Each member of the <Insert PIC name> shall avoid situations that could result in an actual, potential, or perceived conflict between the overall goals and vision of the PIC and a personal or pecuniary interest of that PIC member.

Should an issue or agenda item arise during a PIC meeting where a PIC member is in a conflict of interest situation, he or she shall declare the conflict of interest immediately and shall absent himself or herself from the meeting for, and decline any participation in, the discussion and resolution of the issue or item.

### Sample 2

#### Conflict of Interest:

1. A conflict of interest may be actual, potential, or perceived.
2. A member of the <Insert PIC name> shall declare a conflict of interest in matters where he or she, friends, members of his or her family, or business entities in which he or she may have an interest, could possibly benefit (either directly or indirectly) from decisions of the PIC.
3. A member shall exclude himself or herself from discussions in which:
  - the member's ability to carry out his or her duties and responsibilities as a member of the PIC may be jeopardized, or seen to be jeopardized, as a result of his or her personal or pecuniary interest;
  - the member, his or her relatives or friends, or a business entity in which the member may have an interest, may gain or benefit (either directly or indirectly) as a result of actions that may be taken by the PIC or the board in response to information or advice that the PIC provides to the board;
  - the member, his or her relatives or friends, or a business entity in which the member may have an interest, may gain or benefit (either directly or indirectly) as a result of confidential information that becomes known to the PIC member in the course of carrying out his or her PIC responsibilities;
  - the member might be in a position, or be perceived to be in a position, to give preferential treatment to his or her family members, friends, or a business entity in which he or she has an interest, as a result of his or her participation on the PIC;
  - a conflict of interest is likely to result.
4. A member shall not accept favours or economic benefits from any individuals, organizations, or entities known to be seeking business contracts with the board.

## By-law 8: Conflict Resolution

(Note: Must be consistent with any conflict resolution policies of the board.)

### Sample 1

#### Conflict resolution:

- ♦ Every PIC member will be given an opportunity to express his or her concerns or opinion about the issue in dispute and how the dispute has affected him or her.
- ♦ Speakers to an issue will maintain a calm and respectful tone at all times.
- ♦ Speakers will be allowed to speak without interruption.
- ♦ The responsibility of the chair or co-chairs is to clarify the statements made by all speakers, to identify common ground among the points of view raised, and to set out the joint interests of all members.
- ♦ If no common ground can be identified, the chair or co-chairs will seek to clarify preferences among all members before proceeding further.
- ♦ If all attempts at resolving the conflict have been exhausted without success, or if the chair or co-chairs are not in a position to be impartial with respect to the conflict, the chair or co-chairs shall request the intervention of the director, or other senior administrator, to facilitate a resolution to the conflict.

### Sample 2

#### Conflict resolution:

- ♦ Members of the <Insert PIC name> are elected as representatives of the board's community and will demonstrate respect for their colleagues on the PIC at all times.
- ♦ If a PIC member or members become disruptive during a meeting, the chair or co-chairs shall ask for order.
- ♦ If all efforts to restore order fail or the unbecoming behaviour continues, the chair or co-chairs may direct the individual PIC member(s) to leave the meeting, citing the reasons for the request.
- ♦ The removal of a member for one meeting does not prevent the PIC member from participating in future meetings of the PIC, nor does it prevent that meeting from continuing.
- ♦ The incident shall be recorded and submitted to the director or designate within one week of the meeting.
- ♦ When the chair or co-chairs have requested the removal of a member or members from a meeting, the chair or co-chairs may request that the disputing member(s) of the PIC participate in a special meeting, the purpose of which will be to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution to the dispute. Such a meeting may be a private meeting, and shall not be construed as a meeting of the PIC.
- ♦ The chair or co-chairs may request the intervention of an independent third party to assist in achieving a resolution of the dispute.
- ♦ An independent third party may be a board official or another individual mutually agreed on by the parties involved in the dispute.
- ♦ Any resolution reached at the meeting to resolve the conflict shall be recorded and respected by all parties.

# *The Planning Process: Sample Exercises and Strategies*

## *Exercise 1: Assessing the Current Situation*

This exercise may help your PIC identify issues – an important step in the planning process.

### **Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools**

#### **Vision**

In Ontario's education system, all partners acknowledge the positive impact of parent engagement on student achievement. Students are supported and inspired to learn in a culture of high expectations in which parents:

- are welcomed, respected, and valued by the school community as partners in their children's learning and development;
- have opportunities to be involved, and also a full range of choices about how to be involved, in the educational community to support student success;
- are engaged through ongoing communication and dialogue with other educational partners to support a positive learning environment at home and at school;
- are supported with the information and tools necessary to participate in school life.

*Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools, 2010, p. 7*

First, review the vision of parent engagement in Ontario (see above). In small groups, discuss the following questions:

- ◆ Who are our parents?
- ◆ What is our community like?
- ◆ Have parents been invited to be engaged in their children's learning?
- ◆ What have we done to give parents the tools they need to support their children's learning?
- ◆ What are some of the emerging trends in parent engagement?

Appoint a facilitator in each group to stimulate discussion and to group ideas. Allot ample time so that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. When the allotted time is up, ask the facilitators to present the ideas to the whole PIC. A main facilitator should then summarize the information. This summary will help your PIC identify the focus of its activities in both the short and long term.

## Exercise 2: Identifying and Defining Goals

This exercise is a good way of involving many participants when establishing the PIC's short-term and long-term goals.

(*Note:* Participants should be in groups of four or five.)

### O. Reg. 612/00, Purpose

- 27.** (1) The purpose of a parent involvement committee is to support, encourage and enhance parent engagement at the board level in order to improve student achievement and well-being.
- (2) A parent involvement committee of a board shall achieve its purpose by,
- (a) providing information and advice on parent engagement to the board;
  - (b) communicating with and supporting school councils of schools of the board; and
  - (c) undertaking activities to help parents of pupils of the board support their children's learning at home and at school.
- 28.** A parent involvement committee of a board shall,
- (a) develop strategies and initiatives that the board and the board's director of education could use to effectively communicate with parents and to effectively engage parents in improving student achievement and well-being;
  - (b) advise the board and the board's director of education on ways to use the strategies and initiatives referred to in clause (a);
  - (c) communicate information from the Ministry to school councils of schools of the board and to parents of pupils of the board;
  - (d) work with school councils of schools of the board and, through the board's director of education, with employees of the board to,
    - (i) share effective practices to help engage parents, especially parents who may find engagement challenging, in their children's learning,
    - (ii) identify and reduce barriers to parent engagement,
    - (iii) help ensure that schools of the board create a welcoming environment for parents of its pupils, and
    - (iv) develop skills and acquire knowledge that will assist the parent involvement committee and school councils of schools of the board with their work; and
  - (e) determine, in consultation with the board's director of education and in keeping with the board's policies, how funding, if any, provided under the Education Act for parent involvement as described in section 27 and clauses (a) to (d), is to be used.

- ♦ Review the PIC role and mandate outlined in O. Reg. 612/00 (see above).
- ♦ Have each person write down five or six phrases, each of which identifies a goal, purpose, or direction that aligns with the PIC mandate.
- ♦ Note each of your group's phrases on a flipchart, grouping common goals.
- ♦ Discuss the common goals in your group and become familiar with the ideas.
- ♦ Develop at least one goal statement for each of these common ideas.
- ♦ Join with other groups to compare the lists and develop a common list of goals.
- ♦ Based on consensus, prioritize goals.
- ♦ For each goal statement, identify internal and external barriers that may hinder your PIC in reaching the goal.
- ♦ Back in your small groups, seek creative ways and alternative solutions to achieving your short- and long-term goals.



## Exercise 3: Developing an Action Plan

This exercise can help you focus on the goals you have identified and provide you with concrete and creative ways of achieving them. Start with the following strategies:

- ♦ For each identified goal, brainstorm a number of ways to achieve it, in the context of the mandate for all PICs.
- ♦ Determine the most promising strategies – those for which time, talent, and resources are available.
- ♦ Develop an action plan based on your findings.

The format of your action plan could resemble that of the sample below. Such a plan would identify: the activities you are planning in order to achieve your goals, the individuals responsible for the activities, the deadline for completing each activity, and the resources needed to carry out the activities successfully. The last column of the action plan could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities in helping to reach the PIC's goals.

<b>Action Plan for:</b> <i>Recruiting Volunteers</i> <b>Year:</b> 20XX <b>Goal:</b> <i>To bring new parent members into the PIC</i>				
Activities	Person(s) responsible	Timeline	Resources required	Evaluation

## Steps in Developing an Action Plan

### PURPOSE OF THE ACTION PLAN

The PIC's role is to support, encourage, and enhance meaningful parent involvement to improve student achievement and well-being. PICs are to fulfil this role by providing information and advice to the board on parent engagement, communicating with and supporting school councils, and undertaking activities to help parents support their children's learning at home and at school. It is recommended that PICs create an action plan that addresses the steps they will take to fulfil this responsibility. The action plan should:

- ♦ align with the board plans for student achievement and student well-being;
- ♦ focus on initiatives intended to engage parents to support student achievement and well-being;
- ♦ draw on the expertise and experience of school councils;
- ♦ recognize the importance of ongoing communication with the board, school councils, and other PICs.

### VISION AND GOALS

#### Agreeing on a Vision

It is important for the committee to take some time to clarify its vision. The first step in this process is to provide an opportunity for PIC members to express their ideas to see if they have common viewpoints that could be the basis of the committee's vision. For example, members could discuss the following:

- ♦ Does "parent involvement" mean the same thing to all of them?
- ♦ Do the members have similar ideas about how parent involvement can be enhanced?
- ♦ Is there a shared vision of how student learning, student achievement, student well-being, and student success might be improved?
- ♦ Does the committee need assistance from others, such as an outside facilitator, to help clarify its thinking?

Developing a clear and consistent vision is an important first step. It will help members focus on work that supports student achievement and well-being.

#### Prioritizing and Setting Goals

Once there is consensus on the committee's vision, members may want to examine where they are in relation to their vision. When they are ready to set their goals, the members might choose to adopt a model that many have found useful – "S.M.A.R.T." goals. S.M.A.R.T. goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely.



### TIP

S.M.A.R.T. goals are:

**Specific** – A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal, you must answer the “w” questions and the “how” question:

- Who is involved?
- What will be accomplished?
- Where will it take place?
- When will it take place?
- Which requirements and constraints exist?
- Why is it being done?
- How will it be done?

**Measurable** – Goals must be measurable and should include not only the goal you want to reach but also the date by which you want to reach it. As part of your action plan, indicate the data you will gather to find out whether you have been successful.

**Attainable** – Goals must be attainable. If you set goals that are too far out of reach, you may not be successful. A goal should be challenging, but not impossible.

**Realistic** – To be realistic, a goal must be something you are both willing and able to work towards.

**Timely** – There must be a clear timeline for the attainment of the goal. Timelines should be reasonable. For long-term goals, it is wise to build in checkpoints that allow you to check the progress being made in attaining the goal and determine whether timeline adjustments are necessary.

## DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR TRACKING PROGRESS

Tracking progress towards goals increases the likelihood that the committee will stay on course, reach target dates, and finally celebrate success. In developing criteria for tracking its progress, the PIC should answer the following question: What will demonstrate to us that our goals have been achieved? If the committee has taken time to seek consensus on its vision, it will be much easier to answer this question.

## ESTABLISHING TIMELINES

Once the priorities and goals have been set, PICs will want to establish a timeline for the implementation of their goals. Timelines should be realistic and include checkpoints – dates or points at which the PIC will look at its progress and determine if it is on target or if the timeline needs to be revised.

## Strategies for Generating Ideas

PICs will need to generate ideas to address a range of issues at different points during both planning and implementation of their activities. The following strategies for brainstorming and generating ideas can be useful at such times.

**Brainstorming:** The following ground rules help brainstorming become an effective tool to generate ideas.

- ♦ Work with the whole committee.
- ♦ Try to ensure that everyone is clear on the issue to be brainstormed.
- ♦ Invite ideas from committee members, recording them on a chalkboard or flipchart.
- ♦ Accept all ideas without either positive or negative comment.
- ♦ Encourage quantity – the more ideas the better.
- ♦ Modify and combine ideas.
- ♦ Finally, ask committee members to rank the ideas they feel are the best.

**Round table:** This process is similar to brainstorming, but with the committee subdivided into small groups of four to six people. Groups are given a time limit. Each group records its ideas on a flipchart and reports back to the main group at the end of the allotted time.

**Brain writing:** This is similar to a round table, but with more individual participation. Index cards are given to each small group, and group members are asked to write down one idea on a card. The cards are then exchanged, and new ideas or comments are added by other members of the group. A facilitator summarizes and groups all the ideas and comments from the small groups.

## Strategies for Making Decisions and Setting Priorities

PICs can use the following strategies to help decide which ideas to act on.

**Dotmocracy:** Dotmocracy is a process that can be used to help reach consensus when establishing priorities or making decisions. The steps in the process are as follows:

1. *Review the choices:* Try to ensure that all committee members understand the options available and have had an opportunity to ask questions about the options. Determine the final number of options the committee can address.
2. *Discuss in small groups:* Provide an opportunity for members to meet in smaller groups to discuss the pros and cons of each option.
3. *Share in the large group:* Have a spokesperson from each small group report on findings. More discussion may occur at this point.
4. *Complete the chart:* List all options on the left-hand side of a sheet of chart paper.
5. *Distribute dots:* Give each member the same number of dots.
6. *Use the dots:* Have members use the dots to support the option(s) of their choice. A member may choose to use one dot for each of several options or assign all the dots to one option.
7. *Determine the results:* Set the committee's priorities according to which option(s) receive the most support (dots).

**Pro/con analysis:** In this process, participants develop and list possible ways of resolving an important issue and identify the advantages and disadvantages of each suggestion. After members complete this process, a motion is put forward and the issue is voted on, or members work to reach a decision by consensus.

**Voting:** After all ideas have been listed, each member votes on what he or she considers the three or four best ideas by putting a coloured sticker or a coloured check mark beside the ideas he or she thinks are best. The ideas are then ranked according to how many stickers or check marks they have been awarded. The recorder then lists the ideas in the order of their ranking.

**Value voting:** This method is useful for obtaining feedback when time is limited. The chair/co-chairs ask each member to take a position on each idea (e.g., strongly agree, agree, or strongly disagree). The responses are then tallied to focus the discussion on the ideas with the most support.

**Multi-voting:** This variation of brainstorming allows the group to narrow down the number of ideas presented. After brainstorming, the ideas are numbered and similar ideas are combined. Each member then writes down the numbers of those ideas that he or she feels should be discussed. No more than one-quarter of the ideas on the master list should be chosen. Based on the feedback from members, ideas with the fewest votes are eliminated and the remaining ideas are kept for further discussion.

## *Simplified Rules of Order*

### **ROBERT'S RULES: SIMPLIFIED RULES OF ORDER\***

If your PIC decides to make decisions formally, by majority vote, or if consensus cannot be reached and a vote is required, the following simplified rules of order may be useful:

#### **MAKING A MOTION**

1. An individual must be recognized by the chair or co-chair before “obtaining the floor” to make a motion. This means that the chair or co-chair must let a person know that it is his or her turn before that person can speak to the committee and formally propose a course of action.
2. Once an individual has the floor, he or she may make a formal proposal, or motion, beginning with the statement “I move that ...”.
3. Before the motion can be considered, another individual must second the motion by saying “I second the motion”. This does not necessarily indicate that he or she agrees with the proposal, only that he or she believes that it is worthy of discussion.
4. Once a motion has been made and seconded, the chair or co-chair restates the motion (“states the question”) so that everyone clearly understands what is being proposed. From this point on, until the motion is voted on, all discussion must focus solely on the question.
5. If members of the PIC wish to discuss the motion, the chair or co-chair opens debate. Each participant may speak to the question twice, but no one may speak a second time until everyone has had the chance to speak once.

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\*Detailed information about Robert's Rules is available at [www.robertsrules.com](http://www.robertsrules.com).

6. If no one wants to speak further to the motion, the chair or co-chair may ask the PIC if it is ready for “the question” (ready to vote on the proposal). The chair or co-chair then repeats the motion and conducts the vote by asking for those in favour and those opposed. (The vote may be conducted by a show of hands, by standing, or by secret ballot.)
7. A majority is needed. In the case of a tie, the motion is defeated.

### AMENDING A MOTION

Until the chair or co-chair states the question (repeats the motion) for a final vote, the person who made the motion may change it, although the original seconder may wish to withdraw. In this case, another seconder would be needed.

After the question has been stated, the motion can still be amended, in one of the following ways:

1. The person making the motion may ask to change the original wording. The chair or co-chair will ask if anyone objects. If no one objects, the wording of the motion is changed. Debate continues on the motion as amended.
2. If someone does object, the question of whether to allow a change in the wording of the motion is put to a vote. If the group consents to the change, debate continues on the motion as amended.
3. Someone else may move to amend the motion by saying, “I move to amend the motion by ...”. If so, the normal process for a motion, as outlined above in “Making a Motion”, is followed.
4. An amendment to the amendment may also be proposed, but a third amendment is out of order and not allowed.
5. If the amendment is defeated, discussion returns to the original motion.

### WITHDRAWING A MOTION

1. At any time before a vote, the person making the original motion may ask to withdraw it. The motion to withdraw does not require a seconder. Once the question is withdrawn, it is as if it never existed.
2. If the chair or co-chair has already stated the question and a request to withdraw the motion is made by someone other than the person making the original motion, the chair or co-chair asks if there is any objection. If there is none, the motion is withdrawn. If someone objects, the request to withdraw the motion is put to a vote.

### TABLING A MOTION

Members can make a motion to table a motion – meaning to set it aside for discussion at another time so that more pressing business can be discussed, or so that more information about the issues can be obtained. The following rules apply to tabling a motion:

- ♦ The motion to table a motion takes precedence over the discussion of the motion.
- ♦ The motion to table a motion requires a seconder.
- ♦ There can be no debate on a motion to table.

# Agenda/Minutes

## PIC Agenda

*<Insert PIC name> Meeting (Sample)*

[Date, Time]

[Location]

### Agenda

*Welcome and introductions (10 minutes)*

*Declaration of conflict of interest (3 minutes)*

*Approval of minutes of the last meeting*

*Business arising from the minutes (10 minutes)*

*Old business/updates (10 minutes)*

- ◆ Spring conference for parents
- ◆ PIC summary of activities
- ◆ By-law amendments

*New business (45 minutes in total)*

- ◆ Review of the parent toolkit
- ◆ PIC input to board parent satisfaction survey
- ◆ Draft PIC code of ethics
- ◆ School council conference

*Reports (30 minutes in total)*

- ◆ Promotions, communications, and marketing for school council conference
- ◆ Provincial parent engagement policy
- ◆ Community representative
- ◆ School council handbook

*Trustee's report (15 minutes)*

*Director's report (15 minutes)*

*General information updates and inquiries (maximum 5 minutes)*

*Next meeting date, time, and location*

*Agenda items for next meeting*

*Adjournment*

# PIC Minutes

## Sample 1

### PIC MEETING

[Date]

Minutes

Members Present: \_\_\_\_\_

Regrets: \_\_\_\_\_

Agenda Item	Decision/ Action Taken	Person(s) Responsible
Welcome and introductions	Call to order: 7:00 p.m. Welcome and introduction of guests	Chair
Review and approval of agenda	_____ moved that they be accepted. _____ seconded the motion. CARRIED.	
Review and approval of previous minutes	_____ moved that they be accepted. _____ seconded the motion. CARRIED.	
Declaration of conflict of interest	[parent member] declared conflict of interest regarding ...	
Business arising from the minutes	Thank-you letters were sent out to the corporate sponsors of the school council conference.	Public Relations subcommittee
Old business	By-law amendments were circulated for the PIC's consideration.  Motion made by _____, the committee chair, to approve the amendments.  CARRIED.	PIC By-laws subcommittee
New business	Review of the EQAO Grade 9 results was led by the director. A preliminary plan was presented for consideration, with a focus on parent engagement to support student improvement.  Draft Code of Ethics was circulated for the PIC's consideration.  School Council Training Workshop: Discussion – What do we want out of this workshop?	PIC members to provide feedback to director through PIC chair  Members to review and prepare comments for next meeting  Subcommittee to incorporate results of discussion into action plan to be presented to PIC at next regular meeting



Agenda Item	Decision/ Action Taken	Person(s) Responsible
Trustee's report	Budget consultation is proceeding as planned with four trustee-led workshops scheduled for next month, in various locations across the board.	
Director's report	<p>Enrolment projection for next year is below the current year's numbers. This will result in fewer schools at fully funded capacity.</p> <p>The school year calendar is under consideration by a committee of the board, and the PIC is thanked for its input.</p> <p>The board will be reviewing its transportation routes for students for the next school year and is looking for PIC members to participate on the review committee.</p>	
Other reports	School council conference committee has confirmed the date and location for the fall conference. Speakers and workshop leaders have been approached.	
Public comments		
Next meeting date	[date/month/year, location, time]	
Agenda items for next meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of ethics</li> <li>• Board-wide autodialer</li> <li>• Results of the board-wide parent satisfaction survey</li> <li>• Other agenda items are to be submitted to the chair two weeks prior to the next meeting.</li> </ul>	<p>Chair to summarize comments submitted by members</p> <p>PIC members to consider strategy to survey parents and provide comments for next meeting</p> <p>Director to summarize comments, present staff recommendations, and provide information at the next meeting</p>
Adjournment	9:00 p.m.	

## Sample 2

### \_\_\_\_\_ PIC MEETING

[Date, Location]

#### Minutes

The regular PIC meeting was called to order by the [chair/co-chairs] at 7:15 p.m., and a quorum was present.

Chair: [name]

Present: [names of those present]

The agenda was approved [or “*approved with one change ...*”].

The minutes of the last meeting were approved as read. [*If they were distributed before the meeting date, they can be approved “as circulated”, and it is not necessary to spend time reading them aloud at the meeting. If there were errors, they “were approved with corrections”.*]

#### Old Business

Evaluation of progress towards goals to date. [Name of individual] noted that the <PIC name> brochure is now in draft. Copies were distributed to PIC members and a brief discussion ensued. Further feedback may be sent to [name of individual] prior to [date] for the consideration of the subcommittee. The next draft will be presented at our next meeting.

#### New Business

PIC conference. [Name of individual] volunteered to head the School Council Conference subcommittee. Various suggestions of topic and presenter were made by PIC members, including the theme of “Parents as Partners”. The subcommittee will review the suggestions and provide the PIC with a recommendation at the next meeting. The chair of the subcommittee stated that all of the suggestions that were put forward for consideration would require funds.

**MOTION:** That the conference theme be confirmed as “Parents as Partners”  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_) [*Put mover’s and seconder’s names here.*]

**ACTION:** [*name of individual to act on passed motion*]

The next meeting will be a special meeting to discuss by-laws on [date] at [time] in the [location].

The next regular meeting will be held on [date] at [time] in [location].

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Chair

# *Annual Summary of Activities/ Financial Statement*

Each year, the PIC shall submit a written annual summary of PIC activities to the chair of the board and director of education. The report must include a summary of activities undertaken by the PIC and a description of how funding, if any, provided by the ministry for parent involvement was spent.

## *Sample Annual Summary of Activities*

*[PIC name]*

*[Date of submission]*

1. List the names and positions of all PIC members and officers, and if appropriate the group they represent (e.g., officers; parent members and the area they represent, if applicable; community members and the group they represent; board employee group members and their affiliation).
2. Acknowledge the efforts and commitment of PIC members.
3. List the dates of the year's PIC meetings, as well as any available information on upcoming meetings.
4. Summarize the activities of the PIC under the following headings:
  - Summary of information and advice given to the board
  - Summary of strategies and initiatives developed that the board could use to effectively communicate with parents and to engage parents to support their children's learning at home and at school
  - Information communicated to school councils and parents
  - Support provided for school councils
5. A financial statement (a description of how funding, if any, provided by the ministry for parent involvement was spent) must be included.

## Sample Financial Statement

Annual Financial Statement

[Name of Parent Involvement Committee]

Sources and Uses of Operating Funds for Year Ended August 31, 20XX

Source	Amount
Allocation from ministry	A
Revenues	B
[Description of revenue]	
[Description of revenue]	
[Description of revenue]	
Expenditures	C
[Description of expenditure]	
[Description of expenditure]	
[Description of expenditure]	
<b>Year-end Balance</b>	<b>A + B - C</b>

Note: The level of detail in the financial statement should reflect the complexity of the PIC's financial operations.

# Code of Ethics

## Sample Code of Ethics

*A member shall* consider the best interests of all students and parents.

*A member shall* be guided by the school board's mission statement.

*A member shall* act within the limits of the roles and responsibilities of a PIC, as identified by O. Reg. 612/00 and the PIC's by-laws.

*A member shall* become familiar with relevant school board policies and operating practices and act in accordance with them.

*A member shall* maintain the highest standards of integrity.

*A member shall* recognize and respect the personal integrity of each member of the school board community.

*A member shall* treat all other members with respect and allow for diverse opinions to be shared without interruption.

*A member shall* promote a positive environment in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued.

*A member shall* acknowledge democratic principles and accept the consensus of the committee.

*A member shall* respect the confidential nature of some school board business and respect limitations this may place on the operation of the PIC.

*A member shall* not disclose confidential information.

*A member shall* limit discussions at PIC meetings to matters under its mandate and of concern to the school board community as a whole.

*A member shall* use established communication channels when questions or concerns arise.

*A member shall* declare any conflict of interest.

*A member shall* not accept any payment or benefit financially through PIC involvement.

Source: Adapted from the by laws of the Port Arthur Collegiate Institute School Council, Lakehead Board of Education, Thunder Bay, Ontario.

# *PIC Effectiveness*

## *Sample Questionnaire for PIC Members*

### **ASSESSING YOUR PIC'S EFFECTIVENESS**

1. Are PIC meetings effective?

\_\_\_ rarely \_\_\_ sometimes \_\_\_ mostly \_\_\_ always

2. How could meetings be improved?

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3. Are we on track with our action plan?

\_\_\_ not at all \_\_\_ somewhat \_\_\_ mostly \_\_\_ consistently

4. What is the next step in our PIC's action plan?

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5. What is going well?

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6. Do we need to change any of our processes?

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7. What do we want to improve?

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