

Upper Grand District School Board

Parent Involvement Committee

September Minutes (September 29, 2014)

In Attendance:

Parents: Martha MacNeil, Deb Drake, Kathy Watts, Heather Janes, Sarah Dick, Lorrie Wren, Barb White, Sue Shaw, Carrie Proudfoot, Rosemond Anim-Somuah, Andrea Higgins, Mollie Loughren, Mark MacKinnon, Sarah Casey, Kathryn Selves, Vikki Brown, Heather Mewhinney, Katie Lamarre, Megan Taylor, Kathy Eidt, Debbie Bush, Jen MacLeod

Board Personnel: Martha Rogers, Brent McDonald, Marty Fairbairn, Linda Busuttil, Susan Moziar, Jeni Vaughan, Darren Hale

Community Representative: Heather Bailey

Guest Speakers: Sean Hamilton, Michelle Campbell

Regrets: Amanda VanSoelen, Kay Elford, Jana Bell, Cindy Gibson, Julie Patrick

Welcome and Introductions

- Welcome extended to all and introductions were made.
- Wide representation of schools from across the board. Elementary: Credit Meadows, Spencer Ave., Kenilworth, Arbour Vista, Victory, Waverly Drive, King George, Elora, Harris Mill, John Galt, Rickson Ridge, Westminster Woods, Primrose Elementary, Mitchell Woods, Jean Little, Taylor Evans. Secondary: Centennial CVI, John F. Ross, GCVI, College Heights, Erin DHS.
- Approval of September agenda and May minutes.
- Teleconferencing was not provided for this meeting, request made to have available for future meetings.
- Refreshments for PIC meetings are provided by the culinary students at College Heights S.S.

Mandate and Overview of the Parent Involvement Committee

The mandate is to:

- Work with School Councils to advise and provide support, especially with respect to identifying and addressing barriers to parent involvement/engagement; receive/solicit information from School Councils and channel that information back to the board; provide advice to the board on specific topics when requested.
- Majority of members are parents; board representation - superintendent, director, trustee, elementary and secondary administration, teaching staff; community member.

Guest Speaker: Sean Hamilton - Online Homework Help

Mr. Hamilton is the e-Learning contact for the board. Contact info: homeworkhelp@ugdsb.on.ca or Sean.Hamilton@ugdsb.on.ca

- Online math tutorial service for students in Gr. 7-10 provided by TVO, 24/7 service (tutorials, quizzes, listen & learn, glossary, formulas, worksheets) with 1:1 tutoring available 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Tutors are Ontario certified teachers. This is a tool the board, parents and students are welcome to use, but it is not run by the board.
- Designed to support students in understanding concepts and to learn ideas and helps to bridge gaps – easy for all to access thereby eliminating barriers, non-judgmental. Service is anonymous to provide a safe learning environment.
- The site is organized by “rooms” according to grade and sessions are stored in a “locker” so students can go back and access later for study and review. There is a whiteboard component allowing drawing/typing of text and/or diagrams and questions. Student feedback – very helpful, aids in studying.
- To access requires the student’s OEN (Ontario Education Number). Students need only register once, a link provides direct site access for subsequent visits. Guest login for parents is also available.

- TVO provides some evaluative numbers back to the board. Use of the service is growing and has doubled over the previous year, 50% of students have registered although only 5% have accessed the service. There is no evaluation of gender use which would be helpful in light of EQAO data.
- Potential concerns expressed – no FI (French Immersion) component (there is a French tutoring service not related to this site, but they don't allow access to non-French school boards), equity of access for families not having the technology required to go online (public libraries have very few terminals to allow this access) or not having any/inadequate internet service (e.g., rural locations).
- Benefit to Parents – help in improving child's understanding and with homework completion, no cost, accessible through guest login for parents, provides another "partner" in their child's education.
- The board is very interested in promoting this resource:
 - An Open House online Oct 7-9, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., where teachers can login and preview the site with their classes
 - Promotional packages have been sent to schools
 - Sean Hamilton is willing to present at School Council meetings
 - Display/workshop at the UGDSB Digital Open House (technology Learning Fair that premiered last Spring and to be repeated this year).
 - Collaboration with the curriculum department – promote in PD activities, presentation of workshops.

Guest Speaker: Michelle Campbell – Update on UG2GO apps

Ms. Campbell is the supervisor of the board's Library and Media Services.

- Students can access the site at school by selecting UG2GO after logging in to the board site as they usually do. Home access link is <https://www.ugdsb.on.ca/ug2go> and the Username is the 1st 2 letters of the student's first name, the 1st 3 letters of their last name followed by the last 4 digits of their OEN. The password is the one set at school for the student's account.
- New databases have been added to both the elementary and secondary UG2GO sites:
 - Learn 360 – video streaming, ~ 10,000 educational videos organized by grade, subject, format, etc. plus additional content added for any gaps identified based on the curriculum. Movies can be used for school fundraisers (can charge entry fee or for refreshments) without licensing fees or can also use a dvd copy of any of the licensed content. Note for movies not on Learn 360, there is a specific licensing process that must be followed and potential fees that must be paid – contact the board for further information. Movies currently in the theatre as well as Disney and Pixar movies are not available through this site.
 - Overdrive – Digital Library containing resources mainly geared to Gr. 3 and up (Gr. 4 – 9 students are the major users currently). Search is by subject, language, division, reading level, interest level, type (i.e., audio, video), etc. Students need to do an additional login since they are "checking out" books and this must be attached to a specific individual. Books can be available to read online or downloaded to an e-reader for reading offline. After 3 weeks, the book is automatically made inaccessible on their device so it is available for the next reader.
 - Pebble Go – A primary research tool designed for Grades K to 4 containing Animals, Earth & Space and Social Studies modules. Provides early learning opportunities for students who are just getting started doing research.
 - Power Knowledge – A resource to support the science curriculum that includes Earth & Space Science, Life Science and Physical Science modules. Designed for students in Grades 3 to 8.
- A description of the available databases is also available directly on the UG2GO site.
- Question was raised as to the availability of French resources on the UG2GO site. Learn 360, Naxos, Student Link and many of the databases in the "Find" section of the site have French content. Google translate can also be overlaid on these databases.
- Databases recommended for secondary students include the research tab (much more useful than using google to search for items) and Noodle tools which is an excellent resource to help students create bibliographies.
- Ms. Campbell is interested in and happy to present at School Council meetings and can tailor the presentation to specific areas/levels.

Board and Ministry Report

CASL (Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation) Regulations and what they mean for School Councils

- CASL document overviews were distributed. This legislation, which was intended to reduce the amount of unwanted retail email for Canadians, has resulted in challenges for schools, school councils and school boards in terms of getting information out to parents.
- This is federal legislation, in place as of July 1, 2014, that prohibits sending a commercial electronic message (CEM) to an electronic address unless the sender (1) obtains consent, (2) provides identification information, and (3) provides an unsubscribe mechanism. This applies to email, texting, instant messaging, direct message via social media, etc., but not to voice mail or faxes.
- Examples of CEMs in the school board context would include the promotion, advertising, and/or offering for sale of school pictures, field trips, yearbooks, team uniforms, fundraising events, fun fairs, pizza and hot dog days, etc.
- CASL's scope is broad and the penalties for violation are severe. In the first month of the legislation, the government's regulatory department received 10s of thousands of complaints. As a result, the board is taking a conservative approach and making efforts to ensure staff and agents of the school board are aware of the prohibitions, implications and requirements.
- If schools, school councils or individual employees send out a newsletter or email that contains a CEM then the sender must comply with CASL. If an email only contains a link (or a reminder to go to a website), CASL still applies to the content accessed through that link. If content is informational only, it will not be prohibited by CASL.
- Consent must be express or implied (where there was an existing relationship prior to July 1, 2014). Although ~ 20,000 families have been captured off current Campaigner and similar lists, it would be incredibly difficult to separate out new families from families already in the system. As a result, the course of action taken by the board is to obtain express consent in all cases. The board/schools will be sending a consent form home to all families. Alternately, a form on the website would be acceptable. Express consent cannot be requested via email from persons for whom implied consent doesn't already exist. Consent is valid until revoked or until the student/family has left the board.
- Electronic communications that do contain a CEM must set out the name of the school board, the mailing address of the board and either (a) a phone number, (b) an email address or (c) a web address of the board (since schools are not a legal entity, the board information must be included).
- The sender must also specify an electronic address or internet website to which an unsubscribe request may be sent, it must remain functional for at least 60 days after the CEM was sent, and requests to unsubscribe must be acted upon within 10 business days of receipt.
- The board's CASL website for consent is <http://www.ugdsb.on.ca/CASL>. For further information, contact the Communications department at 519-822-4420 x 725 or the Freedom of Information Officer at 519-822-4420 x 721.
- Question raised as to how/if School Councils will be able to access consent in order to continue to distribute to parents. The response was that councils could send their email to the office staff who would then attach it to Campaigner to be distributed to that list. It was noted that councils often maintain their own separate email distribution lists specifically for those who are interested in council notices and information. Sending out to the entire school Campaigner list may mean those who do not want council communications may receive them. However, since every communication must include a disclaimer that if you don't want to receive information you can request to be removed, recipients can opt out. Martha or Brent can be contacted via email for advice on specific issues arising for councils as this progresses.
- This legislation does not apply to URLs outside Canada.

Chair's Report

- The PIC Annual Report was distributed at the meeting and also has been sent out to School Councils. (Martha M. was commended for a very informative and well done report).
- Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants – PICs can apply for a grant of up to \$30,000 and School Councils up to \$1,000. The Ministry has released the successful applicants list (subsequent review of the list shows that 45 elementary and 3 secondary schools in the board received grants totaling \$46,115).

Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grant & Spring Event

- PIC applied for, and was successful in obtaining, a \$21,600 grant for this year. Thanks extended to Martha M. and Kathy for their work on the application. Ministry focus this year is on math and numeracy; PIC proposal – “A Gazillion is Not a Number! – Creating positive attitudes towards math”. Parents will be invited to attend math-focused events addressing attitudes towards math and providing strategies for engaging in their child’s learning.
- Dr. Lynda Colgan (Professor – Queen’s University) has been approached to do seminars on making math fun at a couple of locations throughout the board. Both parents and children would be involved.
- Grant funds will be used to purchase a copy of her book MatheMagic for each attendee at the seminars.
- The Spring Event would tie into this, PIC members were asked to contact Martha M. if they are aware of any appropriate speakers.

Planning for 2014-2015

1. PIC Executive

- Martha M. has announced her candidacy for trustee and therefore is stepping down from the chair position. Sarah Dick will chair.
- Positions of treasurer, secretary and communications officer (Twitter account, PIC website) remained unfilled at the end of the meeting. Please contact Martha M. if you are interested.

2. Subcommittees

- PRO grant and Spring Event will need subcommittees/chairs.
- A subcommittee will be needed to review the by-laws.
- Anyone interested contact Martha M.

Budget Items

- Opening balance of \$46,000 composed of:
 - \$37,500 School based funding amount for School Councils (\$500 per school).
 - Base Ministry PIC funding of \$8,500 (this allocation is initially based on estimated enrolment and is adjusted once final numbers are submitted to the Ministry, so this may change).

Communication

- Open Doors, Open Minds – a Mental Health Symposium with Keynote speaker Dr. Margaret Lumley at Our Lady of Lourdes CHS, October 2nd, 7:00 p.m. Visit <https://opendoorsopenminds.eventbrite.ca> for further information.
- Understanding Media Now: Navigating Surveillance, Social Media & Marketing with speakers Ron Deibert and Annie Kidder. October 18th, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Toronto. For registration and fee information visit <http://www.aml.ca/understandingmedianow>.
- Brent is speaking at the Immigration Centre on Parent Engagement Thursday October 23rd, 5:00 p.m. Any interested PIC members are welcome to attend.
- People for Education Annual Conference, Saturday November 8th, 8:15 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., U of T. For further information visit <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/events-workshops/come-to-our-conference/>

Open Discussion, New Business, Final Remarks

- The Career Education Council’s “Your Future, Your Choice” annual career fair is being held Wednesday November 19th, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at Centennial CVI. Admission is free.
- A huge thank you to Martha M. for her dedication, hard work and countless hours as PIC chair for the last 2 years!

Next Meeting

- Monday November 3rd, 2014 at 7:00 p.m., Credit Meadows P.S., 220 Blind Line, Orangeville.