

PIAC Working Group REPORT

Date: Jan 6, 2026

Hosted by: Crystal Stewart, lead of School Council Working Group

Meeting topic: Innovation Grant challenges and possible solutions; email access; parent engagement challenges at individual schools.

Meeting Summary: The School Council Support Working Group met to discuss issues and potential improvements to: the innovation grant application process and TDSB email setup. The group also discussed the upcoming annual PIAC conference, gathering parent feedback for the upcoming provincial budget, the recent disbandment of a school council and specific parent engagement challenges at individual schools.

As discussed during the meeting the SC WG subsequently gathered Innovation Grant feedback and ideas from all attendees and PIAC members. It compiled this information in a brief report for the TDSB so that it may be presented at the January 29th general meeting.

Working Group	School Council Support WG
Meeting Date	January 6, 2026
Attendance	<p>Crystal Stewart, School Council WG Co-lead, Ward 6 Farheen Mahmood, School Council WG Co-lead, Ward 15</p> <p>Katrina Matheson, PIAC Co-Chair Prasanna Jagannathan, PIAC Officer at Large Kristen Boyd, Ward 15 Vimuththan Nantheeswarar, Ward 22 Gili Zemer, PIAC Ward 9 Sarah Brager, Ward 9 Olivia Hetherman, Ward 18 Marissa Hill, Ward 18 Rehab Aly, Ward 3 Tamasha Grant, Ward 4 Kaydeen Bankasingh, Ward 8 Chantal Gayle, Ward 19</p> <p>Parents: Autumn, Jennifer Alexander, Omar</p>
Description/Objective	<p>The School Council Support Working Group is a non-governance working group with the purpose of communicating and supporting SCs of schools of the board. The School Council Support Working Group will develop and engage in outreach strategies to support School Councils; work with TDSB staff to promote parent involvement in the Principal/Vice Principal hiring/selection process (previous P/VP WG); and provide recommendations on Parent/Caregiver Engagement in the Virtual School (previous Virtual Engagement WG).</p> <p>The areas of focus include but are not limited to Regulation 612, inactive SCs, effective SCs, and issues surrounding SCs.</p>

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	<p>This working group coordinates with all other PIAC working groups on relevant matters.</p>
<p>Update</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New PIAC member and community introductions ● The group discussed TDSB email setup issues. TDSB technical support information was shared with the group. The importance of publicizing and attending the annual Feb 7th PIAC event, where onsite technical support will be available, was discussed. ● Discussed the provincial budget and the importance of engaging school councils for budget feedback. ● Discussed issues with the school council Innovation Grant process, including unclear appeal procedures and communication challenges. The group agreed to gather feedback, ideas and present findings at the next general meeting. ● Discussed governance concerns at two individual school councils. Related to this, identified a need for PIAC to provide recommendations on how to handle similar issues, as TDSB lacks authority in this area.
<p>Next Steps and Action items</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask Special Events WG if an innovation grant writing training session can be offered in time for the Feb 7th PIAC event. This is TBD. ● Present Innovation Grant findings report at Jan 27th General meeting ● Obtain an update from the TDSB about the School Council Survey ● SC WG to form a sub-group, lead by co-rep G. Zemer, to develop recommendations to the ministry regarding mechanisms for resolving school council conflicts now that TDSB authority is limited. ● Next meeting of the WG is February 10, 2026

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School Council Innovation Grant Report

Purpose

This report summarizes feedback from School Councils regarding the School Council Innovation Grant and identifies opportunities to improve access, equity, transparency, and effectiveness.

This report is based on consultation with the School Council Working Group, the Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC), and broader community feedback. Input was gathered through facilitated discussions and collaborative working sessions, where participants shared lived experience, challenges, and proposed solutions related to the grant program. This feedback was synthesized to identify common themes and inform the recommendations outlined below.

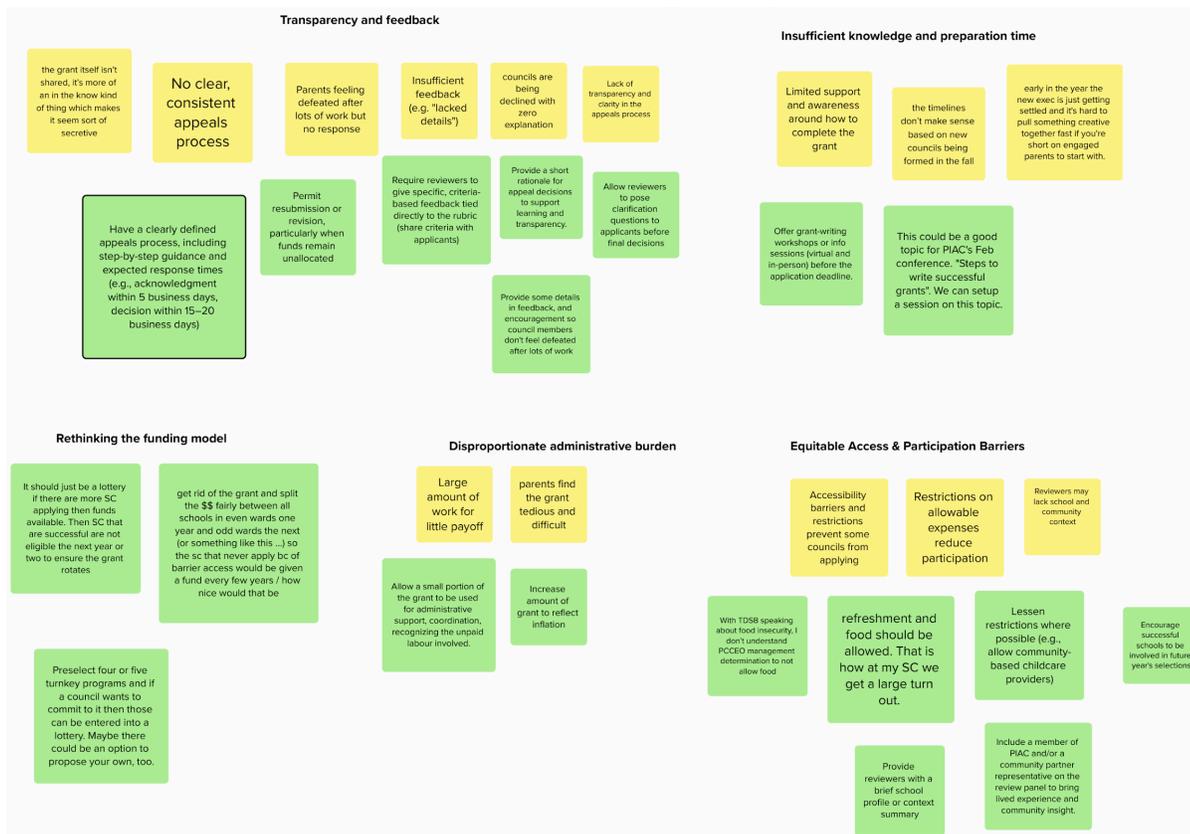
Consultation and Engagement Approach

Feedback was collected and organized using a collaborative working board.

Figure 1: Community and PIAC Feedback Board

The image below captures the collaborative working board used to gather, cluster, and analyze feedback on the School Council Innovation Grant. Feedback was grouped into key themes—including transparency and feedback, administrative burden, preparation time, equitable access, and alternative funding models. These themes directly informed both the identification of issues and the development of recommendations in this report. Yellow indicates problems while green indicates possible solutions.

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Key Issues Identified

1. Limited Transparency and Feedback

- Applications are often declined without explanation.
- Feedback, when provided, is vague or not tied to specific criteria.
- Councils are not allowed to revise and resubmit applications if funding is not awarded.
- The appeals process is unclear or lacks transparency.
- Lack of response leaves volunteers feeling discouraged after investing significant time.
- Councils cannot ask clarifying questions before final decisions are made.

2. Disproportionate Administrative Burden

- The application process is complex and time-consuming.

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- The effort required is not reflected in the grant amount.
- All application work is completed by unpaid parent volunteers.
- Many councils feel discouraged by the administrative load.

3. Insufficient Knowledge and Preparation Time

- School councils are often newly formed when the grant opens.
- Many councils lack experience with innovation grants, putting them at a disadvantage.
- Councils with prior experience are better positioned to succeed.

4. Barriers to Equitable Access and Participation

- Restrictions on allowable expenses (e.g., food, childcare) limit participation.
- Communication about the grant is inconsistent and not always accessible.
- Grant reviewers may lack sufficient understanding of the school or community context.

5. Concerns About the Funding Model

- Competitive grants may unintentionally favor experienced or well-resourced councils.
- Alternative funding models could improve equitable access.

Options for consideration

1. Increase Transparency and Feedback

- Provide clear, criteria-based feedback for all applications.
- Establish a transparent, timely appeals process.
- Allow councils to revise and resubmit applications if the funding window is still open.
- Offer clear rationale when applications are denied to support learning and transparency.

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2. Adjust Grant Amounts and Timelines

- Increase grant amounts to reflect inflation and the effort required.
- Adjust application timelines to align with School Council start-up realities.

3. Provide Support and Guidance

- Offer grant-writing instruction and clearer communication.
- Reduce restrictions that limit inclusive participation (e.g., allow refreshments in an era of food insecurity).
- Consider the unique context of each school and community.

4. Explore Alternative Models

- Introduce turnkey options where councils can apply to a select number of predefined programs alongside customized applications.
- Consider a lottery system when demand exceeds available funds, rotating successful councils out of the next year's lottery.
- Explore a model where selected schools receive funds automatically, with support for program implementation to ensure effective use and success.