



November 17, 2020

Trustees and Director of Education
Toronto District School Board
5050 Yonge Street
Toronto, ON M2N 5N8

RE: PIAC Recommendations on Virtual School Engagement

AUTHORITY

The Parent Involvement Advisory Committee (PIAC) of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) makes the following recommendations to the Board and the Director of Education, pursuant to the authority of the *Education Act, Ontario Regulation 612/00 School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees, last amendment: O. Reg. 330/10*.

The purpose of PIAC as 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.

PIAC 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

IT IS RECOMMENDED that:

1. TDSB supports parent/guardian and caregiver engagement in the Elementary Virtual School and Secondary Virtual School.
 - 1.1. **Communication**
 - 1.1.1. Enable communication between classroom parents by facilitating and supporting tools and processes including but not limited to class lists or directories, so that parents/guardians can opt-in to communicate with each other.
 - 1.1.2. Enable regular communication to parents/guardians from Virtual School administration including but not limited to e-newsletters and video messages.
 - 1.1.3. Facilitate and support teachers to regularly (e.g. weekly or bi-weekly) communicate with classroom parents/guardians.
 - 1.1.4. Facilitate and support teachers to hold class "meet-and-greet" sessions which include participation by parents/guardians at least once each term to communicate classroom expectations and information to parents/guardians as a classroom community.
 - 1.1.5. Create and communicate a "parent concern protocol" with a reasonable standard of response time to parent/guardian communications,

including phone calls and emails to teachers, administrative staff, principals, vice-principals, superintendents and trustees.

- 1.1.6. Facilitate interactive meetings such as ward forums or town halls which can be organized geographically, by grade, by division, etc.
- 1.1.7. Create and maintain a TDSB webpage for posting frequently asked questions (FAQ) and also questions and answers (Q&A) relating to the Virtual Schools.
- 1.1.8. Improve the TDSB website to make it more user friendly to parents/guardians and caregivers.
- 1.1.9. Provide a “311” type phone service with clearly communicated and posted hours of operation to assist parents/guardians and caregivers in navigating the services, programs and information at TDSB with translation available in identified languages.

1.2. Responsiveness

- 1.2.1. Dedicated phone numbers for all administration and administrative staff in all Virtual Schools.
- 1.2.2. Business hours (and extended hours) for the Virtual School (phones answered live).
- 1.2.3. Maximum response time for voicemails left (both in general and for response from (Vice) Principals).
- 1.2.4. Maximum response time for emails sent (both in general and for response from principals and vice-principals).
- 1.2.5. Maximum times to schedule meetings with school administration.
- 1.2.6. Clarity around firm timelines and deadlines for Special Needs accommodations (IEP, ICRP, other).
- 1.2.7. 311 type service to help navigating the system (multilingual).
- 1.2.8. If staffing remains an issue increase administration and administrative staffing to at minimum home (brick and mortar) school levels.

1.3. Virtual School Survey

- 1.3.1. Collaborate with PIAC to survey virtual school parents/guardians (with identified translations).

1.4. Accountability

- 1.4.1. Facilitate consultation with prior notice in reasonable timeframes on all major policy and operational changes, including but not limited to French language instruction hours and classroom changes.
- 1.4.2. Provide clarification to parents/guardians of the Parent Concern Protocol in the Virtual School.
- 1.4.3. Provide clarification to parents/guardians of curriculum expectations, including but not limited to the required resources to support their child’s learning (e.g. devices, printing, art supplies, etc.)
- 1.4.4. Provide clarification to parents/guardians of curriculum expectations regarding subject areas (e.g. health and physical education, music, etc.).
- 1.4.5. Provide clarification to parents/guardians around timelines and deadlines for Special Needs accommodations (e.g. IEP, ICRP, etc.).
- 1.4.6. Provide clarification to parents/guardians of curriculum expectations with regard to the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

1.4.7. Provide clarification regarding the funding available to support parent engagement in Virtual Schools

RATIONALE

The COVID-19 Pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges.

At its meeting on October 20, 2020, PIAC struck an ad hoc PIAC Virtual Engagement Working Group which has received feedback and input from Virtual School stakeholders including parents /guardians and caregivers, community support workers, and school administrators.

TDSB has made a commitment in its Multi-Year Strategic Plan to create equitable learning environments where students get what they need to excel and thrive. The TDSB Virtual Schools are experiencing equity gaps and it is the responsibility of the Board to ensure that Virtual Schools also receive equitable access and opportunity for the active participation of parents, to improve pupil achievement and to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents.

In its Multi-Year Strategic Plan, TDSB has made commitments to:

“Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being

- We will strengthen relationships among our students, staff, families and communities to create a culture that supports all students and leads to improved learning and well-being.
- We will involve parents/guardians in the school improvement process to ensure their voices and perspectives inform our work.
- We will continue to build both formal and informal community partnerships to support the needs of all students and families.
- We will continue to create an environment of shared leadership where everyone’s expertise and experience is invited and every voice has influence.

Community Engagement

The engagement of a parent or caregiver in their school community has lasting benefits for student achievement and well-being. The Board will be working to improve this engagement by reviewing related policies, supporting school councils, and building strategic partnerships with community groups.”

Sincerely,

D. Williams (Co- Chair, TDSB PIAC)

Wilmar Kortleever (PIAC Ward 11 Rep and Co-Lead, PIAC Virtual Engagement Working Group)

Kaydeen Bankasingh (PIAC Ward 8 Rep and Co-Lead, PIAC Virtual Engagement Working Group)