



November 1, 2019

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON
M7A 1L2

To the Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education,

On Wednesday, October 16, 2019, the Board of Trustees of the Halton District School Board directed the Chair to write a letter to the Minister of Education concerning the status of the Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grant funding.

The resolution was as follows:

Be it resolved that the Chair write a letter to the Minister of Education expressing the valuable contribution that school councils and PRO Grants play in engaging the community and supporting student achievement and well-being, encouraging the continuation of the funding model as per previous years, and requesting that information be made available as soon as possible.

Since 2006, PRO Grants have provided funds that support school councils in "identifying barriers to parent engagement in their own community, and to find local solutions to involve more parents in support of student achievement, human rights and equity, and well-being."

Trustees were disappointed to learn that the 2019 PRO Grant funding has been slashed by more than half and that the process for applying and managing grants had been downloaded to PIC representatives and school boards. It is important to note that the PIC representatives are being asked to participate in the selection process are parent volunteers who have already assumed large volunteer roles in the Board.

A majority of schools within the Halton District School Board have taken advantage of these grants to engage with their parent community in a number of different ways. Many grants were used to subsidize Family Math Nights or STEM Nights, encouraging parents/guardians to attend with their children to engage with math manipulatives, robotics, technology and teachers. Family fitness and wellness events allowed families to discover ways to promote healthy living. In our highly diverse areas, multicultural nights have been a popular choice to engage with newcomer families to help them interact with their children in the school setting to empower them, help them feel welcome, and to promote inclusivity in the school communities.

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PRO Grants have also been used to inform and help parents with issues through expert speakers. Examples include information nights about cannabis, vaping, human trafficking, student stress and anxiety, post secondary options, reducing stress in the home, and helping parents/guardians deal with tween and teen social media, devices and digital footprints. Through PRO Grant events, parents have been able to engage with agencies and supports like social workers, public health nurses, police departments and community hub workers. PRO Grants allow schools to meet specific needs within their community and provides an equitable opportunity to access funds.

Our own Board has been a recipient of PRO Grant funding which has been used for the past 12 years to support an annual parent conference. The most recent conference took place on October 19, 2019. Hundreds of parents from across Halton Region attended the conference at Garth Webb Secondary School. [A listing of the 24 available conference workshops](#) has been attached to this letter for your convenience so you can view the breadth of topics. We fear that this highly valuable conference will not continue in its current popular and accessible format without the PRO Grant funding that has always been provided for this event.

Parent/guardian engagement in education is critical. They are our partners in each student's journey through our schools. HDSB Trustees believe school councils and activities enabled through PRO Grants make a valuable, impactful contribution in engaging the parent community in support of student achievement and well-being. As such, we strongly encourage the continuation of the PRO Grant program and funding support levels as per previous years.

Sincerely,



Andréa Grebenc
Chair of the Board of Trustees, Halton District School Board

Enclosure: HDSB Parent Conference Workshops 2019

Cc: Ted Arnott, MPP
Stephen Crawford, MPP
Parm Gill, MPP
Jane McKenna, MPP
Effie Triantafilopoulos, MPP
Ontario Public School Board Association
Ontario English Public School Board Chairs
HDSB Board of Trustees
HDSB School Councils
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