



PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

20 November 2019

Report No. 19-120

2019-2020 Parents Reaching Out Grant

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PURPOSE:

1. To discuss possible approaches for the allocation of the 2019-2020 Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grant funding.

CONTEXT:

2. The Ministry of Ontario Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants are designed to support parents 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.

This year, the Ministry allocated \$40,521 in PRO grant funding to the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) to spend at their discretion, subject to parameters specified in the Transfer Payment Agreement. This report seeks advice from the Committee with regards to possible approaches for the allocation of the 2019-2020 PRO Grant funding.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. Changes to the PRO Structure and Amount
In the past, the Ministry offered two types of PRO grants; a regional PRO grant for school districts and Parent Involvement Committees (PICs), and PRO grants of up to \$1,000 for individual school councils. Historically, the OCDSB received approximately \$70-80,000 for school councils and \$10-20,000 for the District.

In 2019-2020, the Ministry changed PRO grants from an application-based funding model to an allocation-based grant provided to school boards. This year, the OCDSB will receive \$40,521 in PRO grant funding representing a decline of over 50% compared to the total amount of \$94,475 received by the District and its school councils in 2018-2019.

4. Parameters of PRO Expenditures
The Ontario PRO Transfer Payment Agreement (Appendix A) provides parameters on activities that would be eligible for funding and sets limits on some expenses (i.e. refreshments (10%), parent lending library (50%)),

advertising and promotion (10%), and administrative expenses (10%)). The Agreement, however, does not provide specific parameters on how PRO grants should be allocated.

School districts will have to develop their own allocation plan in alignment with the grant parameters. Annually, the OCDSB has received a PRO grant which was used to fund the District's Speaker Series and the annual Parent Conference and School Council Training Day. The cost of these events has averaged \$20,000 per year which has exceeded the PRO regional grants of approximately \$12,500 in each of the past three years. The PRO grant deficit is usually covered by the Ministry's parent involvement funding (PINV).

Any projects that are funded by PRO grants must demonstrate a commitment to respect the role of parents in students' educational experiences with a goal to increase confidence in the educational system whereby parents feel like partners. Should the District use the total 2019-2020 PRO grant allotment of \$40,521 to fund the Speaker Series and the Parent Conference, approximately \$20,000 would be available for other parent engagement activities. Alternately, should the District decide to allocate the PRO grant funds without funding for the Speaker Series and the Parent Conference, the District would have to consider the sustainability of those events.

5. Reporting Back on PRO Expenditures

District school boards are required to submit a final report using the Ministry's reporting template by July 15, 2020. The final report must include a financial expense summary and an evaluation of the project(s) outcomes based on project(s) objectives, the number of other participating parties, and the impact on parent confidence as well as direct feedback from parents on the merits of the project(s).

6. Possible Allocation Strategies

Some possible allocation strategies might include:

- Distributing a fixed amount to all school councils to "top up" their \$500 PINV allocation;
- Distributing a fixed amount to some school councils based on need;
- Distributing the funds through a grant application program; or
- Using the funds to create some parent engagement modules and/or resources that school councils could use.

These are some preliminary ideas which could be further discussed at the meeting. The following consideration for allocation should be kept in mind:

- The District is responsible for reporting on the use of PRO grant funding to the Ministry of Education;
- Reporting is a lengthy and prescriptive process which includes the development of a parent feedback survey; and
- Bringing an equity lens to such expenditures and being mindful of communities that struggle with establishing a school council is of concern to the District.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

7. In the past, costs associated with managing the PRO grant application process, the funding received, and the reporting process were covered within existing budgets as they were centrally controlled. Should the Committee consider assigning some of the remaining funds to schools or other organizations, additional expenses may be incurred in terms of the number of staff involved and time allocated to managing the assigned funds and reporting to the Ministry.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

8. The District will work with its PIC to determine how the PRO funding will be allocated. PIC members are encouraged to consider any feedback they received from their respective communities or organizations when considering possible allocation strategies.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

9. Partnering with PIC in the planning and implementation of PRO-funded projects reflects the increased parent voice in the decision making of the District in alignment with the Culture of Caring pillar of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

10. What model of allocation maximizes opportunities for parent engagement in a way that aligns with the terms and conditions and can be easily administered in the prescribed timeframe?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - The Ontario PRO Transfer Payment Agreement