

<b>Working Group</b>	Virtual Engagement (Parent Engagement for families in the Virtual Schools)
<b>Date (IAC Meeting)</b>	March 9, 2020
Description/Objective	This ad hoc Working Group aims to provide recommendations on Parent/Family Engagement in the Virtual School. Areas of interest are Responsiveness, Communication, Community, Accountability, and relation with Home School Councils.
Update	<p>Since the last PIAC meeting (on February 16, 2021), the ad hoc Working Group met once, on February 24. As discussed, Co-Leads Wilmar &amp; Kaydeen had follow-up conversations with Vicky Branco &amp; Ian MacPherson.</p> <p><b><u>Meeting Feb.24, 2021</u></b>  <i>Attendance (incomplete): Saira Somani (W3), Sharon Grant (W4), Mirian Turcios (W6), Kaydeen Bankasingh (W8, Co-Lead), Andrew Waters (W9), Wilmar Kortleever (W11, Co-Lead), Kate Leuschen (W16), Seema Mitchell (W18), Abdullah Mamun (W19); Chris Levien (W20), Zuojun Han (W20), Felicia Seto-Lau (Co-Chair);</i>  <i>TDSB: Latha John (PCEO, Committee assistance), Vicky Branco, Ian MacPherson (CSW);</i>  <i>Trustee: Trixie Doyle</i></p> <p><b>Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TDSB has engaged Vicky Branco (former Superintendent, among many things known from her work on Model Schools &amp; Parent as Partners Conferences) to run certain projects, including helping the Virtual School with Parent (family, community) Engagement. In addition to items like information sharing (newsletter frequency &amp; practical content; public meetings), Vicky has been working specifically on two initiatives that PIAC had identified as priorities:</li> </ul> <p><b>Key Projects</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><u>Exchange of Contact Information between Parents/Guardians)/Caregivers.</u></b>        Since given the working title: <b><i>Parent Connect.</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board wants to help facilitate this;</li> <li>An online (Google) Form has been created. It asks for the necessary Contact Information, plus (Virtual) school info, home school, Learning Centre, Class number, Teacher e-mail, and other. The Virtual School can send out the link to all parents. The lists can then be sorted, and class lists distributed per class. There are up to 2600 classes;</li> <li>The Virtual School does not have the administrative capacity to manage this;</li> <li>Teachers cannot be asked to run this initiative (workload, collective agreements, uniformity of execution);</li> <li>It was suggested and considered that PIAC Volunteers can run and/or assist with this. Concerns were raised re: data privacy, uniformity of timing/execution;</li> <li><b><u>Question/suggestion (I):</u></b> to speed up implementation of Parent Connect, can PIAC assist by engaging a consultant to assist with the Collection, Sorting, and Distribution of Class Contact Lists?            A Requirements proposal was created that can be used to engage a Consultant. Based on the estimated work required (immediate, and follow-up), a maximum cost of \$2500 has been proposed.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b><u>Volunteering in the Virtual School</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board is looking to facilitate this;</li> <li>An online (google) form has been created for Teachers to indicate what volunteerism they need/can accommodate. And whether they welcome in-class</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

parents;

- An online (google) form has been created for Parents (Guardians, caregivers) to fill out. Among other things, it asks for contact information, the kind of volunteer activity the respondent is interested in, whether the respondent is willing to volunteer outside their own students' classroom, and availability of Police Reference Check/PRC (or, as usual, Annual Declaration if PRC previously obtained);

- An orientation for volunteers would be offered, and a training specific to those volunteering to read to K-grade 3 students.

- Most people are willing & able to pay the fee required for the one-time, initial PRC (\$20, or \$65 for expedited/extensive procedure), but some are not. If not, respondents are asked to inquire with their Home School Council and/or Administration for assistance. Please note that after this initial Police Reference Check, no additional fees are required for the annual Declaration.

- Question/Suggestion (II): Can PIAC assist to obtain maximum accessibility of volunteerism to 'backstop' the cost for a certain number of parents who cannot afford the PRC application, and for home local assistance is not available?

Suggested budget of up to (!) \$2000 is proposed (which pays for 30 – 100 PRCs depending on fee level).

#### **Other Initiatives:**

1. **ThoughtExchange.** PIAC decided to ask the TDSB to send a ThoughtExchange consultation to all parents/caregivers in the Virtual School to ask them about Parent Engagement they are looking for (and what engagement has worked for them so far). *"What kind of Parent Engagement would you like to see strengthened in the Virtual School? What types of Parent Engagement have you seen that works well in your opinion?"*

To prevent duplication/confusion with the Board wide Winter Consultation Survey also held in January, Staff has held off on distributing the ThoughtExchange. As it looks that the more detailed results of this Consultation may still take a while to come back to us, the Working Group is asking that the ThoughtExchange go out at earliest convenience.

2. **Resource disparities (inequities) in the Virtual School.**

Members in the Working Group meeting of February 24 again raised the issue of inequities in the Virtual School (V.S.) experience. Especially in the first months of the school year, a total focus on starting, staffing and developing the Virtual School was understandable.

But after 6+ months, members of the Virtual School communities increasingly wonder why certain things that are commonplace expectations in the Brick & Mortar schools, do not seem available in the Virtual School.

Among the items raised were:

- \* Responsiveness;
- \* Consistent communication;
- \* Public meetings with V.S. leadership;
- \* Resources (I): Online learning licenses that are available in various (if not all) Brick & Mortar schools, e.g. leveled reading licenses, and EPIC, and learning evaluation; but also learning enhancements like (virtual) Field Trips, and more;
- \* Resources (II): Teacher budgets – which should also have a much higher limit than the \$100 currently proposed;
- \* Resources (III): Student/Family support – even as the Virtual School is online, and besides (in addition) to Device/internet availability, families incur costs. These can be substantial, e.g. arts & crafts supplies in Kindergarten/elementary grades, science supplies in grades 7+, and stationary/printing/other in basically all grades. As

	<p>evidenced by people using the <i>Parents Engaged in Education</i> 'Education Bank' (<a href="https://www.parentsengagedineducation.ca/family-service-centre">https://www.parentsengagedineducation.ca/family-service-centre</a>)</p> <p>With regards to the latter: can for example a central place be created where VS Teachers can request supplies for students ?</p>
Motion I	<p>Whereas PIAC would like to support the swift roll-out of the initiative to support Volunteerism in the entire Virtual School, and</p> <p>Whereas a Police Reference Check (PRC) is required to volunteer, and not everybody can easily afford the PRC fee,</p> <p><b>We move that PIAC support parents who request assistance in submitting the Police Reference Check to a maximum budget of \$2000.</b></p>
Motion II	<p>Whereas PIAC would like to support the swift execution of the <i>Parent Connect</i> initiative (exchanging contact information between Parents/Guardians/Caregivers in Virtual School classes),</p> <p><b>We move that PIAC support the engagement of a Consultant who will facilitate/assist with the Collection, Sorting, and Distribution of Class Lists, with a maximum budget of \$2500</b></p>
Next Steps and Action items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the Parent Connect &amp; Virtual School Volunteerism initiatives</li> <li>• Launch, publicize, and process the ThoughtExchange</li> <li>• Further Explore the inequities in the Virtual School Experience, advocate for more (equal) resource allocation.</li> </ul> <p>PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize facilitated Conversations with parents in the Virtual School</li> <li>• Develop further Virtual Engagement Recommendations, especially in the area of Accountability.</li> </ul>
Co-lead(s)	<p>Kaydeen Banks (Rep, Ward 8) Wilmar Kortleever (Rep, Ward 11)</p>
Working Group Members (Name and Email Addresses)	<p><b>PIAC:</b> Saira Somani (W3), Sharon Grant (W4), Patricia Seedial (W4), Jess Hungate (W5), Jaimala (W5), Mirian Turcios (W6), Kaydeen Bankasingh (W8), John Bakous (W8), Andrew Waters (W9), Cecile Farnum (W9), Charlotte Schwartz (W10), Wilmar Kortleever (W11), Nazerah Shaikh (W14), Kate Leuschen-Millar (W16), Seema Mitchell (W18), Shanti Chand (W19), Abdullah Mamun (W19), Chris Levien (W20); Zuojun Han (W20), Towhid Noman (CLG),</p> <p><b>Co-Chairs:</b> D. Williams, Felicia Lau</p> <p><b>Community Members:</b> Sylvester Witter, Zena Shereck;</p> <p><b>TDSB:</b> Michelle Munroe (PCEO), Latha John (PCEO, Committee assistance), Trustee Trixie Doyle (Ward 14); Vicky Branco (Parent Engagement in the Virtual School); Hugh Keane (CSW); Ian MacPherson (CSW); Ian Allison (Superintendent, VS), Shirley Chan (Superintendent, VS);</p>