

Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants: Grants for School Councils

Speaking Notes

Slide 3:

Ontario is committed to the success and well-being of every student and child.

Ontario's publicly funded education system – acknowledged as one of the best in the world – partners with parents, guardians and communities to develop graduates who are personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens.

Thousands of Ontarians from across the province, including parents and students, provided their input and advice to help craft Ontario's renewed vision for its education system. We recently released this vision, *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*, which reflects our government's commitment to helping every learner build the knowledge and skills to succeed and thrive now and in the future.

The renewed goals for education are as follows:

Achieving excellence: Children and students of all ages will achieve high levels of academic performance, acquire valuable skills, and demonstrate good citizenship. Educators will be supported in learning continuously and will be recognized as among the best in the world.

Ensuring equity: All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood.

Promoting well-being: All children and students will develop enhanced mental and physical health, a positive sense of self and belonging, and the skills to make positive choices.

Enhancing public confidence: Ontarians will continue to have confidence in a publicly funded education system that helps develop new generations of confident, capable, and caring citizens.

In *Achieving Excellence*, we recognize and acknowledge that parents are a key part of our success in education. We know that good schools become great schools when parents are engaged in their child's learning.

By focusing on the four key goals outlined in *Achieving Excellence*, we will maintain and enhance Ontario's reputation as a world leader in education.

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- Since 2006, the government has awarded over 15,000 grants to school councils and 568 regional/provincial grants. A total investment of over \$24 million
- In 2014-15, 2,279 projects were approved with grants totaling \$3.5M.
- 2,212 school council applications were received and 2,178 projects were approved. 137 regional/provincial applications were received and 101 projects were approved.
- This year, over 98% of school council applications were approved for full or partial funding – the highest number of approvals ever. 71 out of 72 publicly-funded school boards participated in the program.
- As part of the Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy, outreach continues to be specifically conducted with schools in priority neighbourhoods. There has been a steady increase in both the number of applications from priority schools and the number of approved projects. In 2014-15, 138 priority school applications were approved – over 300% in applications and 450% in approvals since 2008 (when the government introduced its Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-2013) . The Ministry will continue to promote the participation of priority schools in the program.

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- Application due date is May 19, 2015 at 12:00 midnight. All applications, submitted by school councils, must be approved by a motion by the school council. Please note that applicants should obtain the login and password several days prior to the due date as there will be insufficient time on the due date to obtain and complete the application.
- For project ideas, refer to the Ministry website <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/reaching.html> and go to the bottom of the page to click on the links for school council and regional/provincial grants.

Slide 7:

The accompanying slides will explain in greater detail, information about each of the grants and provide information to assist with the completion and submission of the grant application.

Slide 8:

Information is available on the Ministry website (web address is on a previous slide): <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/schools.html>

Slide 9:

There may be situations when a family of schools is working on a goal (e.g., improving literacy and numeracy, addressing cyber safety,) and the schools may want to collectively plan a group event, to organize a series of workshops, or schedule a speaker. If there is a partnership, each school council is required to submit its own application.

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The school council, with the involvement of the principal, will discuss and determine the project to be submitted. We will discuss the project guidelines in a few moments.

Non-eligible items are reviewed on slide 13.

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- School council will comply with applicable federal, provincial, municipal laws, statutes or regulations.
- Information related to the grant is public information.
- School council will acknowledge the ministry contribution on printed materials or press releases.

Slide 12:

The principles of equity and inclusion are key components to remove barriers that some parents may experience and prevent them from fully participating in their children's education. The underlying focus of the grant application is to design a project that will ultimately inform or engage parents in their children's achievement and well-being.

Slide 13:

Focussing on the criteria for the engagement of parents, the PRO school council application provides seven statements to help describe the goal(s) of the project. Applicants may select up to three of the statements.

Slide 14:

To assist the applicant in the development of proposal, a list of Ministry initiatives, including examples and web links, has been included in the application for school councils. Applicants may select up to three that best apply, and may specify "other" ministry initiatives.

Slide 16:

Information regarding login:

- Obtain login information as soon as you can to avoid leaving it to the last minute, prior to the deadline.
- The login information will be sent within 30 minutes. However, during peak periods, when many individuals are acquiring a login, it may take longer. Please wait one hour before requesting another login. All of the requests are handled in the order in which they were received and when individuals repeatedly apply for a password, the most recent request will have over-ridden their earlier responses received from SmartSimple (the on-line service provider).
- Increasingly with the sophistication of firewalls, emails from SmartSimple may go to the applicant's junk mail folder; therefore, please advise individuals applying for a grant to check their junk mail folder. If the applicant's email address changes, SmartSimple must be notified so that the applicant's contact information can be updated.
- It is a very good idea to share the login information with another individual on the school council and/or the principal in case of an emergency; by sharing the information, the alternate can complete and submit the application on time.

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- Completion of the application should include sufficient detail for the evaluator to understand exactly how you are enhancing parent engagement—e.g. if the “What” is a Workshop, please provide details about the type of workshop. An explanation is required for the who, how, when and why areas, as well.
- With any initiative of this type, you should plan to assess the success at the end of the project—i.e. did the project increase parent participation/understanding—which may be determined through a survey or response sheet completed by parents. It is important, at the end of the project, to reflect on what worked and what might be changed for the future.
- Compulsory Fields that must be completed before saving include the Project title, name of school, principal email, one-sentence summary of the project, budget items, total budget requested.
- The one sentence summary is used to summarize approved projects on the ministry's website.

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- Remember to include as much detail as possible—e.g. itemizing or providing a breakdown of the budget rather than requesting a sum of \$1,000.
- Refreshments are intended for a snack at meetings and are not intended to fund dinners, luncheons, celebration “teas”, etc. and are limited to up to 15% of the total allocation.
- Promotion or advertising is limited to 5% of the total allocation.

Slide 19:

The final payment will be flowed upon receiving a completed report back.