

Ministry of Education

New resources to help parents become more involved in children's education

NIAGARA FALLS, ON, Oct. 19 /CNW/ - Two new grants will make it easier for more parents to become involved with their child's education, Education Minister Kathleen Wynne announced today.

"We recognize that parents play a vital role in the development and education of their child and the success of our schools," said Wynne as she released the final report of the Interim Parent Involvement Advisory Board. "That is why we are providing targeted funding to help parents overcome any challenges they have regarding involvement - so they can better support their children's learning."

Parents and their partners are encouraged to be creative in the development of projects, which could include publishing newsletters in multiple languages, parent workshops, supporting parents who want to help with their child's homework or multicultural school events.

The new Parents Reaching Out grants respond to recommendations in the Interim Parent Involvement Advisory Board's final report, which was released today. School councils can submit a proposal on their own or in partnership with other school councils, parent or community groups. Projects should create a more welcoming environment for parents who face barriers to becoming involved in their children's education or school. Provincewide, \$1 million has been made available for this school-based grant. In addition, \$750,000 has been allocated for parent-focused regional and provincial projects that meet specific criteria. Parent organizations, school boards, non-profit organizations and others are invited to apply in partnership with parents.

"These initiatives will continue to build parent capacity at the school, board, and provincial levels," said Gabrielle Blais, Chair of the Interim Parent Involvement Advisory Board. "They will enable parents to learn from each other and to reach out to those parents who, for a variety of reasons, have found school involvement challenging."

Gregg Dame, a parent in the District School Board of Niagara and former member of the Interim Parent Involvement Advisory Board said, "These grants will help hard-to-reach parents become more involved in Niagara schools. The region will be able to hold more parent workshops, publish more newsletters in more languages, and even provide support to parents who want to help with their child's homework."

The new grants respond to one of the commitments in the Parent Involvement Policy, which was released in December 2005. Other initiatives aimed at creating a more welcoming environment for parents in the education system include:

- Creating the Parent Engagement Office created in January 2006 to support provincial efforts to facilitate effective parent involvement in the school system;
- Launching the Parent section on the Ministry of Education website gives parents access to useful news and resources including "Involving Parents in the School: Tips for School Councils"; and

- Establishing Parent Involvement Committees at the board level to give parents a voice at the board level and provide a direct link to the Director of Education and trustees.

"We value the important contribution that all parents make to their child's education and Ontario's schools," said Wynne. "Engaging more parents in education will help us to reach every student."

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Backgrounder

HELPING PARENTS BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Parents play a vital role in the development and education of their children and in the success of Ontario's schools.

New Funding to Support Parent Involvement

Parents Reaching Out Grants for Schools:

Provincewide, \$1 million is now available to school councils for projects that help parents who face challenges in getting involved in their child's education. This could include parents who:

- have recently settled in Canada,
- whose first language is neither English or French,
- face socio-economic or physical challenges.

School councils may submit a project proposal on their own or in partnership with other school councils, parent or community groups.

Application packages will be distributed to school boards across Ontario and are available for download by following the "Parents" links on the Ministry of Education's website (www.edu.gov.on.ca). Applications for 2006-07 projects must be submitted no later than November 21, 2006.

Parents and their partners are encouraged to be creative in the development of projects, which could include publishing newsletters in multiple languages, parent workshops, supporting parents who want to help with their child's homework or multicultural school events.

Parents Reaching Out Grants for Regional or Provincial projects:

A total of \$750,000 is available to support regional and provincial

projects aimed at enhancing parent involvement. Activities must fall under at least one of the following categories:

- 1) contributing to student success,
- 2) creating a culture in which parents are partners,
- 3) ensuring schools and school boards are welcoming for parents, and
- 4) providing parent training and skill-building.

Parent organizations are encouraged to apply. Ontario school boards and school authorities, non-profit organizations, volunteer-sector associations and Ontario postsecondary institutions can also apply in partnership with parents.

2006-07 Base Funding for Parent Involvement

As it did in 2005-06, the government is providing each school council with \$500 to assist with parent communication and other parent engagement efforts. School boards have been asked to allocate this funding at the school level, on top of any existing allocation they provide to school councils. School councils will approve expenditures for activities funded with this allocation.

2006-07 Funding for Parent Involvement Committees

School boards will also receive \$5,000 (plus \$0.17 per student) to support Parent Involvement Committee activities at the board level, including district meetings and communication in schools.

Interim Parent Involvement Advisory Board

In November 2004, the Parent Voice in Education Project was created to make recommendations on the establishment of an independent, representative, provincewide body that would be accountable to parents. They held public meetings in early 2005 and based their final recommendations on over 1,150 submissions from parents and parent organizations.

The minister asked members of the Parent Voice in Education Project to act as the Interim Parent Involvement Advisory Board and to provide advice on choosing members of the Provincial Parent Board and the establishment of grant programs for school councils, and regional and provincial projects.

The board was composed of 16 parents representing regions across Ontario who had demonstrated expertise in parent leadership.

Parent Involvement Policy

In December 2005, the government announced a new provincial Parent Involvement Policy to make it easier for all parents to participate in their child's education and future success.

The policy provides direction to the Minister of Education, the ministry, school boards, schools and their staff to create conditions, attitudes and supports for parents to engage in their child's education.

The provincial Parent Engagement Office was created in January 2006 to support provincial efforts to facilitate effective parent involvement in the school system.

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