

# Toronto District School Board

Policy P023

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Title:	<b>PARENT AND CAREGIVER ENGAGEMENT</b>
Adopted:	November 25, 1998
Effectuated:	November 25, 1998
Revised:	January 26, 2005; July 13, 2005; February 3, 2010; <b>June 29, 2022</b>
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Authorization:	Board of Trustees

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## 1. RATIONALE

Regardless of family income or background, students whose parents/guardians/caregivers are involved in their schooling are more likely to have higher grades and test scores, attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behaviour, and adapt well to school. The more comprehensive and well-planned the partnership's shared responsibilities, and communication between the school, Board, and home, the higher the student achievement.

## 2. OBJECTIVE

To establish a framework for shared responsibilities of parents/guardians/caregivers, the Board, and the trustees for the implementation of effective strategies to increase and improve effective parent/guardian/caregiver engagement in the Board.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

*Board* refers to the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the "TDSB".

*Capabilities* refer to what a person has the ability or knowledge to do.

*Caregiver* refers to a person involved in a care and commitment relationship that may be ongoing, long-term, significant, and where responsibilities have shifted to a non-family member. (Ontario Human Rights Commission, Defining Family Status) <[www.ohrc.on.ca](http://www.ohrc.on.ca)>.

*Co-construct* refers to a dynamic process in which what is taught and learned (the

curriculum) is negotiated between teacher, students, and parents/guardians/caregivers rather than being solely predetermined by the teacher.

*Colonialism* refers to a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another. Settler colonialism — such as in the case of Canada — is the unique process where the colonizing population does not leave the territory, asserts ongoing sovereignty over the land, actively seeks to assimilate the Indigenous populations, and extinguishes their cultures, traditions, and ties to the land.

*Community Liaison Groups* refer to parent/guardian/caregiver community groups with mandates to engage parents/guardians/caregivers on educational issues of specific interest and relevance to the group and hold a memorandum of understanding with the Board.

*Critical actors* refer to how oppressed or marginalized people learn to critically analyze their social conditions and act to change them.

*Engagement* refers to an equitable collaboration between the Board, school, and the home that is, anti-oppressive, culturally responsive, and focused on improving children's learning. It requires the Board and schools to reach out to engage parents/guardians/caregivers in ways that:

- enhances parent/guardian/caregiver knowledge and efficacy in navigating academics and the educational system in ways that foster parent agency
- foster parent-to-school and parent-to-parent relationship that enables the connection between parents/guardians/caregivers, particularly equity-seeking parents/guardians/caregivers, and designates spaces to share experiences and concerns
- build strategies and capacity for staff and parents/guardians/caregivers to learn and share funds of knowledge, as well as cultural and intellectual resources that can contribute to transforming instructional and institutional practices in schools
- nurture spaces and places for parents/guardians/caregivers to exercise leadership and influence in schools and school systems

*Guardian* refers to a person who has lawful custody of a child, other than the parent of a child.

*Newcomer* refers to new arrivals to Canada and Toronto as landed immigrants, refugee claimants, temporary residents, and undocumented persons.

*Oppression* refers to prolonged, systemic, abuse of power or control by one group of people (the Dominant Group) at the expense of others (the oppressed) and maintains a cultural imbalance of Power that socially supports the mistreatment and exploitation of all groups of 'less powerful' individuals. This results in unjust advantages, status, and benefits for one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs, economic and institutional structures, and subtle and overt cultural

practices. Because oppression is institutionalized in our society, target group members often face Barriers and limitations in many aspects of social participation i.e., school, health care, social services, employment, parenting, housing, etc. Oppression actively provides unearned Privileges and protections to some members of our community, allowing them to ignore the presence of Discrimination and or Barriers to fair and equal access and opportunities such as Classism, Racism, Ableism, Sexism, Homophobia, and Transphobia.

*Relational* refers to people's connections that engage others from a place of worthiness that cultivates courage, compassion, and connection.

*School Improvement Process (SIP)* refers to a relational process that promotes shared leadership with staff, students, parents/guardians/caregivers, and the community in developing a plan that acknowledges the importance of building a common understanding of areas of strength and areas that require more learning and improvement through the use of data. The Process is grounded in evidence-based decision making that informs how learning and curriculum are experienced through ongoing school and classroom practice(s) in instruction and assessment.

All schools must engage in a process to develop goals that responds to Indigenous Education and sovereignty, equity, achievement and well-being. These goals are individual and unique to each local school and should be meaningful and relevant to the specific students at each school. All goals must begin with students and with the intention of improving achievement and well-being for all, but especially for those students who have been underserved. Innovation in action at the school level will ensure that each student is thriving in an accessible, inclusive and engaging environment. Parents/guardians/ caregivers and students should have an authentic role in the school improvement process.

*TDSB* refers to the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the "Board".

*Whiteness* refers to a White identity that has become the ideal and is viewed as the norm, whereby other identities such as Black, Indigenous, Asian, etc. are viewed as multicultural subcultures within a society. Acknowledging and addressing whiteness is a critical step in creating anti-racist schools and classrooms.

#### **4. RESPONSIBILITY**

The Director of Education holds primary responsibility for the implementation of this Policy.

Within the Director's Office, the responsibility for the implementation, and day-to-day management of the Policy is assigned to the Associate Director, Student Well-

Being and Innovation and the Central Coordinator of Parent and Community Engagement.

## **5. APPLICATION AND SCOPE**

This Policy applies to all parents/guardians/caregivers, and employees of the TDSB, including supervisors, business unit leads, senior and executive managers, and trustees.

## **6. POLICY**

- 6.1. The Board will ensure that parent/guardian/caregiver engagement is integrated into all programs, sustained with resources and infrastructure. It will be intentional, relational, linked to achievement and well-being, and build staff, parent/guardian/caregiver capabilities and confidence (self-efficacy).
- 6.2. Parents/guardians/caregivers engagement practices will work to disrupt and dismantle systems of whiteness and oppression and center around the cultural knowledge and practices of parents/guardians/caregivers, particularly Black, Indigenous, racialized people, people with disabilities, women, 2-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Trans, Queer and (2SLGBTQ+), newcomers and other equity deserving parents/guardians/caregivers, as per TDSB Equity Policy (P037). All parents/guardians/caregivers will be positioned as critical actors in student achievement and well-being.
- 6.3. Indigenous Peoples are self-determining nations with distinct and inherent rights and laws. These inherent rights and laws govern the relationship between Indigenous people and institutions. Guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Board will work to dismantle TDSB's colonial structures, practices, and impacts of colonization by actively engaging in alliance with Indigenous Elders, students, parents/guardians/caregivers, and the community in developing a governance model that honors Indigenous knowledge, sovereignty, and self-determination.
- 6.4. The Board will ensure that parent/guardian/caregiver engagement is a partnership that is equitable and relational in which goals that support student achievement, well-being, and healthy development at home, school, and in the community are co-constructed with parents/guardians/caregivers and allow for active participation in decision-making or an ability to influence decisions related to their child(ren).
- 6.5. School leadership will facilitate equitable collaboration between parents/guardians/caregivers and the school that:

- ensures the engagement of parents/guardians/caregivers and equity deserving parents/guardians/caregivers into the school and the School Improvement Process (SIP) ensures language and other related settlement supports are provided for newcomer parents/guardians/ caregivers' engagement; and
  - establish clear engagement goals and create spaces for staff and parent/guardian/caregiver dialogue that upholds principles of equity, as per the Equity Policy (P037).
- 6.6. The Board will ensure TDSB staff, parents/guardians/caregivers, and students, as appropriate, collaborate with local school community partners to assist in reaching school improvement goals. This will connect students, parents/guardians/caregivers, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.
- 6.7. The Board will support community outreach programs and organize parent/guardian/caregiver forums at school, ward, and regional levels that experience significant challenges in promoting and sustaining parent/guardian/caregiver involvement in their children's education. This will also be done to promote parent/guardian/caregiver consultation and input on matters related to policy, program, or operations of the TDSB school system.
- 6.8. The Board will ensure that parents/guardians/caregivers and TDSB staff are provided with anti-oppression engagement training opportunities. This training will aim to strengthen the knowledge and skills of parents/guardians/caregivers and TDSB staff to build trusting relationships and work as equitable partners in co-constructing student learning, achievement, and well-being.
- 6.9. The Board will provide an effective and operational communication system(s) and multilingual service that will enable the Board to seek ongoing feedback, and frequent, two-way communication between TDSB staff, parents/guardians/caregivers, and Trustees.
- 6.10. In accordance with *O. Regulation 612/00 of the Education Act*, the Board will ensure that every TDSB school establishes a school council that will advise the school and the Board. The Board will also develop School Council procedures that outline the operations of School Councils.
- 6.11. The Board will engage in strategic relationships with Community Liaison Groups who wish to work with the TDSB to address educational issues of concern, and who are formed in accordance with criteria established for these groups.
- 6.12. The Board will develop parent/guardian/caregiver engagement standards that address the engagement of parents/guardians/caregivers in the SIP,

co- constructing learning, well-being, and achievement goals, and the operation of School Councils.

6.13. The Board will use disaggregated race-based data to track, monitor, and report on parent/guardian/caregiver engagement across the Board.

## **7. SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES**

The Director of Education is authorized to issue operational procedures to implement this Policy.

## **8. EVALUATION**

This Policy will be reviewed as required, but at a minimum every four (4) years after the effective date.

## **9. APPENDICES**

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## **10. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

Policies:

- Community Engagement Policy (P078)
- Equity Policy (P037)
- Selection, Promotion, and Placement of School Principals and Vice- Principals Policy (P052)

Procedures:

- Translation and Interpretation Procedure (PR503)
- Parent Concern Protocol (PR505)
- Parent and Community Involvement Procedure (PR558)
- Selection, Promotion, and Placement Process for School Principals and Vice-principals Procedure (PR705)

Legislation and other documents:

- *Education Act*
- O. Regulation. 612/00, School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees
- O. Regulation. 613/00, Operations of Schools-General
- Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools