

Section 3

Parental Involvement in Schools in Ontario: How it Works



Parental Involvement in Schools in Ontario

How it Works

Ontario's Parent Involvement Policy

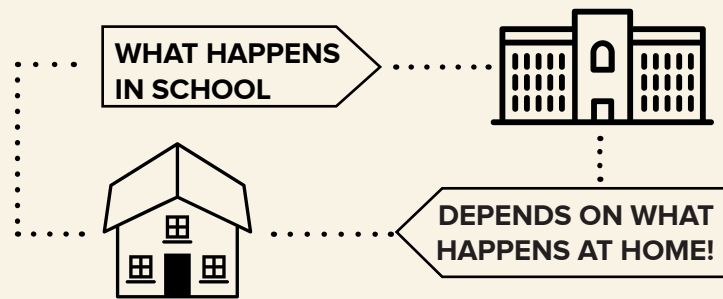
The policy acknowledges the important role that parents play in ensuring success both for their own children and for Ontario's public education system as a whole.

The Ontario's Parent Involvement Policy takes into consideration the following elements:

- Recognizes and supports the important role parents have contributing to their children's learning at home and at school.
- Recognizes, encourages and supports many forms of parent engagement.
- Identifies strategies to remove barriers to parent involvement (e.g. communications and language).
- Supports parents to acquire skills and knowledge they need to be engaged and involved in their child's learning.
- Provides a parent voice at the local level (e.g. parent involvement committees and school councils as well as individual parents talking to teachers and principals).

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT POLICY

Is defined as a combination of commitment and active participation on the part of the parent to the school and to the student.
(LaBahn, J. 1995).



How can I get involved?

Study after study has demonstrated that student learning and achievement improve when parents play an active role in their children's education and that good schools become even better when parents have a voice and actively engage with the school.

For many parents, the most important thing that the school can do to help them feel included is to communicate effectively with them. Parents want to know about changes before they happen.



School Councils:

Parent engagement takes time to build and it has to be actively encouraged to make it work. Most schools councils consist of five to ten active parents. One of the biggest concerns for parents is poor communication between the home and school in all official interactions with the school.

The schools can provide you with an interpreter if you need one. If you don't feel confident conveying your message in English, ask a friend or another parent to help you ask for an interpreter. Effective communication is essential.

Every publicly funded school in Ontario is required to have a school council. School councils are made up of individuals representing parents, the school, and the community. They provide advice to principals and, where appropriate, to the local school board to ensure that their school responds to local needs and reflects local values. Strong school councils help build strong school communities and contribute to children's success at school.

The school council provides an avenue for consultation, advice, and information sharing among all members of the school community. School councils are encouraged to represent and share the views of their community and to establish open, inclusive practices that invite participation. School councils may provide advice on any matter to the school principal and, where appropriate, to the school board. School boards and principals are obligated to consider and respond to each recommendation made by a school council.

To assist members, the Ministry of Education has published School Councils: A Guide for Members and Tips for School Councils.

Both resources are available on the Ministry of Education website:

www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/guide

School councils may advise the principal or the school board on:

- school year calendars
- codes of students behaviour
- curriculum priorities (not curriculum content as this is set by the Ministry)
- programs and strategies to improve school performance on provincial and school board tests
- safe arrival program (elementary school)
- communications to parents and communications to the community
- community use of the school, and community programs and services provided at the school through school-community partnerships
- school board policies that will affect the school; and selection of principals.

According to the Education Act (amendment 612/00), school council elections must be held annually, within the first thirty calendar days of the start of the school year. Any parent who is interested in the school council election process or in participating as a member on the school council has the opportunity to do so. Elections are held at the beginning of the school year to ensure that even parents who are new to the school community will be able to participate in the election of their representative.

Parent Involvement Committees (PIC) in Ontario

In Ontario, every school board is required to establish a Parent Involvement Committee (PIC). The Ministry provides funding to support the work of this committee. It is important to note that while school councils oversee only one school, PICs oversee a group of schools.

PICs are an advisory body and are a vehicle for the participation of parents at the board level. Their purpose is to support, encourage and enhance meaningful parent involvement to improve student achievement and well-being throughout the board and its schools.

PICs are formal structures and act as advisory bodies to the local school board. The PIC is a parent-led committee; the chair/co-chairs are parents and the majority of members are parents. The director of education, a trustee of the board and up to three community representatives are members of the PIC. Subject to board by-laws, a PIC can include a principal, teacher and/or support staff.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Ministry of Education has created resources to support PICs including a Fact Sheet, Tips for Running Effective PIC Meetings and a Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) Handbook.

www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/guide.html



What do Parent Involvement Committees (PIC) do?

While school councils are school-based advisory structures, PICs focus on matters that affect more than one school. The PIC provides information and advice to the board on effective parent engagement strategies and practices. PICs also communicate with and support school councils, and undertake activities to help parents support their children's learning at home and at school.

The PIC regulation also states that the Ministry may solicit the advice of PICs on matters that relate to student achievement and well-being. PICs can assist school boards by identifying strategies to increase parental engagement, including outreach to parents who find involvement more challenging due to language, recent immigration, poverty, newness to the system or other factors.

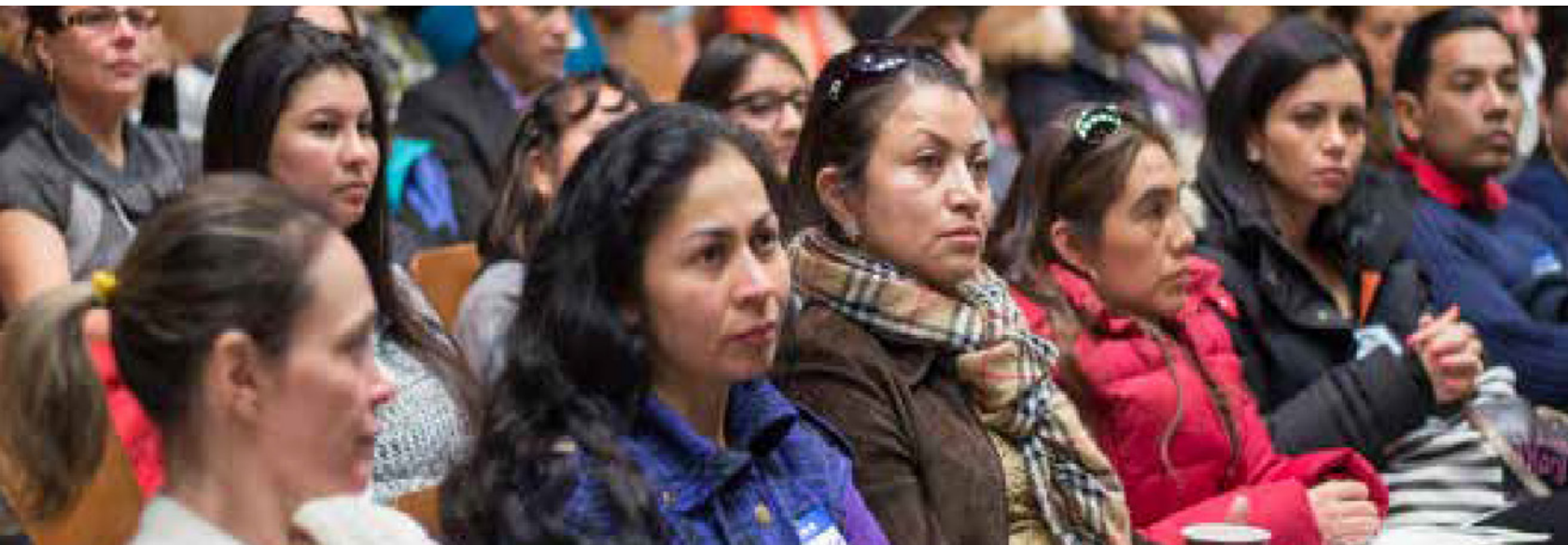
PICs can promote the initiatives of school councils, encourage dialogue on relevant board policies and help share effective practices that support parent engagement in their children's learning. They can also help identify parent and school council training needs within a district and contribute to the development of workshops, forums and conferences to address these needs.

"Parents play a vital role in education. When parents are engaged and involved, everyone - students, parents and families, teachers, schools, and communities - benefits, and our schools become increasingly rich and positive places to teach, learn, and grow"

– A parent engagement policy for Ontario schools, 2010



Do you think you are ready to join your child(ren)'s school council? If so, ask your school principal to find out when the next meeting will take place.



Parent Involvement Committee structure in Toronto Boards

There are parent involvement structures both in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and the Toronto Catholic District Board (TCDSB). As a parent you can participate in the parent involvement committees according to your children's board.

Toronto District Public School Board (TDSB)

If your child is enrolled in a public school, here is what you need to know about parent involvement advisory committees:

What does a Parent Involvement Advisory Committee do?

- Consult and work with parents, staff and community to identify issues related to parent engagement.
- Make recommendations or provide recommendations or comments to the board on any parent/education related matter
- Work and support school councils across the board



How can parents get involved with a parent involvement advisory committee (PIAC)?

- Get elected as a PIAC representative or alternate at your ward meeting or contact your Trustee
- Get involved with TDSB's Community Liaison Groups.
- Join one of PIACs Working Groups. Working group members are volunteers and are open to all TDSB parents/guardians
- Attend PIAC meetings. TDSB parents/guardians are welcome to attend meetings as observers.

PIAC supports parents/school councils in the following ways:

- Facilitation of Working Groups on an array of issues.
- Participation on a number of TDSB committees such as: School Calendar; Caring and Safe Committee; TDSB Consultation Committee.
- Organize the annual School Council Appreciation Event
- Collaborate with TDSB to organize the annual Parent Involvement "Make a Difference" Conference
- Ongoing outreach and support for School Councils

Community Liaison Groups

The current TDSB policy on Parent and Community Involvement supports and recognizes parent/community groups who are organized to work with the Board on educational issues of specific interest and relevance to members of their groups.

Community Liaison Groups facilitate an ongoing working relationship between the TDSB and system-wide community groups who wish to contribute to the Board's mission in areas of specific interest.

Special Education Advisory Committee

This committee assists the board in understanding the special needs of exceptional children and youth, and to advise the board in matters that apply to the delivery of special education services and programs.

To learn more visit: www.tdsb.on.ca

Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)

If your child is enrolled in a catholic school, here is what you need to know about catholic parent involvement committees.

What is the Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (CPIC)?

Toronto CPIC is a parent-led organization. Toronto CPIC members are volunteer parents/guardians, who collect information and ideas from their wards, discuss the information at meetings, and disseminate information to the right people.



The focus of the committee is to support student academic achievement through increased parent involvement.

What does the CPIC do?

Members of CPIC work at both the Ward and Board level. Members provide information and advice on parent engagement to the school board; create initiatives that promote and facilitate parent engagement; and educate parents to help them support their children's learning at home and/or at school.

The following are voting members:

- 24 Parent Members: Ward Representatives - elected by parents (two-year term)
- 4 Parent Members (at large) – elected by 24 Parent Members (one-year term)
- 3 Community Representatives - appointed by the committee one from OAPCE and/or the Archdiocese of Toronto

The following are non-voting members:

- Trustee representative
- Director of Education or designate
- Liaison Officer to the TCDSB

Who qualifies to become a member of CPIC?

All parents/guardians with at least one child currently registered in one the TCDSB Catholic schools. An employee of the TCDSB is not eligible to be elected to this council.

Special Education Advisory Committee

This committee may make recommendations to the Board in respect of any matter affecting the establishment and development of special education programs and services for exceptional pupils of the Board.

Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education – Toronto OAPCE

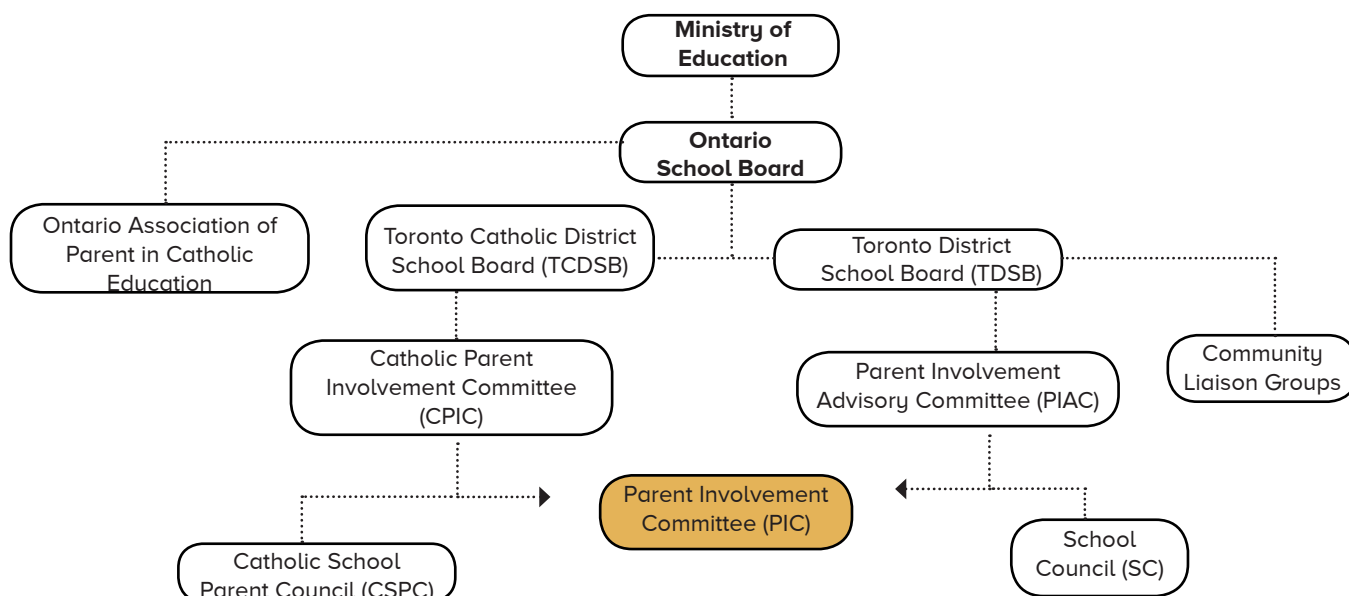
This province wide organization ensures value-added input to the TCDSB and the province to improve and enrich the Catholic education of students.

To learn more visit: www.tcdsb.org



Do you want to have a greater impact at the school board level? If so, check the website of your designated school board and find out more about the parental involvement committees (PICS).

Overview of Parent Involvement Advisory Committees (PIAC) and Catholic Parental Involvement Committees (CPIC)



Public Board Committees (TDSB)

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATED COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD

- Parent Involvement Advisory Committee
- Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEES

- Aboriginal Community Advisory Committee (ACAC)
- Alternative Schools Advisory Committee (ASAC)
- Black Student Achievement Advisory Committee (BSAAC)
- Community Use of Schools Advisory Committee (CUSAC)
- Early Years Advisory Committee (EYAC)
- Environmental Sustainability Community Advisory Committee (ESAC)
- Equity Policy Advisory Committee (EPAC)
- French as a Second Language Committee (FSLAC)
- Inner City Advisory Committee (ICAC)
- Student Nutrition Advisory Committee (SNAC)

PIAC Working Groups 2016-2017

Standing Working Groups

Bylaws (Ad hoc) Budget
Membership Nominations (Ad hoc)

Active Working Groups

Anti-Discrimination
Closing the Gap
Consultations
Communication
Outreach
P/VP Hiring Process
PRO Grant (Ad hoc)
School Council Information Document
SC411 (School Council Presentation)

Special Events Working Groups

Annual Parent Conference
School Council Appreciation & Information Event
Parent as Partners Conference
PIAC Strategic Planning Meeting
Annual Parent Conference

Definitions:

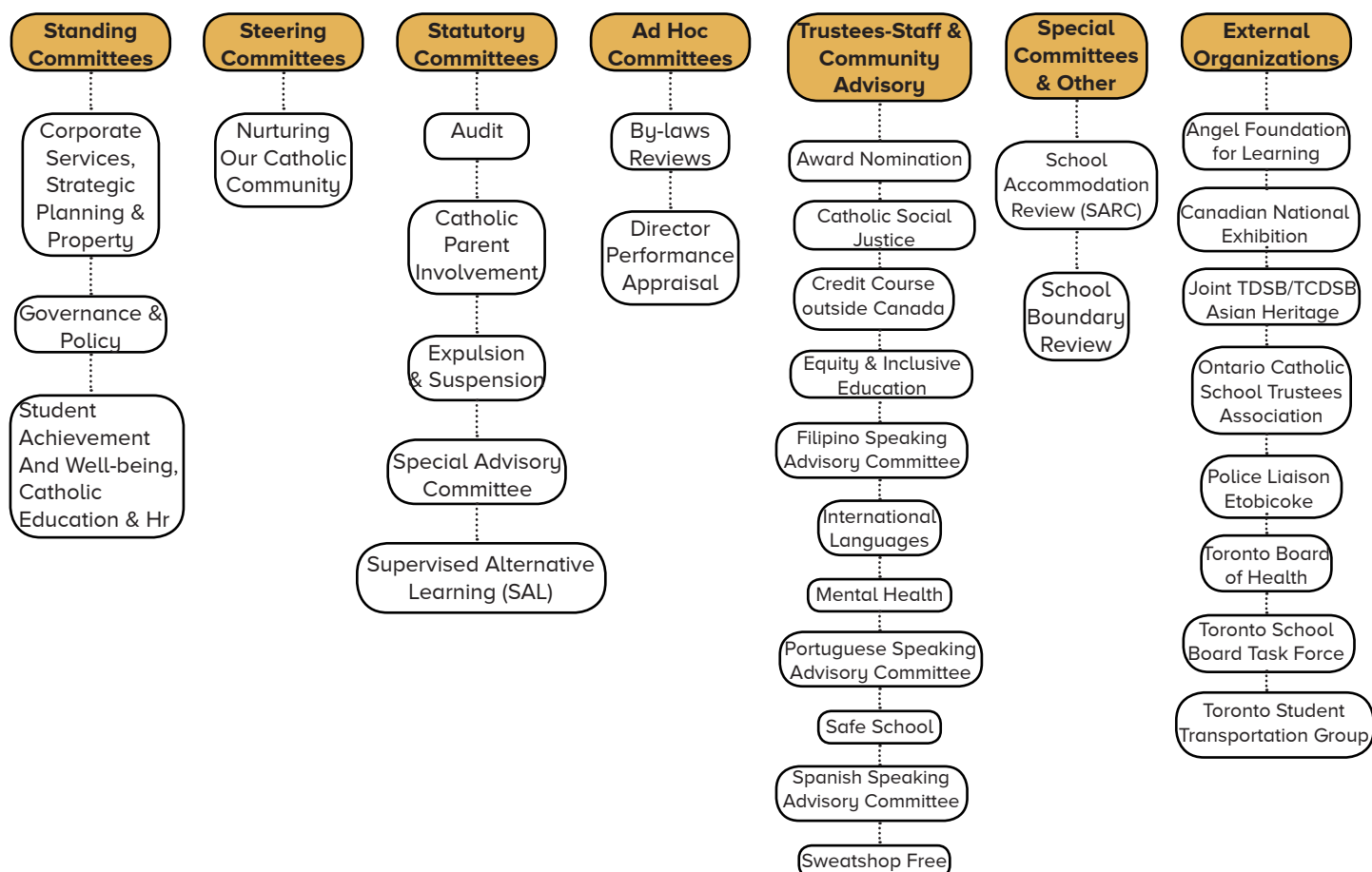
Standing Working Groups are permanent and exist to do its assigned work on an ongoing basis.

Active Working Groups are non-permanent. They may be formed and/or dissolved as the needs and priorities of PIAC change.

Special Events Working Groups exist solely for planning, managing and executing a PIAC hosted event.

Ad hoc Working Groups are formed for a specific task or objective, and dissolved after the completion of the task or achievement of the objective.

Catholic Community and Board Committees (TCDSB)



Provincial Funding for Parental Involvement

“Parents Reaching Out Grants” (PRO)

encourage parent engagement at the local, regional and provincial levels. They are designed to support parents in identifying barriers to parent engagement in their own community and to find local solutions to get more parents involved in their children’s learning.

There are two types of grants:

- Parents Reaching Out Grants to School Councils support school-based parent engagement projects.
- Regional/Provincial Grants for which parent organizations, Parent Involvement Committees (PICs), publicly funded school boards, non-profit organizations and post-secondary institutions operating in Ontario can apply.

What kinds of projects have been funded through Parents Reaching Out grants?

Thousands of projects have been funded across Ontario. Some of these include:

- **“Their Success Depends on Us!”** This grant supported a Parent Support Centre offering parents hands-on workshops and resources covering topics such as effective communications with the school and at home as well as a numeracy support group for parents to help their children succeed in school. *St Gregory Separate School – Powassan (Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board).*

- **“Books for Breakfast”** This grant supported a series of breakfast and read sessions for parents and children. Guest authors talked to parents and children during the breakfast session and then provided a short program for parents discussing ways to build and enhance literacy skills and foster a love of reading. *CC Carrothers Public School – London (Thames Valley District School Board)*
- **“Homework Survival Strategies”** this grant supported workshops for parents focusing on homework strategies, knowing your child, parenting skills and how to support their school work at home. *Britannia Public School – Mississauga (Peel District School Board)*

Read more Parents Reaching Out success stories at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/success.html

If you need more information on the program, please call **416 325-2929** or toll free **1-800-387-5514**. Persons with a hearing impairment should call **1-800-268-7095**.

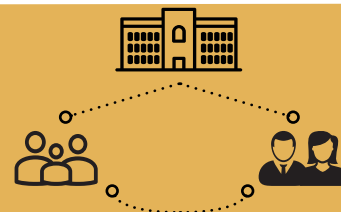
If you need technical help with the application form, please send your questions to support@smartsimple.com.

More information about application requirements and deadlines can be found at: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/reaching.html

DID YOU KNOW?

There are various ways to support your child(ren)’s success in school. From attending a school or community event to helping with homework, these activities foster a sense of community within the school, aimed at building stronger relationships between parents and teachers.

For more ideas visit: www.peopleforeducation.ca



Early Childhood Resources

Here are some programs for parents to get involved in their children's early education.

Ontario EarlyON:

These programs provide opportunities for all children to have access to inclusive, play and inquiry-based learning opportunities and for parents and caregivers to have access to information about early learning, child development and specialized services as well as access to high-quality services to support them in their roles.

For more information visit:

www.edu.gov.on.ca/



HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters):

Is a free home-based program which recognizes that parents are their children's first and best teachers. For newcomer families who do not have the tools and resources to prepare their preschoolers to enter school, HIPPY provides parents with the tools and supports that allow them to make a real difference in the lives of their children.

For more information visit:

www.workingwomenc.org/programs-services/hippy/



Better Beginnings, Better futures:

An initiative to prevent young children in low income, high-risk neighbourhoods from experiencing poor developmental outcomes, which may then require expensive health, education and social services. It emphasizes quality early child development programs, community and parental involvement, and program integration. Programs are available in many communities across Ontario.

For more information visit:

www.bbbf.ca



Ready for School Connects:

This two-week program is designed for newcomer families with children entering kindergarten. While their children participate in daily programs designed to prepare them for kindergarten, parents attend workshops on topics including effective discipline, the kindergarten curriculum, the education system in Ontario, and services available in the community.

For more information visit:

www.rfsc.ca



Bibliography & Resources

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French Public District School Board- Conseil Scolaire Viamonde (formerly Conseil scolaire de district du Centre Sud-Ouest) www.csviamonde.ca

French Catholic School Board Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud [ww.csdccs.edu.on.ca](http://www.csdccs.edu.on.ca)

The Best Start Resource Centre: Ontario's Maternal Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre, lot's of information on preconception health, prenatal health and early child development (0-6yrs). http://en.beststart.org/for_parents