



May 2019

Submission to Manitoba's Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education



Manitoba Association of
Parent Councils



Board of Directors
Manitoba Association of Parent Councils
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May 30th, 2019

Manitoba's Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education
470-800 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3G 0N4

Dear Commissioners,

The Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC) is an organization of school based parent groups that volunteer in schools within Manitoba. Manitoba Association of Parent Councils was recognized in 2013 as the representative of Parent Advisory Councils in Manitoba (Bill 14 – Parent Group for Schools). MAPC is currently made up of 7 Board Directors that live in Winnipeg and throughout the province of Manitoba.

Today, our submission to the K-12 Commission represents the voices of those parent council groups and individual parents/guardians whom have a vested interest in the education of Manitoba's children. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the K-12 Commission for giving us the opportunity to partake in this process and the ongoing development of our education system.

We are proud to have worked along side our educational partners throughout the years and would also like to take this opportunity to thank them for their knowledge, determination and diligence.

- Manitoba Education and Training (MET)
- Manitoba Association of School Business Officials (MASBO)
- Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS)
- Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA)
- The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS)
- Student Services Administrators' Association of Manitoba (SSAAM)

Over the last number of months parents and educators have reflected over what they feel are the issues and concerns regarding the review. We ask that the Commission further reflect on these issues and outcomes and hear our voices!

Sincerely,



Brenda Brazeau
Interim Executive Director
Manitoba Association of Parent Councils

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Introduction

What is education – “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”. (Nelson Mandela, 1918-2013).

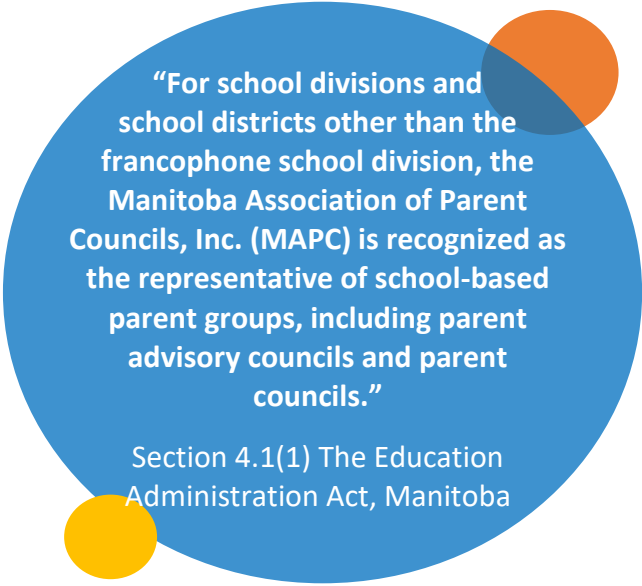
Society cannot progress forward without people that are educated. Education assists us to experience the world from many different perspectives. You gain wisdom through education which acts as a stepping stone during a person’s growth.

The Manitoba Association of Parent Councils has over 350 members throughout Manitoba consisting of Advisory Councils for School Leadership, Parent Advisory Councils, Parent Committees and several others. Numerous studies have shown that student achievement advances when parents/guardians play an active role in their child’s education.

IT MATTERS

“Parents, families and community members play a very important role in the education system. It is important for them to realize how much influence they can have over students and schools especially when they become involved in school matters”.

(Working Together: A Guide to Positive Problem Solving for Schools, Families and Communities, Manitoba Citizenship and Youth, 2004).



“For school divisions and school districts other than the francophone school division, the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, Inc. (MAPC) is recognized as the representative of school-based parent groups, including parent advisory councils and parent councils.”

Section 4.1(1) The Education Administration Act, Manitoba

Universal School Food Program for Students from Kindergarten to Grade 12

Recommendation

A universal school food program would ensure that all students from kindergarten to Grade 12 have the same access to healthy food in school. Every child has a right to healthy, nutritious meals. Studies over the years have shown that hunger greatly impacts a child's performance and behaviour in school. At this time, only a small number of children have access to food programs.

Manitoba has one of the highest child poverty rates in the country: approximately 88,000 thousand children. In Winnipeg, the city's poorest neighbourhood is that of Lord Selkirk Park where 68% of the people live below the poverty line. Poverty has serious repercussions, but for children it can be particularly devastating. Children who go hungry are not able to focus, so they have a low attention span, have behavioral issues, and discipline issues. Some children come to school late or miss school all together. Having children that are well fed makes a difference in their individual performance and how they contribute or disrupt the classroom. We all know the importance of eating healthy food, we have all heard the statement "eat your vegetables" but what happens when families cannot afford these items. [See: 1. Providing Equitable Access to Lunch Hour Supervision Programs Provided by Manitoba School Divisions](#)

Diversity and Inclusion in Classrooms

Recommendation

"Support ongoing, effective training to make schools safer and more relevant to Indigenous, black, people of colour & 2SLGBTQ students. Teachers need to be supported with PD & Resources."

Parent & Public Consultation Attendee

Diversity can be theorized in a number of different ways depending on the situation. In our classrooms, we theorize diversity as understanding that every student brings unique experiences, strengths, and ideas to each classroom. Diversities can be along the aspect of race, sexual orientation, gender age, disabilities, or religious beliefs, etc. Diversity such as these allow us to explore and incorporate differences in our classroom to enhance learning.

As educators it is our responsibility to create a supportive environment which means including academic supports (flexible pacing, grouping reading and literacy specialists, tutoring etc.).

In inclusive classrooms, educators are aware of the diversity of their students and work with the students to create a safe and collaborative educational environment. [See 2. First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Parents and Families in Manitoba's Education System 2018 \(Statement of Belief\)](#) and [3. Providing Supports in Public Spaces for Manitoba Students with Disabilities 2016 \(Resolution\)](#)

Cap Size in Classrooms

Recommendation

The cap on classroom size was mandated by the Smaller Classes Initiative which stated that class sizes were not to exceed 20 students. In March of 2017 the Government lifted the size cap on classrooms. The importance of teacher to student ratio is very important and is considered to be way too high. School age daycare ratio is 1:15 ...why are our elementary schools so different? Manitoba children need to feel safe, confident and successful. Success in the early years shows as a high predictor of later success in both school and life. A small class will make a more interconnected unit. In smaller classrooms, students are given the opportunity to interact, and facilitate better relationships with their teachers and fellow classmates and allow everyone to be more supportive of each other. Smaller classrooms are also significant as it allows educators to better know the strengths and weaknesses of each student. With smaller classrooms, teachers' attention is more focused and students are more oriented to be more engaged and eager to learn the curriculum and new experiences.

***"Need class sizes that
facilitate meaningful
relationships and connections
with students"***

- Parent & Public Consultation Attendee

Overloaded classrooms in general, create further problems in learning results for our children. Students feel frustrated, discouraged, and end up with negative effects on their studies. This results in further behaviour problems and disruption in classrooms. Having the feeling of discouragement can also result in stress and anxiety for both the student and the educator.

Mental Health and Wellness

Recommendation

We need to assist our educators in ensuring that we have mental wellness and trauma informed classrooms. Our children spend at least 6 hours a day with our educators. Training needs to be given to teachers and support staff so they can develop an understanding of child and youth mental health concerns and how to best deal with them. It is imperative that Manitoba education guarantee that all

“Greater acknowledgement of mental health & training for staff and students to support those who are struggling”

- Parent & Public Consultation Attendee

students in the province have access to health programs, professional mental health counselling services, as well as education and career counselling within our schools.

We in Manitoba need to increase dedicated funding for accredited mental health professionals to be available in schools to best meet students’ mental health needs in a timely and accessible manner.

Role school/classroom climate, culture and physical spaces have a significant play on mental health and trauma for students and educators.

Mental illness seriously interferes with a child’s academic achievement and their ability to form relationships. Anxiety, behaviour and mood disorders are the most widespread and are experienced by some of our most struggling students. In order to have the best learning environment, both students and educators need to be healthy.

As a community we need to collaborate between schools and mental health providers. The time is now to invest in our students as well as our educators to reduce negative impacts in the future. [See 4. Mental Health Supports for Students in Manitoba Schools 2015 \(Resolution\)](#)

Indigenous Education from the Intellectual and Cultural Traditions of Indigenous Peoples

Recommendation

1. Commit to making Indigenous education a priority.
2. Ensure governance structures recognize and respect Indigenous peoples.
3. Implement intellectual and cultural tradition of Indigenous people through curriculum and learning approaches relevant to students and communities.
4. Support students and educators to increase understanding mutuality among Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.
5. Build relationships and be accountable to Indigenous communities in support of self determination through education, training, and applied research.

There are over 50 first nations in Canada as well as the Metis and Inuit communities. We cannot expect our educators to be experts on all of these – we need to give them the funding from our Government and the knowledge from our Elders.

[The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action #63 and #64.](#)

Governance

Recommendation

In general, many parents feel that having a voice in their children's education is extremely important and by not having local representation, this could impact what programs are provided to our students. Someone who has children that attend school in the inner city have different needs than those who live in the suburbs and should be able to have someone represent them who lives and understands the issues relevant to each area. This allows parents to be engaged and able to connect with those who create the vision and direction of the schools. Many parents depend on the programs, services and supports that school boards support, for example breakfast programs and learn to read programs to name a few. Parents also believe that continuing to elect school boards remains an important democratic right.

Parents do believe that school boards need to use the financial resources in an appropriate and fiscal manner, however this should not be at the expense of the students. With more students having additional learning needs entering school every year, the need for additional funding (or a different formula) needs to be addressed.

Parents have said that being able to voice their concerns to the schools, staff, and school boards in regards to the needs they are trying to meet is crucial. Student and family needs are not just the 3 R's, but now may include nutrition needs, mental health concerns, transportation issues, childcare or lack of childcare spaces, and are having to rely on the schools and school boards to support this.

It is recommended that the Government of Manitoba places renewed emphasis on engaging parents in school and divisional planning, as outlined in the Public Schools Act:

- that school boards consult with local parent groups about the budget on an annual basis (Budget Consultations, 178(1) Public Schools Act, MB)
- that the principal of each school consult with its parent group in the creation of the school plan (Parent Groups for Schools, Consultation re: annual school plan, 55.2, Public Schools Act, MB)

Parents and parent groups offer unique perspectives and insight about student needs in a learning community. When schools and school divisions include their voices in the planning process, the education community is better equipped to build awareness and understanding of the diverse family and student needs that exist in schools. [See 5. School and Divisional Planning \(MAPC Tip Sheet\)](#)

Appendices

1. Providing Equitable Access to Lunch Hour Supervision Programs Provided by Manitoba School Divisions

Background

Each school division has its own policy/budget rationale for either including or excluding lunch hour program management and/or supervision within the school division budget. If the division budget does not provide for lunch hour program supervision management, the parents are responsible for providing the lunch hour supervision, either individually or as a co-ordinated program.

Introduction Statement

Access to lunch hour supervision programs provided by a school division is inequitable in Manitoba, depending on location of residency. If no school division program is offered, the capacity to deliver lunch programs by parents varies among neighbourhoods for a variety of reasons, such as parent volunteer time available, parent skill capacity for program management/delivery, low income challenges, language barriers, etc. The ability for parents to pursue employment and education opportunities is directly affected by the availability of lunch programs in the school.

Access to a lunch hour supervision program provided by a school division should be available to every family in Manitoba.

Action Requests

That the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils request of the Minister of Education and Training to require all school divisions within Manitoba to provide lunch supervision program management to ensure equitable access for all families in Manitoba. Each school division can design its individual program to meet its budget and policy needs (e.g. Providing teachers with a lunch break, collecting parent fees as needed to support costs), but the responsibility of delivering the lunch hour supervision program would rest with the school division, not the parents.

Originally submitted by David Livingstone Community School Parent Advisory Group, Winnipeg School Division.

2. First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Parents and Families in Manitoba's Education System 2018 (Statement of Belief)

In June 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released its Calls to Action to address the legacy of Canada's Residential Schools System and its generational impact on survivors and their families. Contained within these recommendations were a series of actions involving the education system and how it could contribute towards the healing and reconciliation journey for all citizens of Canada.

http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

In response to the TRC Calls to Action, as well as in response to a media piece on racism in Winnipeg, the City of Winnipeg declared its support in March 2017 by establishing the City of Winnipeg Indigenous Accord, whose vision stated, *"... Winnipeg is a place where everyone has a voice, a place where people and the environment come first, where everyone has fair access. Everyone should be treated with respect and acceptance and kindness. Everyone should treat everyone kindly and equally and accept them for who they are because when you feel like you belong, you achieve freedom. United as one, and hopeful, we can work toward a peaceful and safe city."*

<http://www.winnipeg.ca/indigenous/pdfs/CoW-Indigenous-Accord.pdf>

Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC) Board of Directors declared its support as a partner of the Accord in June 2017. As a signatory of this Accord, MAPC committed to participate by working towards three specific activities to support goals contained in the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action:

1. *The Board of Directors will open MAPC meetings and events by **acknowledging** that we live, work, and meet on Treaty Land in the homeland of the Metis people, ensuring that every MAPC volunteer, director, employee, and member parent group understands that the land has a deep connection to our collective histories as First Nations, Inuit, and Metis people, as well as settlers and newcomers (TRC Recommendation 45.iii)*
2. *MAPC will offer **opportunities** to its membership, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to learn about the history of colonization in Canada and legacy of the Residential School system through workshops and exercises coordinated in partnership with the Indigenous Inclusion Directorate and other partners. (TRC Recommendation 10.vi and 10.vii)*
3. *MAPC will offer its **support**, as a friend and ally of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis people and their respective school communities, to assist in the collaborative development of relevant resources, supports, and materials promoting the inclusion of autonomous parental voice in a variety of school systems, for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis people, as well as allies and partners. (TRC Recommendation 10.v and 10.vi)*

<http://www.winnipeg.ca/indigenous/WIA/PartnerGoals.stm#5>

ACTION REQUEST

In recognition of the Accord and on behalf of its membership and parents throughout Manitoba, the MAPC Board of Directors would like to share the following proposed statement of beliefs with its education partners and the media.

1. MAPC believes that our national and provincial histories have created a rich tapestry woven with inspiring stories of growth and celebration, as well as devastating tales of failures and tragedies. MAPC believes that each of these stories –the good as well as the painful - contributes to essential learnings for students, ensuring that all children in Manitoba will know how to contribute to building diverse communities.
2. MAPC believes that by acknowledging and understanding our collective pasts and responsibilities, every person can contribute to creating stronger communities and a Good Life for all children, parents, and families in Manitoba.
3. MAPC believes that it is important for every student in Manitoba to learn about the history and culture of; the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) peoples, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the history and legacy of the Canadian Residential School System, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada's Calls to Action. MAPC believes that engaging in diverse opportunities, resources, and supports are critical to student learning about these events and that school communities, in collaboration with families, are the most influential environment for that to occur.
4. MAPC supports the need for school communities to invite parents, parent councils, and communities to participate in learning opportunities dedicated to the history and culture of FNMI people, UNDRIP, the Residential School System, and the TRC Calls to Action.

3. Providing Supports in Public Spaces for Manitoba Students with Disabilities 2016 (Resolution)

Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC) and parents of school aged children throughout the province, support Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning's philosophy of inclusion, which states that,

Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship. In Manitoba, we embrace inclusion as a means of enhancing the well-being of every member of the community. By working together, we strengthen our capacity to provide the foundation for a richer future for all of us.

(Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2016,
<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/index.html>)

Parents and families, as well as parent councils, work tirelessly to ensure that children have the ability to access opportunities in schools, which strengthen inclusion by promoting social interaction, learning experiences, and community building. These efforts include planning or participating in special events, field trips, family fun days, playground enhancement, and more. However, many children and their families are often excluded from participation because of a disability and any barriers that may prevent them from participating in a meaningful way.

One concern for many families and caregivers is the lack of safety equipment and appropriate toileting stations in public areas frequented by students of early, middle, and senior years schools during field trips. These items promote safety, hygiene, and dignity for students as well as their caregivers. They are often forced to either improvise the situation to the best of their ability (such as using the floor rather than a change table for diapering needs) or worse, refrain from participating in an event due to a lack of equipment which promotes safety and inclusion (such as a lift or ramp system in a public swimming pool).

Youth and adults with disabilities are often victims of the poverty cycle and a lack of social inclusion. Although they are not specifically indicated in the provincial strategy for poverty reduction, *All Aboard*, it is noted in the action plan for creating opportunities for youth that "...an important part of poverty reduction and **social inclusion** is allowing and supporting youth to become socially connected, engaged and supported by their community. Young people need access to recreation, arts, and education." (All Aboard, http://www.gov.mb.ca/allaboard/pubs/proposed_actionplan_2013-2016.pdf)

In the Accessibility for Manitobans Act, recently introduced in 2013, a key area identified to remove barriers is the Accessible Built Environment. This area identifies that architectural and structural barriers often prevent citizens from accessing opportunities and resources which should be available to all. It is within this area that improvement can be made so more recreational activities can be accessed to contribute to the enjoyment for all people and their daily living. (Accessibility for Manitobans Act, http://www.gov.mb.ca/dio/pdf/introducing_accessibility_for_manitobans_act.pdf)

Action Request:

MAPC supports the Accessibility for Manitobans Act and its intent to remove barriers to participation for all citizens. We strongly urge the provincial government and all committees contributing to the consultation and implementation contained within this act, to consider the need for safety and hygiene equipment to be included. These required improvements will increase accessibility, address safety issues, and promote dignity for all students and caregivers while accessing public areas in Manitoba.

4. Mental Health Supports for Students in Manitoba Schools 2015 (Resolution)

Background

Parents and schools have a shared responsibility to foster an environment which considers the health, safety, and wellbeing of all students in a school community. Ongoing discussions regarding mental health are well documented priorities for education stakeholders throughout the province, as demonstrated in the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) Journal http://www.mass.mb.ca/documents/mass_journal_spring2013.pdf and at the MASS Education for ACTION conference in November 2014. While Manitoba schools often demonstrate exemplary work and strong programming in support of students experiencing mental health concerns, there is still much work that needs to be done.

Introduction

It is widely understood that, “Without timely treatment and supports, children and youth living with mental illness do not flourish.” (Mental Health Framework for Students: A Position Statement, 2013, Manitoba Association of School Superintendents) Youth may miss or drop out of school, engage in high risk behavior, or contemplate suicide as a result of their unaddressed or misunderstood mental health concerns. Parents and families are left feeling isolated and overwhelmed in finding help for their child, and often look to the school for support or resources to assist them in managing the ongoing challenges they may be facing. Situations such as these become even more complicated when the child’s parent is dealing with personal mental health concerns as well.

While it is understood that parents have a responsibility to work collaboratively with the school and keep informed of the development or existence of medical conditions, including mental health concerns, resources and supports are often lacking - especially in some communities. Waitlists for diagnosis or treatment can be long, staff resources are limited, and communication challenges between the various sectors involved in youth well-being can add strain an already overworked system. As a result students, families, and schools are often left feeling frustrated, upset, and anxious. While it may be true that all of the parties involved *want* to help, families are often left feeling helpless – or even worse – hopeless.

MAPC believes that timely access to appropriate professional resources to address mental health concerns of youth is a high priority in Manitoba.

MAPC supports early assessment and diagnosis of mental health concerns for all grade levels in Manitoba schools. MAPC supports the implementation of proactive strategies to address mental health challenges which focus on prevention and intervention. MAPC supports education for all stakeholders to develop a greater understanding and awareness of mental health concerns in children and youth. MAPC supports timely access to mental health resources and supports for all school communities in Manitoba.

Action Request

It is with these understandings in mind, that MAPC is voicing its support of the recommendations made by MASS in the “development and implementation of a Comprehensive Collaborative Mental Health Framework for Manitoba.” This framework includes:

1. *Provincial Plan*: A strategic, provincial plan for a comprehensive, collaborative 3-tiered mental health framework for all children and youth (ages 0 to 18) developed and implemented by all Ministries of Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet.
2. *Timely and Universal Access to Mental Health Professionals*: Timely, responsive access to the services of mental health professionals for all Manitoba’s children and youth.
3. *Psychiatric Services*: Enhanced psychiatric services for all Manitoba’s children and youth requiring Tier 3 Intensive interventions and supports.
4. *Collaborative Community-Based Planning*: On-going school-based collaboration with mental health professionals to plan and deliver Universal, Selective, and Intensive Tiers of programming, supports and services for children and youth.
5. *Communication Protocol*: A communication protocol, including common language, to improve the communication between mental health professionals and all intersectoral partners.
6. *Equitable Services for all Manitoba School Division*: Equitable mental health services for the rural, northern and urban regions of the province.

(Mental Health Framework for Students, 2013)

MAPC strongly urges the Government of Manitoba and all education stakeholders to continue working together to address the mental health needs of Manitoba children and youth to the age of 21.

References:

Manitoba Association of School Superintendents. (Spring 2013). Mental Health Framework for Students: A Position Statement. Retrieved from http://www.mass.mb.ca/documents/mental_health_framework.pdf

5. School and Divisional Planning (MAPC Tip Sheet)

School and Divisional Plans are maps of how an education community will get from 'here' to 'there'. A plan maps out the specific goals, the timeline that will be followed to work towards each of these goals, the responsibilities of each person or group involved, and how success will be measured and reported on.

Why is a School or Divisional Plan important?

Divisional Plans are important because, by analyzing data and considering the most current research, educators are better able to determine direction as to how the division will improve literacy and numeracy skills of students – especially in the context of Aboriginal learners – as well as other priority areas determined by the local context, or needs, of the school division

School Plans are important because they determine how each school will work towards and support the goals that the school division has established.

Who participates in the development of a School or Divisional Plan?

It is required, as outlined in the Public Schools Act, that each school board consult with local parent groups about the budget on an annual basis. (*Budget Consultations, 178(1) Public Schools Act, MB*)

Each School Division has an elected school board, as well as a team of dedicated professionals, that participates in developing the **Divisional Plan** to address its specific needs relating to provincial curriculum, student programming, annual budget, and other priority areas. The division must also describe how education stakeholders were involved in the development of the **Divisional Plan**. This could include community business leaders, volunteer organizations, students, and families. Each member of the school team participates in developing the **School Plan**, supporting the goals established by the school division. It is required, as outlined in the Public Schools Act, that the principal of each school consult with its parent group in the creation of the school plan on an annual basis. (*Parent Groups for Schools, Consultation re annual school plan, 55.2, Public Schools Act, MB*)

When is a School or Divisional Plan developed?

School divisions are required to post the most current **Divisional Plans** on their respective websites by October 31 of each year. Each school board determines its own requirements for schools to participate in developing a **School Plan** on an annual basis.

How can you participate?

Parents and parent groups offer unique perspectives and insight about student needs in a learning community. When schools and school divisions include their voices in the planning process, the education community is better equipped to build awareness and understanding of the diverse family and student needs that exist in schools.

There are a variety of ways that schools, school divisions, and parent groups can explore when considering parental participation in the development of School and Division Plans. Your involvement could include:

- Reviewing the current plans and providing input at public consultations and PAC meetings
 - Identifying challenges and opportunities that exist in the community which could potentially impact student and family engagement

- Creating opportunities for families to learn about the school and divisional plans and how they can support education goals from home and in the community

Discuss with your school or division how your parent group can participate in the planning process in a meaningful way which suits your parent and school community needs.

Resources:

MB Education and Training

K – 12 Framework for Continuous Improvement

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/ssdp/framework.html#framework>

Parent Groups for Schools (Public Schools Act)

<https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/40-2/pdf/b014.pdf>

School Partnerships: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities

http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/school_partnerships/index.html

Public Schools Act (Budget Consultations, section 178(1))

http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250_2e.php

Manitoba Association of Parent Councils

MAPC Resource Guide for Manitoba Parent Advisory Councils (*available upon request for MAPC Members*)

MAPC Empowering Parents: A Guide to Addressing Concerns in Manitoba Schools

<http://www.mapc.mb.ca/PDFs/Advocacy%20Guide%20APPROVED%20APR%202015.pdf>