

GRANTS FOR STUDENT NEEDS
2018-19 BRIEF

To the Minister of Education

December 2017

ONTARIO ENGLISH
Catholic
Teachers
ASSOCIATION

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) represents the 45,000 passionate and qualified teachers in Ontario's publicly funded English Catholic schools, from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.01 The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the development of the 2018-19 Grants for Student Needs (GSN). As always, we will advocate for investments in publicly funded education that will effectively and efficiently meet the needs of teachers, students, and communities.

2. BUILDING ON OUR SUCCESS

2.01 Ontario's education system is widely considered one of the most successful and high-performing in the world. In 2015, the five-year high school graduation rate reached 86.5 per cent for the first time in the province's history, representing a more than 18 per cent increase since 2004 (Ministry of Education 2016). We have fostered increased literacy and numeracy, advances in early childhood education, and a reduction in the number of low-performing schools (Fullan 2013). Even in mathematics, where much attention has been paid to declining test scores, recent PISA results indicate that Ontario is among the most successful jurisdictions in the world (OECD 2016). We can also pride ourselves on our commitment to equity, which is evidenced by the relatively small gaps in performance between high- and low-income students, and between Canadian- and foreign-born students.

2.02 As a number of observers have noted, these results have been achieved in large part due to the co-operative professional relationship between policymakers and teachers (OECD 2015). Catholic teachers look forward to working closely with the government as we continue to build on this success. However, as we do so, it is important that the government take steps to maximize the impact of education funding.

2.03 One consideration that the government should pursue is to make the Local Priorities Fund (LPF) a permanent feature of the Grants for Student Needs. The LPF addresses a range of priorities, including special education staffing

to support children in need, as well as “at-risk” students and adult education. Teachers across the province have been calling for investments like these for many years, and the LPF provides an effective mechanism to address specific local needs.

- 2.04** In recent months, the government has introduced a number of education initiatives, with the goal of “achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being and enhancing public confidence.” To meet these goals, it is imperative that the government follow through on its stated objective to focus on accountability and transparency. Only by adopting appropriate accountability measures can we ensure that education funding is effective, transparent, and aligns with the needs of schools and communities across Ontario.

Recommendation:

That the government increase investment in education to address cost increases and improve programs.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN EDUCATION EXPENDITURES

- 3.01** In the introduction letters that accompany the 2018-19 Education Funding Engagement Guide, both the Minister of Education and the Deputy Minister of Education make clear that funding will include a specific focus on equity and accountability. This is an important inclusion, and one that we hope the Ministry makes good on in its Grants for Student Needs.
- 3.02** We have been particularly concerned about the way school boards are using the Special Purpose Grants, such as the Learning Opportunities Grant. These programs are only worthwhile if the money is spent appropriately and effectively. Over the years, the proportion of the grant that goes to services targeted toward students in need – such as guidance counselors or nutrition

programs – has been dramatically reduced (Brown 2013). Furthermore, with an overall education budget that does not match student needs, and legal pressure to balance their books, school boards have great incentives to use these grants to fill gaps in funding for core programs and expenses (Casey 2013). For instance, in 2012-13 the Toronto District School Board is reported to have diverted almost 70 per cent of the funds that were intended for targeted initiatives to support at-risk students. The board is said to have diverted almost \$1 billion of such funding since it was introduced in 1998 (Johnston, Queiser and Clandfield 2013). This is a problem that our members report is happening in their school boards as well.

- 3.03** Rather than scaling back the reporting requirements, we should be strengthening the process by which funds are distributed and allocated. There is still no clear process to determine how allocations from these grants are made, and no disclosure regarding these allocations until after the funding has been distributed. To be useful in holding school boards to account, reporting must be prompt, with real-time transfers of data where possible.

Recommendations:

That the Ministry of Education link funding, as closely as possible, to teacher-directed initiatives that support teachers and students in the classroom.

That the Ministry of Education require school boards to report locally-determined program expenditures of funds allocated through the Grants for Student Needs and Education Program: Other grants as a compliance requirement under the overall accountability framework of the Grants for Student Needs. Disclosure should be as specific as possible in identifying the program and components to which funds are allocated.

That the Ministry of Education establish an annual process of consultation with teacher representatives at each school board regarding locally-determined program expenditures of funds allocated through the Grants for Student Needs. Funds should not be released until such consultation has occurred.

4. WELL-BEING

4.01 In recent years, the concept of “well-being” has moved beyond its traditional focus on physical health, and has taken on a more comprehensive definition. In May 2016, the Ministry of Education released *Ontario’s Well-Being Strategy for Education Discussion Document*, which defines well-being as “that positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are met.” The document states that supporting well-being is essential for fostering healthy, active, and engaged citizens, and breaks down the concept into four main components: positive mental health; equity and inclusive education; safe and accepting schools; and healthy schools.

4.02 Catholic teachers applaud the government’s commitment to promoting well-being among students. But we must be sure that the rhetoric and consultations are followed up with adequate investments. We also need to ensure that we are paying attention to the well-being of teachers and other staff, including administration, in order to foster a supportive environment for everyone within the school community.

4.03 Mental Health

Up to 70 per cent of mental health issues emerge by adolescence (Government of Canada 2006). In Ontario, 15 to 20 per cent of children and youth have a mental health need, and one in seven students describe their own mental health as fair or poor (OPACYO 2011; Boak et al. 2013). However, young people remain the least likely to receive adequate care; currently, more than 6,500 children and youth in Ontario with significant

mental health issues wait more than a year to access treatment (Children's Mental Health Ontario 2016; Ministry of Children and Youth Services 2016). Young people are far too often turning to emergency services as a result of problems that should have been identified and addressed much earlier (MHASEF 2015).

- 4.04** The government has done a good job of producing resources to increase awareness and reduce the stigma around mental health issues. Our schools have also been providing more services, with programs like School Mental Health ASSIST, and Mental Health and Addiction Nurses in District School Boards. Last year's GSN included continued funding for a Mental Health Leader for each school board, as well as resources for school-aged children and youth in care, treatment centres or custody.

- 4.05** However, we are still not moving fast enough in developing a comprehensive, adequately resourced approach that strikes an appropriate balance between prevention and intervention, especially early and ongoing intervention. Undiagnosed or untreated mental health issues remain a significant impediment to student engagement and achievement. By providing more mental health supports in schools, where children and youth spend much of their time, we can further reduce stigma, help students with mental health issues feel connected to their communities, and deliver more responsive service.

- 4.06** Naturally, the mental health needs of students, and the accessibility of services, varies in accordance with the population and geography of our school communities. As such, we must ensure that rural schools and/or schools with lower student populations are not disadvantaged in their attempts to provide students with a healthy environment. The diversity of schools and communities within Ontario means that any mental health funding must be reflective of the needs of the specific community it

is intended to serve. This is an area where co-ordination between the Ministry of Education and other ministries, and further exploration of the community hub model, could be effective.

- 4.07** Of course, while additional professional resources are required, teachers still have a critical role to play. The Ministry of Education's (2017) updated policy and resource guide for educators lists the wide variety of mental health issues students might be dealing with, including problems with anxiety, mood, attention and hyperactivity, behaviour, eating, substance use, gambling, and self-harm and suicide, among others. To be able to identify student needs and offer the proper support, teachers urgently need expanded, focused, and ongoing training and professional development.

Recommendations:

That the Ministry of Education provide additional funding in the GSN, and co-ordinate with other ministries, to expand supports and services for students with mental health issues.

That the government co-ordinate funding from other ministries with the Ministry of Education to deliver child and family support services from space available in elementary and secondary schools.

4.08 Special Education

Teachers want to provide the best, most inclusive learning environments for all students. However, there are many issues with respect to funding, staffing, classroom composition, and accountability that are limiting our ability to serve students with special education needs.

- 4.09** The 2017-18 year represented the first time where the Differentiated Special Education Needs (DSENA) allocation was fully implemented, after a four-year phase in that replaced the High Needs Amount. The transition to DSNEA was

purported to create “greater fairness and equity within the system,” but in reality, distributional changes have continued to exacerbate shortages in some school boards. Boards were already reporting that they did not have the resources required to serve all of the students with identified special education needs (People for Education 2015; Rushowy and Ferguson 2015). And although the government pledged to address regional deficiencies, recent studies indicate that as many as 30 to 40 per cent of elementary schools in Eastern, Southwestern, and Northern Ontario, respectively, are still without a full-time special education teacher (People for Education 2017).

- 4.10** Previously, in the 2017-18 Education Funding Engagement Guide, the government acknowledged that the demographic data used for the Measures of Variability (MOV) were inadequate, especially given the damage done when the mandatory long-form census was suspended by the previous federal government. Unfortunately, a 2017 Ministry of Education Memorandum indicated that there would be only one additional MOV category: a French language School Board Adjustment.

- 4.11** This calculation fails to address the fact that many special education needs, such as autism and behavioural disorders, have seen considerable increases in incidence – as well as improvements in our ability to detect them – in recent years. We need to refresh our approach.

- 4.12** We can strengthen the existing formula by incorporating new sources of data, such as social service agency client rosters. We can also further develop our birth registries to record needs that are evident at birth. Furthermore, while we do not want to go back to an individual submission basis, it should be noted that school boards collect a great deal of data on students. If certain boards feel they are being negatively impacted by the funding formula, they can use this data to inform their arguments.

- 4.13** Our members have also identified several specific issues that should be addressed, such as the utilization and replacement of certified special

education resource teachers. In many boards, these teachers are constantly being called upon to undertake administrative duties. They are not always replaced in the classroom. As a result, students are going without the specialized support they need.

- 4.14** We should all be particularly concerned about those students who require especially intensive support. As we have argued for several years, the \$27,000 cap on the Special Incidence Portion, which has been in place and unchanged since 1998, needs to be amended or removed. This amount is well below the salary grid for educational assistants and not nearly enough to cover the increasing costs of specialized staff and necessary materials. This is especially true given that inflation is constantly eroding the real value of the grant.
- 4.15** Research has shown that smaller classes enable teachers to more effectively address the unique learning needs of special education students while building safe, integrated classroom communities (Bascia 2010). This is also true when the class has partially integrated special education students, and especially true when there are several students with special education needs, or students with multiple exceptionalities. There must be provincial class size and composition guidelines that will help teachers to provide the best possible learning environment for all students.

Recommendations:

That the weighting factor be re-established as a component of the Special Incidence Portion of the Special Education Grant.

That the Special Education Grant establish clear benchmarks for the caseloads of special education teachers.

That the government develop a mechanism for school boards to report spending allocations from the Special Education Grant.

That the government develop provincial class size and composition guidelines for the integration of students with special needs.

4.16 Violence Against Teachers

For almost a decade, OECTA has been raising the issue of violence and harassment experienced by Ontario teachers. We were consistently told by government that more data was necessary in order to identify the scope and scale of the problem, and work toward tangible solutions.

4.17 In the spring of 2017, OECTA partnered with Pollara Strategic Insights to conduct a comprehensive survey of members. The results were sobering. Almost 90 per cent of respondents said that they have experienced or witnessed some form of violence or harassment by a student during their career. More than a quarter have had to take time off work because of the mental health effects of violence in schools. Eighty-five per cent feel that the incidence of violence is increasing, while 80 per cent say that incidents are becoming more severe. And despite advocacy by Catholic teachers and others in the education community, 72 per cent of respondents do not believe that students and teachers are protected against violence or harassment in schools, with two-thirds saying they do not believe that school administrators take the matter seriously. These statistics illustrate a widespread crisis that cannot be allowed to persist.

4.18 In addition to illuminating the problem's severity, the survey data also pointed toward potential solutions. One of the key conclusions was that the government must make significant, ongoing investments in professional supports – such as educational assistants, psychologists, social workers, and child and youth workers. In addition, funding is necessary to address the necessity for programs for those students who might need to be removed from the regular classroom for a time. Finally, the survey data made clear that increased funding for training remains an important requirement. Not only should there be proper informational training for all staff on reporting procedures, but also teachers require intervention training that instruct on non-physical contact with students.

Recommendations:

That the government provide funding for the proper training of all school staff on reporting procedures for incidents of violence in the workplace.

That the government provide intervention training that requires non-physical contact with a student.

That the government make significant investments in professional supports and services (e.g. psychologists, child and youth workers, social workers, and education assistants). These dedicated funds should be delivered through the Pupil Foundation Grant and the Special Education Grants.

That the government provide appropriate programs for students who might need to be removed from the regular classroom.

5. SCHOOL FACILITIES AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

- 5.01** Declining enrolment is a challenge, but any solutions must respect our history and communities. As the report of the Declining Enrolment Working Group (2009) stated, "Actions taken to address declining enrolment should ensure that students have fair access to education programs and services based on their need and circumstances. All measures must also respect the constitutional and statutory framework for education in Ontario, which includes English-language public, English-language Catholic, French-language public, and French-language Catholic school boards."
- 5.02** Closing schools or merging school boards is more likely to cause unwanted and unnecessary disruptions than to create significant savings. Many costs, including administrative costs, would continue to be driven by enrolment. Also, Ontario's Catholic schools still enjoy widespread support, educating

almost 650,000 students, including many non-Catholic students whose parents have chosen to send their children to Catholic high schools, in recognition of the system's high standards, values-based education, and forward-thinking methods. Our graduates, who are active in all fields of modern society, say the education they received in Ontario's publicly funded Catholic schools taught them a sense of community and fostered an understanding of social justice (Herbert and Childs 2013).

- 5.03** There is a need for flexibility, especially in the rural and northern areas of the province where there might only be one school in a community in any of the four publicly funded systems. Moving school boundaries and closing schools eliminates the range of opportunities available for families, while forcing students to move away from their friends and teachers. And it is not just Catholic families that would feel the consequences of upheaval – merging systems would inevitably see students in the public system shifted among boards and schools.
- 5.04** Other public education advocates agree that rather than closing schools or merging boards, we should be concentrating on using our public facilities in smarter, more collaborative ways (Heartfield 2012; People for Education 2012). For several years we have been recommending a more holistic conceptualization of schools as community hubs. We would like to see various child- and family-related social services moved into school buildings and more fully integrated into students' daily lives. This would serve to lower costs and make efficient use of public assets while reducing social isolation and improving outcomes. Examples of services that could be offered in school buildings include child care, fitness and recreation programs, family counseling, paediatric services, and mental health supports.
- 5.05** Such models are popular in the United States, where studies of the impacts of these schools show they raise grades, reduce dropout rates, and improve work habits and behaviours (CCS and IEL 2013; Castrechini and London

2012). In the ideal scenario, “children’s learning activities with the school contribute to community development, and...community activities contribute to and enrich children’s learning within the school” (Clanfield 2010).

- 5.06** A second alternative worthy of further study, specifically in regions with persistent enrolment issues, is the potential of shared facilities for coterminous boards. In its 2014-15 Pre-Budget Consultation Summary, the Ontario government noted that “co-locating the schools of coterminous boards in the same facility was an idea with fairly broad support” (Ministry of Education 2014). Naturally, this would have to be done while protecting each school system’s unique framework and structures. However, research out of the United States suggests that this approach can reap considerable savings (PSBA 2011; New York State 2011).
- 5.07** There are several successful examples of such arrangements in Ontario. The Humberwood Centre houses Holy Child Catholic School, Humberwood Downs public school, a branch of the Toronto Public Library, the Humberwood Community Centre, as well as the 280-space Macaulay Child Development Centre. In Brantford, St. Basil’s Catholic Elementary School and Walter Gretzky Elementary School each have a wing in the 90,000-square-foot shared facility. These sorts of shared facilities can be helpful in maximizing cost efficiency, specifically in rural areas where enrolment declines have raised the specter of school closures.
- 5.08** Each community is different, so it is important to consider local needs. However, the current community partnership guidelines give school boards too much leeway in determining whether and how to expand the use of school facilities to meet community needs. The regulatory amendment proposed by the Community Hubs Framework Advisory Group would go some way toward addressing this issue, but the government must go further in developing a provincial community hubs strategy and promoting and incentivizing inter-ministerial and municipal co-operation. The strategy

should be developed in consultation with teachers' associations and other stakeholders. Also, it is crucial that the strategy build the strength of our publicly funded education system, rather than being used as a means of cutting back. Funds intended for the classroom should not be affected.

Recommendations:

That any action taken by the Ministry of Education to address declining enrolment ensure that students have fair access to education programs based on their needs and circumstances.

That the Grants for Student Needs continue to respect the constitutional and statutory framework for education in Ontario, which includes English-language public, English-language Catholic, French-language public, and French-language Catholic school boards.

That the government enact the recommendations made by the Premier's Community Hubs Framework Advisory Group, and implements a strategy that promotes and incentivizes inter-ministerial and municipal co-operation.

6. FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT EDUCATION

6.01 More than 80 per cent of Aboriginal students in Ontario attend provincially funded schools, and more than 90 per cent of elementary and secondary schools have some Aboriginal students enrolled (People for Education 2015). Far from being concentrated in remote areas, 92 per cent of elementary, and 96 per cent of secondary schools have at least some Aboriginal students (Gallagher-Mackay, Kidder, and Methot 2013).

6.02 Some progress has been realized since the government made Aboriginal education a priority in 2007; however, the government failed to reach its goal of closing the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal

students by 2016. In 2014, the Auditor General of Ontario reported that only 45 per cent of Grade 10 Aboriginal students were on track to graduate high school. And there continue to be significant resource gaps in schools with high proportions of Aboriginal students, including lower than average access to guidance teachers, teacher-librarians, and music and physical education programs (Gallagher-Mackay, Kidder and Methot 2013).

- 6.03** Recently, the government has engaged in several positive initiatives. The 2017-18 GSN document increased overall funding for Indigenous Education to nearly \$66.3 million, a nearly \$55-million increase since 2007. In addition, the government's new resource to support voluntary, confidential Indigenous student self-identification allows school boards to better customize programming to support Indigenous student achievement and well-being. The government has also worked with Indigenous partners to ensure that curriculum focuses on residential schools, treaties, and Indigenous people's historical and contemporary contributions to Canada.
- 6.04** While these initiatives take steps in the right direction, there remains cause for concern. OECTA is proud to sponsor the Lieutenant Governor's Aboriginal Summer Reading Camps, which deliver literacy programs to thousands of children in 28 communities. However, as trained professionals who are strongly committed to public education, we believe a comprehensive public policy response is best. We were disappointed to see the government partner with Teach for Canada to recruit teachers to work in Northern Ontario schools. This program undermines both the teaching profession and the communities it is meant to serve. The government insists that communities are eager to participate, and that Aboriginal leaders will help select the teachers, but the Teach for Canada approach is not what the public expects or deserves. Rather than a private, corporate-sponsored solution, we need robust public policies that give all communities access to sufficient resources and properly trained and certified teachers (CTF 2015).

- 6.05** In addition, as noted in the 2018-19 Engagement Guide, the Indigenous Education Grant remains scaled to an average class size of 12 students. However, enrolment both in Indigenous languages and Indigenous studies have increased considerably in recent years; as of 2015-16, the average class size in the secondary panel is now 17 for Indigenous studies courses, and 16 for Indigenous languages courses. As such, we believe that the class size funding benchmarks should be changed to reflect this increase in average class size. Only by scaling funding appropriately can the government achieve real gains as it works to improve its Indigenous education offerings.
- 6.06** If the government hopes to redress the educational gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, then initiatives such as curriculum updates must be made in conjunction with robust investments in professional development of certified public education teachers. As always, it will be key for the government to include accountability and transparency measures to ensure that funds are directed in the most impactful way.

Recommendations:

That the Ministry of Education make further investments to close the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

That only fully trained, certified teachers be employed to teach in provincially funded schools.

7. FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

- 7.01** OECTA members are pleased the Full-day Kindergarten (FDK) program has been completely implemented. Parents, teachers, early childhood educators (ECEs) and administrators agree the program is preparing children socially and academically, leading to better outcomes in later years (Janmohamed et al. 2014). However, there are a handful of serious problems that continue to jeopardize program success.

- 7.02** Kindergarten-Grade 1 combined classes continue to be too common. This is troubling because a split classroom could have students ranging from four to seven years old, with large gaps in social and cognitive development. Also, there is a marked difference in the curriculum between Kindergarten and Grade 1. Play-based learning is a fundamental principle of the FDK program, while the Grade 1 curriculum is more structured. Split classes limit the time and space available for Kindergarten students to play and explore (Alphonso 2014).
- 7.03** Class size is another persistent issue. Ministry of Education data show that in the 2014-15 school year, almost eight per cent of the FDK classrooms across the province had 30 or more students. Although the government made a positive decision to institute a 30-student cap in Kindergarten classes, data show that 43 per cent of FDK classrooms in English Catholic schools had more than 26 students. The academic research is very clear that class size is an important determinant of student outcomes, especially for disadvantaged children and others who might have difficulty transitioning to the school setting (Schanzenbach 2014). Also, when dealing with young children in a play-based environment, reasonable class sizes are essential for ensuring the safety of students and teachers.
- 7.04** Even when class sizes are kept relatively small, the interaction and combined efforts of the teacher and the ECE are vital to student success. When the FDK program was developed, the teacher/ECE teams were recommended based on experiments in Ontario and elsewhere, in which teams were found to “add to the strengths of the professional preparation and skill sets of both teachers and ECEs” (Pascal 2009). ECEs bring specialized knowledge about early childhood development, while certified teachers bring high levels of skills and training related to pedagogy and delivery of the curriculum. One of the main reasons students are benefitting from the FDK program is that staff teams are “uniting around the mission to support young children and

families” (Pelletier 2014). The proper functioning of the staff teams is upset when school boards manipulate government regulations or staff schedules so that one of the members of the team is taken out of the classroom during the instructional period. We must keep the program true to its original promise and guarantee that teachers and ECEs are able to provide the best possible learning environment for every student in every class.

Recommendations:

That the Ministry of Education amend funding and class size regulations to eliminate Kindergarten-Grade 1 combined classes.

That the Ministry of Education limit the size of Full-day Kindergarten classrooms to 20 students.

That the Ministry of Education ensure every Full-day Kindergarten classroom has at least one teacher.

That the Ministry of Education guarantee there is a teacher and an ECE in the classroom at all times of the instructional period.

8. TECHNOLOGY AND 21ST CENTURY LEARNING

8.01 In *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*, the Ministry of Education (2014) says students “will benefit from a wide array of opportunities both inside and outside of school that are compelling and contribute to their success, including the opportunity to benefit from the effective and appropriate use of technology in the classroom.” OECTA recognizes the need to help students develop the skills required in a technology-driven world. However, we remain concerned that the available resources are insufficient to provide meaningful opportunities and instruction.

8.02 In recent years, government investments have improved students’ classroom access to technologies, as 96 per cent of schools report that students have at

least some access in their classrooms (People for Education 2014). However, data also indicate that 58 per cent of students continue to use their own devices. The persistence of “bring your own device” policies has the potential to widen the “digital divide” between students who have access to personal technologies and those who do not (Rushowy 2014). More recently, the government announced a \$50 million investment to improve access to high-speed broadband connectivity in schools across Ontario – particularly in northern, rural and remote schools – in order to provide students with more reliable and equitable access to learning resources.

8.03 In these endeavours, we must remain mindful that successful use of technology in education requires teachers who are comfortable with the hardware and software, and who have well-designed learning objectives (Jacobsen 2010). Even younger teachers, who might use technology frequently in their daily lives, are not necessarily proficient in translating their personal fluency into learning practice (People for Education 2014). Teachers have shown they are eager to gain knowledge and experience in this area. With the recent financial support offered by the Ministry of Education, uptake of Additional Qualifications courses has significantly increased. However, funding from the Ministry of Education is directed mainly toward the acquisition of new tools. To achieve true integration of technology in the classroom, a greater proportion of available resources should be invested in professional development (PD) that is teacher-directed, and teacher-led. This teacher-led PD should be developed in consultation with accredited professional development bodies that are sanctioned by teachers’ associations.

Recommendation:

That the Ministry of Education review and amend the Grants for Student Needs to provide adequate funding and support for computers and technology in schools, and relevant professional development for teachers.

9. ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

- 9.01** The majority of Ontario's publicly funded schools have students who require language support, and the Ministry of Education's (2007) policy is to promote academic achievement among English Language Learners (ELLs) "at the level expected of all learners in Ontario."
- 9.02** However, according to People for Education (2015), schools with 10 or more ELLs have an average ratio of 76 elementary ELL students per English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, and an average of 42 secondary ELL students per ESL teacher. Previously, it has been found that more than 20 per cent of schools with 10 or more ELLs have no specialist teacher (People for Education 2013). Clearly, the vague proxies currently being used to determine funding are not reflective of the real need for services.
- 9.03** Investing in ELL programs will enable children to better interact with their peers and the learning materials. The need for a properly resourced program will take on new urgency as the province prepares for an influx of refugees, many of whom will not have had access to formal schooling or literacy training.

Recommendation:

That the Ministry of Education provide adequate funding and access to English Language Learning programs.

10. ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

- 10.01** Adult and continuing education programs are funded at roughly two-thirds the level of regular day school credit programs. Previous analysis calculated that the annual underfunding of adults studying the provincial curriculum at \$112 million (Mackenzie 2015). In June 2017, the government announced an additional \$185 million in adult education funding, to be rolled out over the next four years as part of the government's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel (Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development 2017).

The government claims that this will assist an additional 80,000 adult learners across Ontario.

10.02 However, in many cases, these programs are delivered to new immigrants or students who were marginalized from the regular day school credit program. They often have special education, language and other needs that require support. At the same time, funding allocations in the Special Purpose Grants are directed only toward students in the regular day school program.

10.03 School space for adult and continuing education programs is also limited. As a result, teachers and students often have to deal with large class sizes, sometimes in excess of 40 students, as well as different courses being delivered to students in the same classroom.

10.04 Teachers, especially those in day school adult education programs, are often employed from contract to contract, with substandard salaries, working conditions and rights. Furthermore, boards have been moving courses that were previously delivered by day school teachers to the continuing education system, where teachers are paid at an hourly rate, legislated and negotiated class size limits are circumvented, and other contractual obligations applicable to regular day school programs are ignored.

10.05 The demands of the modern economy will certainly require greater attention to post-secondary education, but completion of high school is still a fundamental building block. And across Canada, one in five working age adults lack basic literacy and numeracy skills (Drewes and Meredith 2015). Research shows that intensive support to raise literacy rates would yield dramatic increases in employment and wage rates, significantly reducing the number of adults living in poverty (McCracken and Murray 2010).

10.06 Furthermore, by improving basic language proficiency, fostering notions of citizenship and social engagement, and encouraging healthier lifestyles and relationships, we can reduce the need for later interventions in these areas and enhance the well-being of our democracy and society.

Recommendations:

That the government fund adult and continuing education credit courses at the same level as regular day school credit courses.

That all credit-based courses be delivered by teachers who are members of the bargaining unit under the same legislative and contractual terms and conditions of work as regular day school teachers.

11. MINISTRY INITIATIVES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

11.01 Every year sees the introduction of a host of new initiatives and workshops, many of which are planned and implemented with little or no consultation with teachers' associations. This past year was no different – in the span of one week alone, the government announced the launch of its comprehensive Education Equity Action Plan; the establishing of a panel of education experts to review student assessment, including report cards and EQAO; and plans to undertake a review of the entire K-12 curriculum to ensure it is “infused with 21st century competencies.”

11.02 These wide-ranging programs and initiatives are ambitious, and add to the already heavy workload of teachers who are striving to deliver the curriculum while integrating students with different needs, responding to individual learning styles, and incorporating new technologies. If the Ministry of Education is intent on keeping these new programs, it is imperative that they make funds available for release time so teachers are able to carry out all of their duties effectively.

11.03 Teachers are enthusiastic learners who are eager to consider new methods and improve their practice. But the most effective professional development is “job-embedded professional development” – self-directed, teacher-led, authentic experiences that allow teachers to share what they know and what they want to learn, and to connect their learning to their real experiences in

the classroom (CEA 2015; Croft et al. 2010; Darling-Hammond and McGlaughlin 1995). Ontario teachers are already demonstrating their capacity in this regard. The Ontario Teacher Learner and Leadership Program supports experienced teachers to undertake “self-directed advanced professional development for improving their practices and supporting students’ learning.” Teachers report that the initiative has enhanced collaborative professional learning and improved knowledge, understanding, and instructional practices (Campbell, Lieberman and Yashkina 2013). It is in everyone’s interest to expand the time and resources available for this type of ongoing, classroom-focused, teacher-directed inquiry.

11.04 As part of the Funding Engagement Guide, the government specifically requested feedback on expanding the New Teacher Introduction Program (NTIP). The government rightly notes that a gap has emerged between the requirement that NTIP participants be a “beginning 97-day LTO teacher” and the language in Ontario Regulation 274/12 that requires first year LTO teachers with 4-month (80-day) assignments to have an Occasional Teacher evaluation. The result of this is that a number of teachers are deemed ineligible to receive NTIP support, as they fall below the 97-day requirement.

11.05 We agree that NTIP should be expanded to include 4-month LTOs as eligible for participation. However, in expanding access, it is critical that school boards not have the flexibility to use NTIP funding outside of NTIP’s expanded eligibility.

Recommendations:

That in cases where the Ministry of Education’s directives involve or impact teachers, school boards implement the initiatives only with the agreement of the teachers’ union.

That funding for Ministry of Education initiatives support a model of teacher-directed professional development, which is developed in

collaboration with professional development committees that are sanctioned by a teachers' affiliate.

That funding for professional development initiatives include disclosure requirements for school board reporting purposes.

12. OCCASIONAL TEACHER FUNDING

- 12.01** As the Ontario College of Teachers (2014) reports, "Entry to the profession in Ontario is now typically in the form of contracted daily supply teaching. Many education graduates are confined to being on supply teaching on-call lists for multiple years." However, funding for occasional teachers still has not been reformed to acknowledge this reality.
- 12.02** The allocation for occasional teachers under the Pupil Foundation Grant is a flat amount without reference to a benchmark, unlike the category for classroom teachers, which is based on a benchmark that includes salary and benefits. However, the Ministry of Education (2015) clearly states that funding for occasional teachers includes salary and benefits.
- 12.03** As new teachers enter the profession, they are spending more time on daily occasional teacher lists. They are experiencing challenges earning incomes and also suffering gaps in professional development during the very important first few years of teaching. It will be to the detriment of the quality of our system if these teachers are not able to keep their knowledge and skills current while they wait to find permanent teaching positions. For example, funding should be provided for daily occasional teachers to participate in the professional development and health and safety components of professional activity days.
- 12.04** The Ministry of Education continues to introduce new initiatives that will require teachers to devote a significant amount of time if the programs are to be worthwhile. However, there are not sufficient resources available to fund

release time for these teachers, allowing an occasional teacher to replace them in the classroom. For example, OECTA members in several school boards report that teachers are only able to leave the classroom for short periods to participate in the Reading Recovery program. Proper funding for release time will benefit permanent teachers, occasional teachers, and students.

Recommendations:

That the “supply teacher” lines in the Grants for Student Needs be adjusted to reflect a benchmark that includes salary and benefits for occasional teachers.

That the Grants for Student Needs include funding for occasional teacher professional learning.

That the Grants for Student Needs include funding for release time, to enable teachers to undertake new Ministry of Education initiatives.

13. EDUCATION BUREAUCRACY

13.01 OECTA members are strongly supportive of public servants. However, as much as possible, funds should be directed toward the fundamental ingredient in a successful education system: the interaction between a well-trained teacher and a well-supported student. Unfortunately, resources continue to be directed toward redundant or unnecessary layers of bureaucracy.

13.02 Ministry of Education regional offices are a perfect example. In an era of instant telecommunication, these offices serve no discernable purpose. Information can be disseminated across the province quickly and effectively without the need for these staff and overhead costs. Other examples of wasteful spending include the bloated Student Achievement Division, overstaffed central school board offices, and a \$35 million Education Quality

and Accountability Office that administers unhelpful and unnecessary standardized tests.

13.03 OECTA is particularly concerned that a number of Ontario school boards are turning to organizations such as School Boards' Co-operative Inc. (SBCI), to advise them on issues of workers' compensation, health and safety, and attendance management, despite the fact that boards already employ staff for these purposes in schools and central offices. Companies such as SBCI hide their data and methodology from the public, making it impossible to verify findings. This is especially problematic given that SBCI profits by promoting these unverified findings.

Recommendation:

That the Ministry of Education curb unnecessary bureaucracies and redirect funds to the classroom.

14. CONCLUSION

14.01 All stakeholders should be proud of the progress that has been made over the past decade. Even in the face of harsh criticism, the government has pushed ahead with some bold policies and programs that have greatly improved our publicly funded education system. But there is still much to be done. Now is not the time to step back, or to simply tinker around the edges. Adjusting funding formulas to more accurately reflect classroom realities is necessary, but not sufficient. To really move ourselves to the top of the class, Ontario needs to fully invest in our teachers, schools, and students.

15. RECOMMENDATIONS

15.01 That the government increase investment in education to address cost increases and improve programs.

15.02 That the Ministry of Education link funding, as closely as possible, to teacher-directed initiatives that support teachers and students in the classroom.

- 15.03** That the Ministry of Education require school boards to report locally-determined program expenditures of funds allocated through the Grants for Student Needs and Education Program: Other grants as a compliance requirement under the overall accountability framework of the Grants for Student Needs. Disclosure should be as specific as possible in identifying the program and components to which funds are allocated.
- 15.04** That the Ministry of Education establish an annual process of consultation with teacher representatives at each school board regarding locally-determined program expenditures of funds allocated through the Grants for Student Needs. Funds should not be released until such consultation has occurred.
- 15.05** That the Ministry of Education provide additional funding in the GSN, and co-ordinate with other ministries, to expand supports and services for students with mental health issues.
- 15.06** That the government co-ordinate funding from other ministries with the Ministry of Education to deliver child and family support services from space available in elementary and secondary schools.
- 15.07** That the weighting factor be re-established as a component of the Special Incidence Portion of the Special Education Grant.
- 15.08** That the Special Education Grant establish clear benchmarks for the caseloads of special education teachers.
- 15.09** That the government develop a mechanism for school boards to report spending allocations from the Special Education Grant.
- 15.10** That the government develop provincial class size and composition guidelines for the integration of students with special needs.

- 15.11** That the government provide funding for the proper training of all school staff on reporting procedures for incidents of violence in the workplace.
- 15.12** That the government provide intervention training that requires non-physical contact with a student.
- 15.13** That the government make significant investments in professional supports and services (e.g. psychologists, child and youth workers, social workers, and education assistants). These dedicated funds should be delivered through the Pupil Foundation Grant and the Special Education Grants.
- 15.14** That the government provide appropriate programs for students who might need to be removed from the regular classroom.
- 15.15** That any action taken by the Ministry of Education to address declining enrolment ensure that students have fair access to education programs based on their needs and circumstances.
- 15.16** That the Grants for Student Needs continue to respect the constitutional and statutory framework for education in Ontario, which includes English-language public, English-language Catholic, French-language public, and French-language Catholic school boards.
- 15.17** That the government enact the recommendations made by the Premier's Community Hubs Framework Advisory Group, and implements a strategy that promotes and incentivizes inter-ministerial and municipal co-operation.
- 15.18** That the Ministry of Education make further investments to close the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.
- 15.19** That only fully trained, certified teachers be employed to teach in provincially funded schools.

- 15.20** That the Ministry of Education amend funding and class size regulations to eliminate Kindergarten-Grade 1 combined classes.
- 15.21** That the Ministry of Education limit the size of Full-day Kindergarten classrooms to 20 students.
- 15.22** That the Ministry of Education ensure every Full-day Kindergarten classroom has at least one teacher.
- 15.23** That the Ministry of Education guarantee there is a teacher and an ECE in the classroom at all times of the instructional period.
- 15.24** That the Ministry of Education review and amend the Grants for Student Needs to provide adequate funding and support for computers and technology in schools, and relevant professional development for teachers.
- 15.25** That the Ministry of Education provide adequate funding and access to English Language Learning programs.
- 15.26** That the government fund adult and continuing education credit courses at the same level as regular day school credit courses.
- 15.27** That all credit-based courses be delivered by teachers who are members of the bargaining unit under the same legislative and contractual terms and conditions of work as regular day school teachers.
- 15.28** That in cases where the Ministry of Education's directives involve or impact teachers, school boards implement the initiatives only with the agreement of the teachers' union.
- 15.29** That funding for Ministry of Education initiatives support a model of teacher-directed professional development, which is developed in collaboration with professional development committees that are sanctioned by a teachers' affiliate.

- 15.30** That funding for professional development initiatives include disclosure requirements for school board reporting purposes.
- 15.31** That the Grants for Student Needs include funding for occasional teacher professional learning.
- 15.32** That the Grants for Student Needs include funding for release time, to enable teachers to undertake new Ministry of Education initiatives.
- 15.33** That the Ministry of Education curb unnecessary bureaucracies and redirect funds to the classroom.

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