

Ministry of Education - Changes to Education Funding and Policies

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The Minister of Education has announced changes to education funding and policies as part of the Ministry's [vision](#) for the modernization of public education in Ontario.

Modernizing Classrooms in Ontario

The Ministry reaffirmed their commitment to modernizing classrooms in Ontario which includes changes to class size requirements, the expansion of broadband technology, increased e-learning programming, restrictions on cellphone use in schools, changes to hiring practices and funding.

Class Size Changes

The government has announced changes to class sizes:

- K-3 no changes to caps or average class size, but reduction to Early Childhood Educator (ECE) funding ratio;
- Grades 4-8 – change in average class size funding to 24.5 students to teacher ratios (from 23.84);
- Grades 9-12 – average class size requirements adjusted from 22 to 28, with a board wide average of 28; some funding will be provided to offset the impact of these changes as they are phased in over next four years.

We are working to assess the impact of these changes, but will not have clarity until provincial funding announcements are made. It is reasonable to expect that the changes will result in an increased number large class sizes. At the elementary level it could lead to an increase combined grade classrooms, particularly in schools where enrolment is lower and/or running multiple program streams. At the secondary level, it may result in a reduction of the number of sections per school which could reduce course offerings/ options for students.

Curriculum Modernization including:

1. **Math** – the government has announced a new 4 year math strategy which will include a new curriculum focused on basic concepts and skills, supported by parent and teacher resources and online resources for students. In addition, the government intends to introduce legislation which requires teachers to pass a math content knowledge course prior to entering the classroom/being certified by OCT.
2. **STEM** – A new focus on STEM will include a revised mandatory Career Studies course in grade 10 beginning in September 2019. There will also be revised Business Studies and Computer Studies curriculum expected in 2020.
3. **Skilled Trades**- Increased emphasis on SHSMs and experiential learning.
4. **Financial Literacy** – new financial literacy elements to the Grade 10 Career Studies course for implementation in September 2019.
5. **Indigenous Education** – revised First Nations, Metis and Inuit Studies curriculum for grades 9-12 for implementation in September 2019.
6. **Health and Physical Education** – revised elementary curriculum will maintain same elements, adjust the age appropriate elements, provide a parental opt-out policy and create online modules for parents – all for implementation in September 2019.

7. Digital Curriculum Documents – the Ministry will launch a new digital curriculum platform beginning in September 2019.

- **Cellphones**- the Ministry will amend the Provincial Code of Conduct to prohibit cell phone use in schools during instructional time effective September 2019, except for educational purposes as authorized by the Director, for health and medical purposes, and to support special education needs. This may require some policy revisions at the OCDSB.
- **EQA**O – the Ministry announced a “modernization of EQAO and its processes while using data to build better assessment and evaluation models that have a greater focus on equity”. Additional information is required to assess the local impact.
- **E-learning** - effective 2020-2021, all secondary students will be required to complete a minimum of 4 e-learning credits to graduate. In addition, the delivery of e-learning will be centralized and the average class size for e-learning will be 35. These changes are to take effect in 2020-2021. More information will be shared when it becomes known.

Grants for Student Needs Funding

The Ministry has indicated a number of changes in funding for Grants for Student Needs (GSN). This includes changes to funding for the Local Priorities Fund, Cost Adjustment Allocation, Human Resource Transition Supplement, Classroom Loading Factors, Utilities Funding and Student Transportation Funding. The Ministry has also indicated that funding announcement details will be available by the end of April 2019. At this time, we are awaiting additional information to fully understand the budget implications of these changes.

Hiring Practices

The Government has indicated that consultations on hiring practices and specifically practices in relation to Regulation 274/12 will continue with a view to ensuring a framework where principals are able to hire qualified teachers based on merit and suitability for position. The consultation guide indicates that the proposed model would:

- Provide increased mobility for teachers in Ontario;
- Ensure that teaching positions are filled by the right candidate;
- Simplify the hiring process to reduce turnover in the classroom;
- Reduce bias in hiring by addressing conflict of interest;
- Be complemented by a Policy and Program Memorandum on equity and diversity in hiring practices;
- Apply to all school systems (French Language Boards included).

Continued Provincial Consultation – To May 31st

The Ministry will be continuing public consultation until May 31, 2019. You will find links to those consultations below:

Class Size Consultation - <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/class-size-consultation.html>

Hiring Practices Consultation - http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/hiring_practices_consultation.html

The public consultation questions are framed around the Ministry’s four key goals:

1. **Student Achievement:** Success and well-being of every child.

2. **Protecting Front Line Staff:** The planned changes are to be managed through attrition protection for teachers.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility:** Delivering services in an effective and efficient manner.
4. **Evidence-based Decision Making:** Grounded in sound policy, inter-jurisdictional scans, and empirical research.

Summary

Our teachers and education workers are incredibly committed to the important work that they do to support student learning and well-being. We will continue to work with all staff to provide the best learning environment possible for all students.

The OCDSB believes in the importance of modernizing public education. Schools should be vibrant learning spaces which foster innovation and creativity. Updates to curriculum and technological infrastructure are important elements of a modernization program and the OCDSB supports updates to curriculum, particularly in math, health and physical education, financial literacy, STEM and Indigenous education.

While explicit reference to a focus on equity and well-being were absent from the recent announcements, the OCDSB remains committed to its focus on equity, inclusion and well-being.