

The Annual Report on Ontario's Public Schools 2008



people for
Education
BECAUSE EDUCATION MATTERS MOST

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Data from the Survey

If specific research data from the survey is required, it can be provided for a fee. Elementary school data has been collected since 1997, and secondary school data has been collected since 2000. Please contact info@peopleforeducation.com.

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**schools
at the centre**

highlights – by the numbers

Measuring success

- Canada's rank in reading among OECD countries: **4**¹
- Percentage of Ontario Grade 3 and 6 students passing standardized provincial reading, writing and math tests: **90**²
- Canada's rank in the world for percentage of post-secondary graduates: **1**³
- Ontario's rank in Canada for percentage of university graduates: **1**⁴
- The percentage of Canadians who identify themselves as non-readers: **13**⁵
- The percentage of Americans who identify themselves as non-readers: **43**⁶

Declining Enrolment

- The reduction in enrolment in Ontario schools since 2002: **90,000**⁷
- The percentage enrolment decline since 2002 in the Superior-Greenstone School Board: **36**⁸
- The number of schools currently recommended for closing: **50**⁹

Class size

- Percentage of primary classes with 25 students or fewer: **99**
- Percentage of elementary schools that have split grades: **74**

Special Education

- Ratio of Special Education teachers to special education students in elementary school: **30:1**
- Ratio of Special Education teachers to special education students in high school: **53:1**
- Percentage increase since 2001 in elementary schools with regular access to psychologists: **48**

Fundraising, fees and volunteering

- The amount school boards report raising through "school-generated funds," including fundraising, vending machines, and corporate donations: **\$596 million**¹⁰
- Equivalent in full-time jobs that parents volunteer in schools: **2,500**¹¹
- The percentage of secondary schools that charge fees for Phys Ed classes: **46**¹²

Libraries, reading and literacy

- The percentage decline since 1997 in elementary schools with teacher-librarians: **25**
- The percentage decline since 2002 in elementary students who say they like to read: **15**¹³
- The annual budget for the provincial Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat: **\$76 million**¹⁴

Design and Technology

- The amount the province is spending on promoting and training for skilled trades: **\$1.5 billion**¹⁵
- The percentage decline since 1998 in Design & Technology programs in Grade 7 & 8 schools: **68**

English as a Second Language

- Number of non-English-speaking immigrants to Ontario annually under the age of 19: **25,000**¹⁶
- In elementary schools with ESL students, percentage with ESL students but no ESL teacher: **48**

The Arts

- Percent of Northern elementary schools with music teachers, as compared to schools in the GTA: **26 / 64**
- Amount the cultural sector contributed to Ontario's economy in 2003: **\$20 billion**¹⁷

introduction

In **Manitoba**, the government provides funding for community schools that “act as a hub for a broad range of services, supports and opportunities that strengthen and support schools, families and communities.”¹⁸

In **Saskatchewan**, the province has implemented the *Schools^{Plus}* program – based on the premise that schools have two functions: to educate children and youth, and to deliver services to families.¹⁹

Community Learning Centres in **Quebec** receive funding for a community development coordinator who helps coordinate school services ranging from dentistry clinics to community computer labs.²⁰

Across North America, education communities are coming to realize that schools are the ideal place to offer the programs, supports, services and education that families, children and youth need.

In this report, we describe the effect that declining enrolment will have on schools across the province over the coming

years. And although the report documents improvements overall in many of the programs and resources in Ontario's schools, our system is not prepared for declining enrolment and lacks a forward-thinking vision for education. And despite years of discussion, reports and recommendations, we are no closer to integrating services in our schools.

Without provincial policy and leadership to provide structure and support for community schools, to integrate schools into municipal planning, and to integrate services for children, youth and families across provincial Ministries, Ontario will not achieve what has been achieved in other provinces and jurisdictions – schools at the centre of communities, used and valued by the community at large.

We hope that parents, school communities, educators and members of all levels of government will use this report as the beginning of a process to develop “new thinking” about Ontario's schools in the 21st century.

measuring success

In Ontario, the government focuses on test scores and graduation rates as the two measures of success in provincial education policy.

How Ontario measures up

- ❑ Ontario has more university graduates as a percentage of the population than any other province in Canada.²¹
- ❑ Canada has more post-secondary graduates, as a percentage of the population, than any other country in the world.²²
- ❑ Among all the English-speaking provinces, in testing of a random representative sample of 13-year-olds, Ontario came first in math, reading and writing, and second in science.²³
- ❑ Ontario and Canada rank among the top OECD countries in having reduced the impact of family income on students' success.²⁴
- ❑ Only 13% of Canadians identify themselves as non-readers, compared to 43% of Americans.²⁵

In other jurisdictions, a broader range of measures are used to assess the health of the education system, including participation in post-secondary education, the gap between the highest performing and the lowest performing students, and the effects of students' socio-economic status on their chances for success.

By any of these measures, Canada and Ontario perform among the top countries in the world.

How Canada compares

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) research shows that Canadian students are in the top ranks in reading, writing, mathematics and science. While the following statistics are for all of Canada,

Ontario students achieve consistently at or above the Canadian average.

- ❑ In Canada, 84% of adults aged 25 to 64 have high school diplomas. In the 24-to-34 age group, this level of attainment rises to 91%. The OECD average is 67%.
- ❑ In reading, Canadian fifteen-year-olds rank 4th across 57 OECD countries, compared to the UK which ranks 18th.
- ❑ In science, Canadian students were 3rd, compared to the U.S. which ranked 29th.
- ❑ In mathematics, Canadians were 7th, compared to France which was 23rd, and the U.S. which was 35th.
- ❑ Canada has the third lowest proportion of students performing at the lowest level on mathematics, and has among the narrowest gaps between high and low performing students.²⁶

Ninety-five per cent of Ontario students attend public schools

The percentage of students who attend public schools in the province has remained relatively steady over the years for which data is available. In 2001, 4.8% of Ontario students attended private schools. By 2005, that number had increased marginally to 5.2%.²⁷

OECD research has found that, in international testing, when the socio-economic background of students and schools was taken into account, public schools scored 12 points higher overall than private schools.²⁸

Standardized test scores

In Ontario, students in Grades 3, 6, and 9 write standardized tests in reading,

writing and math administered by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). Grades are recorded in levels, with Level 1 representing a low passing grade. Ontario sets Level 3, (70% to 79% or “B”) as the provincial standard. In Alberta the provincial standard is measured as a simple “pass” or 50%+.

In 2006/07, with the exception of Grade 9 Applied Mathematics, over 90% of students passed all EQAO tests.

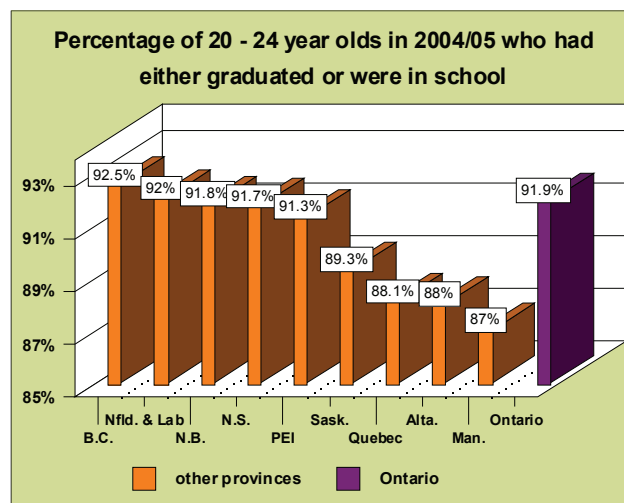
Student surveys and other measures

The EQAO also surveys students for attitudinal information, but it does not publicize the results widely. Data is collected on how much students read and how much they enjoy it, on whether they think of themselves as good at math, and on their participation in activities outside of school.

In some jurisdictions, students, parents and teachers are surveyed about their satisfaction with their school and their principal, and schools report on students’ participation in extra-curricular activities, attendance and punctuality.

The education system is held accountable for its results, but we have had little discussion about what kind of results we’re looking for beyond test score targets in grade 3, 6 and 9, and graduation rates.

In order to measure for a broader range of factors, we must first decide what our goals are for our education system. What kinds of students do we want to graduate? What knowledge and skills do we want them to possess, and are there some qualities we want them to have? Once we have reached a general consensus on a broad range of goals, then, and only then, we will be able to develop a set of criteria for measuring our progress.



Data from Statistics Canada shows that 92% of Ontario students graduate from secondary school, compared to 88% of students in Alberta.

OECD results for 15-year-olds in 2006		
Science	Math	Reading
1. Finland	1. Chinese Taipei	1. Korea
2. Hong Kong	2. Finland	2. Finland
3. Canada	3. Hong Kong	3. Hong Kong
4. Taiwan	4. Korea	4. Canada
5. Estonia	5. Netherlands	5. New Zealand
6. Japan	6. Switzerland	6. Ireland
12. Germany	7. Canada	18. United Kingdom
19. Ireland	25. United Kingdom	23. France
28. United States	35. United States	33. Italy

These results are taken from tests of students in 57 OECD countries—the tests measure a standard set of knowledge and skills.²⁹

declining enrolment

Across Canada, school-aged populations are on the decline. According to Statistics Canada, the number of students in Canada's elementary and secondary schools will decline by as much as 500,000 in the next 15 years.

Declining enrolment in Ontario

- ❑ Since 2002, overall enrolment in Ontario elementary and secondary schools has declined by nearly 90,000 students.
- ❑ 31 of Ontario's 72 school boards have seen enrolment declines of more than 10% since 2002.
- ❑ There are currently over 300 schools involved in Accommodation Reviews in the province.³⁰
- ❑ As of May, 2008, closures were recommended for 50 schools in 16 boards.

Enrolment decline is, for the most part, a result of declining fertility rates. The more extreme declines in rural and northern areas are caused by a combination of birth rate declines and migration to urban and suburban areas.³¹

Affect on funding and communities

Much of the funding school boards receive is based on numbers of students. As a result, fewer students equals less funding, fewer programs, and, in many cases, closing schools. But fewer students don't necessarily result in lower costs.

Boards reviewing schools

In 2006, the province introduced a uniform standard for making decisions about school closings, effectively lifting a moratorium on school closings imposed in 2003. The *Accommodation Review Guidelines* lay out a process for

consultation, involvement and evaluation to ensure boards take a range of factors and views into account when they are considering closing schools.³²

This year, half of Ontario's 72 school boards are undertaking accommodation reviews. The reviews involve nearly 300 schools, and affect over 100,000 students. To date, the reviews have resulted in 50 recommendations for closure.

Many parents have expressed disappointment at the results of reviews, because boards, often hamstrung by provincial policy and funding, are unable to implement many review recommendations.

A trend across the country

Ministries of Education across the country are exploring strategies to deal with declining enrolment. In Quebec, the Quebec English School Boards Association appointed an advisory council to look at the issue of declining enrolment and limited resources. The advisory council recommended that Quebec school boards re-position their schools as centres for community-based activity and complementary services. They said that schools from different systems (English and French) must share more of their services, programs and buildings, and that school systems must co-operate with municipalities to ensure the full and effective use of their buildings.³³

Changes in funding formula do not offset enrolment decline

Over the last few years, the province has added grants to support very small and

remote schools, and school boards now receive funding for principals, vice-principals and secretaries on a per-school as well as a per-pupil basis.

The province also provides boards with a *Declining Enrolment Grant* – a temporary transition grant to allow boards to adjust their staffing and expenses as their enrolment declines. But the province has not changed the number of students required to generate staff in the funding formula, despite steep declines in average school enrolment.

New solutions needed

In both rural and urban areas, schools can act as thriving hubs for their communities. They can include community centres and stay open after hours and on weekends for community use. Parenting centres, child care centres, community kitchens, public meeting spaces, even public libraries and health clinics can all add to the life of a school and strengthen a community's sense of connection to their local school.

These solutions do not necessarily cost more money – in many cases, they may save money in the long run. But the solutions may involve municipalities, other ministries and sectors, and will entail fundamental changes to the way schools are funded.

In 1968, the Hall-Dennis Report³⁴ recommended that schools include facilities for the use of the community, and in 2002, the Rozanski report recommended that the province inaugurate a cabinet-level committee to oversee the integration of services for families, children and youth.³⁵

If Ontario schools are to thrive in the 21st century, integration, community access, and cooperation across sectors and levels of government will be key.

The province is in the process of appointing a panel to examine declining enrolment – it is imperative that its mandate be broad, and that a new vision for schools and the use of school buildings is at the core of its tasks.

what schools told us...

“Our school is part of the Accommodation Review Process. If it closes, the bus ride from the Quebec border to North Bay would be over an hour one way which would be very problematic for young students, 4 to 7 years old.

On the other hand, our resources and staff are so stretched that our students are not receiving the best education. A bigger school population would enable our students to have straight classes, special classes in shop, visual arts and music, and extra-curricular activities including a variety of sports with more teacher coaches and a full-time principal. It is a difficult decision for the Board to make and be responsible for.”

An elementary school in the Near North DSB

“As we experience an enrolment decline, cutbacks to special ed services (special education resource teachers, child and youth workers, social workers, etc.) affect the most needy and vulnerable students.”

*An elementary school in Dufferin-Peel
Catholic DSB*

class sizes & split grades

Class sizes in both elementary and secondary school have declined substantially over the last ten years. The decline comes as a result of a number of factors, including funding and policy introduced in 2005 to reduce class sizes in primary grades, the introduction of Student Success teachers in secondary school, and declining enrolment overall.

Class size policy and results

- ❑ 99% of kindergarten to Grade 3 classes have 25 students or fewer, a steady improvement since 2005.
- ❑ 53% of Grades 4 to 8 classes have 26 or more students, a slight increase since last year.
- ❑ In secondary schools, 38% of core English (or French in French-language schools) classes have 22 students or fewer – the government-mandated average – an improvement from 30% in 2002/03.
- ❑ Three quarters of elementary schools report they have split-grade classes. In those schools, on average, 36% of the classes are split.

There are a variety of opinions about the effect of class size on student success, but overall, class size reduction is viewed positively by nearly all those involved in education – particularly parents.³⁶

High financial cost

The rapid reduction in primary class size has been costly and has caused substantial organizational and space difficulties in some boards.

This year, 90% of a school board's Kindergarten to grade 3 classes must have no more than 20 students; the

remaining 10% must have no more than 23. Only five boards have not met the target.

The financial costs of this program have been substantial. In 2007/08, \$406 million was provided to hire 5,100 additional primary teachers and \$700 million was directed to capital projects to create more than 1,900 new classrooms.

Split-grade classes

While classes with split grades have been around in Ontario since the time of the one-room schoolhouses, they have proliferated in recent years in response to the provincial caps on class size, particularly in boards with small or rural schools.

This year, 74% of schools across the province reported they had split grades in elementary schools. The numbers vary, from a high of 80% of schools in Eastern and Southwestern Ontario to a low of 70% of schools in the GTA. Those schools report an average of 36% of their classes have two or more grades in them.

In international studies on the effects of split classes, there was little evidence that split classes either improved or harmed student achievement: 28 of 38 studies found no overall effects, four showed positive effects, and six showed students did better in single-grade classes.

But many Ontario teachers have concerns. The demands of the Ontario curriculum are intense. A move to differentiated instruction, which requires teachers to adjust their methods and

content to match the different capacities of a wide range of students, combined with having to teach students in two or more grades may reduce the quality of the instruction. According to one academic study, “Interview data showed teachers in the multi-grade classes were less satisfied with their jobs than their counterparts in single-age classes as a result of the heavy teaching load and demands for classroom management.”³⁷

Class size policy across Canada

Smaller class sizes in early grades are a reality across the country. British Columbia reports an average class size for grades 1-3 of 20.3 students, and for Kindergarten, of 17.4 students. Alberta’s average class size for K-3 has dropped to 18.6. In Nova Scotia, the elementary average in 2005/06 was 22.4 students, and the cap of 25 students had been expanded to grades 3 and 4 for September 2008.

But in British Columbia and Nova Scotia, class size policy is based on the characteristics of the students rather than sheer numbers. Maximum class sizes are determined by the number of special needs students in the class, and British Columbia has just introduced legislation limiting the number of special education students to three per class.

It may be time in Ontario to consider not only the size of the class, but also the students in the class and the number of grades it contains.

what schools told us...

“Regarding ‘hard caps’ for primary class sizes, there was a lot of disruption at our school when we needed to move about 48 students to new classes. It would be helpful to have a ‘soft cap’ and this would create less stress and tears for the children.”

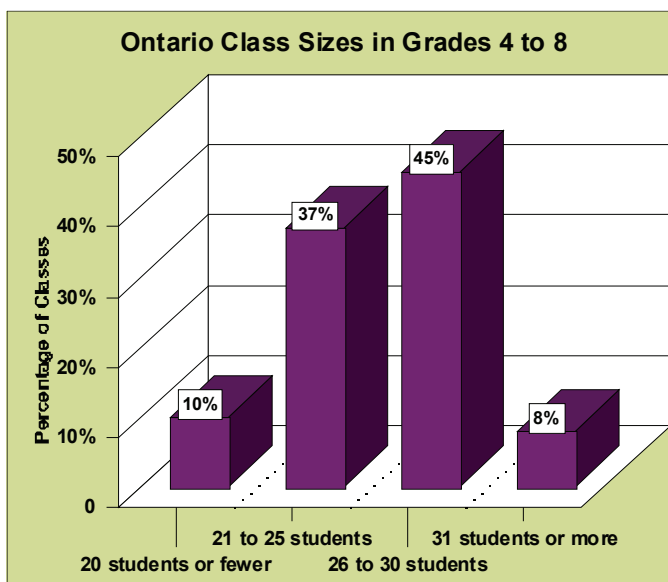
An elementary school in Upper Grand DSB

“The numbers should be reduced for grades 4 to 9 – it is a difficult transition for students going from a class of 20 to a class of 32; and it is difficult for teachers to program for large classes (especially with the differentiated instruction and success for all strategies required of them).”

An elementary school in Toronto Catholic DSB

“We are a small rural school. All classes except kindergarten are combined particularly to meet the mandate of primary classes under 20.”

An elementary school in Bruce-Grey Catholic DSB



fees and fundraising

Almost all of the province's publicly-funded elementary and secondary schools raise funds for various reasons, ranging from school trips, to team uniforms, to library books, computers, and even upgrades to the school building or grounds. Many secondary schools also fundraise for charities.

Fundraising and fees in Ontario schools

- ❑ Fundraising totals for elementary and secondary schools range from \$0 per school to \$500,000.
- ❑ The percentage of elementary schools raising over \$20,000 per year has more than doubled since 2001.
- ❑ In fundraising in high schools, the top 10% raised as much as the bottom 90% put together.
- ❑ In 2006/07, school boards' audited financial statements show a total of \$596 million in "school-generated funds," a 5% increase from the previous year.

Private money in public schools

In 2004, the provincial government directed school boards to change their accounting practices. All fundraised money and other "school-generated" funds, such as vending machines, school fees and donations from businesses, must now be included in boards' annual financial statements.

In their audited financial statements for 2005/06, school boards reported a total of over \$567,000,000 in school-generated funds.³⁸ This year, that amount has grown to \$596,000,000. Even this total may underestimate the amount of private money in public

schools because it does not include funds raised by autonomous Home & School Associations, the parents' groups that pre-date school councils and that continue to exist in many schools.³⁹

Fees

Fees are also endemic in schools across the province. They are requested for things like student activities, labs, art supplies, music and athletic programs, workbooks, agendas, outdoor education programs, and field trips.

These fees force many families to choose between a number of unpleasant options: pay the fee and experience financial hardship, go through the sometimes demeaning process of requesting help from the school to cover the costs, or have their child miss the enrichment program and possibly feel stigmatized. In interviews with over 200 parents, the Ottawa Social Planning Council found that fees were cited as one of the biggest barriers low income parents experience in the education system, intensifying the feeling that they "didn't belong" in the same way others did.⁴⁰

In 2006, to address concerns about fees, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board developed a new policy for permission forms and requests for money. Now every notice home with a request for money is supposed to carry a statement upfront that the fee is voluntary.⁴¹

The interpretation and application of policies about fees varies from board to board and from school to school.

Growing inequities

While fundraising has been commonplace in Ontario schools for many decades, the growing amounts raised are cause for concern. Some affluent neighbourhoods have the capacity to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for their public schools; other neighbourhoods, where parents’ incomes are lower, raise little if any money. Thus, some schools have significantly enhanced resources, such as better stocked libraries and enrichment programs.

The past decade has also seen an increased reliance by public schools and school boards on philanthropic donations. At least 12 school boards in the province have established charitable foundations as a source of education funding, and some boards are issuing charitable receipts for donations to support capital costs for things like new science labs or libraries.

Ontario has no overall policy about private money in public schools. As boards wrestle with the funding fallout from declining enrolment, they may look more and more to the private sector for assistance. This form of private funding may create a growing gap between “have” and “have not” schools. Before this happens, it is imperative that the province has adequately explored the consequences of philanthropy, charitable donations, and private funding in public education.

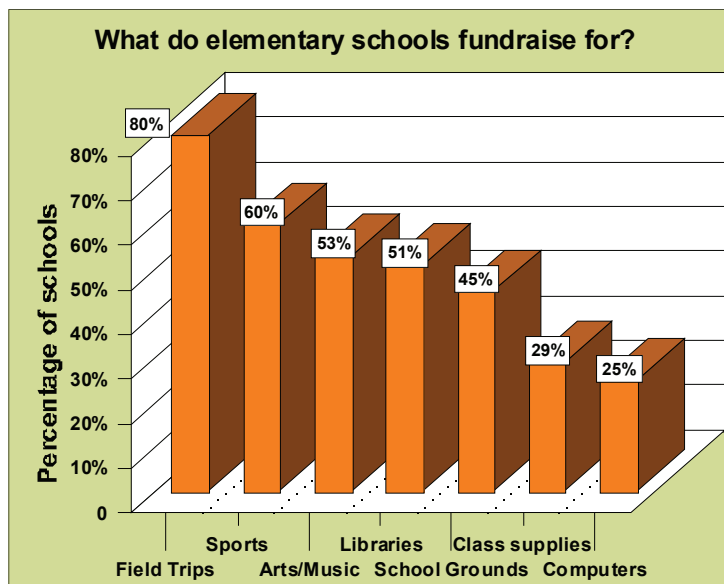
what schools told us...

“As an inner-city school, we find it very difficult to raise money for basics, like a healthy snack each day. Hungry kids are a reality for us.”

An elementary school in Toronto DSB

“I regularly am in the hole re finances (not enough money in my school budget), because there is more to buy than I receive funds for. That’s why I, personally, fundraise at least \$7500-\$10,000 each year at the school. I do this on my own time, as well as try to be a full-time Principal.”

An elementary school in Thames Valley DSB



school libraries

Teacher-librarians inspire students to read, teach students how to find information and help them become competent researchers. And when teacher-librarians are able to collaborate with classroom teachers to teach the curriculum, every student benefits.

16.4 hours per week in 2007/08, up from 15.7 hours per week last year.

Reading and libraries

- ❑ EQAO surveys show that since 2002, there has been a 15% decline in the percentage of students in Grade 6 who say they “like to read.”⁴²
- ❑ Students in schools with teacher-librarians are more likely to report they like to read.
- ❑ Only 60% of elementary schools have a teacher-librarian, most of them part-time, compared to 80% in 1997/98.
- ❑ Just over half of secondary schools have a full-time teacher-librarian.
- ❑ Parents fundraise for school libraries in 51% of Ontario elementary schools.

Fundraising for school libraries

Nearly one fifth of elementary schools report they rely on parents and fundraising for more than half of their library collection budgets. As a result, there are substantial inequities among libraries across the province.

Provincial funding for library resources is provided, for the most part, in the grant for textbooks and learning materials, though for the last three years, some additional funding for libraries has been added in announcements outside regular funding.

Ninety-five per cent of elementary schools spent less than \$25 per student on library collections – far below the standard set by the Ontario School Library Association.

Board's policies changing

There is no provincial policy to ensure all schools have fully-functioning libraries, and, because funding for librarians is provided on a per pupil basis, small schools are much less likely to have teacher-librarians.

This year, a number of school boards increased the allocation of teacher-librarians by allocating additional teacher preparation time to the school librarian. While this contributes to an overall increase in teacher-librarian staffing, it does not necessarily mean the library is open and accessible to students for longer hours during the week in every school. But, on average, school libraries with teacher-librarians were open and staffed slightly longer,

Reading enjoyment continues to decline in elementary school

According to student surveys administered by the EQAO, the percentage of Grade 3 students who say they “like to read” has declined from 68% in 2002, to 58% in 2007. In grade 6, that decline is from 55% in 2002, to 47% in 2007.⁴³ A study conducted by the British government found that students who enjoy reading are much more likely to be “high achievers,”⁴⁴ and a Queen's University/People for Education study has shown that the presence of a teacher-librarian in a school has a direct and positive impact on the percentage of students who report they like to read.⁴⁵

Regional inequities

There is a wide range in spending and staffing for school libraries across the province. In Central Ontario and the GTA where schools are on average the biggest, nearly all schools have at least a part-time teacher librarian and many have full-time staff. These two regions also had the highest spending on library resources including books, other print materials and software.

Research demonstrates benefits

The province currently spends approximately \$76 million on Literacy and Numeracy initiatives,⁴⁷ but none of that funding is targeted at school libraries.

There is a growing body of research regarding the important role school libraries play in student learning. In one 2007 study, researchers found that even taking into account the effects of socio-economic status, in schools with “better-stocked, better-staffed and better-funded” school libraries, student achievement on standardized tests was higher.⁴⁶ Ongoing Canadian research has also found that in schools with exemplary libraries, the teacher-librarian coordinates the curriculum needs for all the teachers in the school.

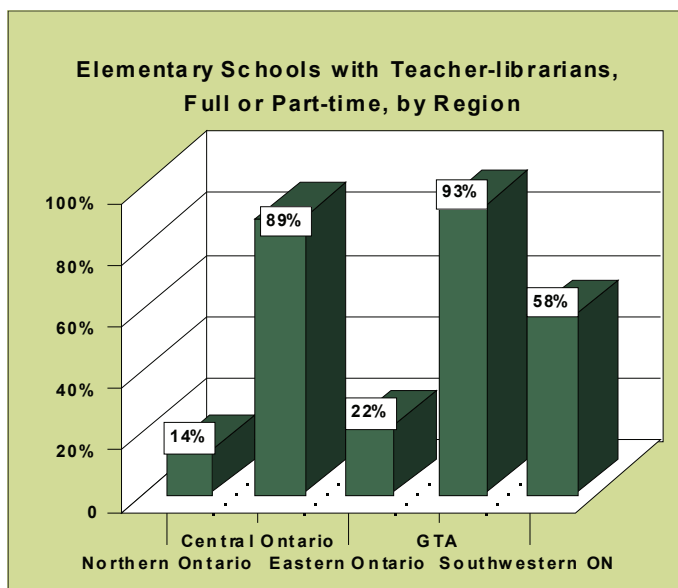
The Ministry of Education is currently working with the Ontario School Library Association to develop policy for school libraries.

what schools told us...

“It has been the same for many years now. Ever since we lost Teacher-Librarians to run the library program, Technicians are merely keeping circulation and cataloguing going.”
An elementary school in Ottawa-Carleton DSB

“We have a slight decrease in time when the library is open and staffed. It makes a difference because without supervision, students cannot access the library at any time.”
An elementary school in Thames Valley DSB

“Our school library is housed in the community library on the military base. The library is open evenings and week-ends. Presently the military base staff look after the library.”
An elementary school in Conseil des écoles l'est de publiques de l'Ontario



the arts

Across North America and in England, concerns have been raised about the “two-tier curriculum” that results from a singular focus on test score targets.

Researchers have found that arts education is increasingly relegated to the bottom tier of the system, with less and less time and funding spent on arts-related courses and activities.⁴⁸

The Arts in Ontario schools in 2008

- ❑ 48% of elementary schools have music teachers, continuing a slight upward trend established over the last four years, but still below 1997/98 levels when 58% of schools had them.
- ❑ There are significant differences in schools' budgets for arts programs, and many schools rely on parents to supply the funding. This year, 47% of secondary schools and 53% of elementary schools report fundraising for arts enrichment in their schools.
- ❑ A majority of secondary schools charge fees for Art classes, and nearly one third charge fees for music.⁴⁹

No dedicated funding for Arts specialists in elementary school

There is extensive arts curriculum for Kindergarten to Grade 8, much of which requires specialized knowledge. To teach the curriculum effectively, teachers must understand fine art theory, be able to read music and have some knowledge of drama. But there is no funding specifically dedicated to arts specialists in elementary schools, and the majority of schools do not have them.

Even in schools with grades 7 and 8, only 14% have a visual arts teachers, a number that has declined fairly steadily since 1998 when it was 17%. Only 6%

have a drama teacher. More schools have music teachers, but even then they are common only in fairly large schools.

The funding that elementary schools do spend on specialist teachers comes from teacher preparation time. By contract, every teacher must have preparation time during the school day to prepare lessons, contact parents and work with other teachers. During that time, another teacher covers the class. Thus, funding for preparation “time” is actually funding for other teachers.

In schools that are large enough to generate a substantial amount of preparation time, the funding to cover the time may cover the costs of core French, music, physical education, guidance or other specialist teachers, but boards are not required to spend the money on these specialists. And increases in funding for teachers' preparation time over the last three years have not resulted in parallel increases in specialist teachers.

Regional variations

Funding for specialists is generated by numbers of teachers, so it is difficult for all but the largest of elementary schools to provide specialist teachers in the arts.

In Northern Ontario, where most of the elementary schools are very small, only 26% have music teachers – nearly all part-time. In contrast, in the GTA where elementary schools tend to have more students, 67% have music teachers, though half are part-time.

Fundraising and fees for the arts

Much of schools' arts programming comes through extra-curricular activities

or arts enrichment, such as attending plays or musical events. But most of the cost for this type of arts enrichment falls to parents, resulting in inequitable access for students. Parents fundraise for arts-related programs in 53% of elementary schools and 47% of secondary schools.

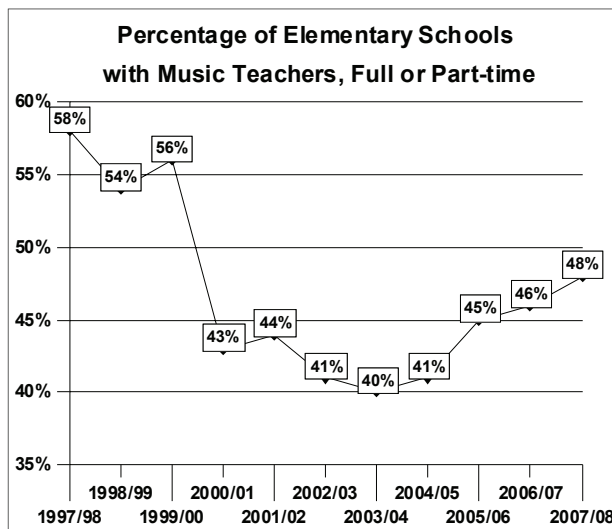
But there are many school communities without the capacity to raise money for things like musical instruments, art supplies and other forms of arts enrichment. And often the communities with the least capacity to fundraise are also home to the students who have little or no access to formal arts programs outside of school.

Student success and the arts

In Ontario, high school students have told us, and the Ontario Student Trustee Association confirms that Ontario secondary school students have difficulty fitting arts courses into crowded

timetables, and many smaller secondary schools no longer offer arts curriculum.

Research over the last 20 years has shown that arts programs enhance students' ability to learn, their capacity for articulate expression and their facility to solve complex problems.⁵⁰ There is also a wide body of research confirming that arts programs engage students who might otherwise drop out of school.⁵¹



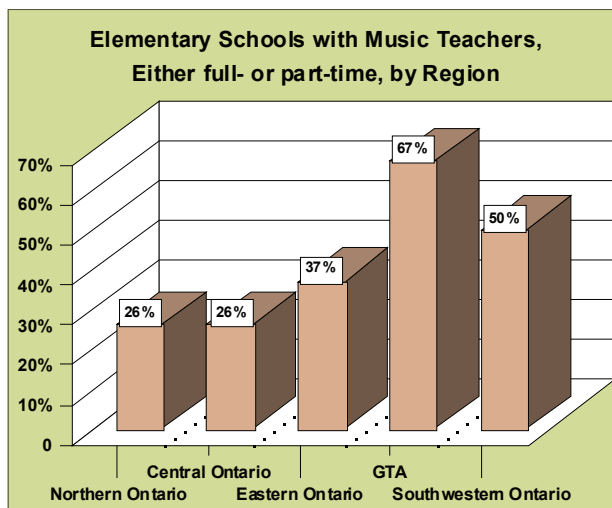
what schools told us...

"The school board needs to provide a music teacher allocation for each school, so that we can meet ministry curriculum expectations."

An elementary school in Toronto DSB

According to UNESCO

"...at a time when family and social structures are changing, with often adverse effects on children and adolescents, the school of the 21st Century must be able to anticipate the new needs by according a special place to the teaching of artistic values and subjects in order to encourage creativity, which is a distinctive attribute of the human species. Creativity is our hope."⁵²



special education

Over 300,000 students in Ontario's elementary and secondary schools receive some form of special education support.

Support can range from a few hours a week in a resource centre to a special class with specialized teachers and special equipment. Because there is such a wide range in programs, support and need, it is difficult to find *one* way to fund special education in schools.

Special Education in Ontario schools in 2008

- Approximately 15% of Ontario's students receive some form of special education support—ranging from adjustments to teaching methods in a regular class, to withdrawal to small special classes to meet particular needs.
- On average, there is one special education teacher for every 29.8 special education students in elementary schools, a ratio that has improved steadily for the last four years, but which is still higher than the ratio of 22.4 to 1 found in 2001.
- In secondary schools, the ratio of students to teachers is 52.5 to 1, a number which has not improved since last year and continues to be higher than the ratio in 2001.
- One third of elementary schools continue to report they have identified students who are not receiving recommended support.

Integrating students

Many principals and parents commented on changes in their special education programs this year. A great number reported that more special education students were integrated into regular classes, with Special Education Resource teachers providing support to regular classroom teachers. The regular classroom teachers used “differentiated

instruction” to respond to the range of students in their classes. Some schools were happy with this arrangement, but many expressed concerns that the support for the classroom teachers was insufficient, and that some classroom teachers were not confident that they could deliver the range of different teaching required for the range of students in their classes.

Students waiting for support

In 33% of elementary schools, there are students who have been identified with special needs, but who are not receiving the support that was recommended for them. These students may be waiting for placement into special education programs, or they may be in smaller schools where it is difficult to provide extra support.

Province-wide, waiting lists have declined in recent years, but approximately 36,000 elementary and 4,800 secondary students continue to wait for special education assessments or to be placed in appropriate programs.

Regional differences remain

Most of the students on waiting lists are waiting to be assessed, usually by a psychologist. While there has been an improvement in the percentage of schools with regularly scheduled psychologists, there are wide discrepancies in access to support across the province.

Only 6% of elementary schools in Northern Ontario have regularly scheduled psychologists, compared 37% of schools province-wide. The same discrepancies hold true for social

workers, speech language pathologists and child and youth workers.

Special education in transition

Three years ago, the Ministry of Education eliminated the special education grant for students with high needs. The grant, known as the Intensive Support Amount (ISA), required massive amounts of paperwork and extensive and time-consuming assessments of students. It was initially very unpopular with school boards and parents. But what the ISA process did do was create a method for keeping track of the percentage of students per board that required high levels of support. This is referred to as a board's special education "incidence rate."

Boards now receive funding based on the incidence rate that resulted from the ISA process. The problem with this is that the incidence rate may change over time, but currently there is no way to measure those changes.

The province has not yet come up with another way of measuring the actual number of special education students in a board. As a result, a number of boards continue to say that they do not receive sufficient Special Education funding.

All funding for Special Education is now based on percentages of students. Thus, when enrolment declines, so does funding, regardless of need. Because of concerns raised by boards, the province is currently topping up funding to ensure no board is receiving less than they received last year.

The Ministry of Education is currently working to develop a more accurate and responsive method of funding special education.

what schools told us...

"If we continue to integrate special needs students into regular classes, we need more support for these students. There should be a mandated ratio."

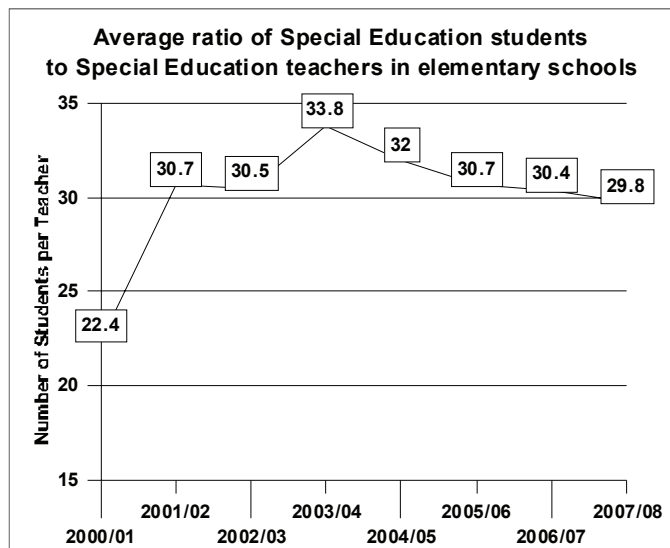
An elementary school in Dufferin-Peel CDSB

"We are the only high school in our rural area. We are required to provide programs for all students in all pathways and to meet the needs of students with all exceptionalities. Although we believe that we are doing a good job, these demands pose significant challenges for us as our enrolment declines."

A secondary school in Hastings and Prince Edward County DSB

"We are a small JK to 8 school in Northern Ontario, and this year we seem to have a lot less funding for Special Education. Teachers are trying to support all the students in their classrooms as best they can, but they can only do so much. Many students are not receiving the support they need. This is a very big concern for us."

An elementary school in Superior North CDSB



physical education

Canadian children and youth get a failing grade in their level of physical activity, according to Active Healthy Kids Canada.⁵³

Research shows that students are more likely to receive regular and rigorous physical education when they are taught by a specialist physical education teacher,⁵⁴ but less than half of Ontario elementary schools have these specialists.

Physical education in Ontario schools in 2008

- ❑ Ontario education policy requires students to take physical education classes from kindergarten to Grade 9.
- ❑ 44% of elementary schools have a physical education teacher, a small but steady increase over the past three years.
- ❑ Elementary schools with full-time physical education teachers have, on average, 465 students. The average elementary school has 331 students.
- ❑ Elementary schools report they face challenges complying with the provincially mandated Daily Physical Activity. It is difficult to fit the time into the school day, often hard to find adequate gym or classroom space to be active in, and staff lack training to offer the daily physical activities.

Access to physical education teachers inconsistent

More elementary schools have physical education teachers this year, but most are part-time; and areas with a high number of smaller schools are much less likely to have them. In the GTA, 72% of elementary schools have a part-time or full-time physical education teacher, compared to 27% of Southwestern and 29% of Northern elementary schools.

Researchers have found that where

regular classroom teachers must deliver the physical education curriculum, gym periods may be missed, and many classroom teachers do not have the knowledge or skills to deliver a program of vigorous physical activity.

Test score pressure squeezing out physical education

American researchers are finding that putting pressure on schools to raise students' test scores can result in reductions to physical education time.⁵⁵ Yet there is a growing body of research illustrating that exercise can boost the brain power in children and adolescents. Harvard University professor, Dr. John J. Ratey, states, "The exercise itself doesn't make you smarter, but it puts the brain of learners in the optimal position for them to learn."

In response to a request for input into the review of the physical education curriculum in March 2008, parents expressed concerns about the level of physical education in their schools. They said that gym classes are sometimes cancelled because of student misbehavior or because there is "no time" given the other curriculum requirements and that some teachers are not providing the required physical health education instruction.⁵⁶

The Province's Daily Physical Activity policy

Daily Physical Activity is a provincially mandated program introduced two years ago, which mandates 20 minutes of activity per day for students in elementary school. It is not intended to replace physical education classes which follow a proscribed curriculum in

each grade; instead it is meant to be a part of the regular classroom day. This year for the first time we asked elementary schools if students were receiving the mandated daily physical activity. While 98% of schools said they had implemented the program, they said it was a challenge to find time in the school day to do it. Schools also cited the need for teacher training, adequate space in the classroom or school, and resources to purchase needed equipment.

The future for physical education in Ontario Schools

One full-time physical education teacher is needed to provide phys ed classes for all the students in an average-sized Ontario elementary school. But because funding for phys ed teachers is dependent on preparation time, only schools well above the Ontario average size tend to have full-time phys ed teachers.

A multitude of factors contribute the decline in activity levels in young people. Many no longer walk to and from school and many spend hours a day in front of computer or TV screens. At a time when costs to participate in organized sports outside school have skyrocketed, schools are the one place where *all* children and youth have access to the physical education which may form life-long and life-saving habits of physical fitness.

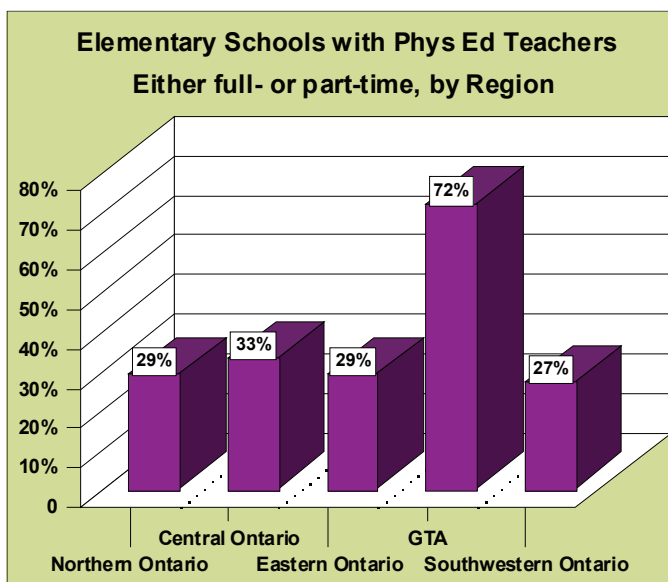
what schools told us...

“A tremendous amount of construction has taken place over the last six months to make the school more accessible and safe. Our school is unique in that we do not have a gymnasium. We have an empty classroom where classes can do some physical activity such as aerobics, yoga, etc. and it is used for some DPA activities. Most physical activity has to be done outside. All our classes contain split grades. The two ‘senior’ classes travel once per week by bus (20-25 minutes) to use the gym of the closest school. I feel parents have not been vocal about the lack of a gymnasium for fear of their small school being closed down.”

An elementary school in Renfrew County DSB

“We are an inner-city school of low socio-economic, often single-parent families. This year our new school gym will open. Our school did not have a gym before.”

An elementary school in Trillium Lakelands DSB



language support for newcomer students

Each year, Ontario receives well over 100,000 immigrants. One third are under the age of 19, and three-quarters from countries where English is not the first language.⁵⁷

Recent data from Statistics Canada shows that more than one quarter of Ontario's population is foreign-born – the highest proportion of all 10 provinces and the highest in Ontario's history.

ESL in Ontario schools in 2008

- ❑ More than one third of all immigrants are school-age.
- ❑ Nearly half of secondary schools report they have ESL students – but only one-third have ESL teachers.
- ❑ Some urban/suburban schools report that over 90% of their students require ESL support.
- ❑ 48% of elementary schools with ESL students have no ESL teacher.

Many, if not most, immigrants come to Canada in search of a brighter future for their children. But in Ontario there remains a wide gap between the percentage of students who require English language support and the per cent actually receiving it.

Supports do not match need

There have been increases in funding for English as a Second Language programs over the last five years, and some of that increase is reflected in slight improvements in the percentage of schools with ESL teachers this year, but a disconnect remains – between what is needed and what boards are able to provide.

ESL students and the Grade 10 Literacy Test

To graduate from high school in Ontario, all students must pass either the Grade 10 Literacy Test or an equivalent Literacy course in Grade 12. For students who speak English as a second language, this is a challenge. One third of ESL students in 2007 chose to defer their test. Of the ESL students who wrote the test, only 52% passed.

Advocates for ESL students continue to raise concerns that the test contains colloquial language and knowledge that is difficult for new English-speakers to understand, particularly as they are not allowed to use dictionaries to translate.

New ESL policy falls short

In the fall of 2007, in response to recommendations from, among others, the provincial Auditor General, the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, the Atkinson Foundation and People for Education, the Ministry of Education released new ESL policy.⁵⁸ The new ESL policy provides guidelines and recommendations, but it is not mandatory. The policy:

- states that students should continue to receive ESL support until they are able to function academically in English, but does not provide funding beyond four years;
- recommends students achieve an acceptable standard of English before ESL supports are removed, but it does not define what that acceptable standard might be;
- notes that there are some newcomer students with much higher needs than other immigrant students: these

students arrive as refugees, some from war-torn countries and some never having attended school. They may not be literate in any language. The policy acknowledges their different needs, but it does not provide any differentiated funding to meet them; and

- states that all ESL funding *should* be spent on ESL programs, but does not mandate it.

Few new teachers with ESL training

Most regular classroom teachers have no ESL training, despite the presence of ESL students in many of Ontario's classrooms. The new ESL policy *suggests* that it would be beneficial for teachers, particularly in urban schools, to acquire ESL training, but it doesn't make it mandatory.

New requirements for reporting

A number of school boards report they spend a substantial portion of their ESL funding on things like school maintenance. With this year's funding, the province added a transparency requirement – for the first time, boards will have to report publicly on exactly how they spend their ESL money. This may be a first step in ensuring that sufficient ESL funding is available for Ontario's newcomer students.

what schools told us...

"We only have staff to accommodate 15 students, however, we have approximately 250 students who should be receiving ESL assistance."

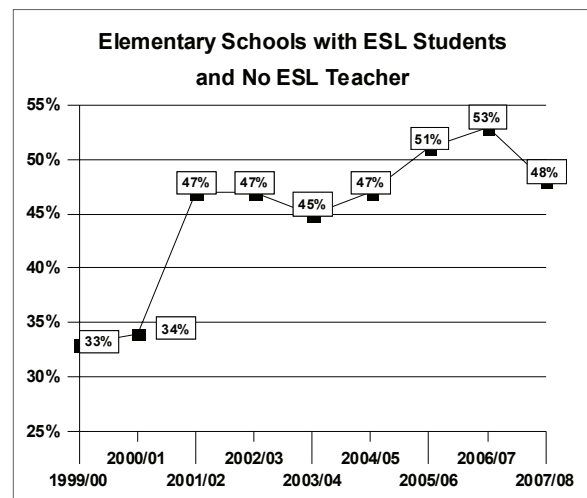
An elementary school in Toronto DSB

"...we have 15 identified ESL students, and a further 80 of our students were born in Canada but came to school not speaking English. Even so, we only have one half-time ESL teacher."

An elementary school in Durham DSB

"We have an increase of students needing support. We carved out some support last year with creative timetabling, but we were unable to do so this year."

An elementary school in Toronto DSB with 75 ESL students and no ESL teacher



grades 7 & 8

Educators agree that the “transition years” (grades 7, 8, 9, and 10) are key to student success, and are a “stumbling point” for many students.⁴³

The Ministry of Education recently commissioned a study of the transition years. It found that students may be more successful when they have to undergo only one transition, and that the best models divide schools either after grade 6, or after grade 8. But whichever place the transition happened, the report said that grades 7 and 8 play a crucial role in students' chances for success in high school.

The transition years

- ❑ Grade 7 and 8 students must make critical decisions about high school, but only 14% of schools with Grades 7 & 8 have guidance teachers, a drop from 25% in 1998/99.
- ❑ In 2008, 7% of schools with Grades 7 & 8 have specialist Design and Technology teachers, compared to 22% in 1998/99.
- ❑ Family Studies is available in only 5% of schools, compared to 16% in 1998/99.

No funding designated for specialists

The current funding formula does not acknowledge or fund specialized teachers or programs in grades 7 and 8. Boards receive no funding for specialized classroom space for things like, music, art or Design and Technology and Family Studies. In fact, boards are penalized for these rooms, because specialized classroom space registers as excess capacity on the boards' books. As a result, many

boards have been forced to drop these courses altogether.

Despite a provincial focus on skilled trades, Design and Technology programs are not a required part of the curriculum, and are disappearing from Grades 7 and 8. The percentage of schools with Design and Tech programs has declined by more than half since 1998/99.

Exposing students to these types of courses and *before* high school, not only provides them with a range of choices for the future, but it also gives them the experience they need to make informed choices for high school.

Guidance counsellors assist in transition to high school

There is also a scarcity of guidance teachers in senior elementary schools.

Although grade 8 students are making critical decisions that will have an impact on the rest of their lives as they select secondary schools, programs and courses, guidance teachers are funded at a rate of one guidance counsellor per 5,000 elementary students in a board. There has been a 44% decline in the percentage of senior elementary schools with guidance counsellors since 1997.

New transition programs

The province has recently developed a transition years program to help students as they move from elementary school to secondary school. The program is intended to provide individual support to students in grades 8 and 9 to assist them in making the transition to high school, but it is unclear how broadly available the

program is in schools across the province.

There is now a breadth of new research on the importance of the transition years for students, and the impact those years have on students’ chances for success. Given that research and given that boards across the province are reorganizing schools in part to deal with declining enrolment, it is vital that the province provide leadership about Grades 7 and 8 schools – about appropriate years for students to make the transition to high school, requirements for specialty courses and teachers in those grades and programs – to ensure that all students are supported in these all-important years.

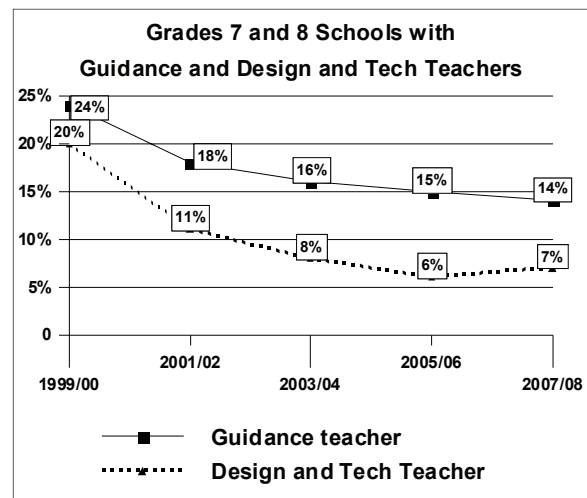
what schools told us...

“We have worked hard to creatively staff and fund our Family Studies and Design Technology programs which our board does not support in grades 7 and 8.”

An elementary school in Toronto DSB

“We need a design and tech program/staff at our school as well as an art teacher.”

An elementary school in Toronto DSB



high school

Ontario's secondary schools have gone through massive reform over the last ten years.

The curriculum has been completely re-written, the expected number of years to graduate was reduced from five to four, changes were made to credit requirements and standardized tests were added in grades 9 and 10.

In Ontario secondary schools in 2008

- ❑ An average of 19% of students per school take more than 4 years to graduate.
- ❑ The average high school has 842 students, a decline from a high of 947 in 2002.
- ❑ High schools have an average of 383 students for every one guidance counsellor.

Access to courses and staff

There has been an 11% drop in the average enrolment in Ontario secondary schools. Because most education funding is based on numbers of students, as enrolment declines, so does funding. And as funding declines, the numbers of teachers and numbers of courses offered decline as well. As a result, many of Ontario's smaller high schools find it difficult to offer a wide range of courses and programs.

Many boards and schools are turning to e-learning and video-conferencing as solutions to declining enrolment. While this form of learning does ensure that more students have access to more course options, some students find the experience less satisfactory. They say it is harder to receive assistance and that it is difficult to engage in broad discussions around subjects.

Student success, credit recovery and access to support staff

All students in Ontario must stay in school either until they graduate, or until they are 18. To improve students' chances for success, the province has implemented a Student Success Strategy which includes student success teachers in each high school who work with support staff and guidance counsellors, credit recovery and credit rescue programs and dual credit programs in some areas.

Student success teachers are intended to work with support staff such as social workers, psychologists and youth workers, but many secondary schools do not have access to these staff on a regular basis:

- 17% of schools have regularly scheduled psychologists;
- 58% of schools have regularly scheduled social workers; and
- 38% of schools have regularly scheduled youth workers.

Credit rescue programs allow students to make up missed work and get one-on-one assistance to allow them to pass a course. Credit recovery is a program that allows students to repeat only the sections of a course they failed, rather than repeating the whole year. In this way, students can continue to move through school with their peers.

Credit recovery is particularly valuable to students in grades 9 and 10, because research shows that students who have not achieved a full 16 credits by the time they finish grade 10 are much less likely to graduate.

In 2005/06 (the latest year for which data is available), 66% of Grade 10 students had 16 or more credits.⁶⁰

Graduation rates and drop outs

Ontario measures its graduation rate based on the percentage of students who have received their diplomas within five years of starting grade 9. When the new secondary school curriculum was first introduced, graduation rates plummeted. They have since recovered as a result of adjustments to the curriculum, a student cohort that has received the necessary preparation in elementary school, and more supports in high school.

It is incorrect to assume that the students who don’t graduate in five years have all dropped out of school. The province does not keep track of the students who take more than five years to graduate, move to other jurisdictions, move to the private system, or move from school to full-time apprenticeship programs or night school.

In fact, according to Statistics Canada, the drop-out rate has declined steadily over the last decade, and over 90% of Ontario young people aged 20 to 24 either have a high school diploma or are in school.⁶¹ This places Ontario in the top 10 OECD countries.⁶²

Ontario graduation rates ⁶³		
Students starting Grade 9	After 5 years	Graduation rate after 5 years
1999-2000	2003-2004	68%
2000-2001	2004-2005	71%
2001-2002	2005-2006	73%
2002-2003	2006-2007	75%

What schools told us...

“Our school offers 2 credit recovery sections each semester. One area that the school would like to see more commitment to, is social worker support. We really need a full time Psychologist and/or Social Worker. More school-based safety monitors would also be helpful.”

A secondary school in Toronto DSB

“Our school is large (built for 1000 students) and currently has only 500 students. As a result we will be closing rooms in an effort to reduce custodial costs. We will also be part of an accommodation review this year.”

A secondary school in Bluewater DSB

“We are the only high school in our rural area. We are required to provide programs for all students in all pathways and to meet the needs of students with all exceptionalities. Although we believe that we are doing a good job, these demands pose significant challenges for us as our enrolment declines.”

A secondary school in Hastings and Prince Edward County DSB

“It is increasingly difficult for our school and board to offer courses which suit all our students and fulfil the requirements for post-secondary education. Experiencing declining enrolment means getting less funding for the board, having fewer teachers and therefore offering fewer courses. One of our grade 12 students, who hopes to go to university next year, has to take his whole second semester by video conference, which requires him to sit in a room, with no actual teacher, for 3 courses per day. Because of the lack of courses offered and the very tight timetables, he has no choice. This is not how he should be learning. The school tried to help, but their hands are tied. This example is just one of many.”

A secondary school in Superior-Greystone DSB (enrolment in this board has declined 35% since 2002, the largest decline in the province.)

parent engagement

When we think about parent involvement, we have a tendency to focus on the more publicly visible and easily measurable aspects of parents' involvement in the education system – things like attendance at school council meetings, volunteering in classrooms and fundraising.

In Ontario schools

- ❑ Over 100,000 parents volunteer in Ontario schools each year – donating the equivalent of approximately 2,500 full-time jobs.⁶⁴
- ❑ According to a poll by OISE/UT and the Canadian Education Association, 53% of Ontarians say they would be willing to serve on local school councils (down from 65% in 1996).
- ❑ 75% of schools report an average attendance at school council meetings of 12 or fewer.
- ❑ 20% of schools did not know if their board had a Parent Involvement Committee – even though these committees are mandated by the province.

It is generally accepted that schools with greater parent and community involvement are richer and more vibrant places to learn.

But it is parents' individual engagement in their own children's education that has been proven to have the greatest effect on students' chances for success in school. This form of engagement is more difficult to measure and more complex to support, but it has the greatest potential for long-term impact, and for reducing the influence of socio-economic status as the number one predictor of success.

Research on parent engagement

Parental engagement has been proven to have a positive effect on students' attitudes toward school, attendance, behaviour, marks, graduation rates, and their sense of personal competence.⁶⁵

And although socio-economic status (parents' income, level of education, immigration status, etc.) is traditionally regarded as the greatest determinant of student success, researchers have found that students with involved parents are more likely to succeed.

According to a research review by the National Education Association in the United States, "students with involved parents, *no matter what their income or back-ground*, were more likely to succeed in school – attending school regularly, earning higher grades, passing their classes, and graduating and going on to postsecondary education."⁶⁶

This form of engagement includes talking about school, organizing and monitoring a child's time, reading to a child and talking about the book, and generally encouraging learning. These have all been shown to contribute to improving a student's academic performance.

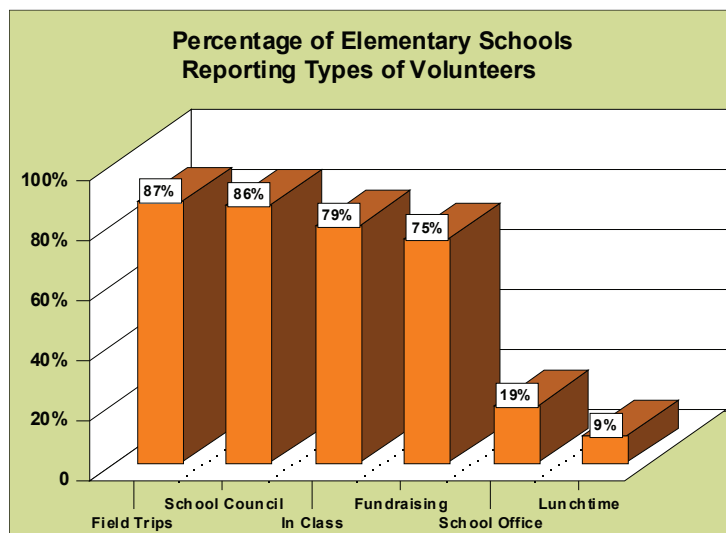
Provincial parent programs

The provincial government has developed a number of initiatives over the last three years to support parent involvement in the education system. Along with a Provincial Parent Board to advise the Minister on provincial parent involvement strategies, the Ministry has

initiated *Parents Reaching Out* grants to support local school councils and regional groups, either on their own, or working with community organizations, to help them to reach out to, and communicate with the parents who are often marginalized in the school system.

The province has also mandated that every board must have a Parent Involvement Committee to monitor boards’ implementation of their parent involvement strategies, but 20% of principals and school councils do not know if their board has such a committee.

School boards receive \$5000 plus 17 cents per student to support the work of their Parent Involvement Committees.



what schools told us...

“We have a very active school council and volunteer base. We have an active role in the management of our school and are constantly in communication with our principal and staff to support and maintain an excellent learning environment for our students. We are involved in many initiatives specifically to promote parental involvement in the school community. Our school motto is: “We are better because of you.” We would be much less productive and effective without our volunteer base.”

An elementary school in Algoma DSB

“We are very proud of our school – it is a true community school with a large number of children living in the immediate area. We have an active core of parent volunteers and dedicated staff that give of their spare time to run a variety of enrichment activities, such as clubs, charity events. etc. We are a very multicultural school that works hard to achieve respectful environment of shared cultural experiences.”

An elementary school in Ottawa-Carleton DSB

“Our school is a small community high school with a great sense of community. Staff are very receptive to parent involvement in their teen’s education. Support for School Council is very good and we are actively involved in many school events and are asked for feedback on many issues during the school year. Our input is also appreciated as well. We are proud to be part of this school!”

A secondary school in Hastings and Prince Edward County DSB

how funding works

In 1997, the provincial government took complete control of education funding in the province. A funding formula for education was developed and, though many adjustments to the formula have been made since then, the basic structure of the formula remains.

Has the funding formula changed?

Over the last eleven years a number of adjustments have been made to the funding formula. Funding has been added to support the province's smaller schools and to somewhat cushion the blow that declining enrolment causes. In 2003, on the recommendation of Dr. Mordechai Rozanski, a Local Priorities Grant was added. In 2006, it was eliminated.

While a proportion of boards' funding is based on numbers of students, there are other grants added to the "per pupil" base (Special Education, ESL, Transportation, Declining Enrolment, etc.). Per pupil funding is not meant to be equal, as different boards have different needs. But it is meant to be equitable in order to provide equal educational opportunity for all students.

Where are the decisions made?

The province

The Ministry of Education provides funding to school boards based on a number of factors, including the number of students in a board, the number of schools, the percentage of high needs special education students, the number of students who have either English or French as their second language, and based on some unique geographical needs (a high number of small schools, very far apart, for

example).

But only the special education funding is "sweatered," meaning it cannot be spent on anything but special education. Most other funding can be moved from one category to another, which means that many funding decisions are made at the board level.

The school board

School boards decide on individual schools' budgets, on whether there will be programs like Outdoor Education or all-day kindergarten, and on things like how many students a school must have in order to get staff such as teacher-librarians or vice-principals. Boards distribute funding for teachers to schools depending on the number of students and, in some cases, depending on the number of students who might struggle to succeed – either because of socio-economic factors or because of other special needs. Boards also decide which schools should stay open and which should close, and how many custodians, secretaries and educational assistants each school will get.

The school

Principals receive a budget for the school from the school board. They make decisions about school maintenance and repairs within that budget, and about the distribution of teachers and class sizes. They decide how to allocate educational assistants and whether their school can have staff such as a teacher-librarian, a music teacher or department heads. Depending on the size of the school, principals may also allocate funding to different departments.

methodology

This report includes research from Statistics Canada, the Ministry of Education, and other organizations, as noted. Unless otherwise attributed, all data is the result of People for Education's eleventh annual survey of resources in Ontario elementary schools, and eighth in secondary schools. The survey acts as an information tool for parents and Ontario citizens. It focuses on the quantifiable resources available in schools across the province, tracking any changes which occur. The resulting data provides an annual picture of the effects of education policy and funding shifts.

Surveys were mailed to every Ontario elementary and secondary school principal and school council in October 2007, with an explanatory letter requesting that they work together to complete it. Translated surveys were sent to French-language schools. Reminders were faxed in December and January. This year, for the first time, surveys were also posted and able to be completed online. To ensure a high level of reliability, parents in the People for Education Network worked in their regions, phoning schools

which had participated previously, asking for their repeat participation.

Confidentiality of individual school responses is guaranteed. Where direct quotes are used that might identify a school, permission has been obtained. Only aggregated data is released.

This year's sample of 844 elementary and secondary schools equals 17% of the province's schools and 18% of its students. Schools in 68 of the province's 72 school boards participated.

Forty-seven per cent of schools in the sample also participated in 2006/07.

Analyses and calculations

The analyses in this report are predominantly based on descriptive statistics (such as frequency distributions) and two-way cross-tabulations. The data in this study was analysed using SPSS 15. Calculations have been rounded to the nearest whole number where necessary, and therefore, do not always add up to 100%. Where appropriate, comparisons by school size, region or year-over-year are noted.

Where significant shifts were found in year-over-year comparisons, the trends were confirmed by a comparison with the smaller sample of repeating schools. Some results, such as parent fundraising totals, were extrapolated to include the total number of elementary or secondary schools in Ontario, using average amounts as the basis for the calculation.

A small number of schools reported that 39% or more of their students were receiving special education assistance.

Schools were sorted according to their postal codes into geographic regions. The distribution of respondent schools is representative of their distribution in Ontario.		
Postal Code Region	% of schools in survey	% of schools in province
Eastern (K)	18%	19%
Central (L)	23%	28%
Toronto (M)	22%	18%
Southwestern (N)	21%	19%
Northern (P)	16%	16%

These schools were excluded from the analysis of the special education variables so that results could not be skewed by the high ratio of special education students in these schools.

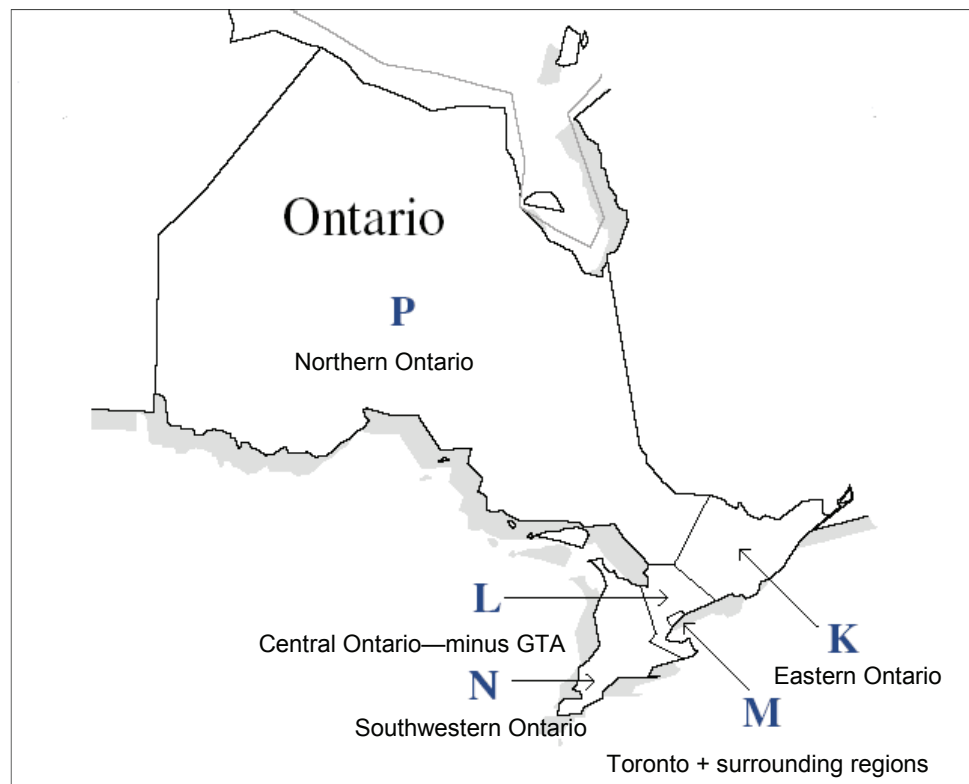
Student-to-staff ratios were calculated for schools which reported both the total number of students and the full-time equivalent for staff positions. The student-to-staff ratio for the province is the mean of the distribution of the student-to-staff ratios of reporting schools.

Regional variations

To make regional comparisons, schools were sorted into postal code regions

and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The Greater Toronto Area includes all the schools in Toronto (M postal code) and schools in the Regional Municipalities of Durham, Peel, Halton and York (all part of the L postal code). The Central Region, for the purpose of regional comparisons, includes all the schools in the L postal code, minus the schools in the Greater Toronto Area.

Copies of the French and English 2006-07 Elementary and Secondary Tracking Surveys are available on our website www.peopleforeducation.com.



Number of Participating Schools, per District School Board			
District Board of Education	# schools	District Board of Education	# schools
Algoma DSB	10	Lambton Kent DSB	10
Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic	11	Limestone DSB	15
Avon Maitland DSB	16	London District Catholic SB	4
Bluewater DSB	16	Near North DSB	11
Brant/Haldimand-Norfolk CDSB	0	Niagara CDSB	5
Bruce-Grey CDSB	3	Nipissing-Parry Sound CDSB	2
CDSB of Eastern Ontario	0	Northeastern CDSB	3
CSD catholique Franco-Nord	5	Northwest CDSB	1
CSD catholique de l'Est Ontarien	6	Ottawa CDSB	9
CEP de l'Est de l'Ontario	5	Ottawa-Carleton DSB	21
CSD des écoles catholiques du Sud-Ouest	4	Peel DSB	28
CSD du Centre Sud-Ouest	11	Peterborough Victoria Northumberland CDSB	8
CSD catholique Centre-Sud	8	Rainbow DSB	10
CSD catholique de Centre-Est de l'Ontario	5	Rainy River DSB	3
CSDC des Aurores Boréales	3	Renfrew County Catholic DSB	3
CSDC des Grandes Rivières	13	Renfrew County DSB	10
CSD de Nord-Est de l'Ontario	1	Simcoe County DSB	30
CSD du Grand Nord de l'Ontario	6	Simcoe Muskoka Catholic DSB	5
CSDC du Nouvel-Ontario	8	St. Clair Catholic DSB	2
DSB of Niagara	7	Sudbury Catholic DSB	1
Dufferin-Peel Catholic DSB	13	Superior-Greenstone DSB	11
DSB Ontario North East	8	Superior North Catholic DSB	5
Durham DSB	16	Thames Valley DSB	37
Durham Catholic DSB	2	Thunder Bay CDSB	5
Grand Erie DSB	25	Toronto CDSB	16
Greater Essex County DSB	16	Toronto DSB	172
Halton CDSB	3	Trillium Lakelands DSB	14
Halton DSB	15	Upper Canada DSB	22
Hamilton-Wentworth DSB	11	Upper Grand DSB	28
Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic DSB	1	Waterloo Region DSB	15
Hastings and Prince Edwards DSB	16	Waterloo CDSB	0
Huron-Perth Catholic DSB	2	Wellington Catholic DSB	4
Huron-Superior Catholic DSB	2	Windsor-Essex Catholic DSB	0
Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB	24	York Catholic DSB	13
Keewatin-Patricia DSB	1	York Region DSB	10
Kenora Catholic DSB	1	Not known	1
Lakehead DSB	11	School Authorities	5
		Total Schools Participating	844

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