

Public education in Ontario's cities



We have to fight for the right of others to have what we in our generation had – schools which helped to bring together children of all backgrounds, income and cultures...If we don't preserve it, we are really going to pay a terrible price....Public education is everyone's responsibility because the future of children is to become citizens of tomorrow.

Governor General Adrienne Clarkson

People for Education

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People for Education is a registered charity working to support public education in Ontario's English, French and Catholic schools.

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Education is an international human right essential to the life of an individual and to a community as a whole. Education provides opportunities for personal, social and academic development and is important for future employment and integration in society.

In Canada, education is recognized and legislated as a fundamental social good. A publicly-funded education system, accessible to all, is recognized as a core responsibility of government.

Ontario Human Rights Commission, October 2003

Public education is the foundation of a civilized democratic society. It offers all children, regardless of income, race, language, or religion, access to the education they need to become participating citizens. Public education holds the capacity to overcome generational cycles of poverty, change the destinies of immigrants and refugees, and create a sense of societal cohesion where few are excluded.

The quality and level of our education has an effect on our health, longevity, employability, income and general quality of life. Educational attainment is widely acknowledged as one of the key components of socio-economic status and is the key indicator of that status ... Those Canadians lacking the literacy and numeracy skills to meet everyday needs may end up feeling alienated from society...

*Statistical Report on the Health of Canadians, 2002
Statistics Canada*

In Ontario, children are presently required by law to attend school from the ages of 6 to 16. Ninety-five per cent of Ontario children, regardless of their backgrounds, attend public schools, most for over twelve years. This makes public schools the most obvious place to provide a wide variety of supports for children and youth.

Public Education in Ontario's Cities

Executive Summary

Boards are forced to use whatever funding they can find to cover the difference between the amount the province provides for staff, and the amount boards actually pay staff like teachers, principals, secretaries and educational assistants. So, sadly, a substantial proportion of the funding for the Learning Opportunities Grant for students at risk, ESL and school renewal is actually used to pay for general salary costs.

Dusty Papke,
President,
Council of Ontario
Directors of Education

City schools face unique challenges

In a typical urban classroom, 13% of students have special needs, 12% need ESL support and as many as 36% come from low-income families; many students have a combination of these challenges.

The new provincial government has implemented a number of changes to education funding and policy to attempt to address some of the unique pressures faced by urban schools, but much of the funding is not reaching the students who need it most. Boards are using a substantial portion of this targeted funding to pay for overall costs such as teachers' salaries and operating expenses.

All schools across the province have students needing a variety of supports, and all schools have qualities that make them unique. But in urban schools, because of the sheer number of students, the concentration of issues, the combination of needs and the impact of changes to government policy, the challenges are magnified.

In Ontario, 1.2 million students and 50% of schools are located in urban areas.¹ In Ontario's urban schools:

- ♦ The proportion of the population that are new immigrants is more than five times higher than the rest of the province.
- ♦ There is a greater proportion of children in low-income families than most other areas of the province.
- ♦ As compared to non-urban areas, cities have more than double the number of residents who speak neither English nor French as their first language.

Levelling the playing field

Four main factors affect students' chances for success at school: their parents' level of education, the language spoken at home, parents' occupation and income, and parent's immigration status.

Without extra support, students from low-income families, from families where English or French is not the first language, and students who are recent immigrants, are less likely to succeed in school. But, by levelling

the playing field with targeted programs and supports, a thriving public education system can provide all students with a comparatively equal chance for success.

A decade of change for Ontario cities

Over the last ten years, cities in general, and young people in cities in particular, have been affected by changes in government policy and funding at all levels. In the last decade, the federal government made substantial cuts in transfer payments to provinces for social services and health care. Other federal policy changes have reduced the availability of public housing, services for new immigrants and multiculturalism programs.

The Ontario government made cuts to education funding, removed taxing powers from municipalities, amalgamated school boards, made cuts to welfare and downloaded a number of responsibilities to cities. Municipal governments made cuts to funding for parks and recreation, implemented user fees for many services and programs, and reduced funding for child care and public health. In order to comply with the new provincial funding formula for education, school boards had to make substantial changes in the programs and services they offer to students and parents.

The panel emphasizes the urgency with which... analysis should be carried out in order to determine the total amount required for the Learning Opportunities Grant in September 1998, to ensure that necessary programming currently in place for "at risk" students may be sustained. *Expert Panel Report on the Learning Opportunities Grant, August 1997*

The impact on Ontario's urban schools:

- ♦ The number of urban elementary schools with English as a Second Language programs has declined by 15% since 1997/98, despite a 13.5% increase in the number of immigrants to urban Ontario over the same time period.
- ♦ Although 81% of urban elementary schools report having English as a Second Language (ESL) students, only 55% have ESL teachers.
- ♦ In the Greater Toronto Area alone there are almost 120,000 English as a Second Language students – 76% of the total number of ESL students in the province.
- ♦ Research shows that the benefit of reducing class sizes in primary grades is magnified for children from low-income families. Despite this, 72% of Kindergarten to Grade 3 classes in urban schools are over the government's planned 20-student cap, compared to 56% of K to 3 classes in non-urban schools.
- ♦ There are over 27,000 elementary school children waiting for special education services in Ontario cities; the number of urban elementary schools with regular access to psychologists has dropped by 19% in eight years.

- ♦ 70% of compulsory English classes in urban secondary schools are over the government mandated average class size.
- ♦ School boards report that there is at least a 10% gap between funding set in the funding formula for salaries and the actual salaries paid by boards. As a result, the Toronto District School Board, for example, must use as much as \$73.6 million of the funding it receives for programs for students at risk to bridge the \$47.2 million gap in funding for salaries for teachers, secretaries, and other employees, and the \$26.4 million gap in funding for utilities.
- ♦ Less than 5% of teacher graduates from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education OISE teacher take ESL training.

Recommendations

The delivery of all social services, including education in these large urban centres, is a complex process. While a wide range of highly qualified agencies is available in these communities, the services they provide have to be coordinated and managed so that they are readily accessible when needed. The issues facing the large urban centres deserve special attention.

*The Education Improvement Commission,
Third Interim Report
January 2000*

Based on the findings in this report we recommend that all levels of government work together to address the gaps in the system that affect children and youth in cities. Because there is such a wide range of factors that affect students' performance at school, it is vital that we address not only the issues directly related to education, but also areas like poverty, immigration, housing and recreation.

People for Education's new urban strategy recommends a number of changes to provincial education policy:

- ♦ **Recommendation:** Because the amounts set in the provincial education **funding** formula do not match the actual amounts boards pay for salaries and other operating costs, we recommend the province immediately release the \$674 million recommended in the Rozanski report to correct this gap.

ESTIMATED COST TO IMPLEMENT IN URBAN BOARDS \$400 MILLION

- ♦ **Recommendation:** Responsibility for urban children and youth crosses all levels of government and nearly all provincial Ministries. We recommend the province mandate advisory committees for each urban area to **co-ordinate the planning and delivery of services for children and youth**. The committees must meet at least three times per year and include representatives from school boards, municipal governments, and appropriate provincial ministries and federal departments.

Integrated services would go a long way towards helping schools meet students' needs in all of the readiness-to-learn areas...as well as special education needs...I believe that a more wide-ranging and higher-level initiative is required to co-ordinate services, and the funding of service, for at-risk children and youth.

Dr. Mordechai Rozanski,
Education Equality Task
Force, December 2002

- ♦ **Recommendation:** The Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) was intended to benefit students whose socio-economic status put them at risk of failure. The purpose of the grant has since been expanded to cover a wide variety of remedial needs; much of the funding in the grant is being used to cover overall costs, and funding for the socio-economic portion of the grant has not kept pace with inflation. We recommend the province designate a new *Equity in Education Grant* to replace the LOG and to be used solely for providing programs to mitigate **socio-economic factors** affecting students. The new Equity in Education Grant should include a built-in accountability process mandating that school boards report annually on the programs and services funded by the grant and on their effectiveness. Per pupil funding for remedial programs should be delivered in a separate grant.
ESTIMATED COST TO IMPLEMENT IN URBAN BOARDS: \$297.6 MILLION (A REAL INCREASE OF \$47.6 MILLION)
- ♦ **Recommendation:** Currently the federal government provides funding for settlement and language support for adults and very young children, but no funding to support children and youth in school. We recommend the federal and provincial governments co-ordinate funding and policy for settlement services so that newcomer parents and children receive all the supports they need to successfully settle in their new communities. We also recommend that the provincial government amend the funding formula for **English as a Second Language** to support ESL students for as long as it takes them to acquire the language, to include a built-in accountability process mandating that school boards report annually on the programs and services funded by the grant and on their effectiveness, and modify the Secondary School Grade 10 Literacy Test to address the needs of ESL students.
- ♦ **Recommendation:** Recognising that in an average urban classroom, 12% of students speak English as their second language, 12% are receiving Special Education assistance and well over a quarter may be living below the poverty line, the government must continue its initiative to lower the student-to-teacher funding ratio in the foundation grant and fund a reduction in **class sizes** to ensure no more than 20 students in classes from Kindergarten to Grade 3, no more than 24 students in classes from Grade 4 to Grade 6, and no more than 30 student in classes from Grade 7 to Grade 12.
- ♦ **Recommendation:** New teachers receive little or no training in **teaching ESL**. We recommend that, in the requisite education of teachers, the province include the teaching of English as a Second Language, and Special Education, as well as pedagogical skills to deal with the real needs of students in inner city settings.

What's So Different about Urban Schools?

At the same time that education resources for high-needs students have been reduced, other social programs that support at-risk children have been hit. Welfare cheques have been reduced by 20% and children are coming to school hungrier and needier. Social housing programs have been downloaded to municipalities. Homelessness is increasing, with the consequent disruptions to children's education. Funding for community support services for childhood mental health problems and children with disabilities has been reduced. All these have had impacts on how well urban boards can provide for their large at-risk populations.

*Judith Bishop, Former Chair,
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board*

Defining Urban Ontario

This report focuses on schools in Ontario's urban centres with populations of over 300,000. These include:

- ♦ the Greater Toronto Area, encompassing the municipalities in Durham, Peel, Halton and York
- ♦ Hamilton
- ♦ Kitchener-Waterloo
- ♦ London
- ♦ Ottawa
- ♦ Windsor

There are 1,182,004 students attending 2,2456 schools in Ontario's urban areas. This represents 60% of Ontario's students and 50% of Ontario's schools.

Ontario's urban areas have undergone rapid and substantial growth in recent decades, due in part to urbanisation and immigrant settlement. Statistics Canada now classifies 84.6% of the province's population as living in an urban setting. This rapid growth has created strains on public services such as transit, recreation programs, social services, childcare, and housing.

At the same time, there has been a redefinition of the social contract. Responsibilities for many programs and services have been downloaded to municipal governments, while municipal revenues have not increased accordingly. As a consequence, important public programs have been severely cut or cancelled when their need has been greatest.

Urban schools, by definition, serve large populations, with widely varying levels of affluence and poverty, family situations, and concentrations of visible minorities.

The Changing Face of Ontario Cities - Diversity

As a result of large numbers immigrating to Canada in the 1990s, most of whom settled in urban areas, the ethnic profile of Ontario cities has significantly changed.

In 2001, 19% of the Ontario population were visible minorities. Toronto had the largest visible minority population in Canada at 37%, with the largest groups being South Asians, Chinese, and Blacks. In Ottawa-Hull, 14% of the population was made up of visible minorities, with Blacks, Chinese, Arabs/West Asians, and South Asians being the largest groups.

Language

Approximately 47% of Toronto District School Board secondary students and 41% of elementary students have a language other than English as their first language. More than 47,000 (24%) of the board's elementary students were born outside of Canada in more than 175 different countries.

While the most obvious implication of the high numbers of newcomers is the need for English as a Second Language training, supporting the success of newcomer students presents many other challenges. Newcomer students and their families need translation services for parents, they need bilingual tutors, cultural liaison workers and appropriate classroom materials. A small but significant proportion of newcomer students have never attended school or have had limited access to education for various reasons, including war. These students require extensive remedial and often psychological support.

Poverty

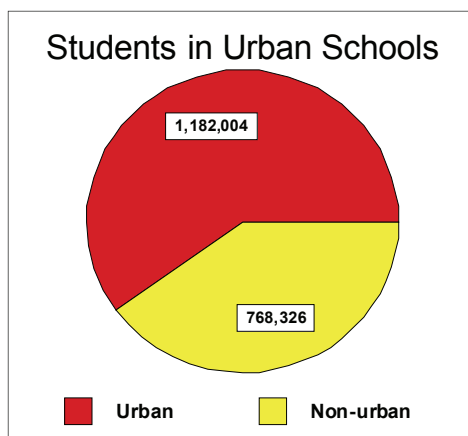
Poverty affects student success. In a recent Manitoba study, 77% of all 18-year-olds in areas of high socio-economic status (SES) passed a grade 12 standard provincial exam, but in the lowest SES area, only 27% passed.²

Poverty is also associated with higher rates of student mobility, that is, the number of times a student will change schools. As the OECD (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) has reported, student mobility is related to lower levels of student achievement.³

The profile of the "inner city school" has changed significantly over the last three decades. As the downtowns of many North American cities have become gentrified over the latter half of the last century, these areas are no longer affordable for immigrating families. A report by the United Way, *Poverty by Postal Code*, describes how lower income neighbourhoods have migrated from their traditional presence in Toronto's city core to

what were formally more affluent suburban areas. These suburbs never developed the infrastructure to support the settlement of large numbers of incoming immigrants, such as social service networks, public housing, settlement programs, and appropriate parks and recreation programs. Staff in the public school systems have often had to take on the role of settlement workers for these new Canadians.

The United Way report also raises concerns about the increasing concentration and number of high-poverty neighbourhoods in Toronto. In a high-poverty neighbourhood, the percentage of residents living in poverty is twice the national average or more. There were 30 high-poverty Toronto neighbourhoods in 1981; in



“Access to good childcare is clearly a vital issue for parents....The same is true of social benefit programs such as employment insurance or social assistance, since these programs have an enormous effect on available incomes for low-income families in Canada....Thus a strategy aimed at improving the situation of children and youth at-risk cannot ignore issues such as minimum wage rates, availability of good jobs, and social transfer and benefit programs.”

Ben Levin⁴

2001, there were 120. Over the same period, the city's poverty rate has gone from 13.3% to 19.4%.⁵

A similar situation is becoming evident in the burgeoning regions beyond Toronto's city limits. In Peel Region, a recent report describes pockets of poverty, a huge volume of new immigrants (43% of its 1,000,000 inhabitants were born outside of Canada), and the emergence of inner city problems like homelessness and an increasing demand for food banks. The report says social services are extremely inadequate and underfunded, in part because the outward prosperity of the region masks the existence of the many who require social assistance.⁶

Unlike previous waves of immigrants who were able to find low-skilled but well-paid jobs, low-income rates almost doubled among recent immigrants between 1980 and 1995, despite their higher levels of education than previous immigrants.⁷

Statistics Canada's 2001 Census identifies approximately 14.7% of Ontario's urban population, or 1,188,025 people, as “low-income,” defined as families spending 70% of their total income on food, shelter and clothing. Exacerbating the conditions for these children's families are the high costs of transportation, housing, childcare, and recreation programs.

Amalgamation

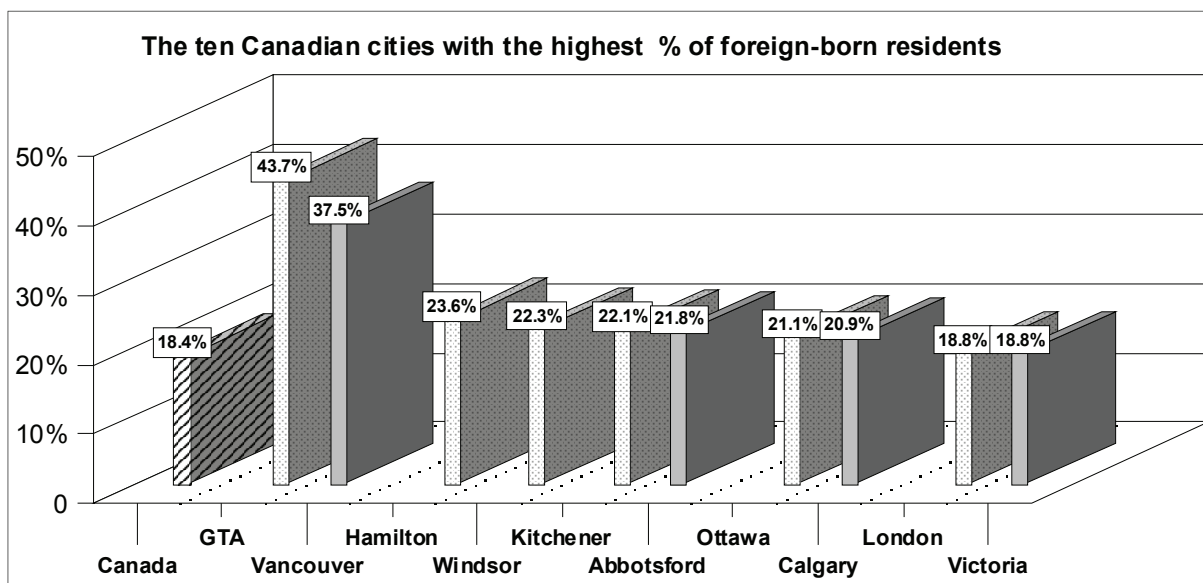
When Ontario's urban boards were amalgamated in 1997 not all areas of cities had the same levels of affluence, the same philosophies, experienced the same problems, or had the same programs in place to deal with things like violence, poverty, or diversity. As a result, some amalgamated boards experienced long periods of confusion and conflict over what programs were to be retained. Many programs were lost, such as tutoring and mentoring in a student's first language, and international language programs; others, like parenting programs, were severely cut.

Amalgamation has also had the side effect of disrupting the tracking of students at risk. Some boards had developed systems to follow students and track their success, relative to other elements, such as mobility and socio-economic status. But these programs differed from board to board, and research and tracking was curtailed or diminished as the new amalgamated boards sorted out their combined approach. In some boards, it is only now, eight years after amalgamation, that attention is again being given to inner city schools and their students.

Immigration in Urban Areas

Ontario has a higher proportion of people born outside the country than any other province in Canada and higher than most jurisdictions in the world.

Between July 2003 and June 2004, 128,055 new immigrants arrived in Ontario. Most of them settled in urban areas; three quarters of them came from countries where English is not the first language; and 37% were under the age of 19. Census comparisons show that the Greater Toronto Area has more foreign-born residents as a percentage of its population than any other city in the world.



Of the cities with the highest proportion of foreign-born residents, six of the top ten are in Ontario.
 Statistics Canada, Census 2001

All levels of government share responsibility for new immigrants

“The state of ESL in large, multi-ethnic school boards is abysmal, and in essence, a betrayal of public trust. The reality is that ESL students are denied access to supports necessary for their academic success, and contravene Canadian laws for equal rights.”

Mary Meyers⁸

Under the constitution, immigration is a shared federal-provincial jurisdiction. The federal government provides funding for health and social assistance through transfer payments, and it supports community-based settlement services through Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The federal government does not provide funding for ESL programs for children in school.

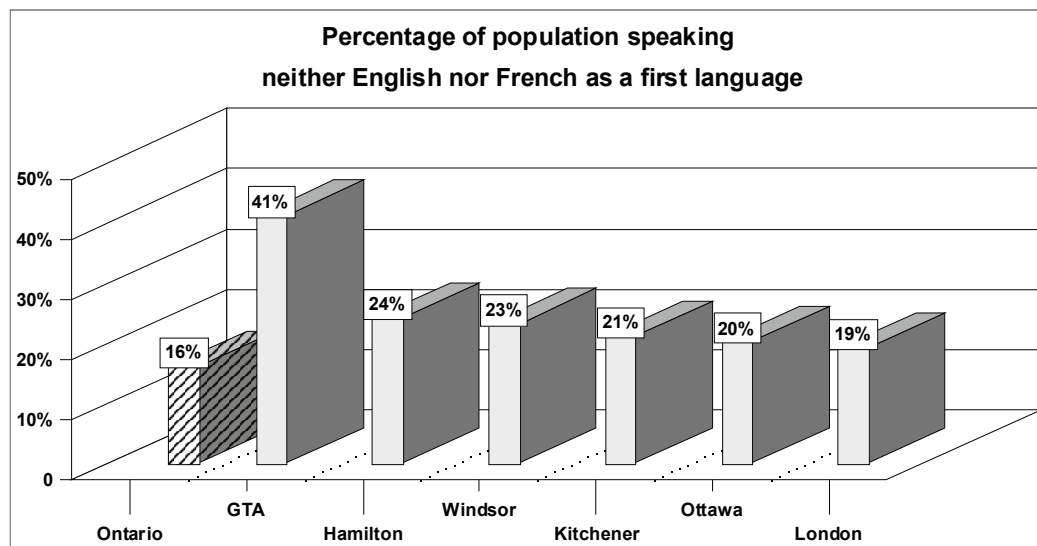
Provincial governments work with the federal government to coordinate settlement programs, and they provide many of the social services essential to new immigrants – for example, education and job training. Municipalities provide emergency shelter for refugee families, child care, social housing and public health.

School boards provide English as a Second Language programs, through schools and through new immigrant reception centres.

Foreign-born and visible minority residents in Ontario's urban centres ⁹				
	Total Population	Foreign-born population 2001	Per cent increase since 1996	Total visible minority population 2001
Greater Toronto Area	4,647,960	43.7% (2,032,960)	+15%	1,712,535
Ottawa	845,875	21.1% (178,479)	+11%	119,687
Hamilton	655,055	23.6% (119,810)	+5%	64,380
London	409,770	18.8% (69,875)	+2%	38,300
Kitchener-Waterloo	427,215	22.1% (90,570)	+9%	43,770
Windsor	304,955	22.3% (67,875)	+19%	39,330

An increase in foreign-born residents and an increase in non-English speakers puts pressure on the school system in urban areas

The number of foreign-born residents in Ontario's urban areas has increased by an average 13.5% since 1996. And the number of residents who report they speak a language other than English or French at home has increased by an average 17% over the same period. School boards report a substantial increase in the number of children born in Canada who come to school unable to speak English. This is especially true in suburban areas like Markham where visible minorities comprise 56% of the population, most of them immigrants from Asia.



<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/PlaceSearchForm1.cfm>

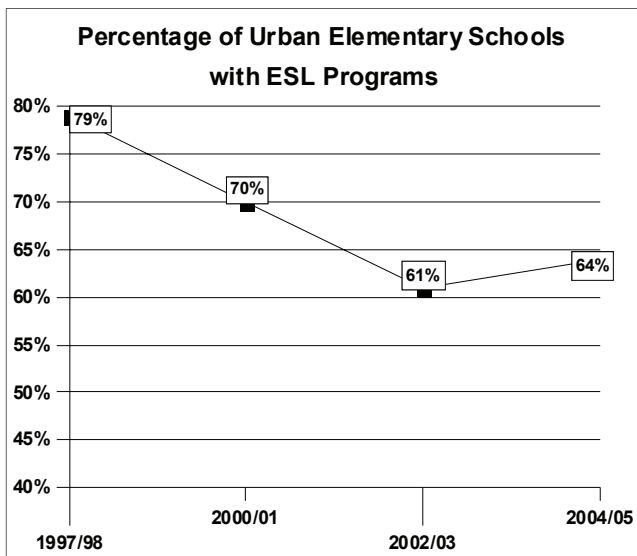
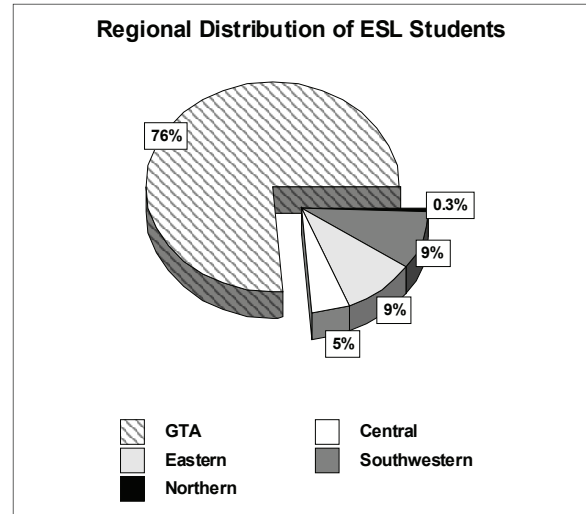
English as a Second Language Programs

“When school boards are really in a bind about money...and they have to maintain class sizes, they have to find the money somewhere....You would never dare cut special ed programs...if you tried to abandon French immersion, you'd hear about it from the parents. But you can cut ESL with relative impunity.”

*Dr. Elizabeth Coelho*¹⁰

Funding for ESL programs has increased in the last four years, but that funding is not getting to the students who need it. Our data show that despite additional funding and increasing demand, programs and staff for urban ESL students are declining. Because of ongoing funding issues, many boards spend their ESL funding to cover overall regular classroom costs.

- ♦ The number of urban elementary schools with English as a Second Language programs has declined by 15% since 1997/98, despite a 13.5% increase in the number of immigrants to urban Ontario over the same time period.
- ♦ Although 81% of urban elementary schools report having English as a Second Language (ESL) students, only 55% have ESL teachers.
- ♦ Almost 120,000 English as a Second Language students – 76% of the total number of ESL students in the province – go to school in the Greater Toronto Area.



- ♦ There has been a 45% increase since 1999/00 in the number of urban elementary schools that report they have ESL students but no ESL teachers.

Increasing demand

Nearly 25% of all the children aged 5 to 16 in the Greater Toronto Area are immigrants who arrived in the 1990s, and one half of those speak a language other than English or French most often at home. In Ottawa, 13% of the student population receives English as a Second Language programs. Hamilton is the second point of settlement after Toronto for refugees and immigrants in Ontario, followed by Windsor and Kitchener. The funding formula provides grants for English as a Second

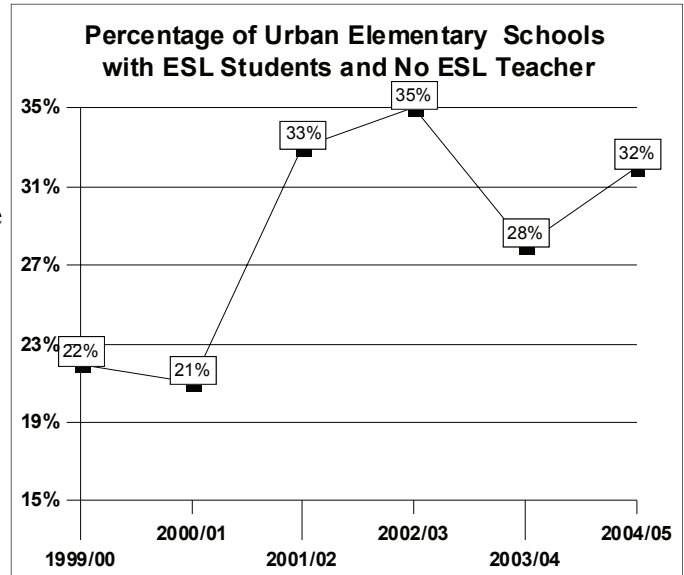
"We've had 25 years of discussion about multiculturalism, yet we continue to churn out teachers with no knowledge of anything related to language development. Building in one required course into the mainstream teacher qualification is essential."

Dr. Jim Cummins¹¹

Language programs to students unable to speak English who have come to Canada in the last four years, and for Canadian-born students entering the system whose language spoken at home is not English.

Funding increases not reaching ESL Students

Since 2003, funding for English as a Second Language has increased by \$64 million. Despite the increase, schools with ESL teachers and programs continues to decline. Because ESL funding is not tied to the delivery of specific programs, many boards use this funding to cover general classroom costs.

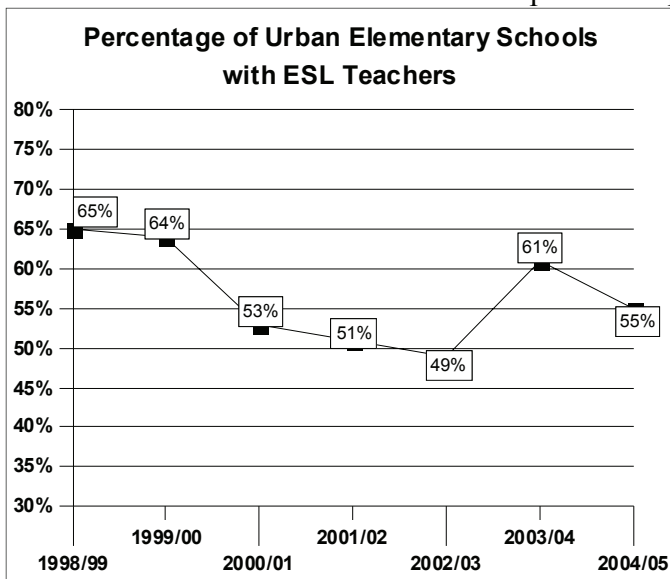


50% of ESL students failed the Grade 10 Literacy Test in 2004

ESL students lag farther behind native language speakers in their learning of curriculum. Their learning is on hold while they acquire the language skills to deal with the curriculum; but in the higher grades the pressure is greater as they require even more sophisticated language skills to cope with more complex concepts and texts. So, for many newcomer students, success at school is a huge challenge.

Far fewer ESL students actually finish high school. A Calgary study has reported an overall dropout rate of 74% for ESL students, 2½ times that of the general student population.

In Ontario, the success and participation rates for ESL students in provincial tests has substantially improved since 2001. ESL student performance in grades 3 and 6 reading and writing tests has generally improved every year, but ESL students still lag far behind. In 2004, EQAO results show that 70% of Grade 6 ESL students failed the reading test, compared to 42% of all students.



In 2004, one-third of the province's Grade 10 ESL students did not write the test, choosing to postpone it until their English language skills improved. But the percentage of students who did write the test has increased 20% since the first year the test was administered. For those ESL students who wrote it, 50% passed the test, compared to a 37% pass rate for ESL students in 2001.

Teachers not taking ESL component in teachers college

Approximately 47% of Toronto DSB secondary students and 41% of elementary students have a language other than English as their first language. More than 47,000 (24%) of the board's elementary students were born outside of Canada in more than 175 different countries. Similarly, in the Peel DSB, 15% of the student population – 19,775 students – are identified as ESL students. However, less than 5% of the 1,300 graduate teachers of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education choose to take the ESL elective in any given year. Teaching English as a Second Language is not part of basic teacher training.

Students at Risk in Urban Boards

...the links between socio-economic disadvantage and lack of success at school are well documented, begin very soon in a children's life, and are remedied at lowest total cost and with greatest payback, by intervention as early as possible.

Expert Panel Report on the Learning Opportunities Grant, August 1997

Students at risk do less well in school than the general population. In grade school children living in poverty score substantially lower in standardised tests and are more likely to be identified as special needs students. They are twice as likely to drop out of school. They are up to four times less likely to access post secondary education. For children under eleven years of age, the odds that a child from a low socio-economic status background will have more cognitive difficulties and behaviour problems are about a third higher than for a child from an average SES background and these differences are seen early.¹²

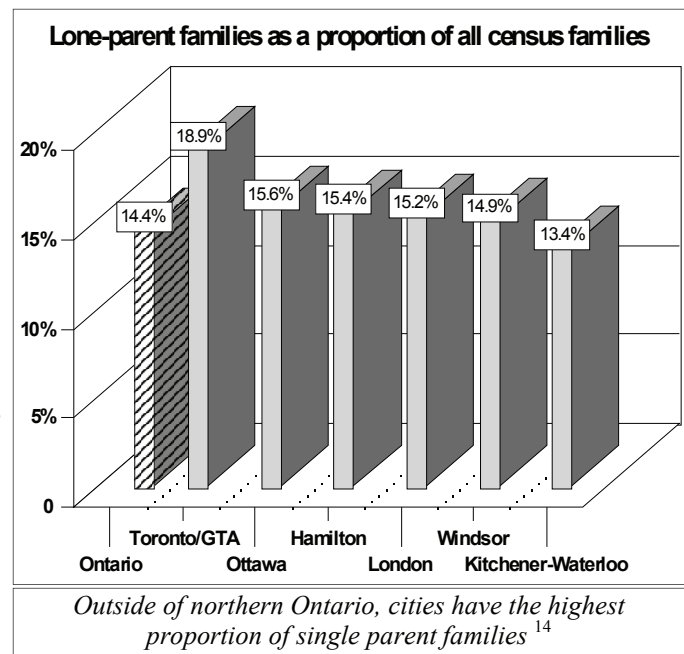
Urban school boards have a higher proportion of students at risk than all other areas of the province except the far north

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines students at risk as those students who are “in danger of failing in school and /or being unsuccessful in making the transition from school to work.”¹³

Among the many factors that put students at risk are low family income, low parental education, single parent status, recent immigration, aboriginal status, learning disabilities or mental health issues, mobility, and inadequate nutrition.

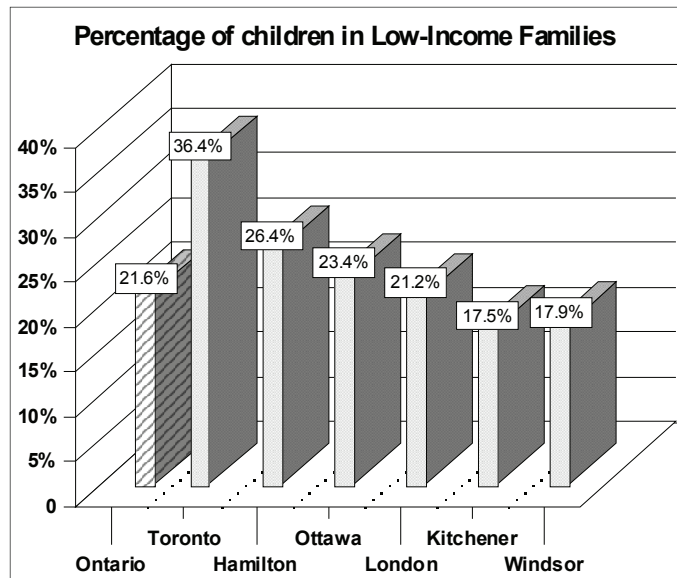
Most of Ontario's urban areas have a higher proportion of children who have those risk factors. There are more children living in low income families, more children in single-parent families, and a substantially higher number of new immigrants.

OECD reports show direct links between parents' income and education and their children's performance at school. Children of new immigrants take, on average, six years in school to catch up to their non-immigrant counterparts.¹⁶ And, according to Statistics Canada and the OECD, children from single-parent households have lower school per-



formance than children from two-parent households.¹⁷ Reading skills were judged on average to be 12% lower for children from lone-parent families, writing skills 10% lower, and mathematics skills 12% lower.

Before the introduction of the provincial education funding formula in 1998, school boards funded programs for students at risk either with money provided by the province in the Compensatory Education Grant or with money raised locally through property taxes. Grants from the province totalled between \$80 - \$90 million per year, but large urban boards spent well over that. For example, the Toronto District School Board spent approximately \$197 million per year on compensatory education.



The proportion of children living in poverty is higher in Ontario's cities¹⁵

Funding for Students at Risk: The Learning Opportunities Grant

Funding paid for programs to alleviate factors that put students at risk. Among the many preventative measures and remedial programs that fall into this category are:

- ♦ lower pupil/teacher ratios, educational assistants, adapted curriculum, tutors, and expanded kindergarten;
- ♦ counsellors, social workers, early assessment, mentoring, orientation and life skills, parenting classes, home/school linkages, stay-in-school and school re-entry programs;
- ♦ augmented literacy and numeracy programming, intensified remedial reading programs, and summer school programs;
- ♦ breakfast/lunch programs, extracurricular activities, before and after-school programs, and recreation and sports activities; and

The panel emphasizes the urgency with which this analysis should be carried out...to ensure that necessary programming currently in place for 'at risk' students may be sustained.

Expert Panel Report on the Learning Opportunities Grant, August 1997

- ♦ homework help, computer-aided instruction, arts and culture programs and outdoor education.

“The [Learning Opportunities] Grant has also been applied to assist in maintaining a wide spectrum of support services for our schools that would otherwise have to be eliminated due to the significant differences that exist between the funding model benchmarks and the Board’s actual costs. This applies primarily in the gap for salaries and benefits and non-salary benchmarks such as the funding for schools office costs and utilities.”

*Don Higgins,
Executive Superintendent,
Business Services, TDSB
Letter to Ministry of Education,
October 12, 2004*

In 1997 the government appointed an expert panel to make recommendations on targeted funding for students at risk. The funding was to be delivered through the Learning Opportunities Grant.

The expert panel estimated that funding for the grant should be set at approximately \$400 million, based on their analysis of school board spending on programs and services for at-risk students. At the same time they recommended that a more thorough analysis of programs funded through the grant was needed to ensure that no services were lost as the funding formula changed.

Despite the Expert Panel’s recommendation of \$400 million, funding for the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) was set at \$185 million. and, eight years later, analysis of the programs to be funded by the grant is still incomplete.

The initial purpose of the LOG was to fund students considered at risk because of their socio economic status. It was to be granted to boards based on on the percentage of families within their jurisdiction:

- ♦ under the Low Income Cut-Off,
- ♦ who are recent immigrants,
- ♦ with low education, with Aboriginal status, and
- ♦ headed by single parents.

But the scope of the grant has expanded considerably since it was first designed in 1997.

The Early Literacy Component of the LOG, is now based simply on the

A Short History of the Learning Opportunities Grant	
The original amount estimated by the government’s expert panel for the LOG to cover programs in place in 1997	\$400 million
The amount presently allocated in the LOG for students at risk based on socio-economic factors	\$382.3 million
The total amount presently allocated on a per pupil basis in the LOG for remedial assistance in secondary schools, the grade 12 Literacy program, early Literacy programs and the Literacy and Math component	\$138.4 million
Total 2004/05 LOG spending	\$520.7 million
The amount, adjusted for inflation, that would now be in the LOG and designated solely for students at risk if the province had implemented the Expert Panel’s recommendation	\$469.3 million

I recommend that the Ministry of Education increase the Special Education per Pupil Amount for secondary school students...to support a high level of special education programs services at the secondary school level.

*Dr. Mordechai Rozanski,
Education Equality Task
Force, December 2002*

number of children that a board has enrolled in JK to Grade 3. While the present budget for the LOG appears is over the inflation-adjusted amount recommended by the Expert Panel, over one quarter of the grant is now not targeted at the students for whom the grant was originally intended. Instead it has been aimed much more broadly, applying to all Ontario schools, and any Ontario students facing problems with curriculum.

Current Use of the Learning Opportunities Grant

The provincial government has added \$160 million to the LOG over the last two years and boards must spend those dollars on the students for whom they are intended. But boards are permitted to use the rest of the funding in the LOG on whatever they decide are priorities. Most boards use a substantial portion of their LOG funding to cover overall costs.

There are three over-riding factors that affect the usefulness of the LOG:

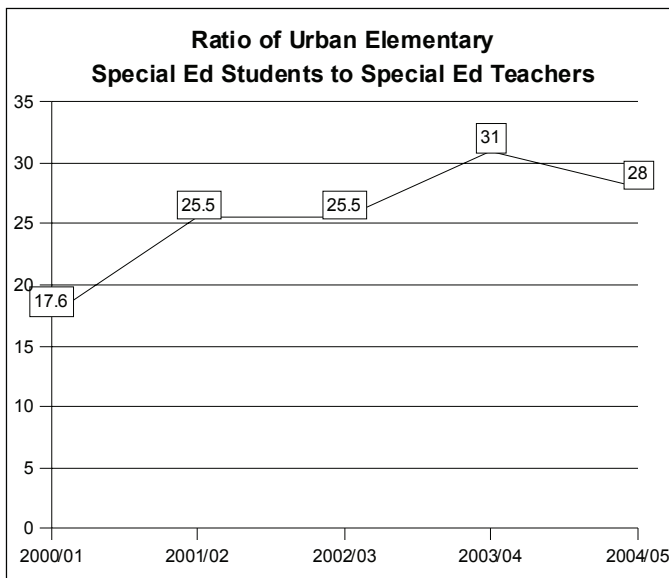
- ♦ The grant is no longer targeted at the demographic group for which it was intended.
- ♦ Many school boards are using money from the LOG to pay for utilities and classroom teacher salaries.
- ♦ There are no accountability measures in place to ensure that all LOG funding reaches the students who need it most.

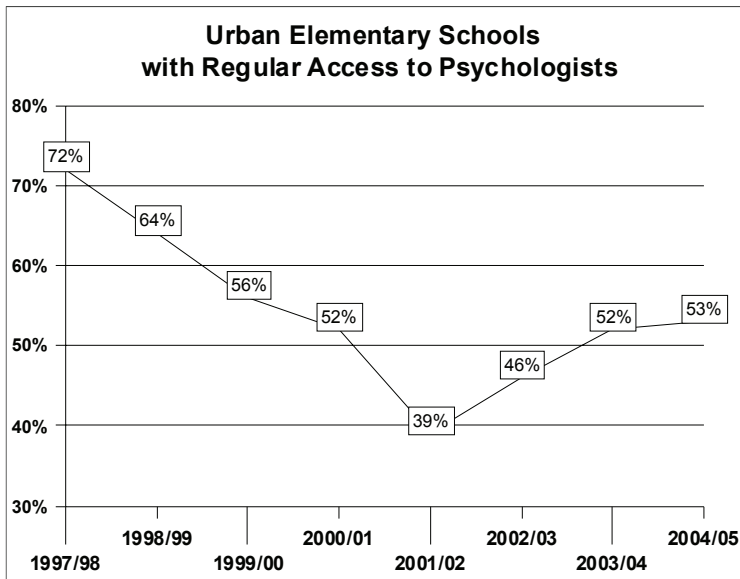
Staff for Students at Risk

Despite the higher proportion of students at risk in urban areas, the staff supporting these students have been cut substantially. Urban boards have cut guidance counsellors, psychologists, social workers and youth workers. Cuts to these staff have resulted in higher student/staff ratios, fewer hours that staff are accessible, and long waits for special education services. There are presently over 27,000 students in urban elementary schools waiting for special education services.

In urban elementary schools, the ratio of special education students to special education teachers has increased by 10 percentage points/ shown a 59% increase over the last five years.

In addition urban boards have cut a significant number of outdoor education programs, alternative school programs for





high school students at risk, attendance counsellors, school community advisors, teachers at new immigrant reception centres, lunchroom supervisors and full-day kindergarten programs.

People for Education tracking shows that despite the advice of the Expert Panel, services to students at risk have been reduced since the funding formula was introduced.

People for Education 2005 tracking data shows:

Guidance Teachers

- ♦ Urban secondary schools report a per school average of 391 students per guidance counsellor, an average of 12 more students per counsellor than was reported in 2000/01.
- ♦ There has been a 29% decline since 1998/99 in the number of urban elementary schools with guidance counsellors.

Psychologists

- ♦ 53% of urban elementary schools report having regular access to psychologists, compared to 72% in 1997/98.
- ♦ 48% of urban secondary schools report regular access to psychologists, an increase of 4% since 2000/01.

Social Workers

- ♦ 55% of urban elementary schools report having regular access to social workers, a 10% drop since 2000/01.

Youth Workers

- ♦ Only 23% of urban elementary schools have regular access to youth workers, compared to 34% of schools in the rest of the province;
- ♦ The average number of hours youth workers are available per month in urban elementary schools has dropped from 104 to 88.5 since 2000/01; and
- ♦ 27% of urban secondary schools report regular access to youth workers.

Urban Classes – Larger and More Diverse

...small classes were associated with higher achievement at all grade levels, especially if students were in the small classes for more than 100 hours.... They found that the major benefits of reducing class size occurred where the number of students in the class was fewer than 20.

Glass, et al. ¹⁸

...reducing class size is especially promising for disadvantaged and minority students.

Robinson, et al. ¹⁹

In 2005, three quarters of urban Kindergarten to Grade classes are over the government's planned 20-student cap.

Teachers in urban elementary schools face classes of students from very diverse backgrounds. In an average urban classroom, 12% of students speak English as their second language, 13% are receiving Special Education assistance and well over a quarter may be living below the poverty line.

Research shows smaller classes benefit students at risk

Tennessee's *Project STAR* (Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio) showed that students in smaller classes "substantially outperformed students" in larger classes on both standardized and curriculum-based tests; and that for students at risk, the effect of smaller classes was initially double that for other students. The study also found that students with special educational needs were identified earlier in small classes.²⁰

A 2005 update to the study which tracked 5,000 students over 13 years concluded that four years in a small class (13 to 17 students) in elementary school were associated with an 11.5% increase in high school graduation rates. Even greater effects were experienced by children from low-income families. "Attendance in small classes appears to have cut the black-white gap in the probability of taking a college-entrance exam by more than half," one researcher noted.²¹

Under the funding formula, funds in the Learning Opportunities Grant may be used to provide class sizes that are lower than the provincially mandated averages of 24 in kindergarten to Grade 3; 24.5 in Grades 4 to 8; and up to 22 in secondary school.

Since June 2004, the government has allocated \$181 million to begin implementing a cap on class size in primary grades. The new money is targeted to hire 2,375 new JK to Grade 3 teachers. However, in 2005, 72% of kindergarten to Grade 3 classes in urban schools are over the government's planned 20-student cap, compared to 56% of K-3 classes in non-urban schools.

People for Education tracking data shows that in 2005:

- ♦ 32% of urban elementary classes had 26 or more students; and
- ♦ 70% of mandatory English classes in urban secondary schools were above the provincially mandated average class size.

Physical Education, Recreation Programs and Community Access

As involvement in recreational activities increased, a corresponding decrease in the number of drop-outs was seen, even among the at-risk group....Recreation provides an opportunity to create a positive and voluntary connection to the educational system.... a pilot [recreation] project in Calgary called *Beyond School* reduced the likelihood of dropping out by 20% for the participant group.

Witt, 1996, "A study by Mahoney and Cairns"

Research shows that students who participate in activity programs are more successful at school. According to the National Federation of State High School Associations, students who are actively involved in recreation programs have:

- higher grade point averages,
- better attendance records,
- lower drop out rates, and
- fewer discipline problems.²²

These programs are especially important for students at risk.

In recent years, many municipalities, looking for ways to cut costs, have reduced funding to parks and recreation programs or added user fees for programs. At the same time, school boards have cut outdoor education programs, reduced the number of physical education teachers, and reduced the community's access to school facilities.

These reductions have happened in the face of data which shows Canadian children are becoming more obese and less physically fit, and despite widespread evidence that access to regular physical activity has a positive effect on children and youth educationally and socially.

People for Education tracking data shows that in 2005s:

- 44% of urban elementary schools have physical education teachers, down from 52% in 1999/00;
- 84% of urban elementary schools and 85% of urban secondary schools charge fees for community use, up from 48% and 81% respectively in 1999/00; and
- the number of urban elementary schools reporting community use has dropped from 89% in 1998/99 to 76% in 2005.

[regarding recreation]...one is hard pressed to think of another domain in children's lives in Ontario in which economically disadvantaged children are treated so unfairly.

Dr. Dan Offord

In July 2004, the government announced a co-operative venture between the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, the Ministry of Education, and school boards to help fund community use of schools.²³ In order to gain access to the \$20 million funding, school boards must sign Community Recreation and Use Agreements and roll back excessive charges for use of space. As of May 1, 2005, 12 of the 20 urban school boards have signed formal agreements with the government, and there is evidence that this government initiative is having positive results for urban families.

Urban Solutions

While the Toronto board has been focused on its financial struggles, other cities such as Winnipeg have been developing a systematic approach to inner-city education, the kind that's never coalesced here despite myriad isolated programs for disadvantaged students.

*Jeff Kugler, Principal,
Nelson Mandela Park P.S. and
member of the Inner City Task
Force*²⁶

"...we have a new opportunity to learn from the past and build a new agenda for success in urban schools around effective instruction, strong community engagement, and an extended approach to education that recognizes that school success cannot be separated from the larger struggle for greater equality in the society."

*Dr. Ben Levin*²⁷ "What Recent History Tells Us About Urban Education," a work-in-progress presented in Montreal, April, 2005

Urban school boards are looking for ways to support and improve the education of inner city students. In its Pathway Schools project, the Peel District School Board has adapted and applied the social risk index developed by Human Resources Development Canada to identify high-risk communities.²⁴ The index uses nine variables that measure education, employment, income and multiculturalism. Schools were ranked according to their index scores. Funded by 2003 increases in the LOG and the Languages Grant, four hub schools and ten readiness centres opened in December 2004. They are designed to:

...accommodate children from birth to four years of age who are accompanied by their caregivers. Families are welcome to attend any of the hubs or readiness centres, regardless of where they live in Peel. Early years hubs are staffed with a kindergarten teacher, teaching assistant, part-time social worker, speech language pathologist, and outreach workers. The four hubs will also serve newcomer families whose first language is not English. They are located at schools in communities of high social risk as identified by the Peel board's Pathway Schools report.²⁵

York Region District School Board has likewise designated 25 "Performance Plus" schools, which are identified as low-performing schools with significant demographic and economic factors, such as low adult literacy levels, single-parent families, or aboriginal status. Funding from the Learning Opportunities Grant provides each school with an extra half-time teacher (which 75% of the schools use for literacy programs); a child and youth worker; a community co-ordinator – usually a parent – for 20 hours a week; and programs such as after-school or Saturday programs, social skills development, physical education, community outreach, parenting, nutrition, ESL, literacy or First Nations programs.

The Toronto District School Board in May 2005 approved an initiative recommended by its Model Schools for Inner City Task Force to pilot seven model inner city schools. The schools, in seven different areas, have high numbers of students with socio-economic or language challenges. Each pilot school will receive an extra \$1 million in funding in 2007, primarily for extra staff, but also for programs to support the students and involve families and the community. The funding will initially come from the school board, though expansion of the program and additional funding could involve partnerships with the city, other provincial ministries and agencies like the United Way.

TDSB Inner City Task Force: programs for seven model inner-city schools

- ♦ Seamless days where classes, childcare, before- and after-school programs all flow under one roof, and facilities are available to families beyond formal classroom hours
- ♦ Full-day kindergarten
- ♦ Parent rooms
- ♦ Community outreach worker for each school, to encourage families and others to use the school as a community hub
- ♦ A school welcome and reception centre for new families, with staff designated to greet them
- ♦ Social worker, and child and youth worker on site daily
- ♦ Programs outside classes that support learning in the classroom, such as team sports, tutoring, music and social opportunities
- ♦ Literacy development for parents
- ♦ Dual-language books for ESL students and special education experts
- ♦ Summer learning programs
- ♦ Space, time and facilities for quiet learning where students can read or do homework
- ♦ Staggered arrival times, recess and lunch to support a calm, orderly atmosphere
- ♦ Partnerships with libraries and community centres
- ♦ A restructured timetable that gives teachers time together to work as teams
- ♦ Snack and meal programs
- ♦ Community gardens and kitchens, perhaps offered through external agencies

Funding for Urban Schools

It is these differences [where the Funding Model benchmarks are significantly below the Board's actual average cost] that have in large measure resulted in significant expenditure reductions since 1998 and still requires the Board to use non-enveloped grants to offset the "gap" in order to maintain programs and services and to achieve a balanced budget....

*Don Higgins,
Executive Superintendent,
Business Services, TDSB
Letter to Ministry of
Education, October 12, 2004*

Funding for education varies widely across the province

The Rozanski report recommended over \$2 billion in funding increases in 2002, to make up for funding deficits and a lack of increases over the eight-year period since the introduction of the funding formula in 1998. The present government has made several initiatives to increase education funding in areas affecting urban schools such as special education, building renewal, ESL, class size, and the Learning Opportunities Grant. However, People for Education's tracking data shows that students in urban schools are still experiencing serious deficits in ESL programs, large class sizes in elementary and high school, and inadequate application of the ESL and Learning Opportunities money.

As long as school boards continue to experience funding shortfalls, they will continue to use funding for students at risk to bridge the funding gap. The Toronto DSB, for example, must use approximately \$74 million of its funding for students at risk to cover the difference between the money it receives from the government to pay for salaries and expenses, and what the board actually pays to its teachers, principals, vice-principals, secretaries, and education assistants, and for utilities costs. (*See Appendix I.*)

In his report, Dr. Rozanski also examined the effects of the funding formula on urban schools. He reiterated the recommendation made in 1997 by the government's Expert Panel on the Learning Opportunities Grant that the Ministry collect data on effective at-risk programs and that it use this data to determine the appropriate funding magnitude for the Learning Opportunities Grant.

Notes

- ¹ Urban areas are defined as all municipalities with populations over 300,000. They include the Greater Toronto Area, encompassing the municipalities of Toronto, Durham, Peel, Halton and York, Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, London, Ottawa and Windsor.
- ² Manitoba Child Health Atlas 2004. <<http://www.umanitoba.ca/centres/mchp/reports>>.
- ³ <http://pisaweb.acer.edu.au/oeed_table.php> **NAME OF REPORT**
- ⁴ Levin, Ben. "Students at Risk: A Review of the Research." The Learning Partnership, <http://www.thelearningpartnership.ca/policy_research/studentsatrisk_by_Ben_Levin.pdf>.
- ⁵ "Poverty by Postal Code." The United Way of Greater Toronto, <http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/who_we_help/pdfs/FL-povertybypostalcode.pdf>.
- ⁶ *Globe and Mail*, "Suburbs suffer inner-city ills, but little relief offered: report." May 14, 2005, p. A4.
- ⁷ *The Daily*. "Low-income Rates among Immigrants." 19 July 2003. <<http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/030619/d030619a.htm>>.
- ⁸ Mary Meyers, ESL teacher and author of *Myths and Delusions The State of ESL in Large Canadian School Boards*, quoted in Andrew Duffy, "Class Struggles: Public Education and the New Canadian," *Toronto Star*, Sept. 25, 2004.
- ⁹ "Proportion of foreign-born population by metropolitan census area." <<http://www40.statcan.ca/101/cst01/demo47a.htm?sdi=foreign%20born>>; <<http://www.statcan.ca/English/Pgdb/demo53b.htm>>. Ottawa data from 2004 City of Ottawa population, <http://ottawa.ca/ward/background_report_4_en.shtml>
- ¹⁰ Dr. Elizabeth Coelho, quoted in the *Toronto Star*, Sept. 25, 2004.
- ¹¹ Dr. Jim Cummins, quoted in the *Toronto Star*, Oct. 2, 2004.
- ¹² Wilms, J. Douglas, ed. *Vulnerable Children: Findings from the Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth*. 2003.
- ¹³ Volpe, Richard. "What have we learned documenting and evaluating school-linked services for children and youth at risk?" <<http://www.cmec.ca/stats/pcera/symposium2000/index.en.stm>>.
- ¹⁴ <<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/82-221-XIE/01002/tables/html/49.htm>>.
- ¹⁵ <<http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/82-221-XIE/00503/tables/html/227.htm>>.
- ¹⁶ *The Daily*. "School performance of children from immigrant families." November 14, 2001, <<http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/011114/d011114a.htm>>.
- ¹⁷ 2000 Program for International Student Assessment, <<http://www.pisa.oecd.org/>>

knowledge/chap6/g.htm>.

- ¹⁶ Dr. Elizabeth Coelho, quoted in the *Toronto Star*, Sept. 25, 2004.
- ¹⁸ Glass, Gene V., Leonard S. Cahen, Mary L. Smith, and Nikola N. Filby. 1982. *School class size: Research and policy*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- ¹⁹ Robinson, Glen E. and James H. Wittebols. 1986. *Class size research: A related cluster analysis for decision-making*. Arlington, VA: Education Research Service.
- ²⁰ Achilles, Charles M., Barbara A. Nye, Jayne B. Zaharias, B. DeWayne Fulton, and C. Cain. "Education's Equivalent of Medicine's Framingham Heart Study." Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse. ED 402677, 1996. See also Mosteller, Frederick. "The Tennessee Study of Class Size in the Early School Grades." *The Future of Children* 5 (2): 113-127, 1995.
- ²¹ <Heros Inc.: Project Star, <http://www.heros-inc.org/star.htm>>.
- ²² Hood, Colin, "Challenges and Opportunities: School Sports and Youth", in *Ideas That Matter*. Toronto: Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 12.
- ²³ Ministry of Tourism and Recreation. Press Release: "McGuinty government helps open schools to community groups." 9 July 2004. <http://ogov.newswire.ca/ontario/GPOE/2004/07/09c1858.html?match=lang=_e.html>.
- ²⁴ <<http://www.peelschools.org/media/news2002/documents/Pathwaysreport.pdf>>.
- ²⁵ <<http://www.peelschools.org/media/news2002/041207a.htm>>.
- ²⁶ Jeff Kugler, Principal, Nelson Mandela Park P.S. and member of the Inner City Task Force quoted in the *Toronto Star*, May 4, 2005.
- ²⁷ Levin, Ben. "What Recent History Tells Us About Urban Education," a work-in-progress presented at the AERA conference in Montreal, April 2005.

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