



DOWNEY DIGEST

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A NOTE FROM DOUG

Spring is in the air, and the Ontario government is hard at work, working for you in Queen's Park. My colleagues and I have heard the calls from parents, educators, and families and are proud to present common sense education legislation that will help to prepare Ontario's students to compete in the global market.

As you will learn in this newsletter, the province is focused on student success, in practical, vital skills such as math, reading and literacy. The government is also dedicated to ensuring parents are equipped to be active partners in their child's education.

ONTARIO'S PLAN TO BOOST MATH, WRITING AND READING SKILLS

The Ontario government is investing more than **\$180 million** in targeted supports in the classroom and at home to help students build the math and reading and knowledge they need to succeed in the workforce. This investment will support nearly **1000 more educators** to help students develop these important skills.

Ontario is investing more than **\$71 million** in 2023-23 in a new math plan, supported by the recently introduced modernized math curriculum that mandates financial literacy and coding in every grade.



The province's plan to boost math skills will:

- Support more than 300 educators to support student learning in math
- Double the number of school math coaches in classrooms to provide direct support to teachers and students
- Introduce one math lead per board to spearhead math curriculum implementation and standardize training, and provide additional supports for math coaches in the classrooms
- Expand access to digital math tools that students and parents can access anytime
- Continue live teacher-led virtual tutoring services focused on math
- Enhance skills of new teachers through dedicated training and covering costs of additional math qualification courses to enhance math fluency and competency

To further support students facing challenges with math, the government is deploying Math Action Teams to school boards or schools to raise standards, training and student outcomes. Teams will work with the school board to identify and recommend targeted, evidence-based responses to improve math achievement for Ontario students.

To help more young students build stronger reading skills, the province is investing **\$109 million** in 2023-24 to boost literacy rates, which will:

- Introduce new, Canada-leading, early reading screening requirements for all students in Year 2 of Kindergarten to Grade 2, along with standardized and fully funded screening tool and training for educators, to ensure students receive the necessary foundational skills and early interventions in reading that are critical to future success
- Fund additional specialist teachers who can work one-on-one in small groups to help students who need additional support in reading
- Invest in almost **700 educators** to support development and excellence in literacy for Ontario students
- Introduce an overhauled language curriculum in September of 2023 with an emphasis on ensuring students at an early language can master basic literacy.

IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS

The Ontario government has also introduced *The Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act*, which would, if passed, ensure the province's public education system focuses on what matters most: important life-long skills, like reading, writing and math. The act would also ensure **accountability and transparency** for parents and families.

The government is taking action to refocus Ontario's education system on what really matters to parents and families. This proposed legislation would centre the education system on preparing students to succeed in life and work, putting more highly qualified educators in the classroom while ensuring parents have the information they need at their fingertips to support their kids. These reforms would ensure students graduate with a competitive advantage and prepared for the jobs of the future.

If passed, *The Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act* would help students and families by:

- Improving accountability and transparency by allowing the Minister of Education to set priorities in important areas on student achievement, like reading and math, and requiring school boards to update parents on progress
- Requiring school boards to publicly post a multi-year Board Improvement Plan that reflects the minister's priorities for student achievement, creating authority to deploy personnel to support school boards when needed, along with greater oversight over provincially funded tax dollars
- Ensuring new teachers and educators have the skills they need to teach students effectively in math, reading and literacy
- Directing school boards to increase engagement and reporting to parents on student achievement and ensuring parents have easy access to the information they need to meaningfully engage with their children's education and success.

- Building schools faster and implementing measures to utilize current school spaces, ensuring Ontario is getting more classrooms into communities who need them
- Strengthening the requirement for school boards to have a code of conduct for boards of trustees, creating a neutral dispute resolution process and authority to standardize and mandate training requirements for school board leadership.
- Building on our progress to establish a leading system of student safety and educator oversight, furthering measures to expedite disciplinary decisions for educators convicted of a criminal offense
- Expanding eligibility for therapy counselling for student victims of sexual assault through the Ontario College of Teachers
- Providing for more consistent approaches to student learning and well-being, including on student mental health
- Improving processes at the Ontario College of Teachers and College of Early Childhood Educators to enable them to operate more efficiently, including more consistent disciplinary processes.

Currently, school boards set their own education priorities, resulting in differences across the education system. For example, there are some schools consistently underperforming in EQAO data, including declining reading, writing and math scores. Moreover, it takes on average five to 10 years to build a standard school in Ontario, and it can take more than 100 days to certify internationally educated teachers.

The province will work with the Ontario College of Teachers and Ontario's faculties of education to modernize teacher training and certification processes to meet the needs of students in the classrooms, including decreasing times to process applications to certify teachers.

Nearly **2,000 front-line educators** will be hired, supported by overall education funding at the highest levels in Ontario history.

Part of this funding includes **\$693 million more** in base Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding compared to the year prior, or a 2.7 per cent increase. With a focus on supporting students across the province and building off the approximately 8,000 additional staff hired since 2018, the government will fund:

- Nearly 1,000 specialized math and literacy educators to boost skills
- Over 940 educators to support students from grades 7 to 10 with a seamless transition into high school and de-streamed courses.

In addition, Ontario's students are supported at the highest level of **per-student base funding** in provincial history at **\$13,125**. This record setting investment will support school boards and educators as they prepare Ontario's students with the skills they need to succeed in life. To prepare and support students in the de-streaming of Grade 9, Ontario is investing in nearly 1,000 educators.