



# DOWNEY DIGEST

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## **A NOTE FROM DOUG**

Somehow the summer has slipped away from us once more.

As we welcome the cooler temperatures, the beginning of September also invites students, teachers and their families back to school. For many of us, the end of summer is a time of transition, one that can often feel hectic and overwhelming. During this time, I'd like to remind all of you that my staff is available to assist with any provincial matters. Please do not hesitate to contact my team if you require assistance or guidance.

For all the families preparing for another school year, I wish you all a wonderful and safe year, filled with new knowledge and discoveries.

## PREPARING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS

The Ontario government is providing new student supports and updating curriculum for the 2023-24 school year. These actions will refocus school boards on the development of foundational skills in reading, writing and math, supported by almost **\$700 million more** in base education funding, **\$109 million** in a new strategy to boost literacy rates, and the hiring of **2,000 more educators**.

These measures will improve transparency for parents and ensure Ontario's public education system continues to focus on improving student outcomes by providing them with the skills and tools they need to succeed.



Beginning this September, all publicly funded school boards will be required to adopt provincial student achievement priorities and metrics to:

- Help students improve EQAO scores in reading, writing and math;
- Prepare students for future success to raise graduation rates, encourage more students to participate in job skills programs and take senior math and science courses; and
- Improve student engagement and awareness through mental health supports.

To further support students facing challenges with math, Ontario is investing over \$71 million to launch the Math Action Achievement Plan, a strategy to boost math competence in the classroom and improve board accountability. This plan includes:

- One lead per school board with the focus of helping improve math outcomes for students.
- More than 300 math coaches will provide direct support in classrooms
- New Math Action Teams will work directly with school boards to identify and recommend targeted strategies to improve student achievement

For the 2023–24 school year, Ontario is introducing revamped curriculum supports to ensure student success including:

**Language Curriculum:** Last updated in 2006/2007, the revised Language and Français Grade 1 to 9 curriculums include foundational instruction to support reading and writing, critical thinking, and digital media literacy skills.

**Educator Resources:** The government has provided \$825,000 to Dyslexia Canada to develop, in partnership with International Dyslexia Association – Ontario, evidence-based systematic and explicit instruction resources and learning supports that are now ready for use.

**Reading Screener and Supports:** The province’s \$109 million 2023–24 investment includes the largest screening program in Canada, funded with \$12.5 million annually to support students from Year 2 of Kindergarten to Grade 2 to be screened for early reading. Up to 700 literacy educators will work to support students who are behind in reading development.

- **Grade 10 Digital Technology and Innovations in the Changing World:** This course will equip students to be innovative leaders by teaching them how to apply coding concepts and skills, build hands-on projects, and investigate artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and other emerging digital technologies.
- **Financial Literacy Modules:** Secondary students will learn how to create a budget, manage their money, protect themselves from financial scams, and plan for long-term purchases such as buying a house or car with new modules.
- **Mental Health Modules:** The Ontario government has partnered with School Mental Health Ontario in collaboration with the Hospital for Sick Children to develop Mental Health Literacy Modules, for teacher use in Grades 7 and 8.

Student mental health funding in schools is increasing to a historic \$114 million in 2023–24, representing an increase of 555 per cent since 2017–18.

## ONTARIO HONOURING VOLUNTEERS

Recently, the Ontario government recognized over 3,400 community volunteers through the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards. The Ontario Volunteer Service Awards recognize adult and youth volunteers for their outstanding contributions and years of continuous service at organizations such as non-profits, schools, community centres, hospitals, libraries and community organizations.

For more information about the program, or to submit nominations for 2024, please visit [www.ontario.ca/page/honours-and-awards-volunteering](http://www.ontario.ca/page/honours-and-awards-volunteering). Nominations are due by November 15 annually.



My office is always here to help with any provincial matters and concerns. While we endeavour to respond to every matter in a timely manner, our team is often busy helping constituents. Take a look at the month so far:



**1035**

email contacts



**132**

phone calls



**40**

walk-in visits



**6**

new cases

You can always contact us at [Doug.Downey@pc.ola.org](mailto:Doug.Downey@pc.ola.org) or 705-726-5538.