

May 4, 2021

Memorandum to: Chairs of District School Boards
Directors of Education
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities

From: Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Subject: Planning for the 2021-22 School Year

Over the past two school years, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of education in Ontario. School boards, educators, students and their families have demonstrated resiliency and flexibility in responding to changes in their learning environments and we have come a long way in embracing new ways of teaching, learning and connecting. These efforts have helped schools remain healthy and safe places to learn and work and have supported the continuity of learning for students during this difficult time.

In the year ahead, we remain committed to the health, well-being and safety of students, educators, school staff and the broader community. We recognize that disruptions as a result of the pandemic have impacted student learning, well-being and engagement, with a disproportionate impact on under-served groups. We also acknowledge that the uncertainty of the public health landscape for the upcoming school year will present ongoing challenges for the education sector.

To respond to these challenges for the 2021-22 school year, the Ontario government will place renewed focus and supports on learning recovery and renewal, equity and student mental health and well-being, while continuing to implement strategies that protect the health and safety of students and staff and support flexibility in school board operations. To support planning and implementation we are providing initial guidance for the next school year and will remain responsive to any changes that may be required due to the evolving public health environment.

Included in this memo are funding allocations, initial school board guidance and new initiatives to support the safe operation of schools in 2021-22. The Ministry of Education (the ministry) will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Health and the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and in Summer 2021 will confirm further details of the health and safety strategies required for the upcoming school year. This will include guidance on requirements such as masking, hand hygiene and screening, as well as the

designation of school boards that will continue with an adapted secondary school delivery model in September.

Planning for the 2021-22 School Year

Continued COVID-19 Funding Supports

Since the start of the pandemic, the Ontario government has made over \$1.6 billion in resources available to support the safe reopening and operation of schools across Ontario, including \$763 million in funding through the federal Safe Return to Class Fund.

Although the evolving public health landscape is difficult to predict, we recognize that the next school year may require similar health and safety measures as those implemented this year. To support the continued safe operation of schools in 2021-22, the ministry will continue to provide temporary ongoing COVID-19 funding supports, with more than \$1.6 billion in resources available to school boards throughout the year. The ministry will continue to work with the Ministry of Health and the Chief Medical Officer of Health to determine when public health measures in schools can be eased or lifted.

Investments through Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) totalling \$487.9 million, include:

- \$304.0 million to help support school boards in having staffing in place to navigate a safe school year. School boards may use this funding to support teachers, early childhood educators, educational assistants, custodians, school-based administrative support, principals and vice-principals to facilitate smaller cohorts, physical distancing, enhanced cleaning and the delivery of remote learning. Funding will be allocated to school boards reflecting a base funding amount of \$600,000 per district school board and \$150,000 per isolate school board, as well as projected total 2021-22 Average Daily Enrolment (ADE). This funding may be re-directed towards COVID-19 related special education, mental health and well-being related expenses;
- \$65.5 million for enhanced cleaning protocols and other health and safety measures in student transportation;
- \$49.0 million for special education, mental health and well-being and equity initiatives;
- \$29.4 million for increased costs related to school operations in recognition of the need to operate ventilation systems longer and replace filters more frequently. This funding will be allocated to provide for a 2% increase to the non-staff school operations benchmark, in recognition of additional costs for non-staff operations related to COVID-19. A further 1.25% will be provided to support costs related to enhanced filtration;
- \$20.0 million for re-engaging students and reading assessment supports, further detailed below. Funding will be allocated to school boards

reflecting a base funding amount of \$20,000 per school board as well as a per pupil allocation, and school authorities, the Provincial and Demonstration School Branch and the Centre Jules-Léger Consortium will each be allocated \$20,000; and

- \$20.0 million in connectivity supports for remote learning technology (as part of a two-year remote learning technology investment totaling \$40.0 million), such as improvements to connectivity within school buildings (an application-based funding process will be communicated in the future).

See Appendix A for more information and funding amounts by school board, as applicable, on items above. Any remaining elements may be communicated before the start of the school year.

As part of the accountability requirements for the aforementioned PPF COVID-19 investments, school boards will be required to report to the ministry, on a monthly basis, information on spending and staffing activities (to date and projected). More information on this requirement will be provided in the coming weeks.

The ministry will also provide the following COVID-19 supports through the Grants for Student Needs (GSN), subject to Lieutenant Governor in Council approval, totalling \$104.6 million:

- \$79.6 million in time-limited supports through the Language Grant, to help school boards continue to offer the same level of support to students requiring English as a Second Language/English Literacy Development (ESL/ELD) and the Programme d'appui aux nouveaux arrivants (PANA) programs;
- \$14.9 million in continued funding to support technology-related costs, to help replace some devices that may be out-of-date and the procurement of additional student devices; and
- \$10.1 million to support mental health to foster the continued learning and well-being of students. This may include employing mental health professionals, professional learning and training, release time for professional development, collaborating with community mental health providers, student engagement opportunities, and the collection, analysis and reporting of student mental health related information.

More information on the above GSN investments can be found in 2021:B08 2021–22 Grants for Student Needs Funding.

Finally, subject to Lieutenant Governor in Council approval, school boards will continue to be allowed to unlock their reserves by accessing up to two per cent of their operating budget from their reserve funds to support the safe operation of schools. Where school boards access more than a total of two per cent of their operating allocation from their reserves for the safe operation of schools over the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years, the ministry would provide funding to cover the excess use of reserves up to the

equivalent of two per cent of their 2021-22 operating allocation. Through the combination of ministry funding and reserves access, it is anticipated that up to \$507.9 million will be available for this purpose, detailed in Appendix A. Additional information can be found in 2021:SB08 2021-22 Estimates (District School Boards).

At this time, school boards are expected to budget for approximately half of the above resources to support the first half of the school year, including access to one per cent from their reserves. This excludes resources related to the GSN investments of \$104.6 million as well as PPF investments to improve connectivity for remote learning technology of \$20 million, and for learning recovery and renewal of \$20 million, which are being allocated in their entirety. The ministry will confirm the use of the remaining resources, if needed for the second half of the year, in the Fall, pending vaccine distribution across the province and public health advice.

The ministry intends to provide school boards with a Transfer Payment Agreement for the total 2021-22 COVID-19 Priorities and Partnerships Fund investments reflecting the funding allocations above as well as the remaining resources, if applicable, in the Fall.

In addition to the funding noted above that will be reflected in the Transfer Payment Agreements and GSN allocations, additional investments for the following COVID-19 supports are being administered centrally.

As the safety of students and staff continues to be a key priority in the reopening of Ontario schools, the government will continue to provide required personal protective equipment (PPE) and critical supplies and equipment, e.g. cleaning supplies, through the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services and the pandemic stockpile. It is estimated that for the 2021-22 school year, these products will value up to \$450.0 million.

The government is also investing \$86.0 million to support school-focused nurses in public health units and testing in schools.

Remote Learning Offerings and Virtual Learning Resources

For 2021-22, school boards will continue to be required to offer remote learning options consistent with PPM 164. While we recognize that some school boards have begun the process of seeking parental decisions on whether students will be learning in-person or remotely in September, we ask that boards delay any deadlines for parents to respond until June 1, 2021 at the earliest.

The ministry provides all school boards access at no cost to Ontario's Virtual Learning Environment for use by educators and students, powered by D2L's Brightspace for use by educators and students. This provides a secure online Learning Management System to host and deliver online, remote and blended learning. School boards should ensure that all educators and educational support staff have an account to access their board's Learning Management System.

[Policy/Program Memorandum: 164 Requirements for Remote Learning](#) outlines remote learning requirements for school boards, including requirements respecting access to remote learning devices by students and synchronous learning requirements for school boards.

New for the 2021-22 school year and in response to educators' requests for additional elementary digital learning content, TVO and TFO are currently developing English-language and French-language elementary digital learning course packs, aligned with curriculum expectations for each subject in Grades 1-8 and Kindergarten. These supplemental resources will become available through the Summer for educators should they wish to incorporate them for in-person or remote learning with the start of the next school year. They may also support students to continue their learning: for example, students could review content online at home to help with homework or to support learning retention through the summer months.

Ensuring Health and Safety

Cohorting and Timetabling for In-Class Instruction

As in 2020-21, school boards should plan to operate elementary schools full time in-person. Elementary students should continue to be cohorted with their classmates and their homeroom teacher. Specialized teachers, for classes such as French as a second language/English (in French-language school boards), the arts, and health and physical education, are still able to go into classrooms to provide the full breadth of programming for students. Students may be pulled into smaller groups for supports (e.g., ESL, ALF and PANA) with students from other cohorts based on local health advice.

In secondary schools, school boards are to adopt secondary timetabling methods that emphasize cohorting of students as much as possible and to limit the number of student-to-student contacts. School boards will be required to limit schedules to two in-person classes (such as quadmestering) with exceptions for schools where contacts can be limited by cohorting grades or if the overall size of the school is small, making contact tracing manageable. Boards that are considering an alternative to the quadmester approach should contact Yael Ginsler, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Student Achievement Division at yael.ginsler@ontario.ca.

The intention is to plan for full time in-person learning for secondary schools. However, school boards are also asked to have plans in place to pivot to other modes of delivery if necessary while still providing students with access to the full breadth of courses:

- Adapted timetables and a study hall where instruction is split between in-person instruction and remote to allow for tighter cohorting; and
- Full remote delivery.

Full guidance on 2021-22 health and safety measures will be communicated to school boards in Summer 2021. This will include guidance on requirements such as masking,

hand hygiene, cohorting for clubs and other extracurriculars and screening, as well as the designation of school boards that would need to open with an adapted secondary school delivery model in September.

Supporting Student Success and Achievement

Learning Recovery and Renewal

We know educators across Ontario have implemented measures to help mitigate learning disruption as much as possible. These include maintaining high calibre in-person learning with key health and safety measures, providing remote learning when in-person learning could not take place, and expanding summer school programs for two consecutive years.

Ontario students, like in many jurisdictions around the world, have experienced disruption to learning. Some students may have gaps in learning, with some having disengaged. Learning disruption is not easy to measure and impacts students differently.

Ontario's learning recovery and renewal approach will include a focus on student mental health and well-being, early reading and math, re-engaging students, special education, targeted French language supports, and educator readiness including professional learning communities and opportunities to share effective practices. More information will be communicated to support these priorities.

Community Involvement Graduation Requirement

Typically, secondary school students are required to earn 40 hours of community involvement activities as part of the requirements for earning an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

In 2021-22, the required number of hours for community involvement activities will be reduced from 40 to a minimum of 20 hours for graduating students. This is consistent with changes made in the 2020-21 school year.

The community involvement graduation requirement of 40 hours will be restored in 2022-23 and students working towards their OSSD should be supported to meet these graduation requirements in time for their graduating year.

At the principal's discretion, the following activities will be deemed eligible for all secondary students for their community involvement activities in the 2021-22 school year:

- Activities that take place during the time allotted for the instructional program on a school day (e.g., walking a younger neighbour or sibling to and from school, helping younger siblings with their homework)

- Activities that include up to 10 hours of paid work, with the requirement to complete a reflection exercise indicating how their work contributed to service for others (e.g., grocery work during the pandemic)
- Activities that consist of duties normally performed in the home (e.g., students could help an elderly relative with errands, provide after-school care for a sibling)

School boards are permitted to develop their own electronic processes for collecting, recording and validating community involvement hours, including allowing electronic signatures that validate students' hours.

With respect to notations for the report card and the Ontario Student Transcript, schools are expected to follow the guidance provided in the 2020-21 school year.

Online Learning Graduation Requirement

As announced in November 2019, it is planned that, starting with the Grade 9 cohort for the 2020-21 school year, students will be required to earn two credits online as part of the graduation requirements of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). While online courses will be a mandatory graduation requirement, exemptions may be made for students on an individual basis.

Further information will be provided regarding the opt-out process as well as the extent to which credits earned during remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic can be counted toward the online learning graduation requirement.

To this end, secondary schools should continue to keep track of student enrolment in full-time and adapted model remote learning.

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)

Students graduating in the 2021-22 school year are exempted from the literacy graduation requirement. With respect to notations for the report card and the Ontario Student Transcript, schools are expected to follow the guidance provided in the 2020-21 school year.

The literacy graduation requirement will be restored for students graduating in the 2022-23 school year. Students in Grades 10 and 11 and non-graduating students, including those who are learning remotely, are required to work towards the literacy graduation requirement, through participating in the OSSLT, adjudication or the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC).

While Grades 10 and 11 and non-graduating students are encouraged to take the OSSLT, to provide maximum flexibility for students to acquire the literacy graduation requirement, particularly for students who may not be able to enter a school building, they can be enrolled in the OSSLC or be provided with an adjudication without having an unsuccessful attempt at the OSSLT.

EQAO will provide a Fall 2021 administration of the OSSLT in addition to a Spring 2022 administration.

EQAO Assessments

In 2020-21, EQAO assessments for Grades 3 and 6 were paused while EQAO aligned assessments with the new elementary math curriculum and transitioned to a new online adaptive platform. Field tests were provided for the new online Grade 9 math assessment and the online OSSLT.

In 2021-22, regular EQAO assessments will resume, with the following adaptations:

- All students in Grade 3 and 6 attending in-person learning will participate in the online EQAO math, reading, and writing assessments.
- All students enrolled in Grade 9 math attending learning in-person will write the Grade 9 math assessment. Results of this assessment may count towards up to 10% of the student's final mark.
- Where applicable, students will continue to receive individual reports.

For EQAO assessments, including the OSSLT, students who are learning remotely and wish to participate in the assessments can, at the discretion of the school board, attend in-person for the purpose of participating in the assessment so long as all applicable health and safety measures can be met.

Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) OSSD

In the 2020-21 school year, the ministry provided guidance to school boards regarding a formalized substitution process for students to earn the SHSM/OSSD. The same substitution parameters will be extended to students graduating in the 2021-22 school year. Further information will be shared with SHSM Board Leads in future webinars.

Cooperative Education

The requirements for offering cooperative education courses, as outlined in the Cooperative Education curriculum, including the classroom and community placement components, remain in effect. Cooperative education placements should be offered virtually, where feasible. In-person community placements can be arranged in alignment with the direction and recommendations of local health units, the direction of the local school board, and within the safety and curriculum requirements of the Cooperative Education curriculum.

For students who are enrolled in cooperative education courses, if the in-person or virtual community placement needs to be suspended after the student has already begun their placement component (and no alternative or virtual placement is possible), students can work with their co-op teacher to modify their co-op Learning Plans so that they can still work to achieve the curriculum expectations and earn their credit(s).

Where feasible, these learners should be provided with opportunities to connect virtually with industry partners on career exploration activities and experiential learning opportunities.

The Ministry of Education's policy regarding WSIB coverage remains unchanged. Please note that PPM76a, *Workplace Safety and Insurance Coverage for Students in Work Education Programs*, applies to in-person and virtual placements, as do the requirements for ensuring health, safety and well-being outlined in the [Cooperative Education curriculum](#).

Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting

Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools, 2010, provides that thirty per cent of the final grade for secondary courses is based on a final evaluation administered at or towards the end of the course. This evaluation is based on evidence from one or a combination of the following: an examination, a performance, an essay, and/or another method of evaluation suitable to the course content.

For 2021-22, school boards will continue to have flexibility to determine final evaluation for up to 30% of a student's final mark.

Boards may allow for electronic signatures to be used by school principals (or their delegate) on the Communication of Learning and report cards, in accordance with their own policies and advice from their legal counsel. School boards should determine the appropriate means for sending the report card to students and families, either in paper or electronic copy, giving consideration to issues such as privacy, security, and safety. Paper copies should be provided at the parent's request. Schools continue to be required to file a signed copy of all report cards in the student's Ontario Student Record.

Early Development Instrument

Information on children's developmental health and well-being prior to Grade 1 is collected throughout the province using the Early Development Instrument (EDI). The EDI is a questionnaire that teachers complete about the skills and abilities of each of their Year 2 (senior) kindergarten students. It measures developmental health and wellbeing across five domains:

- physical health and well-being
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive development
- communication skills and general knowledge

Since 2004, the EDI has been collected across the province in three-year cycles: over a three-year period for Cycle 1 (2004-06), Cycle 2 (2007-09), and Cycle 3 (2010-12), and in a single year, every three years, for Cycle 4 (2015) and Cycle 5 (2018).

In the previous school year, the sixth edition of the EDI was postponed. In 2021-22, the EDI will be implemented in the winter of 2022 in all Kindergarten classes across the province.

Free one-on-one online support

TVO's Mathify will continue to offer free, one-on-one online support provided by Ontario certified teachers, to help students improve their math skills, build math understanding and confidence with the help of a math tutor.

Eurêka! is a French-language a free online learning support program provided by Centre franco where qualified and certified Ontario teachers offer their help to students in French-language schools with their schoolwork and improve their learning in all subject areas.

Providing Flexibility in School Board Operations

School Board Electronic Meetings

In 2020, the Ministry of Education brought forward amendments to [Ontario Regulation 463/97](#) (Electronic Meetings and Meeting Attendance) under the *Education Act* to most recently waive the requirement for school board trustees to attend meetings in person until November 30, 2021.

To continue to support the ongoing operation of school boards in the upcoming school year, the ministry will recommend regulatory amendments that, if approved, would extend the ability for trustees to continue meeting by entirely electronic means until November 14, 2022 (the end of the next trustee period).

School Year Calendars

[Regulation 304](#) (School Year Calendar, Professional Activity Days) under the *Education Act* sets out requirements for school year calendars, including deadlines for boards to submit their school year calendars to the ministry.

The ministry will recommend regulatory amendments to Regulation 304 that, if approved, would establish:

- March 1 as the annual submission deadline for all calendars (regular and modified)
- May 1 as the annual submission deadline for a regular calendar, if modified calendars are not approved by April 15
- August 15 as the annual submission deadline for general outlines of the Professional Activity (PA) day activities

These proposed changes would not impact the upcoming submission dates for the 2021-22 school year calendars, which have already been named by the Minister. They would apply to the submission of calendars in the spring of 2022 for the 2022-23 school year and for subsequent school years.

Amendments are also being proposed that, if approved, would expedite communication of calendar submission deadlines as required in an emergency.

Please note that the proposed regulatory amendments set out above for both school board electronic meetings and school year calendars are subject to approval by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and are subject to change. We will continue to keep you informed.

Professional Activity (PA) Days

Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No. 151: Professional Activity Days Devoted to Provincial Education Priorities will be revised and issued to school boards reflecting the ministry's directions on PA days for the 2021-22 school year. Topics for the three mandatory PA days will include:

- health and safety protocols, mental health and well-being
- learning recovery and intervention strategies
- mathematics, including the elementary math curriculum and Grade 9 de-streamed math course
- anti-racism, anti-discrimination training
- instructional approaches to online/remote learning
- anti-sex trafficking and anti-bullying, including cyber-bullying

The mandatory PA day topics can be integrated. Consideration to supporting students with special education needs, as well as anti-racism, anti-discrimination and inclusion of all students, should be integrated across all professional learning topics. Ontario

Regulation 304 provides for each school board to determine the timing of its PA days. This should be done with adherence to any provisions in local Collective Agreements.

To ensure readiness for the 2021-22 school year, the ministry encourages school boards to address the following topics prior to the start of student instruction:

- health and safety protocols, mental health and well-being; and
- learning recovery and intervention strategies.

The ministry will provide resources to support boards in the implementation of the PA days. Materials will be available in August through the Virtual Learning Environment and throughout the 2021-22 school year.

Engagement with First Nations and Indigenous Education Partners

First Nation, Métis and Inuit students have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to improve access to equitable, culturally appropriate and safe education for all Indigenous students, we encourage school boards to engage with their local Indigenous education partners in planning discussions for the 2021-22 school year, including the implementation of the Grade 9 de-streamed math course, to ensure that First Nation, Métis and Inuit perspectives are incorporated.

We recognize that the past two school years have been challenging and we are grateful for the continued hard work of our partners to ensure a high-quality education for all students across the province. We look forward to sharing more details on health and safety requirements for 2021-22 later in the Summer.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership.

Sincerely,

Stephen Lecce
Minister

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Attachment: Appendix A: Projected Funding Allocations for Applicable COVID-19 Supports

- c: President, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO)
Executive Director, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO)
President, Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
Executive Director, Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
Executive Director, Association des gestionnaire de l'éducation franco-ontarienne (AGÉFO)
President, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
Executive Director, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
President, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)
Executive Director, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)
Executive Director, Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)
President, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
Executive Director and Secretary-Treasurer, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
President, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)
General Secretary, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)
President, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
General Secretary, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
President, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)
General Secretary, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)
Chair, Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW)
Chair, Education Workers' Alliance of Ontario (EWAO)
President of OSBCU, Canadian Union of Public Employees – Ontario (CUPE-ON)
Co-ordinator, Canadian Union of Public Employees – Ontario (CUPE-ON)
Executive Director, Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)
Executive Director, Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)
Executive Director, Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)
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