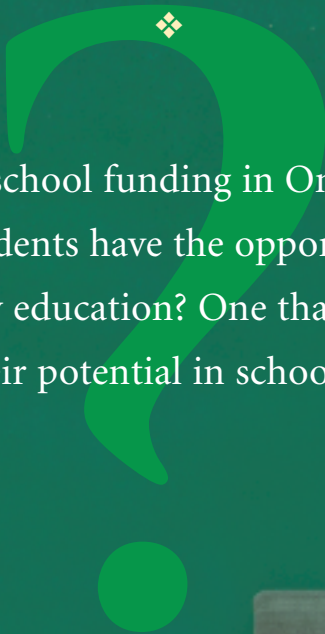


A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

HOW DOES SCHOOL FUNDING SUPPORT MY CHILD'S EDUCATION?



How does school funding in Ontario ensure that all students have the opportunity for a high quality education? One that helps them reach their potential in school and life?



reach every student



HOW DOES SCHOOL FUNDING SUPPORT MY CHILD'S EDUCATION?

The answer to that question is important to everyone – government, taxpayers, school boards and schools, employers and communities, and most of all, parents and students.

Education funding, however, is complex. Like many parents, you may have questions about how Ontario schools are funded, how funding decisions are made, and how those decisions support your child's achievement in school.

This guide offers straightforward answers.

It was developed as part of our commitment to give parents an informed and active voice in education.

THE PROVINCIAL PERSPECTIVE:

FUNDING TO SUPPORT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Education matters! Your child is part of one of the largest publicly funded education systems in the world. We have approximately two million students attending about 5,000 schools. Ontario's education budget is large – second only to health care.

That investment in education is key to the future of our students and to the social and economic future of our province.

Two main factors have shaped decisions about education funding in recent years – the need to improve student achievement and to make funding more responsive to local needs.

Raising student achievement

Your child is attending school at one of the most exciting times in the history of Ontario's education system. Since 2003 the Ministry of Education, your district school board, and your school have been part of a provincewide effort to improve student achievement.

If you are the parent of a high school student, ask your principal or vice-principal about the new programs that are helping more students graduate. Parents of elementary school students may ask about the new teaching strategies for reading, writing and math.

We are already seeing positive results:

- Higher reading, writing and mathematics achievement by elementary students
- More students graduating from high school
- Smaller class sizes and more individual attention for students in junior kindergarten to Grade 3.

GOOD SCHOOLS GET BETTER WHEN YOU GET INVOLVED.

DIGGING DEEPER:

UNDERSTANDING THE FUNDING FORMULA

School boards are funded through Ontario's "funding formula." The ministry allocates funding to each board using a formula that's based on student enrolment and the unique needs of the students in each board. The number of schools, their distribution and their physical condition are also factors.

Boards use this money to make the local decisions needed to educate their students. They do this by funding and staffing schools, designing programs to meet the needs of their students and fixing, maintaining and building schools.

How your school is funded

Each year your school board decides how much money to give your local school. The school then spends this money according to the plans and

priorities of the school board and the province. For example, since schools, school boards and the government are concentrating on improving student achievement, schools will spend money to support that goal. The school also considers its improvement plan developed by the principal and the school community.

Schools also have some choices in the way they spend money. For example, a group of schools might decide to pool their resources to fund a music program. One school might buy musical instruments, another might hire a local musician to visit the schools, and so on. It is important that schools, like school boards, can make these choices so that they can meet the needs of students in their communities.

WHERE DOES FUNDING COME FROM?

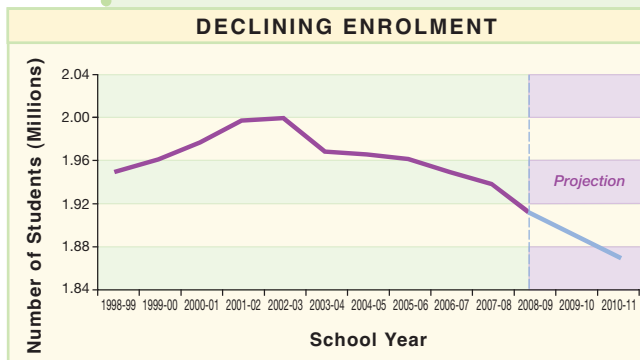
School boards receive money in two ways. First, some of the property taxes collected in your community go to your local school board. Second, the province tops up this amount to bring the total for each board up to the amount set out by the funding formula.

The various grants in the education funding formula fall into three broad categories:

1. Basic or “foundation” funding that every board receives for general costs, such as staff salaries, textbooks, classroom computers and other supplies.
2. Funds to help boards meet the unique needs of their students. English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs, special education classes and funding for remote or rural schools are just a few examples.
3. Funds that are used to build new schools, and to repair and maintain existing schools.

This funding is then used by the school board to develop its budget for the school year.

According to the Education Act, school boards must submit balanced budgets. A balanced budget simply means that the amount of money that a board expects to spend is equal to, or less than, the amount of money it receives from the government.



DID YOU KNOW?

The number of students entering Ontario's schools has been declining since 2003.

This trend is expected to continue into 2010.



CLOSER TO HOME:

MAKING FUNDING MORE RESPONSIVE TO LOCAL NEEDS

Funding has increased in recent years to support new programs for student achievement and to help boards with rising costs. This has helped boards hire more teachers, reduce class sizes, fix school buildings and pay for textbooks and supplies.

The government has also been changing the funding formula to make it more responsive to local needs. This is very important, because every school, board and region of the province has its own needs and challenges. Funding “fairly” does not necessarily mean funding “exactly the same.”

Every community is unique, and so is every student

The needs of a large urban school board, for example, may differ from those of a smaller rural board. French-language and English-language boards also differ. And the total number of students in a school will change as families move into or away from the community.

The province tailors funding to meet the real needs of local boards and students. Funding is also carefully managed to ensure that it goes where it’s needed most.

Improving the funding formula

Ontario’s education funding formula is always changing and being improved. Just as the needs of students and communities change, the funding formula is constantly refined and revised to meet those needs.

Each year, the Ministry of Education consults with education partners across the province. This ensures that the funding formula is meeting the needs of school boards, schools and students. But student achievement – the only real measure of our success – will remain the foundation of future funding decisions.

MAKING GOOD SCHOOLS EVEN BETTER:

YOUR INVOLVEMENT MATTERS!

Becoming involved in the life of your school can be rewarding for you, your child and the entire school. In fact, studies show that good schools become better schools when parents are involved.

Wondering how you can get involved? Here are just a few ways to get started:

- Attend parent information and social events at your school.
- Go to school concerts or sports events – for example, a football game or track and field meet are great places to meet school staff and other parents.
- Learn more about your school by attending school council meetings.
- Ask about translation services, or offer to help if you have a first language other than English or French.
- Volunteer to assist students with reading, help in the classroom, organize events and outings or in other ways.
- Remember that your special skills – in music, sports, art or dance, for example – may be highly appreciated by teachers and students.
- Check the school bulletin board, newsletter and website to learn more about the school and opportunities for involvement.
- Offer to help on field trips and other outings with teachers and students.
- Meet the principal and talk with your child's teacher about becoming involved if you are new to the school.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

For more detailed information about education funding in Ontario, visit:
www.ontario.ca/EducationFunding

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
EDUCATION IN ONTARIO
VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
www.ontario.ca/EDUparents



Printed on recycled paper

07-336

ISBN 978-1-4249-6268-6 (Print)

© Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2008



reach every student

