



The Students' Vision for Education

OSTA-AECO Vision Document

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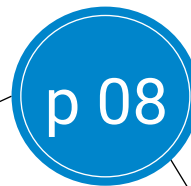


ABOUT OSTA-AECO

The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario (OSTA-AECO) is a registered non-profit, nonpartisan organization, and the largest student stakeholder group in Ontario, representing approximately 2 million students. The General Assembly is comprised of student trustees from public and Catholic school boards across the province. Members of the association work tirelessly throughout the year to advocate for student voice, and strive to work with provincial partners in government and otherwise to improve Ontario's education system for its students.

More information about OSTA-AECO's work can be found at www.osta-aeco.org

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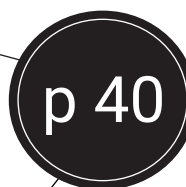
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FOREWORD

Ontario's publicly-funded education system is one of the best in the entire world.

Whether it be the constant stream of international educators visiting schools, or ranking in the top five in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD)¹ education scores; there is so much to be proud of.

This success is no accident.

Instead, it is the product of decades of educational excellence by Ontario's outstanding teachers who have poured their hearts into building the next generation.

It is the product of years of work by Ontario's highly skilled school board administrators, who have implemented innovative educational practices that have transformed classrooms across the province.

And, of course, it is the product of the dedication of Ontario's students, who have persevered through hurdles in their education to consistently increase attainment rates on a variety of indicators to make Ontario proud.

All of this work by educators, administrators, and students has been invaluable in building up one of the core pillars of this province: publicly-funded education. A publicly-funded education system is an integral part of any mature society. It lifts communities up, promotes widespread equity, and provides countless opportunities for citizens to succeed throughout their lives.

The immense benefit of publicly-funded education is unquestionable; it is a promise of prosperity, success, and development. Nevertheless, to protect it, Ontario must constantly improve it. After consulting with students for the past 18 years and counting, the Ontario Student Trustees' Association- l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario (OSTA-AECO), is launching its first-ever long-term strategic policy plan:

OSTA-AECO's Vision Document:
[The Students' Vision for Education.](#)



This document features 35 long-term recommendations that strive to transform every facet of our education system, premised on the following 6 pillars:

Enhancing Equity:

Highlighting the deeply ingrained barriers that exist in Ontario's classrooms, and combating them through capacity building, culturally responsive education, and critical equity analyses of the demographics that make up a school's population.

Funding Formula Reform:

Rectifying the significant issues of funding inadequacy that exist in the education system through a mix of program driver modifications and structural funding reforms to fund modern student needs.

Strengthening Rural & Northern Schools:

Dismantling geographic obstacles to a beneficial student experience with a focus on fostering the conditions for educational opportunity in rural, remote, & northern regions.

Supporting Student Well-being:

Providing the mental and physical supports to form an environment that improves student-well being and, by extension, student success.

System Modernization for 21st Century Learning:

Updating the curriculum to ensuring that the learning happening in classrooms is relevant to today, ultimately preparing Ontario's students for the modern workforce.

School Board Governance:

Structuring Ontario's school boards and their systems to be best designed to amplify student voice.

The classroom is the common thread among Ontario's citizens; it provides a place to learn and grow for everyone in the province. In order to constantly improve Ontario's education system, there must be plans in place to invest and build up public education, and OSTA-AECO is proud to lay out a plan that serves Ontario's students and schools alike.

Ontario's students have a vision for public education in this province. **It is time to embark on this plan and build an education system that works for all of Ontario's students.**

METHODOLOGY



In order to ensure that every recommendation put forward by OSTA-AECO best represents a wide variety of student's voice, many recommendations are supported by results from surveys OSTA-AECO has conducted in the past few years. These surveys include the Ontario Student, Parent, and Educator Survey from 2012 (with 10,626 student responses from 70 school boards) and 2017 (with 4233 student responses from 69 school boards), as well as the Ontario Student Survey which accompanied OSTA-AECO's 2018 Student Platform (with 8230 responses from 62 school boards).

OSTA-AECO has also held several consultations with student trustees from all across Ontario during the compilation of this strategic plan. Feedback provided through these surveys and consultations has been imperative in shaping the recommendations put forward by the organization in this long-term Vision Document.

PILLAR 1: ENHANCING EQUITY

Equity in education is an imperative that should guide every decision undertaken in classrooms and at the board table. The Organization for Economic Development & Cooperation, a significant standard for education achievement used by provincial governments and policymakers, makes this point poignantly. In a report on enhancing equity in education, they state “The long-term social and financial costs of educational failure are high. Those without the skills to participate socially and economically generate higher costs for health, income support, child welfare and security.”² A core operating premise for Ontario’s schools must be ensuring student success for all pupils, regardless of who they are or where they come from.

In the 2017 OSPES conducted by OSTA-AECO, 1 in 3 students felt that student’s voices had no impact on decision making in their schools. 40% of these students self-identify as minorities.

MANDATING IDENTITY & WELL-BEING DATA COLLECTION

Ontario’s schools currently collect a host of data, however, it is limited to basic school information or academic demographic data, such as EQAO scores and the share of students receiving special education services. While this data is essential for certain policy and programming decisions, for students from marginalized backgrounds it does not go far enough.

As Ontario continues to diversify every year, many of these students hail from diverse backgrounds and require specialized approaches that will enable them to break down barriers to their education. However, to

best meet the needs of students, boards and schools need to know where barriers exist. The basis for this approach can only be attained through demographic data that collects more detailed information on race, ethnicity, disability status, gender identity, sexual orientation, and broader indicators of parental socio-economic status.³ By 2031, it is forecasted that about **40% of children below the age of 15** will be racialized.

⁴ As demographics shift dramatically, it is critical to meaningfully break down barriers from a demographic standpoint through developing the means to do so.

By carrying out a Student Census in every school board across Ontario, boards will have a much better idea of the types of students they must serve. A census should include questions on, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, disability status, sexual orientation, indigenous heritage, and broader indicators of socio-economic status. Additionally, it should include questions gauging information on student emotional well-being, perceptions of school environments, and barriers to student achievement.⁵

RECOMMENDATION 1.1

Thus, OSTA-AECO recommends that the Provincial Government fully implement proposed plans in the Education Equity Action Plan and work with boards to regularly undertake a Student Census in every school board across Ontario that collects voluntarily-disclosed student identity & well-being data.

SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

Ontario's world-class education system continues to be a leader in many different areas. Nevertheless, significant achievement gaps continue to persist in our schools. For instance, graduation rates for Metis, Inuit, and First Nations students continue to be anywhere between 11%-27% below the provincial average.⁶ Additionally at the Toronto District School Board, through a representative sample analysis by the Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators in 2016 it is estimated that **41% of black** students did not go onto post-secondary education.⁷

One powerful tool that educators across jurisdictions have employed to support students from diverse backgrounds overcome barriers is a culturally responsive curriculum. Focus groups with students during studies on the benefits on this curriculum have stated that through culturally responsive pedagogy, students are able to take increased ownership in their learning, and this "increases the overall level of student engagement, participation and motivation."⁸ Increased student engagement will lead to increase credit attainment rates across the board and further benefit student success rates.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2

Consequently, OSTA-AECO recommends that the provincial government engage with educators and stakeholders to integrate diverse cultures, histories, and perspectives across the curriculum from, but not limited to, African Canadian, Caribbean, Latin American, South Asian, East Asian and Pacific Islander traditions.



One of the most eye-opening moments of my schooling came this year In my Grade 12 World History class when we did a unit on the African slave trade. I never truly realized the duration or scale of the slave trade until we covered it in class, and it makes me wish I learned more about my African-Canadian heritage at school."

High School Student, Toronto DSB

ADVANCING RECONCILIATION IN ONTARIO SCHOOLS

One of the cornerstone recommendations of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission was 63(i), which recommends that Ministers of Education maintains an annual commitment to indigenous education through "Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools." It has been proven that student achievement benefits from the diversification of curriculum, and advancing reconciliation in schools is of utmost importance.⁹

RECOMMENDATION 1.3

For these reasons, OSTA-AECO recommends that the Provincial Government restart curriculum writing sessions to integrate enhanced Indigenous histories and cultural perspectives across the curriculum to honour the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Actions.

HELPING STUDENTS BUILD HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS: MODERN HEALTH & PHYS ED. CURRICULUM

Health and Physical Education is a cornerstone of a student's school experience, for it provides a rare space for open conversations on some of the less-comfortable conversations that come with learning about sexual health and development. For this curriculum to be effective, it must be oriented around the modern-day realities that students face today and be applicable to the diversity of young people and their families. Today's youth are faced with new challenges that they must learn to navigate in a healthy and smart way. Some of these realities include modernized themes such as online safety, sexual orientation and gender identity, contraception, good decision-making skills, and consent.

RECOMMENDATION 1.4

Thus, OSTA-AECO recommends that the province crafts a Health & Physical Education curriculum that is inclusive of the wide breadth of gender, sexuality, family diversity in Ontario and reflective of the broad range of backgrounds represented in classrooms.

CREATING EQUITABLE ACADEMIC PATHWAYS: REVIEWING STREAMING

A hallmark of Ontario's schools is its system of academic streaming. Streaming requires students at the end of Grade 8 to pick their level of study, which is known as academic, applied, and open in Grades 9/10 and college, university, mixed, or locally developed in Grade 11/12. However, since its full implementation in 1999¹⁰, many Ontario students have been left behind.

Through examining a variety of metrics and participation measurements, a staggering achievement gap exists between academic and applied courses. For instance, in the 2018 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), 90% of students taking academic English passed compared to just 39% of applied English students, which is a 51%¹¹ achievement gap. Furthermore, options for upward academic mobility are extremely limited, as a 2019 analysis by People for Education found that 47% of high schools surveyed found that students "not very often" or "never" transferred from applied to academic. Crucially, **77% did not offer** transfer courses - half-credit classes designed to cover the content gap between academic and applied to facilitate a transition in streams within school hours.¹² Additionally, an analysis by the Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators found there was a significant overrepresentation of students of colour in applied classes. For instance, it was found that in the Toronto District School Board, 41% of black students were enrolled in at least some applied classes compared to 12% of their white peers.¹³

An extensive review of streaming considering the curriculum and instruction of the different levels of courses, support staff levels in classes, the process for course-level selection, and the accessibility of transfer courses, should be undertaken in order to highlight the issues with the current system in order to create a more equitable one. This review must overwhelmingly examine the significant achievement gaps between diverse students and demographic overrepresentation in the different streams.

RECOMMENDATION 1.5

OSTA-AECO recommends that the provincial government undertake an extensive review of streaming in the education system, while directly consulting students who have been most disproportionately impacted by the current streaming system.

OPENING THE DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY TO POST-SECONDARY: RESTORING OSAP

The Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) is a financial aid program to help students pay for post-secondary education. As Ontario faces the highest tuition rates in Canada, OSAP is critical in allowing students in middle- and lower-income families to obtain higher education and graduate while lessening the financial burden on these students and their families. Through structural and funding reforms, OSAP saw a **20% increase** in the number of low-income students applying and a **35% increase** in the number of self-identifying Indigenous students applying.¹⁵

“

As a student with financial difficulties, my financial situation limits my application options for post-secondary. While going to a local university, OSAP gives me a chance to attend classes without worrying about my tuition costs. OSAP also saves me multiple hours of working a minimum wage job. Instead of investing those hours at my workplace, I can spend my time participating in activities that benefit my community.”

Grade 12 Student, Toronto CDSB

These changes ensured that every single student, regardless of their background or ability to pay, was able to afford post-secondary education.

In January 2019, changes to OSAP were announced that would lessen grants offered to post-secondary prospective students.¹⁴ These grants provided through OSAP have allowed students to be more financially stable in their pursuit of higher education and, for many, have enabled them to attend school. Following the announcement of these changes,

RECOMMENDATION 1.6

OSTA-AECO recommends that grants provided to middle- and lower-income families be increased to allow students from more diverse socioeconomic demographics to obtain a post-secondary education.

PILLAR 2: THE FUNDING FORMULA

Ontario's education system does not exist without funding. Through the Grants for Student Needs funding formula and its 2 Foundation & 13 Special Purpose Grants, the provincial government supports 74 school boards, 5000 schools, 7,300 administrators, 113,000 teachers, and 2 million students.¹⁶ Every dollar that goes into education serves a purpose with the intention of bettering the education system and the experience of the students within it. Through overhauling the funding formula, modifying program drivers, and implementing structural reforms to key aspects of the GSNs, it can be ensured that the provincial government continues to make one of the most important investments they can make: an investment in education, and an investment in students.

FUNDING MODERN STUDENT NEEDS: A ROYAL COMMISSION ON EDUCATION FINANCE REFORM

Throughout the intricate network of policies and programming that form the foundation of our education system, the common thread that binds everything together is funding. Since the inception of the modern Grants for Student Needs system two decades ago, school boards across Ontario face a **\$15.9 billion¹⁷** capital repair backlog, **80% of boards** spend anywhere between **\$100,000-\$81 million** more on special education than provided, and rural students face geographical barriers which keep them from receiving the same quality of education as their peers in urban centres. All of these problems are due to the significant issues in funding inadequacies that have arisen due to few reviews and no major reforms of the formula.

When examining funding adequacy through the objective basis of per-pupil funding, Ontario has recently ranked 5th out of all 10 provinces, 18th out of 18 when compared with the provinces and states in the Great Lakes Region, and 45th out of 61 across all Canadian Provinces, U.S. states, and the District of Columbia.¹⁸

Throughout Ontario's history, Royal Commissions have been transformative in making meaningful progress on many different issues. For example, through the Royal Commission on Learning from 1993-1995 major educational innovations such as EQAO, Student Trustees, and mandatory school board Multi-Year Strategic Plans were introduced.¹⁹ A Royal Commission on funding reform will allow for the development of a transformative new funding formula that finally fully supports the needs of Ontario's students.

To truly ensure Ontario's education system is sustainably, equitably, and adequately funded for all students,

RECOMMENDATION 2.1

OSTA-AECO recommends that the Government of Ontario establishes a Royal Commission on Education Finance Reform and that it focus on the following guiding principles:

- *Enabling 21st-century learning*
- *Supporting student well-being*
- *Strengthening rural & northern schools*
- *Enhancing equity*
- *Supporting capital expansion & school renewal needs*
- *Overall funding adequacy.*

A STANDARD OF GOOD REPAIR FOR ONTARIO SCHOOLS

One of the largest challenges facing Ontario's education system is the growing state of disrepair of publicly-funded schools. The capital repair backlog has gone from **\$5.6 billion**²⁰ in 2002, to **\$15.9 billion**²¹ as of 2017, and is projected to reach **\$17 billion**²² at the end of the 2018-2019 academic year.

To fully eliminate this systemic issue, Ontario needs to take a proactive approach through establishing a new model for funding maintenance needs. Currently, the School Operations Allocation is mostly funded on a per-pupil basis. However, whether a school is under-capacity, at capacity, or over-capacity, it will deteriorate and age all the same. Utilization rates are arbitrary tools of measurement which have contributed greatly to the skyrocketing capital repair backlog in our schools.

Seeing as it is extremely difficult for students to succeed if they are shivering in class, the provincial government must create a standard for good repair which is localized for unique costs, individualized through school-based funding, and be completely detached from utilization rates. It should be provincial through consistent standards across the board for the temperature that is conducive for learning, cleanliness, and facilities' upkeep requirements. Consequently,

RECOMMENDATION 2.2

OSTA-AECO recommends that the provincial government work in consultation with school boards to adopt a Standard of Good Repair, as proposed by the "Fix is Not In" report written by economist Hugh Mackenzie for the School Facility and Operations Grant.

"In Grade 6, I remember an ageing pipe burst, causing my elementary school's electricity system to fail and cancelling class for the day. In Grade 8, I remember a massive rain-storm hitting and flooding through my middle school's deteriorating roof, forcing my science class to relocate for a month. This past fall, I had to switch seats in my Grade 12 law class because water kept dripping onto my notes and tests. One of the constants in all of the schools I've been at appears to be a state of deep disrepair."

Grade 12 Student, Toronto DSB

ACHIEVING FUNDING ADEQUACY: UPDATING BENCHMARKS ACROSS THE BOARD

Benchmarks are cost standards in the funding formula that ²³ play a core part of virtually every set of calculations that go into determining the GSNs. They can be broken down into two components: factors and costs. Benchmark factors represent the activities or requirements that trigger a cost, such as legislated class size standards, contractual compensation obligations, or ministry mandates set out by regulation. Benchmark costs are the standard or average dollar amount cost for that particular factor.²⁴

As the last independent review of the funding formula by the Education Equality Taskforce Report stated; "Benchmarks affect everything from the number of funding boards receive to cover their costs in the areas of salaries and benefits for administrators, teachers, and support staff; to learning resources such as textbooks, classroom supplies, computers, and related administrative costs; school operations, including heating, lighting, maintenance, cleaning, and

insurance; construction, including renovations and major repairs ("school renewal") and additions or new buildings ("new pupil places").²⁵

One of the root causes of the significant funding inadequacies in Ontario's education system is the benchmarks that have not meaningfully reviewed since the GSNs were established in 1997. The Education Equality Taskforce Report projected that updating benchmarks to keep up with inflationary costs & enrollment growth expenses would cost \$1.01 billion²⁶ in 2002, which adjusted for inflation is about \$1.4 billion²⁷ today.

Due to limited reviews in the past two decades, benchmarks have become severely out of date in many areas of the GSNs. This is a large part of the reason so many boards struggle with meeting student needs in areas of special education, capital repairs/maintenance, and student transportation in particular. The Auditor General in her 2017 annual report also spotlighted how fifteen years later, the findings and recommendations of the Education Equality Taskforce had not been implemented, particularly around funding adequacy and benchmarks.²⁸

In order to support the needs of Ontario's students, investments must be made from a reputable and accurate basis, rather than using benchmark frameworks from 20 years ago. For this reason,

RECOMMENDATION 2.3

OSTA-AECO calls on the Government of Ontario adopt the recommendation of the 2002 Education Equality Taskforce and the 2017 Auditor General Report and have the Ministry of Education, in consultation with school boards, educators, and other stakeholders, develop a mechanism for biennially reviewing and updating benchmarks in the funding formula.

MODERNIZING THE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES GRANT

The Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) is a portion of the GSNs that was established in 1998 to provide school boards with funding for investments in at-risk students. The LOG is currently comprised of 10 different allocations, with the largest and original portion being the Demographic Allocation. The Demographic Allocation provides \$362.9 million in funding as of the 2018-19 school year, which targets the following four specific socio-economic indicators: Low income, recent immigration, low parental education, and single-parent families.²⁹

However, most of the factors in this allocation have been unreformed since the grant was first introduced in 1997, even though Ontario has seen significant social and economic changes in the 21st century. Precarious employment, housing unaffordability, food insecurity, and the broader decreases in income security define the socio-economic realities of today's students and their families.

An updated set of factors for the Demographic Allocation will ensure that the funding provided through the LOG is directed towards the modern socio-economic barriers that exist today.

RECOMMENDATION 2.4

Thus, OSTA-AECO recommends that the Government of Ontario work with school boards to update the socio-economic indicators that drive the Demographic Allocation to include factors such as; the number of families on social assistance, regional unemployment rates, languages other than English or French is spoken at home and housing instability/frequent homelessness.

CLASS SIZES MATTER

In Ontario's education system, the classroom is where change truly starts. Through the work of world-class teachers and education workers, students receive individualized, one-on-one support from caring educators who understand their needs. It is through the classroom that transformative programs that enhance student success are implemented. These individualized supports and specialized courses are heavily dependent on class sizes.

Through examining objective indicators³⁰ of student achievement, lower class sizes have paid significant dividends in recent years. For instance, in 2007 the provincial government lowered class size averages at the primary level from 25³¹ to 90% of classes having to be 20 or fewer.³² As a result, Grade 3 Reading & Writing went from 49% & 52% in 2000 to 75% & 72% in 2017-18.³³ Grade 6 Reading & Writing has increased from 55% & 53% in 2000³⁴ to 82% & 80% in 2017-18.

Secondary class sizes were similarly lowered to 22 pupils. Consequently³⁵, student success on a variety of indicators increased substantially. 84%³⁶ of Academic students and 45%³⁷ of Applied students in 2017-18 met the standard in the Grade 9 mathematics EQAO. Furthermore, the graduation rate has significantly increased to 86.3%³⁸ in 2017-18 from about 70% in 2000.³⁹

Recently, the provincial government announced a significant increase to secondary class size averages from 22 students to 28. This will result in classrooms of 40 students in the near future. Educators cannot be expected to know the needs of every student and no program can be effectively implemented with classes of that size. This has a detrimental effect on student learning as students will no longer receive adequate individualized support.

In the past two decades, smaller classes have allowed Ontario's students to flourish and achieve at significantly higher levels than before. Consequently,

RECOMMENDATION 2.5

OSTA-AECO strongly recommends that the provincial government reverse its class size increases, and maintain the 2018-19 class size average of 22 pupils in Grades 9-12.

“One of the roughest transitions I've experienced was the transition between Grade 9 and Grade 10 math. My Grade 10 academic math class had nearly 35 kids, which meant my teacher had very little time to give me the one-on-one extra help I needed to succeed. I really struggled in the course, which led me to drop down to applied math and closed off some post-secondary paths for me.”

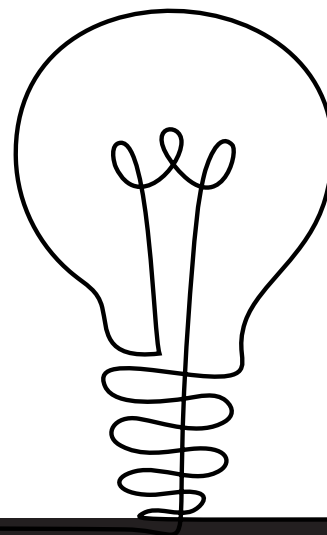
Student, Toronto DSB

SUPPORTING INNOVATION IN EDUCATION: LOCAL PRIORITIES FUNDING

For decades, Ontario's school boards have been leaders in education policy innovation. From student well-being to student achievement, school boards have been using their limited amounts of discretionary budget to aid in the development of several areas in education. Ontario has a long history of local priorities funding, with the province providing discretionary funding of \$200 per student in the early 2000s.⁴⁰ More recently, countless boards across Ontario have used the discretionary funds provided through the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) to design similarly impactful programs to enhance student equity.

As of 2017-2018, the LOG temporarily features a two-year Local Priorities Fund (LPF) of \$235 million.⁴¹ Through the LPF, Ontario's school boards have been able to hire 875 teachers and 1,600-1,800 education workers better support. This has allowed for more special education support staff to help students with learning exceptionalities thrive and additional caring adults to operate programming for at-risk students.

In order to achieve improved outcomes sought by the provincial government on a variety of indicators, school boards require autonomy to fulfill localized needs and craft solutions that match the strengths and needs of their individual student populations. A central, "one-size-fits-all" funding formula cannot achieve this alone.



RECOMMENDATION 2.6

OSTA-AECO recommends that the Government of Ontario makes the current Local Priorities Fund in the Learning Opportunities Grant permanent, and work with school boards to meaningfully expand it to ensure that it is sufficiently funded to allow for local innovation.

PILLAR 3: STRENGTHENING RURAL & NORTHERN SCHOOLS

Out of Ontario's 72 school boards, 70 of them have schools in rural areas. There are clear discrepancies between learning in an urban school or a rural one that can come in the form of fewer courses offered, longer bus commutes to school, and less experiential learning opportunities, to name a few. Students across the province deserve to receive a rich educational experience regardless of their geographic location by minimizing barriers and optimizing learning opportunities for rural and northern students.

SUPPORTING EVERY RURAL SCHOOL: EXPANDING THE RNEF MODEL

Realizing that rural students face significant differences in comparison to urban boards, the GSNs provide the Geographic Circumstance Grant to help eliminate significant barriers.

The grant consists of several allocations, such as the Remote & Rural Allocation to account for the higher cost of procurement for rural boards, the Supported Schools Allocation that enhances the viability of certain programming or staffing allocations like ECEs⁴², and the Rural & Northern Education Fund (RNEF).

The unique aspect of the RNEF is that unlike almost any other block funding section of the GSNs, it mostly funded on a school-by-school basis, rather than board-by-board. This has allowed for rural schools in large urban boards that would not have received support under a board-wide funding determination have received support. For example, in the Peel DSB, several schools in Caledon (a rural area) received \$55,000 in funding in 2017-18 for crucial staff allocations, expanded technical, arts, and athletic course program-

ming⁴³ due to the structure of this funding model.

Funding through the RNEF is determined through a calculation of the number of rural students on a school-by-school basis based on the Statistics Canada definition and two formulas calculating the density of rural student enrollment in a board.⁴⁴ The funding structure of the RNEF, combined with its requirement that resources only go to schools where at least 50% of its students are rural⁴⁵, has allowed for schools across rural & northern Ontario to get the extra funding they require.

This innovative funding stream has allowed for deeply impactful school-level investments in 70 of Ontario's 72 school boards. This is due to the unique model of the RNEF, which is why

RECOMMENDATION 3.1

OSTA-AECO recommends that the provincial government expand the school-by-school model of the RNEF to the rest of the Geographic Circumstances Grant and other aspects of the GSNs, ultimately providing all rural & northern schools across Ontario with the support they need.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

Transportation is a major component of the educational experience of many Ontario students as approximately 40% of students are transported to and from school via school buses and other board-funded transportation mechanisms each day.⁴⁸ It is funded via the Student Transportation Grant within the broader Geographic Circumstances Grant.

Student transportation is delivered through the use of a system of transportation consortia. These transportation consortiums are organizations formed by 2 to 5 school boards of different systems operating in the same geographic boundaries in order to consolidate costs and increase efficiency. The 33 consortia across Ontario are each⁴⁹ individually responsible for operational requirements like administering local board transportation policies, planning transportation services, and contracting school bus operators.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION STANDARD

Studies such as the Research Report regarding Student Transportation and Educational Access⁴⁶ have shown that students who have a positive experience in their travel to school find significant benefits to their well-being and success. This is based on the fact that a lengthy or uncomfortable commute to school can impact a student's ability to start the school day on time and inhibit their ability to participate in extra-curriculars, which are a foundational piece of the student experience.

Through OSTA-AECO's Student Survey, 47% of students reported that transportation affects their abilities to participate in before/after school programming and extra-curriculars,

leaving students feeling uninvolved in their community and missing out on experiences which complete the high school experience.

Some school boards have already taken steps to set maximum commute times for student transportation and accompanying exemptions.⁴⁷ Still, major discrepancies exist across the province. Ontario's students, regardless of where they live, deserve to be able to get to school in a comfortable and relatively efficient manner. To ensure student transportation is beneficial for students,

RECOMMENDATION 3.2

OSTA-AECO recommends that the Government of Ontario work with school boards to establish a Student Transportation Standard, outlining guidelines for bus-to-home communication, informed bus route decision-making, regional protocols for school bus cancellations, and maximum commute times which all take into account local, unique geographic realities.

SCHOOL BUS INSPECTIONS

In 2015, the Auditor General conducted an audit of student transportation services throughout the province and found some significant discrepancies with regards to safety standards. Notably, the Auditor found that restrictions around the maximum and average age of school buses were done at the individual contract level and thus varied board to board. This is coupled with varying processes by consortiums and the Ministry of Transportation for the inspection of buses, which the Auditor stated were “not targeting those vehicles most at risk for safety violations, performing inspections on a timely basis, or ensuring that defects noted during the inspection were fixed”.⁵⁰ These discrepancies leave the door open for varying school bus safety standards across the province, all of which have the potential to endanger students.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3

Thus, OSTA-AECO recommends that the Government engage collaboratively with school boards to establish consistent, province-wide standards for the average & maximum age of school buses and processes for school bus inspections.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY STANDARDS

Additionally, the Auditor General found that School bus safety training for riders was not a requirement, and only 16 of the 33 consortia in the province have made it mandatory.⁵¹ Safety training is a critical proactive measure to ensure Ontario's students are protected and safe while being transported to and from school. School buses are not immune to accidents; between 2010 and 2015, 5 600 buses were involved in an accident, and in 2013 it was found that school buses were in proportionately more accidents than cars and trucks.⁵²

RECOMMENDATION 3.4

OSTA-AECO recommends that the Government of Ontario make school bus safety training a mandatory requirement for all consortia's to implement and that the Government increase the School Bus Rider Safety Amount within the Student Transportation Grant if necessary to allow for this.

“ I live in a small community approximately an hour away from my school, therefore, making it extremely difficult to participate in many activities. With that being said, I still make a full attempt to participate in activities or events and attend all those which are made possible by the help of friends, family and the school itself.”

Grade 12 Female, Rainbow DSB

PILLAR 4: STUDENT WELLBEING

A student can only be truly successful in school when they are mentally and physically healthy. There are several programs and resources that schools can provide to ensure that students take care of their well-being and prosper in school. The number one priority of schools and school boards should be to ensure that students are well-fed, cared for, and offered support staff so they know they have people they can talk to in the event of a mental health issue. Although Ontario has made investments into student well-being resources and this has become a priority for school boards,

OSTA-AECO's OSPES found that 1 in 3 students feel their mental health resources and supports are inadequate.⁵³

STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAMS: UPDATING THE FUNDING CRITERIA

Research has shown that students face significant barriers to learning when they are hungry, as nutritious food is essential to the well-being of a student. In 2015, over 500,000⁵⁴ Ontarians visited a food bank, of which, 33% of those were students.

Through OSTA-AECO's Student Survey, approximately 70% of students⁵⁵ felt that breakfast programs were either highly-important or important for a healthy learning environment.

Ontario's Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services currently funds a student nutrition program (SNP) which includes 14 lead agencies that support nutrition programs in school boards across the province.⁵⁶ They provide students with nutritious breakfasts, lunches, and snacks in accordance with local need. Schools become eligible for additional funding when school demographics face extenuating circumstances such as low EQAO scores, limited parental post-secondary education, language barriers, and recent immigration.



My school runs a daily breakfast program and several students use it due to financial reasons. Poverty rates are rising where I live, and because of this, my school has also had to begin a lunch program to ensure students are eating. I know we don't receive any money for this lunch program so I worry that soon, they will cancel it and students will be starving during their afternoon classes."

High School Student, DSB of Niagara

In OSTA-AECO's Student Survey, 31% of students cited that their school either does not include a breakfast program, or there is a fee associated with the program.⁵⁷

With poverty rates on the rise across Ontario, student nutrition must be a priority for schools. To reflect the modern socio-economic barriers faced by Ontario citizens,

RECOMMENDATION 4.1

OSTA-AECO recommends that:

- A) The province mandate that every school in Ontario have some form of a Student Nutrition Program and provide the resources required to make it a reality.*
- B) The factors considered for the SNP be broadened to include parental status, housing stability, utilization rates for social assistance programs, refugee status, regional unemployment rates, and low graduation rates.*

GUIDANCE STAFF

Guidance staff in schools are invaluable resources to students. They provide insight into personal, interpersonal, and career-related development. In elementary schools, funding provided for guidance counsellors is based on the student to guidance counsellor ratio of 5000:1 and for secondary schools, 385:1.⁶¹

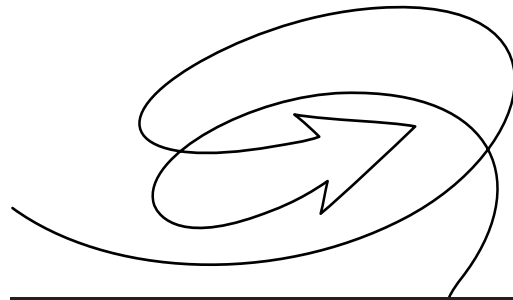
CLARIFYING THE ROLE

According to the Ontario School Counsellors' Association⁵⁸, the responsibilities of a guidance counsellor come in three parts: personal development, interpersonal development, and career development. However, due to Ministry documentation such as the 2010 progressive discipline document, Caring and Safe Schools⁵⁹ and the 2013 mental health and wellbeing document, Supporting Minds⁶⁰, guidance counsellors are also given the task of helping students to deal with their mental health.

Due to the conflict in job descriptions, the role of a guidance counsellor varies across the province, which creates significant discrepancies in the abilities of students to get both academic and well-being support at school.

Mental health supports are also covered by a wide variety of support workers, which can make the exact role of a guidance counsellor within mental health confusing and undefined.

Due to the differing views of the actual responsibilities of guidance counsellors across the province,



RECOMMENDATION 4.2

OSTA-AECO recommends that:

- A) the Ministry of Education specifically outline the role of guidance counsellors to ensure that they can perform their job to the best of their abilities, and students can have a solid understanding of who to turn to for assistance in mental wellbeing and academic success.*
- B) the Ministry clearly define the scope of professions considered to be "Social Workers" in an educational setting and their responsibilities, as well as the difference between academic guidance staff and social workers.*

MINIMIZING THE RATIO

Although funding is provided to school boards at a fixed ratio, only 14% of elementary schools report having guidance supports for their students and 10% of secondary schools in Ontario report that the ratio of students to guidance staff jumps to 800:1.⁶²

Some students report that they must schedule an appointment with their guidance counsellor a few weeks prior to seeing them, due to the workload placed on the counsellor. In elementary schools, most students have never spoken to a guidance counsellor, even though grade 8 students are deciding on which path to take during their high school journey which directly impacts their post-secondary endeavours. This results in students making uninformed decisions and taking courses at levels that do not fit their learning styles. The extremely high student to counsellor ratio creates difficulties in ensuring that all students with academic, social, and post-secondary inquiries are supported to the fullest extent. Therefore,

RECOMMENDATION 4.3

OSTA-AECO recommends that the funding provided for guidance counsellors in Ontario be increased in order to properly support the needs of Ontario students, and the funding provided at the elementary level should match the secondary level.

“ I go to school in a rural area. We have one guidance counsellor for the entire high school of 500+ students. To make an appointment you often have to wait for several days or weeks before she can see you. We have one social worker for the entire school (grade seven-twelve) of 700+ students. She is only in two or three times a week, as she works at other schools in my school board. If you need to speak with her, you must book an appointment and have a similar waiting time to our guidance counsellor. As a student who deals with mental health, this is not nearly enough support. I have never been able to see my SSW in a time of distress or need due to the wait times.”

Student, Upper Canada DSB

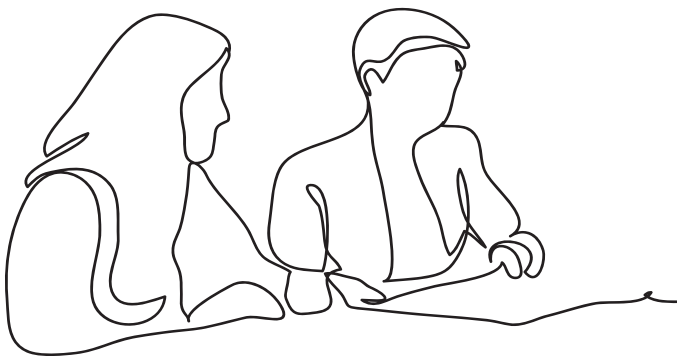
SOCIAL WORKERS IN SCHOOLS

Social Worker is an umbrella designation for a wide range of professionals including psychologists, mental health & addictions nurses, and youth counsellors. Mental illness continues to pose a challenge to many students, and because of this, mental health supports are invaluable in ensuring that students are learning in the best possible environment. Despite the importance of social workers in schools, the 2018 Student Survey conducted by OSTA-AECO asked students to rate the effectiveness of their school's well-being resources on a scale from 1-5.

Almost 64% of students gave a rate between 1 to 3.⁶⁴

SOCIAL WORKER RATIOS

In addition to the 34% of students who rate their mental health as poor or worse, 28% of students have said that they've wanted to speak to a trusted adult regarding a mental health challenge, but had nobody to turn to.⁶³ The province of Ontario needs to financially support school social workers in order for them to provide the best possible specialized care to students. Promoting mental wellness in schools will improve every student's education by improving their ability to learn in their classrooms.



RECOMMENDATION 4.4

OSTA-AECO recommends that funding should be provided for social workers on a ratio that should match guidance counsellor ratios.

THE MECHANICS OF WELLBEING

SAFETALK TRAINING

As mental health concerns continue to be on the rise for students across Ontario, school boards strive to ensure that every student has a trusted adult they can reach out to in the event of a mental health issue. Some of the first trusted adults' students reach out to are teachers. Teachers are a vital part of a student's educational journey, and by participating in a 3-hour SAFETALK training program, they will be equipped to identify and help students who are experiencing suicidal thoughts and help connect them with important resources. With more than 5800 youth suicides across Canada in the past 13 years⁶⁵, this training could help save countless student lives and work to better student mental well-being.

Knowing this,

RECOMMENDATION 4.5

OSTA-AECO recommends that teachers be trained in SAFETALK so they can help students who reach out to them.

BRINGING STUDENT WELL-BEING INTO THE 21ST CENTURY: ONLINE BOOKING SYSTEMS

One of the hallmarks of modernization in today's schools is the digitization of previously pen-and-paper processes. Several school transactions now take place online - from buying uniforms to paying for class trips. In addition, some boards are also moving traditional start-of-year medical forms to digital formats as well.

With technology changing many of the enduring customs and practices of schools, a similar approach should be taken with mental health resources. Some of the most important and utilized mental health services in schools are guidance counsellors and social workers. However, booking appointments remains an in-person process, which may require a student to chat with several staff members which results in their appointment public knowledge. This can sometimes be a barrier to students accessing the help they need.

Additionally, an online process facilitates flexibility of shared support worker resources, as the staff who split between different schools can be in the schools which require them at certain times, rather than waiting in their office for a student to drop by. This also helps to solve an issue regarding the average wait-times that students face when trying to get support.

There are several benefits to digitizing the process of booking appointments with support workers, which is why

RECOMMENDATION 4.6

OSTA-AECO recommends that the Ministry of Education work to develop the infrastructure to allow and work with school boards to digitize the booking of guidance counsellors and other mental health worker appointments through online systems that fits their local needs.



Whenever I tried making an appointment with my school's social worker I would have to talk to several different secretaries which I was not comfortable doing. Just last year, my school launched an online booking system used to book appointments for our support workers which is extremely convenient and makes me feel more comfortable when reaching out for help."

High School Student, DSB of Niagara

PILLAR 5: SYSTEM MODERNIZATION FOR 21ST CENTURY LEARNING

In OSTA-AECO's Student Survey, students were asked to rate the extent to which they feel their education has prepared them for life (including work) post-graduation.

On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is 'very poorly' and 5 is 'extremely well'), the vast majority (72%) of students answered between 1 to 3.

As an institution that works with Ontario youth from childhood into young adulthood, publicly funded education has a responsibility to teach both theory-based knowledge and practical skills to its students. Through a variety of courses, programs, and curriculum changes, the Ontario education system can ensure that all of its students are aptly prepared to begin their lives after secondary school.

CIVICS AND CAREERS

Civics & Careers is the combination of two mandatory half-credit courses offered to tenth-grade students over one semester. These courses are unique to Ontario and have the potential to expose students to some of the realities they will face once they leave the publicly-funded school system. Civics is a course that promotes civic literacy and engagement in youth, while Careers provides students with important information about post-secondary opportunities and managing their personal lives. These two courses offer applicable real-world knowledge that will affect a student's civic and societal impact; however, there is much work that can be done to make a student's time in this class worthwhile.

CAREERS: STRUCTURING THE CURRICULUM

The Careers curriculum focuses on three main points: "Personal Management", "Exploration of Opportunities", and "Preparations for Transitions and Change".⁶⁶ These points are broadly-described in the curriculum and leave much room for interpretation, which can result in careers classes that are taught differently across boards, schools, and even classrooms in the same school.

A OSPES conducted by OSTA-AECO reported that 74% of students found the Careers course to be an expendable class that they would not find worthwhile to take if it were optional, even stating it to be a "waste of time".⁶⁷

To ensure that all students receive a beneficial and relatively-standard education through the Careers course,

RECOMMENDATION 5.1

OSTA-AECO recommends that the Ministry update the Careers curriculum with more detailed guidelines to achieve the outlined goals in the class, focusing on exploring various post-secondary pathways, the modern labour market, and applicable employment opportunities.

According to OSTA-AECO's OSPES survey, it was found that

70% of students believe that the education they receive regarding financial literacy is insufficient.⁶⁸

As the only mandatory course in Ontario curriculum that focuses on potential post-secondary pathways and employment trends,

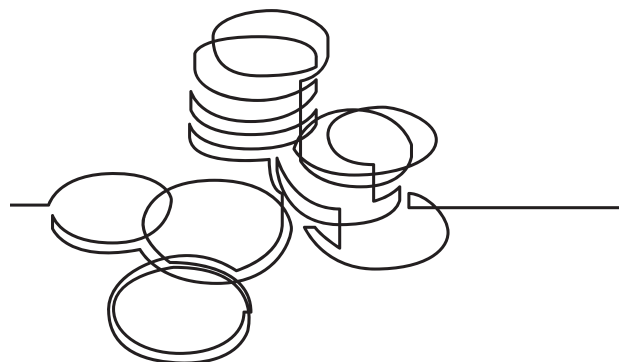
CAREERS: REAL-WORLD SKILLS

A Careers course is only as valuable as the skills it teaches. It is the only mandatory course in the curriculum that focuses on teaching students applicable content that helps them explore several post-secondary pathways. It is meant to teach every student, regardless of their future endeavours, how to be a successful member of society in work and life after public education. However, a majority of the time in this course is still spent on personality tests and determining the student's learning style, resulting in students feeling as Careers is not a worthwhile course for them to take.

70% of students disagreed with the statement "my school provides me with up-to-date information about career pathways and job opportunities" within OSTA-AECO's Student Survey.

RECOMMENDATION 5.2

OSTA-AECO recommends that the curriculum for careers teach transferable life skills including (but not limited to) professional etiquette, interview skills, personal branding, budgeting, paying taxes, and options for financing post-secondary



CIVICS: CREATING DEMOCRATIC CITIZENS

Ontario's youth voter turnout is at an all-time low, and many Ontario students do not feel ready to be voters.

In OSTA-AECO's Ontario Student, Parent, and Educator Survey, students were asked if their school prepares them to vote when they turn 18; 58% of students said no.

The majority of the students surveyed did not feel educated enough to get involved in politics when they are of age, as the survey also found that

42% of students do not feel that they DO NOT sufficiently learn about the different levels of government in schools.

Every Ontario student should leave high school as an engaged and informed citizen with the knowledge necessary to become fully involved in the democratic process. Students need to leave high school with at least some basic knowledge of how Canada's democratic system and its institutions operate to truly feel comfortable going to the polls.

With an increased voter turnout of politically-informed youth, Canadian politics will in turn become a more accurate representation of Canadian society. Therefore,

RECOMMENDATION 5.3

OSTA-AECO recommends the Ontario civics curriculum be re-evaluated and reformed to create more structured guidelines on what should be taught (e.g. branches/levels of government) and should feature content that reflects political issues and movements.



Since tenth grade, I have not had any interaction with politics. I know nothing about the different parties, nor what they represent, nor whom I should vote for. Being such an important part of Canadian life, this should definitely be more emphasized in our education."

**Female Grade 12 Student,
DSB of Niagara**

CO-OP AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Experiential Learning is an umbrella term for student learning that happens “beyond the classroom”.⁷⁰ One of the most popular forms of Experiential Learning for Ontario high school students is co-operative education (Co-op). Co-op has been incredibly beneficial for Ontario students looking to receive a hands-on learning experience that gives them a head start in their career field of interest. It is also a highly attractive feature of numerous post-secondary programs as it provides students with specialized experiences that allow them to transition into high-quality and well-paying jobs within their fields of study. However, students should not have to wait until postsecondary to be provided with these immersive experiences.

CHANGING THE CREDIT LEVEL

Despite the broad array of benefits that co-op offers, many students simply do not consider co-op to be a valuable addition to their course calendar.

The Student Survey conducted by OSTA-AECO found that 55% of students do not plan to participate in the co-op program.⁶⁹

There are several reasons for this, the most prominent of which being that all co-op credits are categorized as Open (O) courses. This poses an issue for university expectations, as university admission departments will only consider courses that are in the University (U) or Mixed (M) categories in their final decisions for admissions purposes. When a student chooses to enrol in the co-op program, they must tie their placement to a course they are taking. For example; if a student is interested in gaining experience in the field of trades, their co-op might be tied to a college level technologies course.

Similarly, if a student is interested in gaining experience at a local hospital, their co-op might be tied to a university or college level biology course. However, by categorizing all co-op courses at the open level, thousands of students are unable to justify committing two periods a day to working hard on a course which does not have an impact on their academic grade.

RECOMMENDATION 5.4

To incentivize co-op credits for students embarking on all post-secondary pathways, OSTA-AECO recommends that the credit level of co-op should match the course level that it is tied back to.

PRACTICAL SKILLS

Practical skills are affiliated with lessons learned in a classroom that will apply to every student's life and ability to function in society. Ontario's publicly-funded education system strives to set students up for a variety of post-secondary pathways and as smart, responsible citizens. This is accomplished through a dynamic curriculum and programs available to students to build on real-life skills.

DIGITAL LITERACY

As society makes significant technological advances, it is important to ensure that the students of Ontario are taught essential skills regarding technology usage in order to succeed within every aspect of the 21st century. According to a survey conducted by OSTA-AECO, 85% of students believe that technology is used effectively in their schools⁷¹, signalling that schools have been able to use the advances of technology to better the educational experiences of students. However, there are very few ways for students to learn about using new technologies through the current Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM) curriculums. Many students do not have meaningful opportunities to get exposure to technological education until their later years in high school, when many courses become available in computer sciences. To rectify this early on,

RECOMMENDATION 5.5

OSTA-AECO recommends that the Provincial government engage in consultations with school boards and stakeholders to integrate instruction around computer science into elementary curriculum.

FIRST AID AND C.P.R.

One of the most useful skills a student can learn is how to act in the case of a medical emergency. Although some students are able to learn CPR through specialized programs, every student knowing First Aid and CPR is an invaluable resource that has the potential to save lives. Through OSTA-AECO's Student Survey, it was found that

73% of students agree that CPR and First Aid should be taught as an essential life skill.⁷²

Due to the critical learning opportunity that this training provides and the widespread student interest in the program, the

RECOMMENDATION 5.6

Grade 9 Health and Physical Education curriculum should be altered to mandate First Aid & CPR training as a part of the course for all students.

E-LEARNING

Online courses, otherwise known as E-learning courses, are typically offered when there is an insufficient number of students or educators at a school to offer in-person classes. E-learning offers a virtual learning environment that works best for students who excel in self-regulation, have a dynamic schedule, or want to take a course that is not offered in their school and board.

ISSUES WITH E-LEARNING

These online courses are used as alternative courses, and still, many students find that learning complex concepts via an online course is extremely difficult and may not always replicate the personalized support offered by traditional classes. Students tend to obtain lower marks with e-learning courses in comparison to courses taught in schools. Additionally, the online platforms used for e-learning can be extremely difficult to navigate and use, especially for young students.

In OSTA-AECO's Student Survey, students were asked to rate the extent to which online classes provide comparable-quality learning capabilities as in-person classes. On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'exactly the same'), 75.4% of students answered a 1 to 3.

In early 2019, the provincial government announced that they would be mandating that all students complete 4 E-learning courses in order to graduate. This new mandate not only provides issues with accommodating diverse learning styles, but also poses major equity issues as some students across Ontario do not have consistent access to the technology needed to complete their work online. Due to the severe equity issues, incomparable experiences students have with in-person classes, and lack of research which proves that students will excel at the same level through e-learning courses,

RECOMMENDATION 5.7

OSTA-AECO recommends that the government reverse the mandate of 4 E-learning courses as a graduation requirement.



I have taken three online courses throughout my high school career. I find that the information I learn from an online class to be much harder to retain than that learned in an in-person class, as the content is fast-paced, has little interaction with classmates or teachers, and is often independently sourced and examined. I am also a person who prefers to discuss concepts within a classroom community while building relationships with them, and I am unable to do these things while in an online course."

High School Student, PVNCCDSB

STANDARDIZED TESTING

Standardized testing is a tool for evaluation which requires all participants to write an identical test and is assessed in a standardized manner through the Education Quality Assessment Office (EQAO). All students in Ontario write an EQAO assessment which evaluates their reading, writing, and mathematics skills in grades 3 and 6. In high school, grade 9 students write a mathematics EQAO assessment (which sometimes counts towards their final grade) and students in grade 10 write the Literacy Test which is used as a graduation requirement.⁷³

EQAO was first established in 1996,⁷⁴ To keep up with the constantly evolving society present today, Ontario needs to ensure the system of standardized testing keeps up with these transformations.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENT & GRADING TOOL

Currently, students must pass the OSSLT in order to graduate high school. Additionally, the grade 9 mathematics EQAO is often graded and used in replacement of a culminating project towards a student's final grade. One of the fundamental flaws of standardized testing is that it is only a snapshot of a student's academic abilities with an unrepresentative baseline. The pressures and language of a standardized test may not be on par with what a student normally experiences in their day-to-day classroom environment. A student's ability to graduate should not be dependent on a single assessment that is not reflective of the student's strengths.

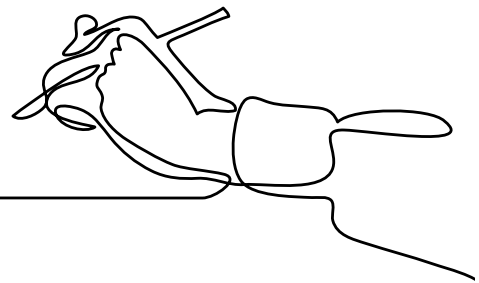
To minimize the overall stress and significantly mitigate the impacts to a student's well-being when writing these assessments,

RECOMMENDATION 5.8

OSTA-AECO recommends that the OSSLT not be considered a graduation requirement, and that EQAO marks should not be incorporated into a student's course grade.

CONTENT MODERNIZATION

One of the defining features of EQAO is that students must learn a suite of specific terminology, strategies, and writing formats in order to be successful in the assessment. A prominent example of this is the news report project featured in the OSSLT, or the dull stories about animals students have never heard of before in the grade 3 or 6 language component of EQAO. As a result, teachers spend months in advance teaching to the test and instructing content and language that is not covered anywhere else in curriculum. Learning becomes focused on memorization, rather than transferable skills. Therefore,



RECOMMENDATION 5.9

OSTA-AECO recommends that EQAO's content and language be fully brought into line with Ontario's curriculum and educational standards.



EQAO testing does not accurately represent a student's full understanding of course content. It is frankly unfair to have a test—using lingo or terms that students have never been exposed to—go toward our final grade.

High School Student, RCDSB

PILLAR 6: SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE

STUDENT TRUSTEES: MOVING AND SECONDING MOTIONS

Student trustees play a vital role in school boards across Ontario by serving as the voice of the primary stakeholders in education; the students. A student trustee's primary duty is to advocate on behalf of the students in their board and furthermore serve as a liaison between students and board personnel. Currently, Section 55 (4) of the Education Act states the following: "a student trustee is not entitled to move a motion, but is entitled to suggest a motion on any matter at a meeting of the board or of one of its committees on which the student trustee sits, and if no member of the board or committee, as the case may be, moves the suggested motion, the record shall show the suggested motion."

As Ontario continues to revitalize the student trustee role and amplify student voice across the province, it is important that elected youth have the opportunity to effectively advocate for change in benefit of their constituents. Student trustees across Ontario see huge discrepancies in their rights around the board table, as some student trustees can move their own motions, others can try to suggest a motion through another trustee, and some student trustees are prohibited to even bring up a motion. By allowing student trustees to move and second motions through the Education Act, it allows standardization in student trustee rights across the province and showing students that Ontario values student voice in a tangible way.

The role of a student trustee is very similar to the role of an ex officio member of a school board. "Ex officio" is a Latin term meaning "by virtue of office or position." In this situation, student trustees are ex officio members as they are at the board table by virtue of their position as student trustees.

The eleventh and most recently published version of Robert's Rules of Order states that "ex-officio member of the board is under the authority of the society (that is, if he is a member, an employee, or an elected or appointed officer of the society), there is no distinction between him and the other board members. If the ex-officio member is not under the authority of the society, he has all the privileges of board membership, including the right to make motions and to vote."⁷⁵ As with any parliamentary procedure, rules may be altered to fit the legal or political circumstances of society. To move and second motions (without the ability to vote) is a right of an ex-officio member, a.k.a a student

trustee, that should not be disallowed based on Ontario law. Allowing student trustees to move and second their own motions would be a major achievement for student trustees, school boards across Ontario, and student voice overall.

RECOMMENDATION 6.1

OSTA-AECO recommends that the Education Act be amended to officially recognize student trustees as ex officio members of school boards, ultimately providing student trustees with the right to move and second motions.

OSTA SUPPORTS

Despite the valuable work and ongoing success of OSTA-AECO, there are challenges that inhibit the association and, by extension, the student trustees of Ontario. Two of the most prominent and significant obstacles are inequitable and inaccessible professional development (PD) budgets as well as insufficiency in annual revenue for OSTA-AECO as an association. These ongoing changes hinder the ability of student trustees to best represent and advocate on behalf of Ontario's approximately 2 million students.

INEQUITABLE AND INACCESSIBLE P.D. BUDGETS

As a result of the 1990 funding formula consultations, a modification to the formula was made to take into account the membership fees of school trustee associations in order to alleviate the burden of these membership fees on school board budgets. At the time when these changes occurred, OSTA-AECO had not yet been founded and therefore, to this day, OSTA-AECO conference and membership fees do not see the same financial support as those of adult trustee associations, even though Section 55(7) of the Ontario Education Act stipulates that "a student trustee has the same status as a board member with respect to access to board resources and opportunities for training." This means that, in many cases, membership fees are deducted from the already insufficient PD budgets available to student trustees. Consequently, although every board in the province belongs to a school trustee association, 52% of school boards do not purchase OSTA-AECO memberships. This funding inadequacy leads to an even greater number of members that do not attend conferences or provincial meetings.

In addition to the strained budgets of Ontario's student trustees, the current unpredictability of annual revenue requires the association to ask the members of the Executive Council to absorb the costs associated with these meetings into their own school board professional development budgets. As a result, execu-

tive members have reduced budget funds available to them for professional development, which places an unfair onus on school board budgets. This is particularly challenging for executive members who live far from Toronto who often travel from great distances to take part in the efforts of the association; no student trustee should be precluded from serving on the executive due to geographic and financial constraints.

RECOMMENDATION

Each year, OSTA-AECO determines membership fees using a two-part formula and charges a registration fee for attendance at each conference. The organization proposes that in addition to providing the fixed and variable membership fee amount to school boards, an additional \$1,800 per student trustee be allocated to be used for registration fees at provincial meetings. The model would be structured as follows and allocated in addition to the current \$2,500 given to school boards to support student voice.

FIXED BASE MEMBERSHIP FEE:

- **\$750 VARIABLE MEMBERSHIP FEE:**

- **\$1,800 per Student Trustee + \$0.05 per student**

Combined, the base and variable membership fees allow for an equitable contribution to OSTA-AECO across boards of all sizes, in addition to the current funding that is provided to school boards to promote student voice activities. In Ontario, student trustees, pursuant to section 55(7) of the Education Act, have the same status as all board members with respect to access to board resources and training opportunities.

By providing OSTA-AECO with the same support other trustees associations currently receive, OSTA-AECO will be able to effectively plan and execute strategic priorities as outlined in this document; while removing the financial strain currently placed on Ontario school boards. Ultimately, these changes will not only free school boards from the financial challenges associated with supporting the incredible work accomplished by student trustees' but will improve the advocacy ability of student trustees, and will equitably improve the quality of education for Ontario's most important investment: its students.

Therefore, OSTA-AECO recommends that the

RECOMMENDATION 6.2

Ministry of Education provide student trustees and OSTA-AECO with the same financial resources as school trustee associations while committing to support the students of Ontario by increasing the overall amount allocated to Student Trustee PD.

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