

January 14, 2021

Consultation on Funding for Public Education

January 2021

from Ministry of Education Statement of Considerations

“Together with our renewed focus on achievement, equity, and mental health and well-being, Ontario’s publicly funded education system will be fairer and more inclusive for all students, educators and staff, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or any other factor related to individual identity”

Submission from The Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators (CODE)

The purpose of this submission is to respond to particular funding areas through the lens of the above statement. Achievement, equity, mental health, well-being, and inclusivity within our Ontario school communities cannot be achieved without thoughtful funding that involves analysis of pedagogical research and deep reflection about systemic assumptions and biases in education. We support all statements demonstrating evidence and outcomes based thinking and/or practices.

COVID-19 OUTBREAK RESPONSE

“This 2020-21 school year has brought new challenges due to the COVID-19 outbreak. In response, Ontario made almost \$1.3 billion in resources available to school boards to support the safe reopening of schools, which includes \$381 million in federal funds. The government’s investments include additional supports for additional teachers and custodians, special education and mental health, technology-related costs, cleaning and safety measures, improved ventilation and HVAC system effectiveness, administrative staff to oversee virtual schools, and flexible funding to support a range of activities based on school board priorities.”

1. *How do we ensure that the GSN (Grants for Student Needs) remains agile to continue to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak?*
 - a) *People for Education (PFE) has produced an analysis of [Ontario’s Grants for Student Needs for 2020/2021](#) that shows that overall funding for education suffered a net loss of 1%. Ontario schools cannot afford reduced funding until all schools are safe for all students and staff both physically and emotionally.*
 - Many of our schools across Ontario desperately need to be retrofitted with appropriate heating, air conditioning and ventilation. This has been made abundantly apparent by COVID and should be funded appropriately with GSN grants in 2021-22 to protect the health of staff and students, even as COVID slowly reduces, and in preparation for the effects of climate change on our weather. Some schools are older and need much more than improved ventilation and air conditioning: they have none at all in place!
 - This priority should not be in competition with salaries for administrative staff and technological support for teachers and for students. These items need to be considered in separate “envelopes”.
 - The government could reduce technological stresses on the schools and on students and teachers engaged in remote education by stepping up and ensuring that strong internet

is available everywhere in the province so that all families, whether rural or urban, can access the technology needed to learn on-line. Internet communication across the province should not be the responsibility of individual schools or school boards, libraries, or businesses. There should be provincial requirements and policies to ensure tax dollars and business profits provide equity of internet access. Right now, in internet terms, we have insufficient highways and too many toll roads creating inequality of access for Ontario citizens.

2. *What's required to successfully help students post COVID-19?*

a) **Infuse schools with enhanced arts education**

Students will be returning to school after experiencing trauma, whether mild or severe. Our sense of school community has been shattered as has student learning of social skills, positive group behaviours, and inclusive attitudes and interactions. There has been no way to practice working cooperatively with others and to regulate emotions within a community group outside the home. Currently, many students are unable or unwilling to keep their cameras on during remote learning.

Support for trauma counsellors is essential for individual student counselling but a real partnership with teachers and administrators is also required to create a positive school community with a focus on inclusivity and well-being. This must happen in classrooms whatever the subject focus. The arts are very often overlooked because they are misunderstood, and too many principals do not even recognize their personal biases about the arts and the systemic hierarchies in which they prioritize learning. STEM without the arts is not going to change social systems, nor transform the world. During this pandemic, we have all experienced the powerful positive effects that dance, drama, music and visual arts have had on adults as well as children to help us deal with our feelings and survive our isolation. These highly academic disciplines are and will be essential to the processing of the collective trauma and forging ahead as an education system and society.

Dedicated post-trauma funding in 2021 and beyond is essential to ensure that all four of the arts in the curriculum are made available to all students in our elementary schools and as elective credits for our secondary students is essential to the well-being of all involved. For example, drama and dance promote community and group identity as students create together with their bodies as well as their minds. Creation involves critical thinking as every music, visual arts, dance and drama student understands.

- See New Zealand's approach to students returning to school after the trauma of earthquakes and fires: [Te Rito Toi](#).
- Last summer, the New Jersey State Board of Education made news by releasing an [Arts Education & Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Framework](#) in conjunction with the *2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standard for Visual and Performing Arts*. The framework shows the inherent connection between SEL and the arts and makes it clear

as to why drama and dance and the other arts are necessary for teaching after trauma and for a rigorous and enriched education of our students.

- [Why dance is just as important as math in school](#) Sir Ken Robinson, 2018, Tedtalk.

b) All students will require gap analyses followed by results focused teaching that creatively blends the learning of missed knowledge and skills with the new learning for the grade and level entered after COVID.

Often folks unfamiliar with the pedagogy of the 21st century assume that rote learning and memorization remain at the heart of learning. They are wrong. Educational research is very clear that successful teaching and learning is foremost relational, and that students must feel safe in the space and be engaged in the work to learn deeply and to achieve high expectations in all subjects. Students must be engaged in both creative and critical thinking. We need to do math and science, and we must imagine what to do with math and science knowledge if we are to truly change the world; we must hone our imaginations as well as our critical thinking skills through arts education and apply these learnings to our mathematical and scientific understanding. The creativity and learning in the drama and dance (all arts) classrooms is essential academic and transferable knowledge. The skills and knowledge acquired in the arts classroom are essential to survival in the 21st century.

ON-LINE LEARNING ADJUSTMENT

As announced on November 21, 2019, Ontario students will be required to take two online credits to graduate from secondary school, starting with the cohort of students entering grade 9 in September 2020. As part of this transition, for the 2020–21 school year, the ministry has included an online learning adjustment in the Cost Adjustment and Teacher Qualifications and Experience Grant in recognition of the maximum average class size of 30 for online courses.

Each school board's Online Learning Adjustment amount is based on its percentage of secondary credits taken through online learning in the 2017–18 school year, calculated separately for each category (i.e. day school programs for pupils under 21 years of age, adult day school, continuing education and summer school programs) and a cost adjustment for each category to reflect a funded average class size of 30 for secondary online courses.

As a reminder online courses will not be included in the calculation of a school board's secondary maximum average class size requirement of 23 and remote learning is not considered part of online learning

1. As future adjustments to the funding methodology for online learning courses are to be confirmed through the 2021-22 GSN, do changes and/or adjustments need to be made to the Online Learning Adjustment in order to be more responsive?

- a) On-line learning is more successful for some students than others and better suited to some courses than others. On-line learning should have the same class size as in-school learning as communication is more challenging, not less challenging, over the internet. Increasing the class size average from 23 to 30 suggests that the inclusion of compulsory on-line credits is a way to

reduce the overall student/teacher ratio in order to save money. On-line classes should be staffed the same as any other class.

- b) Contrary to your statements above, we believe that the remote learning that occurred during COVID for secondary students should absolutely be considered for credit. We recommend that all Ontario students in grade 9 during 2020-21 should be granted their two compulsory on-line credits in acknowledgement of their COVID learning. There is nothing to stop them from taking more on-line learning courses in their next three years of high schools should they so desire. Good data could be gathered about how many of these COVID grade 9s choose to do more on-line credits. Parents would be very grateful for recognition of the unique school year of their grade 9 students who may have not yet stepped into their secondary school.

PRIORITIES AND PARTNERSHIP FUND (PPF)

The Priorities and Partnership Fund (PPF) provides education funding, supplemental to the GSN, for high impact initiatives that directly support students in the classroom. The funding is evidence-based and outcome-focused while providing streamlined, accountable, and time limited funding that will be reviewed and assessed by the Ministry of Education each year.

To further support the ministry's efforts to streamline funding while also reducing administrative burden for transfer payment recipients, some programs previously funded through PPF have been transferred into the GSN beginning in 2020–21. The ministry also implemented a consolidated transfer payment agreement for many PPF programs for the first time. The ministry intends to continue to examine opportunities to consolidate and standardize PPF transfer payment administration, including opportunities for streamlining reporting.

1. Are there further opportunities to improve the administration of transfer payment agreements to continue supporting a reduction in administrative burden?

2. Are there other PPF initiatives that should be transferred to the GSN?

3. What potential areas of overlap exist within currently funded programs? What opportunities might there be to streamline funding, and to streamline reporting?

- a) Questions 1 and 3 belong in the category below: **REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN AND RED TAPE**
- b) The key question is your second one. Saving money is a worthy goal but is not more important than creating high quality education for Ontario students. You state that PPF *funding is evidence-based and outcome-focused* as it should be.

The need for a specific focus on Math with its new curriculum is essential but this is the only subject you identify by name. Your PPF priorities for 2021-22 need to include and name the four arts as a priority because they will assist in so many of the identified priority areas. Without naming the arts as a post-COVID priority along with this Ministry's support of STEM rather than STEAM, so many educational biases not based on evidence nor outcomes are legitimized.

My conversations with a member of the current OECD 2030 committee revealed their horror when they realized that some school boards were reducing the emphasis on arts education to promote STEM which was never their intent. Please return balance to your post COVID priorities. We have witnessed the increased significance of the arts during COVID to create community, hope and resilience, and maintain mental health.....all listed in your introductory statement placed at the beginning of this submission. Please name the ARTS within your PPF priorities and change STEM to STEAM on your website. These two simple acts will enhance your STEM focus; it does not remove anything from it at all and it will inspire cross-curricular collaboration.

- c) *For 2020-21, the PPF will provide over \$300 million in funding to education partners to support students.*

This statement is elsewhere in the materials provided. We believe there needs to be greater transparency in publicly identifying “education partners” who receive Ministry funding.

CENSUS DATA

The formulas for the GSN allocations that provide funding for specific education priorities include various measures of “need” – that is, they rely on quantitative data to indicate what level of need there is for a particular set of programs and services. Currently, census data is a significant input in the measurement of need. Approximately 14 per cent of total funding for the supplemental grants within the GSN are dependent (all or in part) on census data. While several allocations within the GSN still rely on 2006 Census data and socio-economic indicators, the ministry continues to review the impacts of updating the census information for the upcoming school year and beyond. Any updates to the census data would require a redistribution of funding between school boards in recognition of increasing needs.

- 1. *How should allocations within the GSN be adjusted to reflect updated census data based on the re-distributed impacts to school boards?***
 - 2. *Should any updates be phased-in? If yes, what is an appropriate phase-in period and why?***
- a) I wish it was clear which of the allocations within the GSN still rely on the 2006 census: *“While several allocations within the GSN still rely on 2006 Census data and socio-economic indicators”.*
- b) It is not sufficiently evidence-based that you are still using data from 2006 when data from 2016 is available. Updating your data should not need to be phased in unless you anticipate reducing funding to school boards.
- c) In general, this Ministry is not consultative. You do not seek the opinions of students and teachers who are the heart of education. For the first time in our long careers in education, subject associations, identified stakeholder groups, are rarely consulted and certainly not in an equitable manner. We have had ONE curriculum forum to show us the new website. We were not consulted about any of the philosophical concepts behind it.

SECONDARY CLASS SIZE COMPLIANCE

The Class Size Regulation (O. Reg. 132/12) sets out class size requirements for all grades. In 2015–16, the ministry announced a framework to ensure compliance with the kindergarten and primary (generally grades 1 to 3) provisions of the class size regulation. In 2017–18, this compliance framework was

expanded to apply to the junior-intermediate (grades 4 to 8) provisions of the regulation. The current compliance framework requires boards to submit a class size compliance management plan in the first year of non-compliance. Where a board is non-compliant for two or more years, the ministry will implement reductions in the funding envelope for school board administration and governance. This is effectively a requirement to redirect funds to the classroom to assist with compliance with the class size regulation. When a school board demonstrates compliance with the limits set out in the relevant sections of the class size regulation, the compliance measures may be lifted.

1. What are the benefits and/or challenges of implementing a compliance framework for secondary class size?

Secondary schools provide choice to students within the requirements for graduation. Students are given agency to focus on both those subjects which interest them and those which prepare them for their post-secondary lives. When staffing is based on a class average, choices become restricted. For example, one school may have 15 students who select grade 12 physics and require this course for entry into their desired university program. Another may have one very small gymnasium and be unable to offer large Physical and Health classes. Senior band teachers may appreciate being allowed to work with as many as 40 students playing together in one class.

There needs to be flexibility provided for any compliance framework for secondary class sizes. Agency must be given to principals in collaboration with teacher unions to respond to the requests of students in a meaningful way, allowing some classes to be large and others to be small. Averages are more meaningful in K to grade 6 where students are collected together for most, if not all, of their subjects. Averages can decimate entire programs in a secondary school if applied rigidly without opportunity for creative accommodation to the needs of the students and the available areas of expertise of their teachers. But they did successfully reduce the number of teachers in our secondary schools and reduce.

In conclusion, we offer this link. It is well worth listening to this summary of the OCDE summit in Lisbon in 2017 focused on Education in 2030.

[Education 2030 - OECD](#)

Submission from:

Matthew Sheahan, President and Jane Deluzio, Past President.

The Council of Ontario Drama and Dance Educators CODE