

# **2021-22 EDUCATION FUNDING GUIDE**

## INTRODUCTION

All students deserve to have every opportunity to reach their full potential and succeed personally and academically, with access to rich learning experiences that provide a strong foundation of confidence that continues throughout their lives. Schools should be safe and welcoming places where all students have the tools they need to achieve success and follow their chosen pathways to life after graduation including work, college, apprenticeship or university. Educators and school/system leaders need to have the knowledge and skills to create conditions that better support and serve all students. 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.

Since COVID-19 has emerged as an unprecedented public health issue, the government has been diligently monitoring the developing situation to protect the health and well-being of all Ontarians. Our number one priority is and remains the health and safety of our students, teachers and staff.

As you are aware, this year's Grants for Student Needs (GSN) is projected to be \$25.52 billion – representing a historic, high level of investment for Ontario's publicly funded education system. In addition, over \$300 million is being provided for the Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF).

As the province responds to the COVID-19 outbreak, we continue to modernize education funding so students can succeed in school, life, and beyond, while ensuring investments have the greatest impact in the classroom.

For more information about the current education funding model, please see the [2020-21 Education Funding](#) page of the Ministry of Education's website.

## ABOUT THIS CONSULTATION

As in previous years, the government remains committed to discussing education funding reform in Ontario, with education stakeholders through a consultation process that allows stakeholders to provide the benefit of their expertise, experience, and ideas. This year's guide focuses on:

- COVID-19 Outbreak Response
- Online Learning Adjustment
- Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF)
- Reducing Administrative Burden and Red Tape
- School Board Administration and Governance Grant
- Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA)
- Census data
- Secondary Class Size Compliance

You may also submit feedback on education funding topics not outlined in this guide. In order to ensure your feedback is considered, please forward your electronic submission by **Friday January 15, 2021** to: [EDULABFINANCE@ontario.ca](mailto:EDULABFINANCE@ontario.ca). If you have questions about this consultation, please send them to the email address noted above.

## 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.

### Considerations

1. **How do we ensure that the GSN remains agile to continue to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak?**
2. **What's required to successfully help students post COVID-19?**

## ONLINE 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.

### Considerations:

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?**

## PRIORITIES AND PARTNERSHIP FUND

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.

### Considerations:

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?**

## REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN AND RED TAPE

The government is eliminating burdensome, outdated and unnecessary regulation to help restore Ontario's competitiveness, retain high-quality jobs and attract investment.

The Ontario government has taken more than 100 actions to modernize and streamline regulations, reducing overlap with the federal government and municipalities, updating old requirements and simplifying complicated rules.

In 2020-21, the ministry has transferred five Priorities and Partnership Fund (PPF) allocations into the GSN to support the ministry's ongoing efforts to streamline reporting.

The ministry continues to look for ways of reducing administrative burden and aligning program implementation with ministry priorities, while ensuring strong accountability and value for money.

### Considerations

1. **Are there opportunities to reduce the number of non-financial reports and PPF reports school boards currently submit to the ministry?**
2. **Are there areas of overlap or duplication in the current reports school boards submit to the ministry?**

## SCHOOL BOARD ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE GRANT

The School Board Administration and Governance Grant (SBAGG) provides funding for administration and governance costs such as operating school board offices and central facilities, board-based staff and expenditures, including supervisory officers and their administrative support.

Amongst other changes, in 2020-21, the Program Leadership Allocation (PLA) was moved from the SBAGG to become its own grant – Program Leadership Grant – as part of a realignment that better delineates funding for the development and delivery of student programming.

The school board administration and governance enveloping provision requires that a school board's net administration and governance expenses in a fiscal year not exceed the administration and governance limit. It is the ministry's expectation that school boards be in compliance with the enveloping provision within SBAGG.

### Considerations:

- 1. Are there areas of overlap between this grant and other grants within the current funding formula to support school board administration and governance? Are there opportunities to streamline funding to eliminate duplication and find savings?**
- 2. How can compliance with the enveloping provisions of this grant be consistently measured across school boards?**

## MANAGING INFORMATION FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (MISA)

Funding for MISA Local Capacity Building is intended for activities to help school boards build capacity and better manage information and evidence to inform school board decisions around school administration and classroom practice.

MISA funds are used to sustain and advance local capacity to use quality evidence, by targeting funds in at least two of the following four priority funding areas:

1. Build and sustain capacity by continuing work on high priority common core activities to achieve/maintain level(s), as set out in the MISA Common Core Capacities Continuum.
2. Create more collaboration at the classroom, school, board, and/or professional network level(s) in activities related to identifying, analysing, implementing, monitoring, and/or evaluating improvement strategies/initiatives.
3. Promote prioritized availability and usability of information for end-users (e.g. teacher, principal, superintendent), while having regard for privacy protection.
4. Data quality management projects that will improve the timeliness, accuracy and completeness of school board data/information submitted through the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS).

The funding is based on a fixed amount of \$35,000 for each school board and \$0.35 per Average Daily Enrolment (ADE). The MISA Local Capacity Building Allocation is \$3.2 million in 2020–21.

### **Considerations:**

- 1. How can the ministry better support boards in their annual MISA plans and final reporting template submissions?**
- 2. Boards currently have discretion to utilize MISA funding in alignment with the 4 priority funding areas (above) – how relevant are these priorities areas for boards moving forward?**
- 3. Are there other funding priority areas where MISA funds could be directed to maximize impact?**

## **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.

### **Considerations:**

- 1. How should allocations within the GSN be adjusted to reflect updated census data based on the re-distributed impacts to school boards? Should any updates be phased-in? If yes, what is an appropriate phase-in period and why?**

## **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 re-direct 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.

### **Considerations:**

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

## CONCLUSION

The ministry would like to acknowledge once again the ongoing, tireless efforts of school board teams to support students, families and the broader community. We have seen our education system rise to the challenge and provide innovative, flexible solutions in the best interest of students. We are grateful for your partnership and look forward to our continued collaboration going forward. The ministry continues to depend on school boards and trustees, and their knowledge of the needs of their communities, to make decisions that best support students and schools.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide, and we look forward to your feedback.