

**Ministry of Education**

Deputy Minister

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Toronto ON M7A 2A5**Ministère de l'Éducation**

Sous-ministre

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Toronto (Ontario) M7A 2A5**2020:B11****Date:** August 4, 2020**Memorandum to:** Directors of Education  
Secretaries/Treasurers of School Authorities**From:** Nancy Naylor  
Deputy Minister of Education**Subject** **Investments to Support School Reopening in Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak**

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On July 30, 2020, the Ontario government announced its school reopening plan for the 2020-21 school year. School reopening is critical to learning and development for Ontario's students, and a critical support for families to get back to work and allow for the reopening of the economy. The plan has been designed to reopen schools through approaches that keep students, families, staff and all Ontarians safe and healthy and is based on the best medical advice provided by public health experts.

Resources worth \$309 million were announced as part of the school reopening plan. We are writing to provide you with additional information on the following new Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF) investments to support the safe reopening of schools that were part of this announcement:

- Funding for Additional Staffing
- Health and Safety Training
- Masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Cleaning Supplies
- Student Transportation
- Special Education
- Mental Health

In addition, we are providing further details on the Ministry of Education's commitment to provide \$25 million in new GSN funding in 2020–21 for mental health and technology

funding and \$4 million in PPF funding for cleaning, cleaning protocols, and financial support to hire additional custodial staff in September to support school reopening. These changes were first communicated in June 2020.

## **A. NEW INVESTMENTS TO SUPPORT SCHOOL REOPENING**

### **Funding for Additional Staffing**

To support pressures related to supervision, keeping class sizes to funded averages, remote learning and other safety related measures, the ministry will be providing up to \$30 million in new funding in 2020-21 to support the hiring of additional teachers, where needed. Funding will be on an application basis. School boards must demonstrate that they have managed classes as close to the funded average class size as possible and utilized reserves up to one per cent of their operating budget.

The ministry will also provide \$50 million in new funding in 2020–21 to support the hiring of additional custodial staff. Each district school board’s (DSB) and isolate board school authority’s projected allocation for this funding is set out in Appendix A. The allocation for DSBs is based on projected Average Daily Enrolment (ADE) with a top-up to ensure every DSB generates a minimum of \$60,000 in funding. Isolate board school authorities will generate \$15,000 each.

### **Health and Safety Training**

As school boards plan to re-open schools, it is critical that all school and board staff know the health and safety protocols necessary to keep themselves and students safe.

To support school boards in delivering health and safety training to all staff, the ministry has developed customizable material that boards may choose to use in their own training.

These materials are aligned with the [Guide to reopening Ontario’s schools](#) document and have been developed with health and safety experts. The materials are module-based and focused on areas such as environmental cleaning, appropriate use and disposal of PPE, testing and outbreak management, and student transportation, among others. School boards are encouraged to adapt these materials for specific audiences and to incorporate local contexts. The ministry is also providing links to additional health and safety resources. Health and safety modules and links to additional resources will be available in August in a new space in the ministry’s eCommunity in Ontario’s Virtual Learning Environment. School board staff will have access to this space by logging into their school board’s VLE and accessing the link on their school board’s home page to the eCommunity.

All staff who enter a school or board facility have an important role in keeping themselves and others safe. To that end, the ministry is providing \$10 million in new funding in 2020-21 to ensure training is extended to all occasional teachers and casual education workers that could be required to cover absences. Each DSB’s and isolate board school authority’s projected allocation for this funding is set out in Appendix A. The allocation supports one five-hour day of training for occasional teachers and casual workers. For permanent and long-term occasional teachers, this

is provided as part of the seven professional activity (PA) days. For permanent and contract education staff, it is recommended that in-lieu arrangements be made.

### **Masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Safety of students and staff is the key priority in the planning for and reopening of schools in Ontario. This is why the ministry is investing an additional \$60 million in funding for masks and PPE, as well as actively supporting school boards through the centralized supply chain to secure these critical supplies.

Medical masks and eye protection (i.e. face shields) will be provided for all teachers and other staff of school boards. Depending on the regular duties of school-based staff additional PPE will be provided.

Students in Grades 4 to 12 will be required to wear cloth face masks on school property. Students may wear their own masks, and non-medical masks will also be made available for students in schools. Students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 will be encouraged but not required to wear masks in indoor spaces.

The ministry is working with school boards and school authorities, as well as the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services (MGCS) and the Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace (OECM) to ensure appropriate supply and timely delivery. Details of school board allocations will be determined once the recovery model is finalized.

### **Cleaning Supplies**

In June 2020, \$4 million in new PPF funding was announced to support the extra costs for enhanced cleaning protocols in schools and school buses. Details of this funding are set out in Appendix C. The ministry is now providing an additional \$25 million to support the enhanced cleaning required to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools.

Central procurement of cleaning supplies for schools is already underway through MGCS and will be delivered to schools. Details of school board allocations will be determined once the recovery model is finalized.

### **Student Transportation**

To support the extra costs for enhanced cleaning protocols in student transportation, the ministry has set aside an additional \$40 million in funding. This funding is intended for cleaning and disinfecting supplies, additional labour for enhanced cleaning protocols, and PPE for drivers to address health and safety measures for student transportation.

### **Special Education**

To support students with special education needs, the ministry is providing school boards and isolate board school authorities with a new \$10 million investment in PPF funding. This one-time funding is flexible, to be used by school boards to address local needs including for additional staffing resources, specific evidence-based programs or interventions, additional learning resources such as assistive technology, and for professional assessments.

## **Mental Health**

The ministry is investing an additional \$10 million to support the mental health needs of students. This is on top of the \$10 million already announced for mental health supports that will foster the continued learning and well-being of students. This additional \$10 million investment will be allocated through PPF. Please see below, under the previously announced mental health funding, for more details regarding the mental health investment.

## **B. PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED FUNDING**

As previously announced, the ministry is investing \$25 million in new funding through the GSN and an additional \$4 million through PPF to support extraordinary costs related to the COVID-19 outbreak in the 2020- 21 school year.

### **Technology**

The ministry will provide \$15 million in new funding in 2020–21 to support technology-related costs.

The intent of the new funding is to support students who were unable to access technology during the 2019-20 school year to have greater access for 2020-21. The

funding will help to replace some devices that may be out-of-date and support the procurement of additional devices for school boards to loan to students.

Each district school board’s projected allocation for this funding is set out in Appendix B. The allocation is based on projected ADE with a top-up to ensure every district school board generates a minimum of \$50,000 in funding. This funding is sufficient to support a minimum of 100 devices in every district board, and 35,000 province wide.

### **Mental Health**

In June, the ministry committed \$10 million in new funding in 2020-21 for mental health supports to foster the continued learning and well-being of students.

The intent of this new funding is to meet the expected higher needs of all students due to COVID-19. School boards may utilize this funding to:

- employ new mental health professionals to manage the anticipated increase in student mental health needs;
- provide training for educators, mental health professionals and system leaders;
- allow for release time for educator professional development; and
- to more closely engage with their local community and healthcare partners to support the mental health of students.

School boards have the flexibility to utilize this funding to address local priorities both at the elementary and secondary panels and to support the mental health of students in specific sub-populations.

School boards are expected to use at least 10% of this GSN funding, or at least \$1 million provincially, to support the mental health needs of students in grades K-3 who are at risk of being suspended. The goal is to build and maintain a caring and safe learning environment, provide professional learning for school staff focused on understanding and addressing student behaviour, promoting consistent understanding of mitigating factors and how students' behaviours can be a manifestation of the circumstances that they are trying to navigate, and supporting trauma-informed approaches.

School boards may choose to use this funding to support enhanced engagement and collaboration with parents/guardians to better understand and address issues of K-3 student behaviour and to coordinate community and school-based services to support students and families as needed.

Each district school board's projected allocation for this funding is set out in Appendix B. The allocation reflects base funding of \$100,000 per board and a top up based on ADE. This formula provides both smaller and larger boards with the ability to implement meaningful mental health supports, including the option of employing new mental health workers.

### **Funding for Enhanced Cleaning in Schools and on School Buses**

The ministry will provide \$4 million in new funding in 2020–21 to support enhanced cleaning protocols in schools and on school buses.

Enhanced cleaning is required to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools and on school buses, including cleaning plus disinfection of high touch surfaces at a minimum of twice daily, e.g. washrooms, eating areas, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, keyboards, etc.

Funding will be provided to purchase cleaning supplies (including hand sanitizers), operationalize enhanced cleaning in schools and on school buses, hiring additional custodial staff and/or paying for staff overtime due to additional cleaning. School boards will be funded on a per board amount of \$2,500, with the remainder proportioned by board enrolment. See Appendix C for school board allocations.

## **C. ISOLATE BOARD SCHOOL AUTHORITIES**

The ministry will provide further information to isolate board school authorities concerning their 2020–21 GSN funding through an updated Addendum to 2020–21 Technical Paper for Isolate Board School Authorities in the coming weeks.

## **D. NOTICE**

Some of the elements and proposals set out in this memo can only take effect if certain regulations are made by the Minister of Education or Lieutenant Governor in Council under the *Education Act* or other legislation as required. Such regulations have not yet been made.

Therefore, some of the content of this memo should be considered to be subject to such regulations, if and when made.

In closing, the ministry would like to acknowledge once again the ongoing partnership and continued collaboration from our education partners. We recognize that COVID-19 has emerged as an unprecedented public health issue and that it has had a significant impact on families, students, schools and the broader community. The ministry continues to depend on school boards and other education partners, and their knowledge of the needs of their communities, to make decisions that best support students and schools. The health, safety, and well-being of our students, families and teachers is of paramount importance and we remain committed to supporting students' and teachers' safe and successful return to the classroom.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Nancy Naylor  
Deputy Minister