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2021:B08

Date: May 4, 2021

Memorandum To: Directors of Education
Senior Business Officials
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities

From: Andrew Davis
Assistant Deputy Minister
Education Labour and Finance Division

Subject: **2021–22 Grants for Student Needs Funding**

I am writing to provide you with information about the Ministry of Education's Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding for 2021–22. This information is being provided in conjunction with the release of the 2021–22 school year allocations for the Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) and the ministry's 2021-22 COVID-19 supports that provides for another year of resources totalling more than \$1.6 billion. At this time, school boards are expected to budget for approximately half of these resources where the remaining resources will be confirmed by the ministry in the Fall, if needed for the second half of the year. This continued support builds upon more than \$1.6 billion in resources made available in 2020-21 to support the safe reopening and operation of schools across Ontario. More information on the above PPF investments can be found in 2021:B07 and 2021:B10.

GSN funding for 2021–22 is projected to be \$25.6 billion, an increase of 2.2 per cent, while the average provincial per-pupil funding is projected to be \$12,686 in 2021–22, which is an increase of \$152 or 1.2 per cent from 2020–21¹.

This year's GSN includes updates to COVID-19 supports, changes to how online learning classes are funded, transfers from PPF, enhanced accountability measures, and ongoing investments to

¹ Excludes GSN stabilization funding for 2020–21.

reflect the third year of the labour agreements. This year's GSN also includes technical and other routine updates.

As noted in memorandum 2021: B04 *2021–22 School Year*, school boards should take a conservative approach in their planning for the 2021–22 school year given the uncertainty in enrolment.

A. COVID-19 SUPPORTS IN THE 2021-22 GSN

In 2020: B08 *2020–21 Grants for Student Needs Funding*, the ministry announced an investment of \$25 million to support extraordinary costs related to the COVID-19 outbreak in the 2020–21 school year. This was included in the more than \$1.6 billion in resources available in 2020-21. Starting in 2021–22, in recognition of the continuing need for additional funding for technology resources and mental health supports, the ministry is now planning for these allocations to be ongoing elements within the GSN.

Additionally, there will be other time-limited supports through the Language Grant in the GSN (outlined below) demonstrating the government's ongoing support for the health, safety and well-being of students and staff during the pandemic. For further details on COVID-19 resources for 2021-22 through both the GSN and PPF, please see the April 27, 2021: B07 memo from Minister Lecce and Deputy Minister Naylor, *Planning for the 2021-22 School Year*.

Technology Resources - Moving to the Pupil Foundation Grant (PFG) and Geographic Circumstances Grant (GCG)

The ministry will provide \$14.9 million in 2021–22 to support technology-related costs. This continued funding will help to replace some devices that may be out-of-date and support the procurement of additional student devices.

This funding is provided through a new Student Technological Devices per-pupil amount (\$7.11) for students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 in the PFG, with a Student Technological Devices Top-Up Allocation within the GCG to ensure every school board receives a minimum amount of \$50,000.

Mental Health Supports - Moving to the Mental Health and Well-Being Grant

The ministry will provide \$10.1 million in 2021–22 to support student mental health to foster the continued learning and well-being of students. This is in addition to \$49.0 million through PPF for special education, mental health and well-being and equity initiatives for temporary COVID-19 funding supports.

This funding is provided through a new Supporting Student Mental Health Allocation within the Mental Health and Well-Being Grant.

School boards may use this funding for the following student mental health related purposes:

- employ mental health professionals to directly support students
- provide professional learning and training for educators, school-based mental health professionals, and system leaders

- collaborate with community mental health providers to ensure pathways to care for students requiring more intensive supports are available
- student engagement opportunities regarding mental health
- the collection, analysis and reporting of student mental health related information

Funding will be provided to school boards through a per-board amount (\$100,858) and a per-pupil amount (\$1.34). School boards have the flexibility to utilize this funding to address local priorities both at the elementary and secondary panels to support student mental health.

Recent Immigrant Supplement

Due to the extraordinary and temporary decline in recent immigrant enrolment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and closed borders, \$79.6 million in time-limited mitigation funding is being provided to supplement the Recent Immigrant Component of the English as a Second Language/English Literacy Development (ESL/ELD) Allocation (for English-language school boards) and the Programme d'appui aux nouveaux arrivants (PANA) Allocation (for French-language school boards). This funding is expected to help school boards continue to offer the same level of support to students requiring ESL/ELD and PANA programs.

The Recent Immigrant Supplement will ensure school boards generate minimum funding based on total weighted enrolment for each of the four years that generated funding through the ESL/ELD Recent Immigrant Component and the PANA Allocation in their 2019–20 Financial Statements. School boards will generate top-up funding to get to this minimum if actual weighted enrolment falls below this level.

B. ONLINE LEARNING AND REMOTE LEARNING

Online Learning

The ministry is updating the funding methodology for online courses by adjusting benchmark funding for classroom teacher staffing through the Secondary Pupil Foundation Allocation and related grants based on a differentiated funded average class size for online and in-person learning.

In 2020–21, the Online Learning Adjustment Allocation was based on the number of credits offered in 2017–18, funded at an average class size of 30. To align the policy with the funding benchmarks, beginning this year the secondary benchmark will use a funded average credit load of 7.5 credits per pupil split between online learning (approximately 0.081) and in-person learning (approximately 7.419). The online learning credit load benchmark assumes approximately 8% of secondary students will take one course online in 2021–22. For planning purposes, school boards can anticipate the participation rate to be adjusted to approximately 16% in 2022–23 and 26% in 2023–24. These planning assumptions may be reviewed based on experience and policy objectives.

Under this new approach, the Online Learning Adjustment in the Cost Adjustment and Teacher Qualifications and Experience Grant has been eliminated.

Remote Learning

As noted in *2021:B04 2021–22 School Year*, school boards that are planning to deliver remote learning through virtual schools in 2021–22 should use the existing secondary class size average for staffing fully remote classes. Hybrid models should also apply in-person class size requirements.

C. KEEPING UP WITH COSTS

The ministry will provide a two per cent cost benchmark update to the non-staff portion of the School Operations Allocation benchmark to assist school boards in managing the increases in commodity prices (i.e. electricity, natural gas, facility insurance, and other costs).

D. PPF TRANSFERS TO GSN

To further support the ministry's efforts to streamline funding while also reducing administrative burden for transfer payment recipients, the following three PPF allocations will be transferred into the GSN:

Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) \$23.6M

SHSM programs support Grade 11 and 12 students in gaining sector-specific skills, knowledge and training in the context of education and career/life planning activities that assist them in their planning and transition from secondary school to apprenticeship training, college, university, or the workplace.

This allocation will be transferred and consolidated within the existing SHSM Allocation of the Learning Opportunities Grant. The SHSM amounts will be set out in the *Grants for Student Needs – Legislative Grants for the 2021–2022 School Board Fiscal Year* regulation and adjusted in-year as necessary to reflect updated enrolment data.

After-School Skills Development (ASSD) Programs \$6.1M

ASSD Programs implemented by school boards provide students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other students with special education needs who may benefit from the program with additional targeted skills development opportunities, outside of the instructional day, to better equip them for classroom success and to achieve other outcomes such as improved social and communication skills. This allocation will be transferred to, and enveloped within, the existing Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA) Allocation of the Special Education Grant.

Integrated Services for Northern Children (ISNC) \$1.44M

The ISNC funding supports the coordinated assessment, consultation and treatment services on a multi-agency, multi-ministry basis to children and youth with physical, psychological and educational challenges in under-served rural and remote communities in Northern Ontario. This allocation will be transferred into the Northern Adjustment category, under the Measures of Variability component of the Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount within the Special Education Grant. ISNC funding will flow to the lead school board of each of the three regional Northern Adjustment cooperatives, to support regionally determined special education

priorities that are addressed through joint, innovative and cost-effective special education programs and services, including in under-served rural and remote communities.

E. ENHANCED ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

Indigenous Education and the Program Leadership Grant (PLG)

The Indigenous Education Grant (IEG) is being adjusted to include greater accountability measures and is being streamlined as follows:

- The Indigenous Languages Allocation and First Nations, Métis and Inuit Studies Allocation will be enveloped. School boards will be required to spend the allocations on each program and the use of any funding surplus beyond what is needed to run these courses is to be reported through the Board Action Plan (BAP). School boards are required to deliver these programs if a minimum of eight secondary pupils of the board enroll in the course.
- The Indigenous Education Lead position funding, previously funded through both the Per-pupil Amount (PPA) Allocation in the IEG and PLG, will now be fully funded through the PLG. Each school board will continue to generate 1.0 Supervisory Officer salary and benefits benchmark and will also generate 10.44 per cent in travel and professional development. The remaining PPA Allocation will be realigned within the IEG to become a component of the BAP Allocation, which will continue to be enveloped.
 - School boards continue to be required to spend at least half of the benchmark on the lead salary and benefits, and any remainder will be transferred to the BAP for current or future years' IEG spending.
 - As in previous years, the Indigenous Education Lead must be a full-time position and must be dedicated. Job splitting is not permitted, unless an exemption is requested by the school board in writing and approved by the Indigenous Education Office.

The ministry would also like to remind school boards that children and youth in care of children's aid societies (including First Nation's Caring Societies) may choose to attend a First Nation school, under the Reciprocal Education Approach (REA), subject to a First Nation school's admission policies. The REA requires that school boards provide funding support for students, who would ordinarily be eligible to be pupils of the board to attend a First Nation school when requirements and eligibility criteria are met.

Library Staffing

The ministry will be introducing additional requirements to enhance reporting for library staffing funding to get greater insight into how school boards are using the funding. School boards that are not fully utilizing this funding on library purposes will be asked for a multi-year plan highlighting their vision and next steps to address any underspending in this area.

F. PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION (PLAR) MANDATORY REQUIREMENT

Starting in 2021–22, the ministry is requiring that a newly revised PLAR process be available for all eligible adult learners (mature students). The PLAR process provides recognition of adult learning towards the Ontario Secondary School Diploma, where relevant and appropriate, and helps to minimize duplication of learning required. This enables the student to more quickly earn a high school diploma, expediting their goal to gain employment, improve their employment situation, or participate in further education or training.

The ministry will provide additional details through the release of a revised Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 132: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for Mature Students in the spring of 2021.

G. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Student Transportation

In 2020, the ministry launched a review of student transportation, which aims to achieve a more equitable, efficient, and needs-based student transportation system in Ontario. While the review is underway, the overall Student Transportation Grant will be maintained at the previous year's funding level, with adjustments for enrolment growth.

School Board Administration and Governance and Secondary Class Size Accountability Requirements

As noted in *2020:B08 2020–21 Grants for Student Needs Funding*, the ministry is reviewing accountability requirements for compliance with the school board administration and governance enveloping provision and the secondary provisions of the Class Size Regulation (O. Reg. 132/12). The ministry aims to complete this review for the 2022–23 school year.

Starting in 2022–23, the class size compliance framework will be expanded to include the secondary provisions of Ontario Regulation 132/12 - *Class Size*.

H. ONGOING IMPLEMENTATION AND OTHER CHANGES

Labour Funding

The ministry will adjust salary benchmarks² by one per cent. The ministry will also provide benefits funding that vary by employee group, reflecting central agreements, which include up to one per cent increases for benefits' plan maintenance or improvements and additional inflationary increases. The Supports for Students Fund (SSF) will also continue, and all funds should be used consistent with the central agreement obligations.

Funding also continues to be available through the Teacher Job Protection Fund for classroom teachers, if needed, in relation to the changes to class sizes in 2019–20 and 2020–21.

² Does not include directors of education, senior administration staff, principals or vice-principals

Retirement Gratuities

This is the tenth year of a 12-year phase-out of the retirement gratuities resulting in a reduction in the benefits funding benchmarks. This 0.167 per cent reduction will be applied to the benefits benchmarks in the foundation grants with equivalent adjustments to the benchmarks in the supplemental grants to reflect the reduction in benefits funding.

For school boards that provided one-time payouts of retirement gratuities in 2015–16, funding will continue to be recovered from school boards in 2021–22. This recovery, which began in 2016–17, will be over the estimated average remaining service life of school board employees eligible for retirement gratuities as at August 31, 2012. The funding recovered from school boards will be to the extent that school boards received funding from the ministry and to the extent that school boards reported a one-time gain in the early payout of retirement gratuities in 2015–16.

School Operations Allocation - Supplementary Area Factor

This is the third year of the five-year phase-in of updates to the Supplementary Area Factor for base school facility operations, within the School Facility Operations and Renewal Grant, to reflect a secondary class size of 23.

Additional Educational Software Licensing

The per-pupil amount is being increased to \$0.84 and the minimum amount per school board is being increased to \$50,000 through the top-up allocation. These funds are being given directly to school boards, as the ministry's last term-limited licences for digital learning tools expire, to help support their own choice and purchase of licences. This funding is for digital tools that support learning in and outside of the classroom and is provided through a per-pupil component in the Pupil Foundation Grant, with a top-up allocation within the Geographic Circumstances Grant.

Central Employer Bargaining Agency Fees

The Central Employer Bargaining Agent Fees Allocation is being revised to better reflect the trustees' associations' cost structures since the introduction of the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014* (SBCBA). The 2021–22 GSN reflects funding amounts per district school board which are based on the maximum annual revenue of their respective trustees' association. Starting in 2022–23, the district school boards funding amounts will be adjusted each year based on a number of factors, including changes to the GSN benchmarks and each trustees' association's total annual expenses.

As part of this revision, the Central Employer Bargaining Agency Fees – Supplemental (\$1.2 million) PPF is being transferred and consolidated within the existing Central Employer Bargaining Agency Fees Allocation within the GSN.

Parent Engagement Allocation - Moving to the School Foundation Grant (SFG)

The Parent Engagement Allocation is provided to support the parent engagement activities of a school board's Parent Involvement Committee and school councils. This committee and these school councils support the implementation of a wide range of policies, programs, strategies, and initiatives that involve parents. Moving the Parent Engagement Funding Allocation from

the School Board Administration and Governance Grant (SBAGG) to the SFG will better delineate funding for parent engagement based on local needs since the SFG provides school-based funding for in-school administration and leadership.

Capital Planning Capacity (CPC) Allocation – Moving to the School Facility Operations and Renewal Grant

The CPC program supports school boards in acquiring additional resources to undertake a range of capital planning-related activities. To better reflect the purpose of this allocation, the CPC Allocation is being moved from the SBAGG to the School Facility Operations and Renewal Grant, which addresses the costs of operating school facilities (heating, lighting, maintaining, and cleaning) as well as the costs of repairing and renovating schools.

Asset Management Software Allocation

School boards are provided with this funding to offset the cost of licensing and related fees associated with approved software that supports the implementation of effective renewal programs and tracks school condition over time. An update on this funding will be provided at a later point in time, pending completion of procurement. As such, amounts are not yet allocated on a board-by-board basis.

Non-Instructional Spaces Amount - Moving to the School Facility Operations and Renewal Grant

Funding for the Non-Instructional Spaces Amount is being moved from the SBAGG into the School Operations Allocation of the School Facility Operations and Renewal Grant. This funding is provided to support the operating costs of non-instructional spaces such as teacherages in isolate board school authorities that were merged with and continued as district school boards in 2009. As of the 2021–22 school year, three district school boards continue to maintain such non-instructional spaces as part of their facility inventory which they acquired when they merged with isolate board school authorities. The allocations provided to the three district school boards will be set out in the *Grants for Student Needs – Legislative Grants for the 2021–2022 School Board Fiscal Year* regulation.

Calculation of In-Year Deficit for Balanced Budget Compliance

To reduce school board and ministry administrative burden and simplify the calculation of in-year deficit for different purposes, O. Reg. 488/10 *Determination of Boards' Surpluses and Deficits* will be amended to exempt the following three adjustments from the calculation of in-year deficit for balanced budget compliance purposes:

- The amortization of accumulated surplus set aside to offset the amortization of unfunded employee future benefits
- The amortization of accumulated surplus set aside to offset the amortization expense of committed capital spending funded by school boards' accumulated surplus
- The amortization of accumulated surplus set aside to offset the difference between sinking fund interest earned and the amortization expense of the assets supported by the sinking fund debentures

As a result of the change above, a corresponding change is being made to O. Reg 280/19 *Calculation of Maximum In-Year Deficit* where these three adjustments will no longer be exempted from the calculation of the adjusted in-year deficit.

I. CAPITAL

Details of capital funding programs are provided in a separate memorandum, 2021:B09.

School Renewal

The ministry is committed to supporting healthy and safe learning environments. For the upcoming school year, the ministry will continue to invest approximately \$1.4 billion to maintain and improve the condition of schools. This investment is in addition to almost \$700 million in combined federal-provincial funding provided under the COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program.

J. ISOLATE BOARD SCHOOL AUTHORITIES

As in previous years, funding for isolate board school authorities will be adjusted, as appropriate, to reflect changes in funding to district school boards. As such, funding for isolate board school authorities may include adjustments to some of the items presented in this memorandum. The ministry will provide further information to isolate board school authorities concerning their 2021–22 funding, through an updated Addendum to 2021–22 Technical Paper for Isolate Board School Authorities in the near future.

K. REPORTING

Dates for Submission of Financial Reports

The ministry has established the following dates for submission of financial reports:

Date	Description
June 30, 2021	School Board Estimates for 2021–22
November 15, 2021	School Board Financial Statements for 2020–21
November 19, 2021	School Board Enrolment Projections for 2022–23 to 2025–26
December 15, 2021	School Board Revised Estimates for 2021–22
May 13, 2022	School Board Financial Report for September 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022

Rural and Northern Education Funding (RNEF) – Schools List

By June 30, 2021, school boards must submit to the ministry the list of all the additional schools, approved by board of trustees' motion, to be eligible to spend the RNEF Allocation on these specific schools. Please submit these motions along with the list of these additional schools to EDULABFINANCE@ontario.ca including the school name, School Facilities Inventory System (SFIS) number, Campus ID, Board School Identification number (BSID) and panel (elementary/secondary). **Please include "RNEF" in the subject line of your email.**

L. INFORMATION RESOURCES

If you require further information, please contact:

Subject	Contact	Email
Additional Educational Software Licensing	Jennifer Chan	jennifer.Chan3@ontario.ca
Benefits Trusts Funding, Central Employer Bargaining Agency Fees Allocation, and Retirement Gratuities	Romina Di Pasquale	romina.dipasquale@ontario.ca
Capital Priorities and Project Accountability	Paul Bloye	paul.bloye@ontario.ca
Financial Accountability and Reporting Requirements	Med Ahmadoun	med.ahmadoun@ontario.ca
Indigenous Education	Taunya Paquette	taunya.paquette@ontario.ca
Operating Funding	Paul Duffy	paul.duffy@ontario.ca
Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition & Specialist High Skills Major	Dianne Oliphant	dianne.oliphant@ontario.ca
School Renewal	Andrea Dutton	andrea.dutton@ontario.ca
Special Education / Student Mental Health	Claudine Munroe	claudine.munroe@ontario.ca
Student Transportation	Mehul Mehta	mehul.mehta@ontario.ca

General questions regarding the 2021–22 GSN release can be emailed to:

EDULABFINANCE@ontario.ca

M. OTHER GSN MATERIALS

For further information, please see the 2021–22 Education Funding Technical Paper and GSN Projections for the 2021–22 School Year, which are available on the [Education Funding webpage](#).

N. 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, 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 the ongoing work of school board teams to support students, families and the broader community during this challenging time. The ministry looks forward to working closely with you to facilitate the next school year.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Andrew Davis
Assistant Deputy Minister
Education Labour and Finance Division