

Ministry of Education

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Ministère de l'Éducation

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Memorandum to: Chairs of District School Boards
Directors of Education
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities

From: Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister of Education

Subject: Learning Recovery and Renewal

Over the past two school years, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of education in Ontario and across the globe. School boards, educators, students and their families have demonstrated resiliency and flexibility in responding to changes in their learning environments and we have come a long way in embracing new ways of teaching, learning and connecting.

As we look ahead to the 2021-22 school year, we share a commitment to supporting the health and safety, mental health, well-being and achievement of all students. This includes building on the skills and capacity students and educators have gained, while ensuring that students who experienced learning disruptions are prepared for their future.

To understand the impact of learning disruptions, the ministry has reviewed Ontario data, looked to other jurisdictions and has heard from stakeholders, including school board leaders, teachers, principals, parents, students and community partners.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has affected students differently, there are key themes emerging including the need to focus on student mental health and well-being, supports for early reading and math and the re-engagement of students. These themes make up the foundation of the ministry's plan to support learning recovery and renewal.

The ministry is allocating \$85.5 million to support learning recovery and renewal. This funding includes:

- \$62 million for summer learning (2021: SB04 Federal Safe Return to Class Fund: 2020-21 Spring and Summer Learning Opportunities for School Boards, March 25, 2021);
- \$20 million for re-engaging students and reading assessment supports (2021: B07 Planning for the 2021-22 School Year memo); and
- \$3.5 million for professional learning supports (2021: B10:2021-22 Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) memo).

Funding for learning recovery and renewal is in addition to ministry investments of \$80 million in student mental health supports, over \$40 million in math strategy funding, and over \$3.21 billion in special education funding, as well as additional resources through the \$550.5 million Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) and other allocations within the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) for the 2021-22 school year.

The ministry will also be releasing a new Board Improvement and Equity Plan template to support school boards in setting annual targets for improvement aligned with key priorities. More information will be shared with school boards regarding this new process that will include tracking actions and strategies, and reporting on outcomes. This year's Board Improvement and Equity Plan will include focused actions to support learning recovery and renewal.

Mental Health and Well-Being

Student mental health and well-being is the foundation for learning recovery and renewal.

It is important that school boards continue to implement a tiered approach to mental health that supports well-being for all students, while offering more targeted evidence-based help for those requiring additional support, and working with community partners to provide access to more intensive treatment when this is required.

The ministry is providing school boards with more than \$80 million in dedicated funding to support student mental health in 2021-22. More than \$35 million of this funding can be used to respond to local priorities such as employing more mental health professionals, providing professional learning and training for educators and mental health professionals, collaborating with community mental health providers for students requiring more intensive treatment, student engagement opportunities in the area of mental health, and the collection, analysis and reporting of student mental health related information.

Additional funding has been provided to school boards for students requiring continued access to school-based mental health services over this summer.

The ministry, through its implementation partner School Mental Health Ontario, will continue to provide professional learning opportunities, ongoing coaching support and a suite of evidence-based resources to all publicly funded school boards in the province.

Early Reading

The decline in Kindergarten enrolment and the disruption to learning, particularly for our youngest learners, requires a focus on early reading and math.

School boards were provided with funding for evidence-based reading intervention programs or programs that have been shown to be efficacious in improving student outcomes for struggling readers in 2021: SB04 2020-21 Spring and Summer Learning Opportunities. The Transfer Payment Agreement provided evidence-based guidance on the effective implementation of reading intervention programs to help inform school board spending in this area.

Through learning recovery and renewal, school boards are being provided an additional \$20 million that can be used towards reading assessment supports, as well as re-engaging students (see more information below). This funding can support school board investments in licenses and local programs to identify the learning needs of their early readers. Board-by-board allocations were provided in 2021: B07 Planning for the 2021-22 School Year memo.

To support effective instruction in reading, the ministry will also work with experts to release an educator guide that outlines evidence-based, high-yield classroom strategies to support students in Kindergarten to Grade 3. This guide will be released at the start of the 2021-22 school year.

Math

Last year, the ministry released a new elementary math curriculum. The curriculum provides space for teachers to dive deeper into content and provide support to students who may need extra time with concepts.

To support educators in implementing the new curriculum, the ministry partnered with principal councils and math subject associations to provide resources and webinars for educators throughout the 2020-21 school year. To date, the ministry and key partners have released over 220 classroom-ready resources and hosted over 145 webinars with over 22,000 participants.

Over \$40 million in math strategy funding will also be provided to school boards for the 2021-22 school year. This includes funding for school boards to hire board-based positions to support curriculum implementation, school-based positions to provide training and coaching as well as educator professional learning opportunities.

Tutoring Supports

Elementary and secondary students can access one-on-one online tutoring services through [Mathify](#) (English) and [Eureka!](#) (French). [Mathify](#) covers online math tutoring in English for Grades 6 to 10 and [Eureka!](#) supports all subjects for French-language students in Grades 1 to 12.

The Tutoring Allocation in the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) in the GSN is \$8.4 million for the 2021-22 school year. This allocation supports school boards to provide before- and after-school, weekend, and summer tutoring programs that best meet the needs of their students. The ministry encourages partnerships with existing community-based organizations.

Re-engaging Students

During the pandemic, some students have increasingly disengaged from learning or school for a variety of reasons. School boards are continuing to reach out to students and families to re-engage them in learning.

School boards are in the best position to know their students and local actions to support student re-engagement. School boards are asked to develop their own re-engagement plan supported by the ministry. Through learning recovery and renewal, school boards are being provided \$20 million that can be used towards re-engaging students, as well as reading assessment supports (see more information above).

Customized plans will use board-level data to identify students and meet their unique needs, including Black students, Indigenous students, students from low-income households, and students with disabilities and special education needs who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

For example, school board re-engagement plans could include identified staff to contact individual students and families to encourage them to return to learning, working with Indigenous partners and organizations to develop culturally-relevant activities that bridge community and school-based learning, and/or outreach to community partners to support pathway planning.

Extracurricular activities and sports are an important part of re-engagement and should be reintroduced as health measures allow.

The GSN supports school boards to fund key resources that can support re-engagement such as Student Success Leads, Equity Leads, Indigenous Education Leads, Indigenous and Black Graduation Coaches, and Attendance Support Counsellors. School boards are also encouraged to work with students, parents, and community partners in the development and implementation of their plan.

School boards are asked to designate a re-engagement lead that will be invited to virtual sessions to learn more and discuss their plans before submitting a final plan in September. Virtual meetings will be held in English and French on June 2, 2021 and repeated in English on June 3, 2021. For the English-language session, please register using this [link](#). For the French-language session, please register using this [link](#).

Special Education

Special Education Grant (SEG) funding is projected to increase to over \$3.21 billion for the 2021-22 school year, the highest amount ever provided. This includes the transfers of the \$1.44 million Integrated Services for Northern Children (ISNC) and the \$6.1 million After-School Skills Development (ASSD) programs from Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) into the GSN.

School boards can use this SEG funding to retain additional educational staff, provide professional assessments, purchase resources or evidence-based programs or interventions to support learning for students with special education needs. Additionally, school boards are permitted to use their 2020-21 After School Skills Development Program (ASSDP) funding during summer 2021.

Prior to the start of the school year, school boards will be provided with a Remote Learning Guide for Students with Special Education Needs to support students who continue to learn remotely.

In the fall, the ministry will implement a math pilot on early intervention supports for students with special education needs in Grades 4-6 to support math learning in up to 20 select school boards. School boards will be invited to apply in the spring.

Targeted French-Language Supports

In French-language schools, exposure time to French has been significantly reduced due to learning disruptions. In particular, this has impacted families where French may not be the main or only language used at home. The ministry will provide a digital resource for educators and parents to support the development of French-language skills. This resource will focus on improving literacy and communication skills, which contribute to student achievement in all subjects.

Eureka's Virtual Summer Learning Camp will be offered to students attending French-language schools with a focus on literacy and mathematics learning for Grade 1 to 9 students.

Summer Learning

In Summer 2020, students and families took advantage of additional learning opportunities offered through expanded summer programming across the province.

As communicated on March 25, 2021, the ministry is making available \$62 million for expanded 2021 summer programming. This will focus on core programming, credit recovery, transitioning to de-streamed Grade 9 math, targeted programming for underserved students, Children and Youth in Care, reading and math focussed supports, mental health supports, supports for students with special education needs and support for student pathway programs, such as Dual Credits.

Third party organizations are also receiving funding to support summer learning opportunities, such as literacy and numeracy learning in the Summer Learning Program administered through the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) and summer support programs delivered by Frontier College. In addition, the following third party organizations are being supported to provide STEM programming: Science North, Ontario Science Centre, SHAD Canada, Hackergal, FIRST Robotics Canada, and Actua.

We recognize and appreciate the planning that school boards have already begun for summer programming to provide robust learning and supports for students.

Educator Readiness

The ministry is launching a new \$3.5 million Learning and Innovation Fund for Teachers (LIFT) to support professional learning communities. This funding will enable school boards to support teacher collaboration, learning and sharing of effective practices.

School boards will have the flexibility to allocate this funding according to their local needs and in alignment with provincial priorities. For example, school boards may choose to:

- Initiate an application process for interested teacher teams to apply for funding
- Identify specific schools or school teams with innovative practices they wish to support
- Create new or augment existing professional learning designs for teachers

Funding amounts are tiered based on school board enrollment. Board by board allocations can be found in the Priorities and Partnership Funding memo. The ministry will provide a transfer payment agreement and funds will be available for implementation during the 2021-22 school year.

Please forward this [LIFT Contact Form](#) to your identified school board lead to complete. We will use this information to provide further communication and support materials. Any questions about the program can be directed to LIFT-AILEE@ontario.ca.

Learning recovery and renewal intervention strategies are included as part of the topics for three mandatory Professional Activity (PA) days for the 2021-22 school year. Other topics to be addressed as part of the three mandatory PA days include:

- Health and safety protocols, mental health and well-being;
- Mathematics, including the elementary math curriculum and Grade 9 de-streamed math course;
- Anti-racism, anti-discrimination training;
- Instructional approaches to online/remote learning; and
- Anti-sex trafficking and anti-bullying, including cyber-bullying.

All professional learning will consider and incorporate the implications for teaching students with special education needs.

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 151 will be updated to reflect the ministry's direction on PA days for the 2021-22 school year.

Materials to support the implementation of these PA days will be made available in the ministry's Virtual Learning Environment, should this be helpful to school boards.

Learning disruption is difficult to measure and impacts students differently. As we learn more about the impact of the pandemic on student learning we will continue to add to our learning recovery and renewal strategies.

Thank you for your collaboration and support of learning recovery and renewal for students across Ontario.

Sincerely,

Hon. Stephen Lecce
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