

February 17, 2022

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

Subject: **Learning Recovery Action Plan**

Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of education in Ontario and across the globe. Throughout this period our collective focus has been on delivering the best educational experience while protecting schools against the spread of COVID-19. Despite these efforts, we know the pandemic has had far reaching impacts on the learning development and mental health of students, staff, and families across the province.

Now is the time that we must look to the future to ensure our students have the supports they need to get back on track. That is why as we look to the 2022-23 school year, we have launched a **5-point action plan for learning recovery**. The plan leverages and expands upon proven, high-yield programs and supports, and introduces new investments to address critical gaps. Our full plan to support learning recovery and modernize education is outlined as follows:

1. **Measure and assess** by reintroducing provincial EQAO assessments after a two-year pause to better understand student learning levels and additional opportunities for support going forward;
2. **Strengthen numeracy and literacy skills** by investing \$15 million in summer learning with expanded opportunities for targeted student populations, providing over \$11 million in funding to support de-streaming and investing \$25 million in reading intervention programs and professional assessments;
3. **Focus on student resilience and mental well-being** by stabilizing \$80 million of historic mental health funding made last year, providing an additional \$10 million for enhanced supports, and committing to consult, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, to leverage the best available evidence on emerging student mental health needs to support resilience and mental well-being, in alignment with [Ontario's Roadmap to Wellness](#) and within the continuum of mental health care;

4. **Deliver comprehensive tutoring supports** through school boards, including in partnership with local community organizations, and the expansion of online tutoring through Mathify and Eurêka! supported by a major investment of \$176 million; and
5. **Modernize education** to better prepare students for job and life skills by investing over \$8 million in the 2022-23 school year.

This plan builds upon the decisive action to protect students and historic investments to address learning disruption and support student resilience and mental well-being.

Last year, the Ministry of Education allocated \$85.5 million to support learning recovery and renewal, including \$62 million for summer learning, \$20 million for re-engagement and reading assessment supports, and \$3.5 million for professional learning supports. This was on top of significant investments in the Grants for Student Needs (GSN). More than 500,000 students have taken advantage of expanded summer learning opportunities over the last two years. Summer learning enrolments increased by 18% in 2020 over the previous year, with an additional increase of 37% in 2021.

This year, the education sector will be supported by additional historic investments with over \$500 million in Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF), as outlined in memorandum *2022:B05 2022-23 Priorities and Partnerships Funding*, and a 2.7% increase in the GSN, bringing the 2022-23 total GSN investment to \$26.1 billion, as outlined in memorandum *2022:B03 Grants for Student Needs Funding*.

The plan includes over \$176 million for tutoring supports in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years - the single largest investment in tutoring. This funding will enable school boards to offer tutoring in small groups during the school day, before-and-after school, on weekends, and in the summer – including in partnership with local community organizations, to deliver targeted, culturally appropriate programming for students where and when they need it. The Ministry of Education is also supporting the expansion of online tutoring through Mathify and Eurêka! so more students can access these services.

In addition to these investments, the ministry is providing \$304 million through the GSN for temporary additional staffing supports to continue to hire teachers, early childhood educators, educational assistants and other education workers to address learning recovery, the implementation of the first year of a fully de-streamed Grade 9, the delivery of remote learning, supports for special education, and maintaining enhanced cleaning standards. See memorandum *2022:B03 Grants for Student Needs Funding* for more details.

The balance of the plan focuses on reading and math skills, student resilience and mental well-being, and our continued efforts to modernize education and provide diverse pathways to better connect school to job and life skills.

Taken together, these investments will help to recover, renew and build up the education system for the future, and support programs with the greatest impact in the classroom and on students – including students who need our support the most.

Additional details on the learning recovery plan are provided below.

1. Measure and Assess

EQAO provincial assessments are being re-introduced this year following a two-year pause to support a greater understanding of student needs and where additional focus may be needed going forward. These assessments will include gaining an understanding of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning in various regions and populations.

Used along with information on student outcomes such as credit accumulation and graduation rates, EQAO assessment results provide a more comprehensive picture of Ontario's education system's outcomes for students.

EQAO results will be available for the start of the 2022-23 school year, which will establish a baseline for system performance. Following this, the ministry will engage the K-12 sector, pedagogical experts and at-risk communities to identify where additional supports may be needed and establish targets for improvement.

2. Strengthen Numeracy and Literacy Skills

Numeracy and literacy are vital academic and life skills that all students need to succeed in the labour market and thrive during and after their education experience. To further support learning recovery, the government is investing in foundational learning supports in reading and math.

The ministry is investing \$25 million in evidence-based reading programs and professional assessments to support learning recovery.

The ministry will continue to make available summer learning opportunities, including credit, upgrading and non-credit courses funded through the GSN, and by investing \$15 million, including \$10 million for expanded opportunities for targeted student populations, including students with special education needs and summer programming in Provincial and Demonstration Schools.

The ministry will also continue to extend access to school board summer learning programming in 2022 and 2023 for First Nations students living on reserve. Subject to Lieutenant Governor in Council (LGIC) approval, school boards shall not charge fees for First Nations students enrolled in school board summer learning programming, including:

- First Nations students who are already students of the school board via the Reciprocal Education Approach (REA) or/and an Education Services Agreement (ESA);
- First Nations students who will be registering with the school board in September 2022, including students over the age of 21; and
- First Nations students who may be living on reserve and are enrolled in First Nation/federally-operated schools, including students over the age of 21.

For more information regarding funding and reporting requirements for First Nations students accessing school board summer learning programming, school boards should reach out to IEO@Ontario.ca.

Funding will continue to be available for summer learning programming focused on literacy and numeracy that are administered by third parties such as the Council of Ontario Directors of Education and Frontier College.

The ministry will provide a digital resource for Kindergarten to Grade 1 students to support the development of oral French-language skills. It is accessible to teachers, students and parents. Educators can also access a newly created resource focused on the development of phonological awareness of intermediate and junior level students whose first language is not French. Eurêka!'s virtual summer program will also be available for French-language students.

In addition to staff funding available in the GSN, the ministry will be supporting the implementation of a fully de-streamed Grade 9 by investing \$3 million in PPF for school boards to offer transition supports for students and over \$8 million in PPF to support early interventions for students with special education needs to help prepare them for a de-streamed curriculum.

School boards will also receive funding for the fourth year of the \$200 million four-year Math Strategy. This will allow school boards to hire board- and school-based positions and to provide opportunities for educators to participate in professional learning. Board-based leads will support the implementation of math curriculum, including the elementary curriculum and the de-streamed Grade 9 math course. School-based facilitators provide coaching to teachers in schools demonstrating the greatest need.

3. Focus on student resilience and mental well-being

Prioritizing student mental health is essential to support learning recovery. A focus on resilience and mental well-being underpins all elements of the ministry's learning recovery plan and is critical to enabling students to get back on track and succeed.

In order to support student resilience and mental well-being, the ministry is stabilizing and strengthening historic funding made last year by securing this funding in the 2022-23 GSN and providing an additional \$10 million in GSN funding for mental health programs and resources, for a total investment of \$90 million. In addition, funding for School Mental Health Ontario will continue in order to provide implementation support to

all 72 district school boards. See memorandum *2022:B03 2022-23 Grants for Student Needs Funding* for more details.

The mental health components of the learning recovery plan may include:

- Mandatory professional learning for educators on mental health;
- Working with the Ministry of Health to consult with stakeholders to leverage the best available evidence on emerging student mental health needs and the potential of a graduation requirement on resilience and mental well-being; and
- Continuing to support student resilience and well-being through:
 - mentally healthy classrooms and learning environments
 - effective and responsive school mental health supports
 - connections to the broader provincial system of mental health care.

4. Deliver Comprehensive Tutoring Supports

Research indicates that investments in tutoring programs can be successful in supporting learning recovery for students. Research also shows that not addressing learning needs immediately can result in greater learning gaps in math and literacy over time.

That is why Ontario is making a major investment of over \$176 million in expanded tutoring supports. This includes \$175 million to school boards to provide tutoring for the remainder of the 2021-22 school year, and in the 2022-23 school year ahead.

School boards are encouraged to implement tutoring programs immediately and all programs will be in place by April 1, 2022 with the following parameters:

- Average group size of 5 students with smaller average groups for students who would benefit from more attention based on student need;
- Options to access tutoring at a variety of times to meet student need including during the school day, before-and-after school, on weekends and in the summer;
- Prioritization of math and literacy skills and other foundational learning skills; and
- May be delivered with local community partners and third parties that support learning in a trusted environment grounded in the language, culture and community norms for students.

Delivery models should emphasize in-person and school-based programs that address student needs at each school board. For example, models can include withdrawal from a class during the school day; a tutor can be present in the classroom, with the teacher present, to work with a sub-group of students; or drop-in programs may be available to students.

Further information on parameters for tutoring programs can be found in memorandum *2022:B05 2022-23 Priorities and Partnerships Funding* and will be provided through 2021-22 and 2022-23 PPF transfer payment agreements with school boards.

Further, Ontario is investing \$1.4 million per year in the expansion of year-round online tutoring supports in mathematics and reading. This includes scaling up [Mathify](#) online 1:1 tutoring services to immediately provide math tutoring for more weekend hours with plans to expand across grades starting with Grades 4-5. Investments will also expand [Eurêka!](#) online tutoring services to reach more students in French for Grades 1 and 2 and math for Grades 7-9 and 11-12.

5. Modernize Education

Building on our efforts to help students get back on track, the ministry is also looking to the future—by supporting all students to unlock their full potential in a rapidly changing world and develop the skills they need to succeed in any pathway they choose.

In order to modernize education to better prepare students with the job and life skills they need to be successful, Ontario is investing over \$8 million in the 2022-23 school year to:

- Revise curriculum that is aligned with labour demand with emphasis on job and life skills;
- Launch entrepreneurship education pilot programs requiring partnership between school boards and third-party organizations to help students develop these important skills;
- Pilot experiential learning programs that support students to gain important job and life skills outside of the classroom.
- Expand access to Dual Credit programs, including for Indigenous students; and
- Respond to [Apprenticeship Youth Advisors recommendations](#) by developing online modules on skills students need to succeed in the skilled trades and funding experiential learning for guidance counsellors to help students navigate skilled trades pathways.

The ministry will continue to engage with stakeholders and partners on other modernization initiatives, as well as exploring ways to increase First Nation, Métis and Inuit educators in the publicly-funded education system, including alternative entry pathways for Indigenous language teachers.

Professional Development

Finally, we know the success of our Learning Recovery Action Plan will require the continued commitment, dedication and support of school boards and educators. The ministry is stabilizing the Teacher Learning and Innovation Allocation through the 2022-23 GSN (see memorandum *2022:B03 2022-23 Grants for Student Needs Funding*) to further demonstrate the ministry's commitment to teacher growth and development. This \$3.5 million funding allocation will continue to enable school boards to support teacher collaboration, responsive learning and the sharing of effective practices within schools and school boards across the province. While school boards use this fund in accordance with local needs, we recognize the importance of teachers working together to better understand the learning recovery needs of their students and identify strategies

that would work best to meet the needs, and as such encourage the use of this fund for such collaborative efforts.

In further recognition of learning recovery and the ongoing work needed to support our students, it has been included as one of the priority areas for the three mandatory Professional Activity (PA) days for the 2022-23 school year as communicated in the memo released on Tuesday, February 8, 2022. An updated Policy/Program Memorandum No. 151 to reflect the ministry's direction on PA days for the 2022-23 school year will follow shortly.

We know this has been an unprecedented time for education in Ontario and around the globe, and we are committed to working together to give our students the support they need to thrive. Thank you for your collaboration and support of learning recovery and modernization for students across Ontario.

Sincerely,

Stephen Lecce
Minister

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

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