

***As schools transition from the COVID-19 school experience, how does your party plan to address the heightened realities of mental health and well-being, student re-engagement, learning recovery and issues of equity, diversity, inclusion and human rights to ensure student readiness to learn the skills, attitudes, values and knowledge necessary in today's complex global context?***

First and foremost, an NDP government will support students by ensuring there are more caring adults in our province's publicly funded schools. We will hire more mental health workers and child and youth workers. We will create a new position at the school board level to assess and improve the delivery of mental health care in our schools.

An NDP government will cap kindergarten class sizes at 26 and maintain the Teacher-ECE team, cap grades 4-8 classes at 24, and lower high school class sizes so that students can receive more attention from teachers. New Democrats will review and repair the education funding formula to ensure funding meets the needs of Ontario's students today, and into the future. And we will increase special education funding.

An NDP government will end EQAO testing and work collaboratively with educators to determine how random sampling could help spot early trends and determine where should focus on improvement.

We will guarantee that schools are as safe a learning environment as possible by ensuring that all schools have up-to-date ventilation systems to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

***Boards continue to stress the need for local flexibility in order to balance their operating budgets and meet unique local cost pressures and needs. Will your party consider re-establishing the Local Priorities Grant to allow specific local board initiatives, meet funding challenges and support the achievement and well-being of all students?***

Yes, New Democrats would consider re-establishing the Local Priorities Grant to better support school boards.

***Knowing and acknowledging that many First Nations students already face significant gaps in learning outcomes and achievement, often two to three year gaps by comparison to their non-Indigenous public school counterparts, and knowing the impact the pandemic has had on remote learning for students, what would your party propose to do to mitigate learning loss specific to the unique challenges and needs face by many First Nation students across many Indigenous communities in the province particularly those in remote areas?***

An NDP government will ensure that targeted supports are provided where they are needed most. We will overhaul the existing education funding formula with a comprehensive review to be completed within one year. A new funding formula will ensure that students are equitably supported, and learning gaps are closed.

Following the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we will work with Indigenous leaders and educators to ensure that Ontario's school curricula appropriately reflect Indigenous experiences and histories, and we will boost funding for Indigenous language education. An NDP government will also promote links between Indigenous people, First Nations, and school boards.

We are committed to doubling the Rural and Northern Education Fund to support northern schools and the communities they serve. New Democrats will also prioritize and protect in-person learning for the educational, social, and mental health needs of students, and will end hybrid learning models that leave students without the direct attention they deserve.

***What concrete actions will your party take to promote and facilitate the elimination of systemic racism and oppression within the policy, practices and structures in our public education system?***

An NDP government has a plan to eliminate racism and discrimination in our schools and education settings. We will amend the Education Act to define racism and set out clear procedures for reporting. We will build on work being done by school boards to standardize policies to promote racial equity and share best practices around racial equity training for education workers, procedures for reporting incidents of racism, and resources for students who experience racism.

New Democrats will continue the long-overdue work of ending streaming in Ontario so that no student is put at a disadvantage due to systemic racism, and every student has the opportunity to succeed. We will work with Indigenous leaders and educators to ensure that Ontario's school curricula appropriately reflect Indigenous experiences and histories. We will ensure students learn the history of the Holocaust, to prevent antisemitism, hatred, and the insidious spread of Holocaust denial.

***How would your party work towards maintaining labour peace in our school system?***

New Democrats are committed to a new relationship with teachers and education workers, one built on a foundation of respect and a shared commitment to a stronger public education system. We'll invite all sector stakeholders to a new education partnership table as we work to overhaul the funding formula to reflect the needs of students today.

We'll bargain in good faith, and support school boards to negotiate agreements that create working and learning conditions that will help our next generation succeed.

***Is your party committed to working together with public school boards and do you support the current form of school board governance?***

New Democrats recognize the importance of democratically elected school trustees and are committed to working with public school boards to achieve the best outcomes possible for students. An NDP government will work with boards to promote school board elections, support recruitment of candidates that reflect the communities they serve and restore support for trustees to do their important work. We will support more Indigenous representation on school boards by encouraging the recruitment of Indigenous school board trustees to ensure that Indigenous people are represented in school decision making.

We recognize that boards and schools have been through a very challenging few years, often being forced to change plans significantly on a moments' notice. New Democrats will provide advance notice of government decisions, so that boards and schools have time to adjust, and engage in meaningful consultations through a partnership table, with representation from workers' unions, school board trustees, principals, and other education stakeholders, working together to strengthen public education for the long term.

An NDP government will support school boards by funding schools properly, which will alleviate pressure on boards, education workers, and students.

***Are there any other specific education-related platform pieces you would like to highlight?***

New Democrats are committed to clearing the \$16.8 billion school repair backlog within ten years. We will hire more custodians and maintenance staff and establish a province-wide standard for cleaning and school repairs. As part of our Green New Democratic Deal, we will work to upgrade all public school buildings to make them carbon neutral and climate resilient, ensuring they meet both current and future needs. We'll apply those same principles to new school buildings, ensuring they meet international energy efficiency standards.

We will implement the recommendations of the Working Group on Teacher Shortages in the French-Language School System; respecting the constitutional right of French school boards to control their own learning; and ensuring that students province-wide are able to access French-language education.