

Education Funding



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

Mental Health Supports | Special Education | Student Transportation

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

In the aftermath of the pandemic, students across Ontario are facing growing mental health challenges. We must ensure we have proper pathways in place to ensure students are receiving the appropriate level of treatment in the appropriate setting.

According to School Mental Health Ontario, an estimated one in five children and youth in Ontario have a Mental Health challenge. There is a need to maintain the additional mental health supports that exist in our schools and provide additional investments in community mental health and addictions services that will yield long-term benefits for the health care system and the wellness of students and future generations.

Demand for Special Education supports and resources has increased, and it continues to be an area that is underfunded given the prevalence and complexity of student needs. This is even more significant where community services and supports are not readily available or easily accessible.

For a number of years, school boards have faced challenges recruiting and retaining school bus drivers. The provision of Student Transportation requires a coordinated effort often involving partners including other school boards, different school bus operators, separate consortia, and in many instances, school boards working with their municipalities' local public transit.

School boards require strong, predictable, and equitable education funding that keeps pace with rising costs and demands in order to set the conditions that promote and sustain improved student achievement and well-being.

Children and Youth Mental Health, Special Education, and Student Transportation continue to be among the top funding issues for school boards.

OPSBA RECOMMENDS

- A continued increase in the number of community-based mental health professionals (social workers, psychologists, guidance counsellors, child and youth workers, and school mental health workers) to address the significant increase in the number and severity of students requiring support. The Grade 7/8 mental health modules should also be expanded to include a K-12 comprehensive strategy.
- A comprehensive review of the delivery of special education to fully understand the issue of assessment wait times, gaps in services, and access to professional staff across the province in order to provide timely and relevant supports to students and their families.
- The Ministry of Education implement an updated framework that uses a needs-based approach and benchmarks that reflect the true costs of providing student transportation, including the recognition of inflationary increases.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What can be done to expand the mental health resources and supports to children and youth?

How can school boards partner with other levels of government and community organizations?

Why are we seeing challenges in bus driver recruitment and retention, and what makes these challenges unique compared to other sectors?

