

Received November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Notes made by Deaf/Hard of Hearing teacher (Leigh Rossi)

RE: renovations made to Queensdale for Deaf/Hard of Hearing program

System school...can it be deemed this because of the Deaf Hard of Hearing special acoustic provision that have been put in place.

Proper Enunciation Alarms with flashing lights in classrooms where Deaf / Hard of Hearing students attend in addition to the hallways and gym.

Electrical outlets within the special class are surge protected and increased in number compared to other classrooms due to the volume of FM systems that require daily charging.

Air-conditioning within the building as Educational Audiologist recommended for noise reduction that windows need to be closed and to control the humidity levels as this will affect optimal performance of the FM systems.

Classroom is fully carpeted in addition to divider panels were installed to aid in the reduction of sound reverberation.

Curtains are double lined to assist with sound reverberation and for light absorption.

Classroom is currently located away from main traffic areas to reduce hallway interruption.

Washrooms are located in many of the classrooms within the hallway of the Deaf / Hard of Hearing special class which also reduces the traffic and sound of children moving about.

Classroom has a button lock system on the inside door that is keyed solely to a security key for only the classroom staff to carry for protection of the costly board owned equipment.

The school is one floor, accessible, centrally located to accommodate students being bussed in from other locations within the board.

Smartboard is mobile and at eye level that accommodates the multi-aged children with additional special needs.



## **Educational Audiology Consult**

**Date of Consult:** November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
**School:** GL Armstrong Public School  
**Audiologist:** Kim Schmidt

### **Reason for Consult:**

Conduct an acoustical evaluation of the classrooms where students from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program are instructed. Provide possible suggestions for improving the classroom acoustics.

### **Acoustic Evaluation/Suggestions:**

Classroom acoustics are of vital concern to teachers of all students but are of particular concern to teachers of students with hearing loss. Children with normal hearing experience a reduction in their ability to hear and understand speech in rooms where background noise levels and reverberation (echo) are high; children with hearing loss experience greater difficulty comprehending speech under such conditions. This is due to device limitations and the susceptibility to noise characteristic of a sensorineural loss. An evaluation of the acoustical conditions in select classrooms within the school was conducted.

### **Main Instructional Classroom -**

The following noise reduction strategies were noted and contribute favorably to reducing noise and reverberation (echo) generated within the classroom:

- Closed classroom setting
- Location of the classroom on the third floor thus avoiding the sound of scraping chairs from classrooms above
- Placement of Hushups on the legs of chairs on uncarpeted areas
- Close windows during instructional periods
- Close the classroom door during instructional periods

The following features contributed negatively to the acoustics within the classroom setting:

- High ceiling
- Ceiling is comprised of cement block (no acoustic tile)
- Hardwood floors are uncarpeted
- Windows back onto a busy road that is in proximity to a hospital; traffic noise, including ambulance activity is audible, even with the windows shut
- No draperies on the windows
- Wall surfaces are hard and reflective, contributing to reverberation (echo) of sound
- Despite the third floor location (no classroom above), sound from scraping chairs and movement across the floors is audible from adjacent classrooms; a third floor location may also pose an access issue for any students with multiple exceptionalities (hearing loss and mobility issues)
- Noise produced by the heating and ventilation system

Sound level recordings were made at several locations in the classroom. Measurements were conducted when the classroom was unoccupied. Ambient noise in unoccupied classrooms should not exceed 35 dBA but are typically measured at 5 to 7 dBA higher. Readings were obtained at 42 to 50 dBA. Noise from the heating/ventilation system, traffic noise and noise from adjacent classrooms contributed to these values.

Measurements were taken during an instructional block with several students in the classroom. Noise level readings were obtained at 50 to 55 dBA. The reduction in sound quality due to reverberation of sound is an added component. The teacher's voice level is typically 60 dBA depending on student position. This suggests that the teacher's voice can range from being 5 dB to 10 dB louder than the noise, depending on student position. Children with normal hearing require the teacher's voice to be 15 dB louder than the background noise in order to comprehend speech optimally. The students within this program are at a greater disadvantage because of their hearing loss.

Improving the acoustics (reducing noise and "echo" or reverberation) in this classroom setting will be of significant benefit to the students. The following strategies are suggested:

#### Ceilings

- Ceilings should incorporate suspended acoustic tile and should be limited to 9 to 12 feet in height

#### Floors

- Install wall to wall carpeting with underpadding on the floor
- Regular carpet maintenance to enhance indoor air quality and diminish allergic effects
- Placement of Hushups on the legs of chairs on any uncarpeted areas

#### Windows

- Installation of cloth draperies
- Close windows during instructional periods

#### Walls and Doors

- Use of wall treatments such as cork boards and student constructed projects from carpeting, flannel, cloth, or paper ("creatively" improve acoustics by absorbing sound)
- Functional classroom furniture such as mobile bulletin boards, bookshelves, cabinets, clothing racks, padded tablecloths on large tables, and room dividers (all alter the reflective qualities of smooth wall surfaces and decrease "echo")
- Doors leading into the classroom must fit the door frame snugly and the door frame should be lined with felt and rubber to ensure a tight seal
- Close the classroom door during instructional periods

#### Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Systems

- Carefully select and maintain the heating and air conditioning system; noise control devices for existing systems may be necessary

Consideration should be given to improving the acoustics in alternate classroom settings (rotary) where students with hearing loss are instructed.

If consideration is given to an alternate school placement for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program, I would be happy to provide an assessment of the proposed settings.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kim Schmidt".

Kim Schmidt, M.Cl.Sc., Reg. CASLPO  
Educational Audiologist

Received November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Dear Mr. Simmons,

It has come to my attention through a conversation with my ARC representative that the HWDSB Central Mountain ARC is requesting accommodation review options from the public.

As a member of the public, I would very much like to provide the HWDSB with a Central Mountain elementary school accommodation option.

However, there has been no official correspondence from the HWDSB requesting accommodation review options from the public.

Further, it has come to my attention that several accommodation review options submitted by other communities were rejected at the last Central Mountain ARC working meeting, as they were deemed by representatives of the HWDSB to lack sufficient information, specifically regarding recommendation options for all eight schools under consideration.

To ensure a fair and reasonable submission and review process, I would suggest the following:

1. The HWDSB immediately make a reasonable effort to notify the public of requests for Central Mountain elementary school accommodation options. At a minimum, such efforts normally include direct mailings or mail drops to all effected residents, and advertising in local newspapers for 1 to 2 weeks.
2. The HWDSB immediately publish detailed guidelines for the submission of accommodation review options. The guidelines would include submission forms, details of the specific information required, details on how additional information can be obtained and complete examples of accommodation review options that have been previously submitted and reviewed.
3. The HWDSB provide the public with an official method to request and obtain information pertaining to the development of accommodation review options. Requests for information from the public to the HWDSB and information provided should also be officially tracked and recorded. To date, none of the information repeatedly requested by the public, such as the detailed school inspection reports, has been provided. Due to noncooperation from the HWDSB, we have resorted to filing freedom of information requests. As, I am sure you are aware, forcing the public to obtain information through freedom of information requests is not reasonable or timely.
4. The HWDSB provide the public with a reasonable time frame to obtain information, prepare options and make a submission to the HWDSB. I suggest a schedule of 4 to 6 weeks for the public to gather requisite information (once suitable guidelines and reasonable information distribution channels have been implemented by the HWDSB) and an additional 2 to 4 weeks for the public to prepare and submit an accommodation review report.

Please provide me with an specific response to action points 1 to 4 listed above.

Thank you for your time,  
John-Paul Danko, P. Eng.

Received November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Dear Sir or Madam

My name is Lynda Maguire and I am writing on behalf of our community and my grandsons. It has come to my attention that you may be closing Franklin Road School.

I have two grandsons attending this school. They have been very happy at their school and are quite content with all of teachers with whom they have classes. They also see how the staff interact with each other regarding the students, and how well they communicate with the parents and or grandparents.

Needless to say the location is right, not only for the school, but for the playground that is attached. Along with other children in our community, my grandsons spend many hours playing there after school and on weekends with family or friends.

Our school is operating with a seventy seven percent capacity rate which tells me we still have a great need for Franklin Road School to remain open in our community.

At some area schools they are operating and a much lower rate and still remain open, this I don't understand.

I hope you will reconsider keeping Franklin Road school open for many more years to come.

Sincerely

Lynda Maguire

Received November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013 from Nick Morra

Elementary schools that are local and a short walk for young children are being traded for large schools that are distant. More major intersections will have to be crossed at rush hour. More children will be bussed to the giant school. Some of the schools slated for closure have had recent multi-million dollar renovations and are in top shape. Yet a NEW elementary school is proposed near Pauline Johnson? This is strange because a few simple options like changing catchment boundaries can rebalance the school pupil population. Ratepayers will be alarmed that school monies are spent in such an extravagant manner.

I am addressing this email to:

John Malloy - Director of the HWDSB  
Liz Sandals - Minister of Education  
Kathleen Wynne - Premier of Ontario

I am a parent on the Central Mountain of Hamilton whose school is currently part of the ARC process. We have had 2 of the 4 "public meetings".

The first public meeting was long, poorly organized and primarily consisted of a long presentation from the board filled with lots of numbers to support the need for school closures, much of this data was questionable and there were several inaccuracies pointed out through the course of the meeting. This was followed by a "round table discussion" where we finally felt we had a chance to express our concerns and ask some questions. We were told that the summaries of the round tables would be compiled into minutes which would be available on the website as would answers and responses to our questions. After the round table there was a lengthily review from each round table "facilitator" about what was said at the tables. There was then a very brief time frame where a couple of people present could add additional concerns or opinions.

I left that meeting thinking there was a good consensus from the table groups on the concerns. I checked the website in vain over the next two weeks for answers to our questions and the "minutes" I expected would be available to all of Trustee's, noticeably absent from the public meetings. When the summaries were finally posted they were so disorganized, poorly formatted and laid out that even I did not have the patience to shift through them to check the message. I hoped that the second public meeting would start with answers to our questions.

The second meeting was this past Tuesday and I was bitterly disappointed.

There was no attempt to answer the questions from the first meeting. The "Key Themes" that were listed as being based on the first meeting round table discussions were not a fair summary of the meeting I attended.

The plan for the second meeting was to sit through a slightly condensed version of presentation we had already seen. Then we were going to have time to review the "school profiles" that had been drawn up, profiles that were based on the previously mentioned flawed data. All of this to be followed by yet another round table discussion where we would be able to comment on the "key themes" as presented.

When were our questions going to be addressed? Never. I do not think they ever will be.

A member of the audience took over the microphone at one point and tried to address this very point. He stated that we were being bullied and deceived. I believe his statement to be accurate.

I believe the ARC process was designed to make the community and parents think they have a voice when they do not.

I believe the ARC process was designed to pit one school against another.

I believe the ARC process hides a school board agenda that disregards facts, the opinions of the community and the well being of the students.

I have lost faith in the HWDSB, the trustees who were elected to represent us and the Ministry of Education that allows this process to continue independent of provincial oversight. After what I have seen in the first two public meetings I have come to the following conclusions:

This board is not trying to "save" schools it is trying to close them.

This board is not concerned about "All students achieving their full potential".

This board has made choices and decisions about programs, the roll out of full day kindergarden and hard catchment boundaries that have influenced individual school enrolment to support their own agenda.

This board does not want to listen to the parents, student or communities.

This board is not telling us the truth.

I do not believe I am alone in my feelings. Through even a limited amount of research online I found communities all over the province that have or are currently going through this process and feeling just as disillusioned by the results. When will the overwhelming dissatisfaction with the ARC process be notice by the officials and the government we have elected to represent us? It is time for someone to step in and question this sham of a process. I was alarmed when I discovered that the Ministry of Education has no power to overturn a decision made through the ARC process

even if an independent review determines that the procedures were not followed. It would appear that no one wants to be held responsible and that too much power has been put in a group of people with no real accountability and limited stake in the decisions being made. Eleven trustees will make the final decision on the closure of schools in my ward, Eleven people who are never required to attend a public meeting, speak to a student or even visit the schools they are voting to close. Eleven people who are free to completely disregard the recommendations of the Committee who is supposed to be the voice of the people. How can this be the way a decision is made to close a school and change the lives of an entire neighborhood?

Stefanie Sheils  
Concerned Parent and Voter  
Hamilton Ontario

November 12, 2013

Elementary Accommodation Review Committees:

Central Mountain, Michael Prendergast, Chair

East Hamilton, Peter Joshua and Peter Sovran, Co-Chairs

West Flamborough, Mag Gardner, Chair

West Glanbrook, Sue Dunlop, Chair

Dear Elementary Accommodation Review Committee Members;

On November 11, 2013, our Board of Trustees reviewed communications received from Mr. Sékaly, Assistant Deputy Minister in regards to School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Consultations.

By way of resolution, the Board of Trustees asked that this letter and guide be provided to each Elementary Accommodation Review Committee for your information.

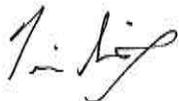
**RESOLUTION #13-127:** Trustee Turkstra, seconded by Trustee Hicks, moved: **That the letter from Gabriel F. Sekaly, Assistant Deputy Minister - October 25, 2013 be referred to staff and the Accommodation and Review Committees (ARCs) and that this letter be posted on HWDSB website.**

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

It is our hope that members of the Elementary ARC will have a further understanding of why Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is currently going through the accommodation process and help others in the community to understand that the current situation of declining enrolment (which also affects funding for schools) is not just a local issue in Hamilton, but a provincial issue as well.

Thank you for taking the time to review this document as part of an upcoming agenda item. The document is also being posted to the website at [www.hwdsb.on.ca](http://www.hwdsb.on.ca) so that members of the community may also have access to this information.

Sincerely,



Tim Simmons  
Chair of the Board

Enclosure: School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Consultations

**Ministry of Education**

Office of the ADM

Business & Finance Division  
20th Floor, Mowat Block  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1L2**Ministère de l'Éducation**

Bureau du sous-ministre adjoint

Division des opérations et des finances  
20e étage, édifice Mowat  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1L2**Memorandum To:**Directors of Education  
Board Chairs  
Education Partners and Stakeholders**From:**Gabriel F. Sékaly  
Assistant Deputy Minister**Date:**

October 25, 2013

**Subject:****School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Consultations**

On September 20, 2013, Minister Sandals wrote to you on the steps that we are taking in developing the school board efficiencies and modernization strategy. I am writing today to advise you that we are now ready to begin formal consultations on the strategy with stakeholder groups. These consultation sessions will begin the week of November 18th in Toronto. Members of my staff will be contacting the various association offices with details on timing, location, and attendance at these sessions.

To help the process along, we have prepared a consultation document for stakeholders. This guide is attached. As you can see, the list of topics and questions covered in the document is by no means exhaustive, but we hope that this short guide will contribute to focusing the discussions. We encourage you to comment on the topics in the guide. We would also welcome any other ideas and suggestions that you might have. Feel free to provide your comments directly to Joshua Paul, Director of the Education Finance Branch, at [joshua.paul@ontario.ca](mailto:joshua.paul@ontario.ca), or to us through your respective association.

While we are always interested in discussing school board efficiencies and funding issues, we are hoping to conclude this year's consultation process by the end of November, 2013.

*Original signed by*

Gabriel F. Sékaly  
Assistant Deputy Minister

c: The Honourable Liz Sandals  
Minister of Education

George Zegarac  
Deputy Minister

Enclosure:

School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Consultations

*School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Consultations  
Memorandum from Gabriel F. Sékaly*

*Page 1 of 1  
October 25, 2013*

**SCHOOL BOARD  
EFFICIENCIES AND  
MODERNIZATION  
CONSULTATIONS**

Over the past ten years, Ontario has become a global leader in education and a highly successful model for other jurisdictions. These accomplishments reflect the hard work, dedication, and collaboration of those in our education community. We have been successful together and intend to continue to work as partners through a collaborative process as we develop a School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Strategy.

Continuous improvement is a necessary practice for any organization, including government. Our government is looking for new ways to deliver key priorities within current fiscal realities. This means we need to evaluate underlying funding assumptions to find new and creative approaches to modernize and transform the way we deliver education and the way funds are used at the ministry, board, school, and class level.

This booklet is intended to guide consultations with you, our partners in the publicly funded education system, who are critical to achieving this goal. And, while this booklet sets out topics to help guide the discussion, I would expressly stress that the reason for bringing us together is to hear your ideas on how we can continue to improve the delivery of education in Ontario. I look forward to starting this important conversation.



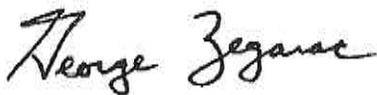
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School board modernization presents an important opportunity to transform the way funding is allocated and used at the board and school level, so that activities on the ground are more closely aligned with our goals for student achievement.

This exercise is especially welcome because the arrangements underlying board resourcing have not changed significantly in recent years, and there is a new level of openness for fresh ideas from across the system.

There is also an opportunity to refine our accountability arrangements, so that we can focus on school boards that need the most support in meeting the expectations of their students, families, and communities. This will help us identify the best performers and share their approaches, with the aim of raising the performance of all.

We look forward to hearing your valuable insights as we shape a more modern education system in Ontario.



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## INTRODUCTION

Crafting the strategy that has made Ontario's public education system a leading international model took visionary thinking. Through the Great to Excellent initiative, we are discussing how to build on this vision to provide improved support for student achievement.

At the same time, our school systems must be able to support the success of students today and tomorrow. Like many other jurisdictions, Ontario continues to deal with the challenges of the global economic downturn and slower-than-expected recovery. Living within our means, while accelerating the achievements of students, will require creative thinking across the public education system. We believe that a collaboratively developed School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Strategy is the best way forward.

One critical task is modernizing school board funding to have more efficient operations on the ground. Our partners in the public education system are crucial to reaching this goal. Through this consultation, we are asking you for your insights into both small adjustments and broader changes that could create a more efficient system. We believe focusing consultation on the following areas will generate a variety of legitimate and lasting solutions, which will be used to inform future decision-making:

- Underutilized and small schools;
- Declining enrolment supports;
- Improving accountability;
- Sharing efficiency savings;
- E-books and e-learning;
- New technologies;
- Getting the balance right;
- Moving ahead together.

Forward-thinking organizations strive constantly for greater operational efficiency. This is especially important in today's highly uncertain economic environment. That is why the central goal of these consultations is hearing about barriers as well as considering fresh new ideas to create an education system that operates efficiently and in alignment with a renewed student achievement strategy.

A critical strand of this discussion is how centrally driven this change should be, in both the short and longer terms. This is something on which we are also seeking your input. We need open and frank discussion around the systems' requirements, expectations, and challenges.



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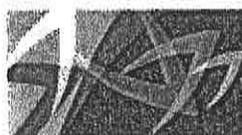
October, 2013

The timing is right for change; the underlying assumptions on how the sector is resourced have not changed significantly in several years and our government is looking for new approaches to continue to deliver key priorities within current fiscal realities. In addition, the national demographic data used in several grants may now be less reliable owing to recent changes in the collection process. As a result, new data sources may need to be explored. We will look at the best ideas and practices in Ontario, other Canadian jurisdictions, and education systems around the globe. At all times, we must keep in mind and respect our constitutional framework and resulting rights, as well as Ontario's great diversity.

While this booklet has been produced to provide a focus for discussions, describe specific areas for possible action based on Ministry analysis, as well as set out a number of questions, the main purpose of the sessions is to hear your ideas. To that end, discussions with key stakeholders will take place through a series of consultation sessions throughout November. Sessions will involve:

- School board representatives, including directors of education, senior school board officials, and trustee associations;
- Principals and vice-principals;
- Teachers' federations;
- CUPE and other support staff unions;
- The Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education;
- Parent groups (People for Education, Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education, Parents partenaires en éducation); and
- Student groups (Ontario Student Trustees Association, Regroupement des élèves conseiller.ère.s francophones de l'Ontario, Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne).

Our goals are ambitious, and we recognize that achieving them will require discipline, hard work, and rigorous thinking across the system. We look forward to a useful, in-depth discussion focused on improving how school boards operate to ensure that our world-class education system focuses the maximum resources possible on student achievement.



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## UNDERUTILIZED AND SMALL SCHOOLS

The current funding formula provides supports to keep underutilized and small schools operating. Support is available to schools with underutilized space (that is, operating at less than full capacity), and to very small schools (those with no more than 100 students). Roughly 70% of all Ontario schools receive some financial support for underutilized space. As well, almost 500 very small schools receive enhanced financial support. Under the current funding framework, the Ministry may be subsidizing space used for non-educational purposes or non-core educational purposes.

The main components of support are the School Foundation Grant, which was created in 2006 and guarantees support for principals and secretaries in each school, and top-up funding through the School Facility Operations and Renewal Grant, which provides funding to help heat, light, clean, repair, and renovate schools under 100% capacity. Top-up funding is further enhanced for more than 1,000 schools that are defined as either rural or supported to help them stay open where necessary.

The involvement of the local community is an important aspect in board decisions about underutilized schools. A school board usually undertakes a pupil accommodation review process led by an Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) when contemplating closing a school. Community consultation through representation on the ARC and public meetings is a central element of this process, which can be lengthy and contentious. In addition, boards have pointed out that the school and/or the local community often find other uses for space defined as underutilized.

More targeted support at the Ministry level toward underutilized space and small schools could support a more efficient school system and free up resources for improved student achievement. However, funding underutilized and small schools is a complex, multi-dimensional issue and communities use space and resources in different ways to meet different needs.

### Key Facts:

- Ontario has 3,750 elementary and 885 secondary/combined schools.
- Almost 600 schools in Ontario are less than half full.
- In the GTA alone, there are about 140 half-empty schools and almost 70 very small schools.
- 13% (almost \$300M) of total school operations and school renewal funding is dedicated to funding empty spaces.
- Almost \$80M is allocated to enhanced top-up funding for school operations and school renewal for those schools.



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## Discussion Questions

1. How can the School Foundation Grant and top-up funding be restructured so as to avoid unintentionally promoting the continued operation of non-viable schools?
2. Under what conditions should the Ministry provide financial support for an underutilized school?
3. How can the accommodation review process be improved?
4. What are the alternatives to providing base funding for principals and secretaries on a per-school basis for all schools?
5. What are the barriers to change?
6. What can be done to allow the system to get more value from existing space?



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## DECLINING ENROLMENT SUPPORTS

The number of school-aged children has been decreasing in recent years, and enrolment is currently declining in 53 of 72 boards. About two-thirds of education funding is based on enrolment. Board costs tend to decline with enrolment, since lower enrolment reduces the need for teachers and services. Not all costs go down at the same rate as enrolment, however, and in some cases costs will never fall as much as revenue does.

The funding system recognizes this challenge with grants and allocations that, as enrolment declines, are intended to help boards adjust their cost structures over time.

Of those supports, the Declining Enrolment Adjustment (DEA) is a true transitional grant, since its level of support reduces over time. Other supports for declining enrolment boards are available, but they are not transitional. These include the top-up funding for school operations and renewal and the School Foundation Grant, both discussed in the previous section. They also include higher student /teacher ratios in "supported" schools, and provisions in the Transportation Grant and the High Need Amount Allocation of the Special Education Grant that protect these funding lines from the full impact of enrolment decline.

### Key Facts:

- Average Daily Enrolment (ADE) is expected to decline to 1.85 million in 2013-14, the lowest level since 1992.
- Provincial ADE is projected to increase beginning in 2014-15, but enrolment in most rural and northern boards will continue to decline.
- There are wide regional gaps in enrolment trends. Since 2002-03, Halton DSB's enrolment is up by more than 22%, while Superior-Greenstone's has fallen by 45%.

### Discussion Questions

1. After over 10 years of helping boards address declining enrolment, how can these supports be reduced or redistributed among boards?
2. Which supports should be restructured from ongoing to transitional support?
3. How might e-learning and/or broadband capacity be expanded to reduce the costs of supported schools and improve programming?



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## IMPROVED ACCOUNTABILITY

As the major source of funding for school boards, the government wants to make sure that the resources it provides are used to support key goals. To that end, funding is often tied to specific policy aims, such as student achievement or safe schools. The Ministry's preference for stronger accountability around policy-aligned grants is key to achieving important province-wide goals. On the other hand, school boards tend to prefer greater flexibility in the use of funding and less reporting for programs funded through Education Programs – Other (EPO).

This underpins the relationship between accountability and flexibility. Many accountability frameworks now use measures of performance to help resolve this challenge. For example, the level of focus on school boards can be adjusted based on board performance, with increased accountability for weakly performing boards and less onerous reporting for strong performers.

An early application of such an approach might be in student achievement. Boards that are high performers in this area would have reporting requirements reduced. This approach would not, however, relieve boards of requirements to use certain components for specific purposes. For example, each board would still be required to hire a co-ordinator under the Student Success Allocation of the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG). As modernization efforts develop, decisions about how flexibly a board could use its funding might be linked to looking at a wider range of performance measures.

### Discussion Questions

1. How can EPO program reporting be consolidated to reduce reporting volume without losing reporting effectiveness?
2. How can accountability for targeted GSN funds be improved without increasing the administrative burden on boards?
3. What are ways of linking school boards' results (academic, financial, and/or other) more closely to reporting requirements?
4. How can demographic-based grants be redesigned if recent demographic data shows markedly different trends?

#### Key Facts:

- Almost \$200M in EPO funding (excluding FDK) has been publicly announced to boards in 2013-14 for about 40 programs.
- About \$172,000 is provided to each board for one dedicated position as co-ordinator for Student Success, Grades 7-12.
- Boards may use the LOG's Demographic Allocation (\$346.4M) as they wish.



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## SHARING EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

Over the years, the Province has tried to address operating pressures with increased funding, for example for utilities or transportation. At the same time, it has also pulled back some funding where it appeared that board spending was running well below provincial funding levels.

This is one of the challenges in finding efficiencies in the education sector. Efficiencies are seen as a source of funding flexibility by those delivering programs and services (school boards), but they look like savings opportunities for the funding body (the Province). As a result, school boards may be reluctant to pursue efficiencies as vigorously as they might otherwise, because it is felt that efficiency gains will ultimately result in reduced provincial funding.

The development of a shared savings protocol might be a way of providing boards with an incentive to find additional efficiencies.

Under such a protocol, efficiency savings could be shared between the Province and the school board, with each board's share being redirected into an enveloped fund. The use of this fund could be determined in consultation at the Partnership Table or some other governance mechanism.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are the impediments, if any, to a shared savings protocol incenting boards to find additional efficiencies?
2. What are some approaches by which boards could share savings from school closures, consolidations, or shared facilities?

#### Key Facts:

- In 2009, the Report of the Declining Enrolment Working Group recommended that "a Transition Adjustment Fund be established to make savings from school closures/consolidations available for school facility improvements that would support education programs for the students affected by the consolidation." (Rec.#19)



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## E-BOOKS AND E-LEARNING

Teachers use different types of learning resources (print, electronic, or a combination of the two), to support the learning and teaching of the Ontario curriculum.

The Ministry is talking to stakeholders about the use of such electronic learning resources as e-books, including licensing for board or school-level use, copyright law, international discussion of Open Educational Resources (OER), and the currency, accuracy, and reliability of resources.

Unlike other forms of distance education, such as correspondence or computer-based instruction, e-learning courses offered through the provincial virtual learning environment (vLE) are teacher-taught, with student interaction being much the same as regular face-to-face classroom-based courses.

Funding for a student enrolled in an e-learning credit course is the same as that for a face-to-face course. However, the scheduling flexibility of e-learning allows boards to meet the academic needs and interests of some students in small or remote schools, and achieve class sizes that support a wider range of course offerings.

More robust data on student achievement in e-learning courses need to be collected and analyzed to inform potential expansion in this area.

### Key Facts:

- The GSN allocates over \$560M a year in funding for textbooks and learning materials.
- Licensing considerations for e-books include number of users, period of use, and portion of text.
- All approved learning resources must meet standards of alignment with the Ontario curriculum and Canadian content.
- Roughly 125 secondary English-language and 79 French-language e-learning credit courses are available.
- More than 110,000 English-language and 12,500 French-language students used the vLE in the 2012-13 school year.

### Discussion Questions

1. What would be the implications for students, teachers, schools and boards if all students were required to complete one course, or a specific course, by e-learning to complete their secondary school graduation requirements?
2. How could the increased use of e-learning and e-books support Ministry goals of increased student achievement and closing the gaps?
3. What are the barriers to change?
4. What opportunities are there to improve efficiencies through e-learning?



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## NEW TECHNOLOGIES

School boards are responsible for local decisions about designing and equipping schools to meet the needs of their students and staff. This includes communications technology such as broadband, as well as computers and other hardware.

Some boards are looking at new developments like cloud-based learning environments and bring-your-own-device (BYOD) policies, both to find efficiencies and to help students and teachers adapt to ongoing changes in teaching and learning. This evolution, however, depends on high-speed internet access.

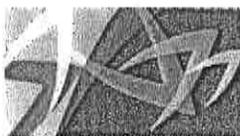
For purchasing and servicing, such entities as the Ontario Educational Collaborative Marketplace and the Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee negotiate strategically sourced agreements and value-added services that are available to Ontario's Broader Public Sector, including the education community.

### Key Facts:

- The bulk of GSN funding to school boards for computers/classroom technology is flowed through the Pupil Foundation Grant (PFG), which provides for core classroom needs common to all students.
- In 2012-13, the PFG provided \$150.1M for classroom computer technology –\$34.52 per elementary student and \$45.03 per secondary student.
- In 2012-13, the \$25M reduction in the Classroom Computers component of the PFG was made permanent.

### Discussion Questions

1. How can the use of new technologies make board administration and program delivery more efficient?
2. How can the sector address barriers to wider use of new technologies?
3. What are the financial and other implications of boards adopting BYOD, cloud-based learning environments, and similar policies and practices?
4. How can joint procurement of technology-related goods and services be better leveraged to reduce costs for school boards?



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## GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT

The main purpose of the consultation process is a long-term rethinking of funding that will better align school board business practices with Ontario's student achievement strategy. Given the current fiscal context, we envision that this will require specific short-term savings goals while we develop a long-term strategy.

An important consideration in both the short and long term is the decision-making balance between local boards and the Ministry of Education. Closely related is the question of how focused the savings strategy should be on specific targets.

Unquestionably, each board in Ontario is unique in both the challenges it faces and the opportunities it sees. Boards are best positioned to find internal savings, especially in the short term. In the longer term, as well, some boards or groups of boards may collaborate strategically to drive specific savings targets for them.

The Ministry's involvement is essential; its perspective ensures provincial alignment of goals for student achievement and well-being. The Ministry is also well positioned to assess what approaches work in specific situations and to share best practices from across the system, supporting a more consistent and strategic approach in the longer term.

No matter the balance ultimately struck between the Ministry and school boards, accountability for results will be crucial, whether a board follows central guidelines and practices, or develops its own savings strategy.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Which are the best areas where boards and the Province can work together to find efficiencies on the ground to achieve modernization?
2. In which areas might school boards be best positioned to find efficiencies in their specific circumstances, given provincial goals?
3. If left up to school boards, what are the best ways of ensuring actions support modernization and align with student achievement goals?



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## MOVING AHEAD TOGETHER

Directing as many resources as possible into student achievement is essential if Ontario is to meet the challenges of the Great to Excellent initiative, which aims to take our school system to even greater heights. To do this, we need to have an open and constructive discussion about how our school system can run its business activities as effectively as possible. The School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Strategy is the primary driver of this transformation.

This booklet outlines some of the approaches the Ministry of Education believes would help move this strategy forward. To realize our goals, we need ideas and help from our partners in the education sector. By bringing together your perspectives, and hearing about both challenges and opportunities, we can find the way forward.

After the consultations are completed, we will release a report summarizing the highlights and outlining the next steps. We will continue working with the dedicated people in the education system to create a new approach to the business activities of schools that is as visionary and forward-looking as our curriculum.



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Central Mountain Accommodation Review

Working Group Meeting #5 - November 26 2013