

Ministry of Education

Deputy Minister

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Sous-ministre

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Memorandum To: Directors of Education

From: Deputy Minister
Bruce Rodrigues

Date: September 12, 2017

Subject: Back to school memo from Deputy Minister

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the new school year. As always, I look forward to working closely with you as the ministry enters into a school year filled with many ambitious, but achievable, priorities.

As you may be aware from the announcements this week, our government will ensure that student achievement, well-being, and equity are top priorities in all schools across Ontario. The plan has many components that are interwoven to make these goals a reality, including targeted investing over three years on well-being efforts and making system-wide changes to all ministry programs and initiatives.

Ontario's students, families, and our education partners have told us that we need to stay focused on student well-being, and that achievement, well-being and equity must be interwoven into every school day. With these objectives in mind, our government is investing \$49 million over the next three years to enhance well-being initiatives. Funding for the well-being priorities of the local needs of school boards will increase from \$6 million to \$12 million starting in the 2018-19 school year. Funding for School Mental Health ASSIST will increase by \$6 million over the next three years.

This funding will also include \$6 million in new and expanding programming to support staff well-being and classroom violence prevention, almost \$4 million to expand active transportation options for students to and from school, and funding for other programs and supports to promote student well-being. More details and consultation on the specific programming enhancements will follow in coming weeks and months.

The ministry will also be consulting on refreshing the curriculum to ensure that Ontario students have a better balance between academic knowledge and practical application that will equip students with the strengths and skills needed to participate in a modern, highly skilled workforce.

The ministry will also be working with you — our system leaders — and other education partners on how best to update Ontario's curriculum and report cards from Grade 1 to Grade 12. This update will ensure it has an up-to-date focus on transferable skills that will help students better navigate their way through the school system, as they approach graduation. We know that employers are looking for graduates who are able to bring critical thinking skills to the table, and who possess skills such as problem-solving, collaboration, communication, creativity, innovation and citizenship. One of the first steps will be to revise the provincial report card this coming year to include the transferable skills that will be at the heart of our curriculum refresh, in place of the existing Learning Skills and Work Habits.

In partnership with the Premier and our [six education advisors](#), led by Dr. Carol Campbell, Ontario will begin a review of provincial assessment and reporting practices, including EQAO, to make sure they are culturally relevant, measure a wider range of learning, and better reflect student well-being and equity.

With the release of [Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan](#), our government will begin working with education partners, students, parents and communities over the next three years to identify and remove any systemic barriers built into our system. The Education Equity Secretariat will implement the action plan by bridging gaps and addressing disparities in achievement for Ontario's students through new policies, resources and program options, and with realistic goals that will help all students. This also includes introducing a renewed approach to Grade 9 that will support all students to reach their maximum potential by identifying and removing systemic barriers that may limit any student's ability to pursue their chosen pathway after graduation.

The Ministry of Education is committed to working closely with you over the upcoming school year to support each other as we move forward with these next steps. I know the foundation set through Collaborative Professionalism will help us develop, plan and implement the full vision of *Achieving Excellence*, and I know I can count on your help to realize these shared goals.

Wishing you a great start to the school year.

Sincerely,



Bruce Rodrigues
Deputy Minister