

SECTION C: EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

OVERVIEW

To compete effectively in the global marketplace, Ontarians must be among the best-educated, most highly skilled, productive and innovative people in the world. The McGuinty government is committed to expanding opportunities for all students — reaching every student from the early grades through to graduate school.

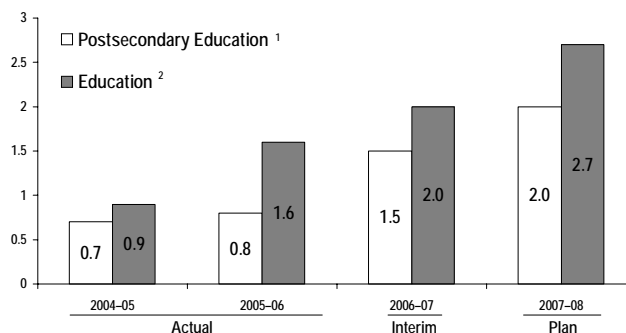
Since taking office, the government has made significant investments to help ensure that children in the all-important early grades can read, write and do math; that teenagers stay in school and are provided with the resources to graduate; and that postsecondary students have improved access to quality education.

To build on the government's progress to date, this Budget is increasing Grants for Student Needs funding (for kindergarten to Grade 12) by \$781 million in the 2007–08 school year to a total of \$18.3 billion — up more than 17 per cent from 2003–04.

Under the Reaching Higher plan, the Province is investing a cumulative \$6.2 billion in the postsecondary education sector by 2009–10. In this Budget, the government is announcing an additional \$390 million for postsecondary education to help with infrastructure improvements and rising enrolment.

When the McGuinty government came to office in 2003, primary school students were in overcrowded classrooms; only 54 per cent of Grade 3 and Grade 6 students met the provincial standards in reading and math; just 68 per cent of high school students were graduating; school buildings were in need of repair; and colleges, universities and apprenticeship programs were suffering from long-term neglect.

Investments Since 2003–04 **Chart 5**
\$ Billions

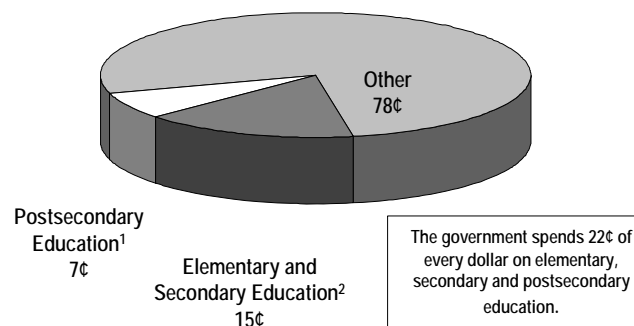


¹ Includes Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and Colleges.

² Includes Ontario Ministry of Education and School Boards, and excludes Teachers' Pension Plan and education property tax revenue.

2007–08 Program Expense

Chart 6



The government spends 22¢ of every dollar on elementary, secondary and postsecondary education.

¹ Includes Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and Colleges net expense.

² Includes Ontario Ministry of Education and School Boards net expense. Excludes Teachers' Pension Plan and education property tax revenue.

The government's plan is working:

- Test scores are up — almost two-thirds of Grade 3 and Grade 6 students now meet or exceed the provincial standards in reading, writing and math.
- Class sizes are down — 65 per cent of primary classes have 20 students or fewer and 93 per cent have 23 students or fewer.
- The high school graduation rate has risen to 73 per cent.
- There is labour peace and stability in our schools.
- Under the Good Places to Learn program, almost 6,800 school building improvement projects have been completed or are underway.

The Reaching Higher plan for postsecondary education is making positive change by improving quality, access and accountability. Accomplishments under Reaching Higher so far include the following:

- There are 86,000 more full-time students enrolled in postsecondary education.
- 145,000 students are benefiting in 2006–07 from enhancements to student aid.
- Graduate school spaces will increase by 12,000 by 2007–08.
- After two years of tuition freezes, tuition increases have been capped at an average of five per cent, or \$100 for 90 per cent of college students and \$200 for 70 per cent of university students.

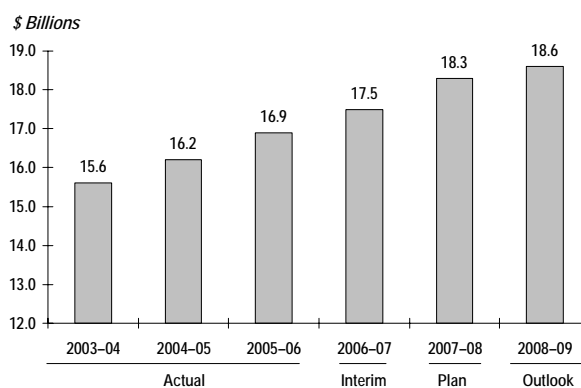
INVESTMENTS TO SUPPORT HIGHER STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The government understands that in today's globally competitive economy, high-quality public education is essential to Ontario's prosperity. Since taking office in 2003, the government has been dedicated to building a strong, stable and vibrant publicly funded education system that gives Ontario's students the opportunity to develop into the best-educated, most highly skilled workforce.

Funded through a combination of education property tax revenues and direct transfers

Grants for Student Needs (School Year)

Chart 7



Source: Ontario Ministry of Finance.

from the Province, annual funding to school boards for elementary and secondary education is determined through the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding formula.

Before 2003, funding for public education was limited, forcing school boards to make some very difficult choices among competing priorities. The government established a plan for student success that provided predictable multi-year funding, ensuring that school boards have sufficient resources to lower class sizes, hire more teachers, meet rising operating costs, maintain school facilities, provide up-to-date textbooks and reach out to more at-risk students. The government's plan also established a working partnership with public education providers by bringing labour stability to public education in the province. The number of student days lost to labour unrest has decreased 95 per cent during the tenure of the government.

School Year	Funding per Student
2003–04	\$7,920
2004–05	\$8,249
2005–06	\$8,623
2006–07	\$8,970
2007–08	\$9,432 ¹
2008–09	\$9,669 ¹

¹ Based on projected student enrolment.

In the 2007–08 school year, the government will continue making substantial investments in education by providing \$18.3 billion, an increase of \$781 million from last year, or more than 17 per cent, compared to 2003–04. By 2008–09, GSN funding will rise to \$18.6 billion, an increase of \$3.0 billion in new funding compared to 2003–04 levels. Average per-student funding will increase to an estimated \$9,669 by 2008–09, up \$1,749 or 22 per cent from 2003–04.

Investments for Higher Student Achievement

- GSN funding to school boards in the 2007–08 school year will increase by \$2.7 billion, from 2003–04, to \$18.3 billion
- Average per-student funding will increase by \$1,749, or 22 per cent by 2008–09, from \$7,920 in 2003–04 to \$9,669 in 2008–09
- French-language boards will receive more than \$1 billion in 2007–08, an increase of \$73.5 million or 7.2 per cent from 2006–07

These planned increases in GSN funding will not be affected by the government's plan to cut high Business Education Tax (BET) rates. The Province's direct transfers to school boards are being increased to offset the decrease in BET revenues.

FOUNDATIONS FOR A BETTER FUTURE

To ensure that Ontario's 1.25 million primary and junior school students have the opportunity to reach their full potential, the government introduced its Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. Announced in 2005, this program is based on several premises — the most important of which is that every child in the province should be able to read, write, do math and comprehend at a high level by age 12. Key to achieving this goal is to ensure that every child comes to school ready to learn. See Section A: *Expanding Opportunities for Children and Families* for more information on support for children and youth.

Improved Literacy and Numeracy

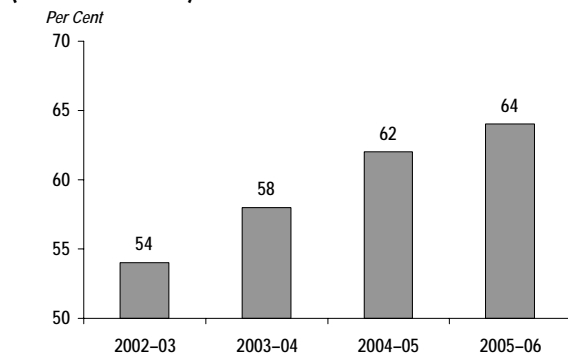
More than ever, the ability to function, contribute and prosper in society requires a sound education, which begins with solid literacy and numeracy skills. Individuals who are more literate and numerate are more likely to have better jobs, have higher productivity and earnings, and be less vulnerable to long-term unemployment.

The government recognizes that every child learns differently and that schools need specialized resources to help each student reach his or her full potential. To ensure that every child has the opportunity to succeed, the government is investing \$28 million in 2007–08 for elementary specialist teachers — bringing the total to an additional 1,900 teachers over the last three years. These teachers focus on such key areas as literacy and numeracy, music, the arts and physical education — giving elementary-school teachers more time to prepare materials for the classroom, correct assignments and connect with parents.

Building on its commitment to provide Ontario schools with proven tools and resources that help children excel in reading, writing and math, the government has implemented the Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership (OFIP). Working collaboratively with school boards, OFIP targets elementary schools where at least two-thirds of students have achieved below the provincial standard on Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) tests over the past three years. A team of dedicated curriculum specialists and instructional leaders goes to these schools to provide hands-on support for school and board staff to improve student achievement. The government has invested approximately \$25 million to support the OFIP initiative.

Since implementing these strategies, which ensure that students receive the specialized and individual help they need, students' scores on EQAO tests have improved significantly for the third consecutive year. Province-wide test scores, which are available on EQAO's website (www.EQAO.com), show that in the 2005–06 school year, 64 per cent of Ontario Grade 3 and Grade 6 students have met or exceeded provincial standards in reading, writing and math — up from 54 per cent in 2002–03. The achievements of Ontario's students demonstrate that the government's targeted investments and strategies are working.

Percentage of Grade 3 and Grade 6 Students in Ontario Achieving Provincial Standards (School-Year Basis) **Chart 8**



Source: Education Quality and Accountability Office.

Reduced Primary Class Sizes

A key way to reach every student is reducing class sizes in the early primary grades (kindergarten to Grade 3).

Since October 2003, the government has given school boards the necessary funding to add 4,800 elementary-school teachers by the 2007–08 school year, resulting in smaller primary class sizes in all of Ontario’s 4,000 elementary schools. According to the most recent data available, 65 per cent of primary classes in 2006–07 had 20 students or fewer — compared to 31 per cent in 2003–04. Ninety-three per cent of all primary classes have 23 students or fewer.

Smaller classes mean Ontario’s primary students receive more individual attention, which is critical to improving reading, writing and math skills. Students who do well in the early grades are far more likely to complete high school and keep learning in a college, university, apprenticeship or training program.

Class Sizes Are Down

Reducing class sizes improves achievement among Ontario’s youngest students by allowing more individual attention. To reduce the size of primary classes, the government has:

- provided funds to hire approximately 1,200 new elementary-school teachers this school year — which makes 4,800 more elementary-school teachers since October 2003
- provided funds to support over \$700 million in capital projects to date in order to support the reduction in primary class size
- reduced primary class sizes to 20 students or fewer in the 2006–07 school year for 65 per cent of classes across the province, compared to 31 per cent in 2003–04.

STUDENT SUCCESS STRATEGY/LEARNING TO 18

To ensure that Ontario can respond to the challenges of today’s knowledge-based economy, the government has made investments and implemented programs in Ontario’s high schools that address the individual learning styles and career interests of all students. By meeting these needs, the government is giving its future workforce the competitive advantage it needs to succeed.

Engaged and Targeted Curriculum

In 2004, the government announced the \$1.3 billion multi-year Student Success Strategy to improve high school graduation rates, reduce student dropouts and increase the number of students who pursue further education. The strategy provides new ways for high school students to gain credits for graduation, and more learning opportunities that address the individual learning style and career interests of all students.

As part of the Student Success Strategy, the government has introduced many innovative programs to Ontario’s high school curriculum that allow students to focus on career paths that match their skills and interests. Students can earn credits by participating in apprenticeship training and postsecondary courses; access co-op placements with strong links to classroom subject areas; and receive increased support,

extra guidance and unique learning opportunities. This comprehensive strategy has provided funding for 1,900 new high school teachers over the last three years to support Student Success Strategy initiatives and provide every high school with a Student Success Teacher to ensure that struggling students have access to the support they need. Results show that since the implementation of the strategy in Ontario's high schools, student achievement is on the rise.

- The pass rate on the Grade 10 literacy test has increased from 72 per cent in 2002–03 to 84 per cent in 2005–06 for English-language students.
- In 2004–05, 93,000 credits were earned through co-op programs, which represents a 22 per cent increase over the 76,200 co-op credits earned in 2003–04.
- In 2005–06, 12,000 students participated in innovative local Student Success Strategy Lighthouse projects and achieved 21,000 of the 27,000 credits attempted, representing a success rate of over 75 per cent.

Transforming High Schools in Ontario

At the heart of the Student Success Strategy are six innovative programs that give Ontario high school students more ways to accumulate credits to graduate:

- *Student success teams* — every student now has access to a dedicated team that includes a principal, a Student Success Teacher and a guidance counsellor, who provide extra attention and support when needed.
- *Specialist high skills major* — this program lets students bundle six to 12 courses in a selected field, such as hospitality and tourism or construction, to prepare for specific academic or skilled careers.
- *Expanded co-op credit* — students can earn two compulsory high school credits towards their core 18 credits through hands-on work experience.
- *Dual credit program* — students can earn credits and put them towards their high school diploma and postsecondary diploma, degree or apprenticeship certification.
- *Lighthouse projects* — these innovative local programs help students stay in school by providing guidance, support and alternative learning environments.
- *Grades 8–9 transition* — Grade 8 and Grade 9 students have a higher risk of dropping out during the difficult transition from elementary school to high school. This initiative includes more teachers, intensive professional development, and improved tracking of struggling students and their progress.

Increased High School Graduation Rates

Ontario's dropout rate is starting to decline, thanks to the government's aggressive plan to help students reach their full potential. In 2003–04, the portion of students graduating from high school was an unacceptable 68 per cent. The Student Success Strategy is reversing this dropout trend and helping more

students build a better future for themselves as shown by the increase in the 2005–06 graduation rate to 73 per cent. The government has set a graduation target of 85 per cent by 2010–11 and Ontario’s high schools are on track to meet this target, which will result in over 90,000 additional graduates between 2006–07 and 2010–11.

The *Learning to Age 18 Act*, which raises the compulsory school age to 18, was enacted in order to increase graduation rates.

The legislation will broaden the range of education opportunities to meet student needs and interests, encouraging more students to keep learning in a classroom or pursue apprenticeship or workplace training programs until they reach age 18 or graduate. Introduced in the 2006–07 school year, this legislation includes new measures to foster partnerships among high schools, the community and postsecondary programs to help students achieve success. This means more high school graduates will be well equipped to find success in the labour market.

BETTER SCHOOLS FOR BETTER LEARNING

Targeted Investments in 2007

The government is taking specific steps for elementary and secondary students to address issues that are important to Ontarians:

- improving service provision in schools for students with autism spectrum disorders
- investing \$4.5 million to train almost 25,000 teachers and \$1.2 million to train vice-principals and principals to address bullying
- launching the Aboriginal Education Strategy and investing \$13 million to improve achievement by First Nations, Inuit and Métis students
- boosting funding for French as a Second Language as part of the Canada–Ontario Official Languages in Education agreement
- providing more than \$4 million for school boards to buy arts materials and musical instruments.

Good Places to Learn

By keeping Ontario’s schools in good repair, the Ontario Government is fostering student success and helping all children reach their full potential. In 2004 the government introduced the Good Places to Learn (GPL) initiative — a school renewal program to help fund \$4 billion of much-needed repairs, renovations and new school construction across the province. See Section G: *Investing in Ontario’s Infrastructure* for more information.

This program has significantly improved the condition of schools by responding to the most pressing needs identified in an independent province-wide school-by-school facility review. This review made it clear that the state of Ontario’s school buildings was getting in the way of the instruction being delivered within them. This initiative includes improvements to roofs, electrical and plumbing systems, technology workshops and labs, heating and cooling systems, libraries and gyms.

Investments in the Good Places to Learn program are supporting critical repair and renewal projects in schools across Ontario. Currently, almost 6,800 projects supported by GPL renewal funding have been completed or are underway in schools across the province.

Textbook and Learning Resources

The Ontario Government has taken action to ensure that students have the resources they need to enhance their achievements and enrich their learning experience. By providing such learning tools as new textbooks, magazines, computer software and multimedia resources (such as CD-ROMs and DVDs), and library materials, the government is giving students what they need to succeed. In addition to annual funding provided through the GSN, the Province is providing over \$50 million to schools for textbooks and learning resources. The government is also enhancing and expanding online teaching resources, which provide students with web-based video assistance and online support such as tutoring and course tips. This investment is part of the government's commitment to improving literacy and numeracy achievement while also providing the learning resources that Ontario's students need to reach their full potential.

REACHING HIGHER IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Ontario's progress depends on the skills and knowledge of its people. Ontario will be at its best and be prepared to compete for higher-value jobs only when every Ontarian has the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential.

The province's colleges and universities play a critical role in equipping people for success and preparing them to generate the necessary ideas, products and jobs that will ensure future prosperity — the prosperity that funds social progress and maintains a high standard of living.

The 2005 Ontario Budget announced Reaching Higher, the government's historic multi-year \$6.2 billion investment in postsecondary education by 2009–10.

The goals of Reaching Higher are:

- **access** — enhanced student financial assistance, increased enrolment and expanded opportunities for francophones as well as Aboriginal Peoples, new Canadians, persons with disabilities and “first-generation” students whose parents did not receive postsecondary education
- **quality** — achieving the highest standards in teaching, research and student learning experience, resulting in the skills and innovation that support economic growth
- **accountability** — improved accountability and performance through defined targets and measures.

The government's education agenda also extends to training and lifelong learning. For additional information, see Section F: *Expanding Opportunities for Economic Growth*.

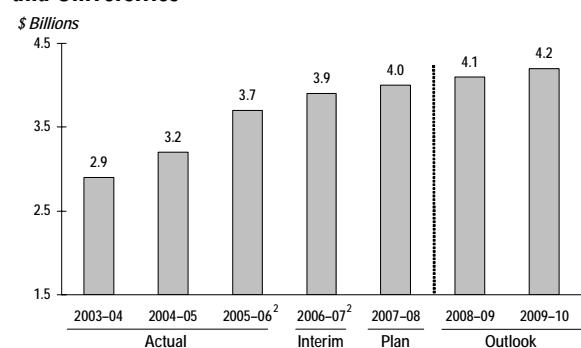
Investing in Postsecondary Education

By 2009–10, Ontario will provide \$6.2 billion in new cumulative investments for postsecondary education and training through the Reaching Higher plan.

Total base operating grants to colleges and universities will rise to \$4.0 billion in 2007–08 and grow to \$4.2 billion by 2009–10, resulting in better learning environments.

Graduate education will also continue to grow, supported by \$170 million in additional funding by 2007–08, rising to \$220 million annually by 2009–10. This will result in 14,000 new graduate spaces by 2009–10.

Combined Operating Grants to Colleges and Universities¹ **Chart 9**



¹ Total of Grants for College Operating Costs and Grants for University Operating Costs.

² 2005-06 and 2006-07 operating grants are adjusted to reflect realignment of Postsecondary Transformation funding.

Note: Excludes \$390 million in new investments in the postsecondary sector announced in this Budget.

New Investments in Postsecondary Education

In this Budget, the government is announcing an additional \$390 million in support for quality improvements in higher education, including funding that could be used for investments in university and college infrastructure and equipment. This time-limited federal funding supplements the Province's significant ongoing investments through Reaching Higher which have been undertaken while awaiting a full and effective partnership with the federal government.

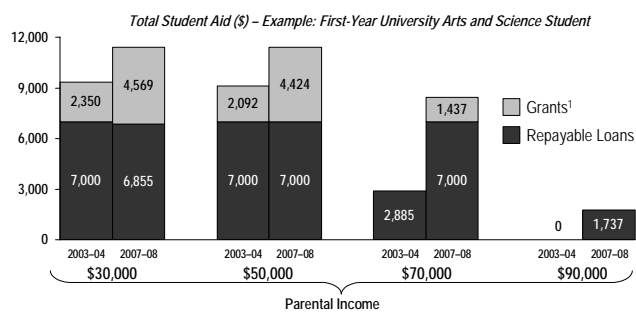
This additional funding includes \$210 million for universities to alleviate immediate cost pressures. It also includes \$105 million for college facilities renewal, including existing building maintenance costs, \$15 million in university capital projects and \$35 million for college capital projects. This additional funding also includes \$25 million to support upgraded and new equipment in union–employer training centres, to meet the skills training and apprenticeship needs of the economy. It will allow the centres to keep pace with changing technological requirements, encourage collaboration and leverage additional training resources from industry partners.

Solid Progress in Student Assistance

One of Reaching Higher's achievements has been improved access to postsecondary education through enhanced student financial aid. The government has made substantive changes over the past three years to grant and loan provisions, benefiting 145,000 students this year. In 2006–07, nearly 60,000 students have taken advantage of new upfront grants re-introduced in the 2005 Ontario Budget. In 2007–08, the government will provide more than \$580 million to students through the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP).

The government is also working with colleges and universities to establish a new Student Access Guarantee to ensure no qualified Ontario student is prevented from studying due to a lack of financial support. As part of this initiative, access will be further strengthened through the recent addition of an Access Window website (<http://accesswindow.osap.gov.on.ca>), which gives students information about the approximate cost and potential loan and grant assistance from OSAP for their program choice.

Improvements in Student Assistance Under the McGuinty Government **Chart 10**



¹ Grants include upfront access grants and non-repayable loans in excess of \$7,000. Examples are based on a dependent university student living away from home entering a first-year arts and science program. Assumes parents have two children — one in postsecondary education and a tuition increase of up to 4.5 per cent in 2007–08. Source: Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

In addition, the government will propose amendments to the *Ryerson University Act, 1977* to update governance structures at the university.

Creating Positive Change in Postsecondary Education

Ensuring Greater Access:

- increasing full-time enrolment by 86,000 since 2002–03, a 22 per cent increase
- doubling student assistance by 2009–10, benefiting almost 200,000 students this year, up 25 per cent from 2002–03
- re-introducing upfront grants, benefiting nearly 60,000 students; and limiting student debt to \$7,000 per completed year of study
- after a two-year freeze, limiting average tuition increases to an average of five per cent annually or \$100 for 90 per cent of college students and \$200 for 70 per cent of university students
- committing \$55 million by 2009–10 to create more opportunities for francophones and those traditionally underrepresented, including persons with disabilities, Aboriginal Peoples and “first-generation” students
- increasing special access funding by \$20 million in 2006–07 for small, northern and rural colleges, bringing total funding to \$65 million
- increasing first-year undergraduate medical enrolment by 23 per cent by 2009–10 over 2004–05.

Improving Quality and Accountability:

- increasing operating funding by 35 per cent between 2004–05 and 2009–10 as outlined in the Reaching Higher plan, to hire new faculty, increase student/faculty interaction, and improve student services, libraries, laboratories and equipment
- expanding graduate spaces by 12,000 by 2007–08, reaching 14,000 by 2009–10
- supporting innovative research in cutting-edge fields such as biomaterials and mining innovation
- monitoring quality through a new Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario
- establishing three-year agreements with colleges and universities to identify and measure quality improvements
- the economic stimulus package announced in the *2006 Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review* includes \$30 million for infrastructure projects at 15 colleges.