

## SECTION D A SMARTER ONTARIO: EXCELLENCE IN PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION

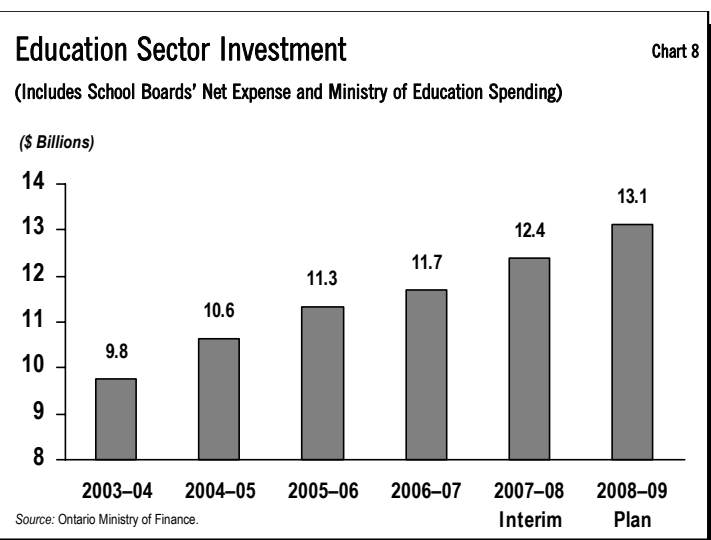
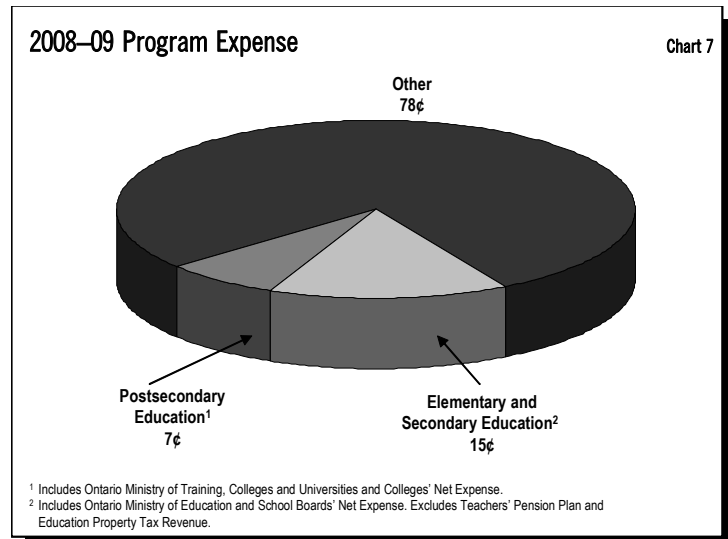
Ontario's continued prosperity in a competitive global economy depends on a well-educated and highly skilled workforce. A strong, vibrant, publicly funded education system underpins a smarter, more successful Ontario.

The government is investing in three core priority areas as outlined in its Reach Every Student plan to energize Ontario education:

- higher levels of student achievement
- reduced gaps in student achievement
- increased public confidence in publicly funded education.

To reach every student and further strengthen the public education system, this Budget increases funding to school boards:

- In the 2008–09 school year, Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding to school boards will rise to \$18.8 billion, an increase of \$315 million since last year and \$3.2 billion or 20.3 per cent since 2003–04, despite overall declining student enrolment.
- Average per-student funding will increase to an estimated \$9,821 in 2008–09, up \$1,901 or 24.0 per cent since 2003–04.

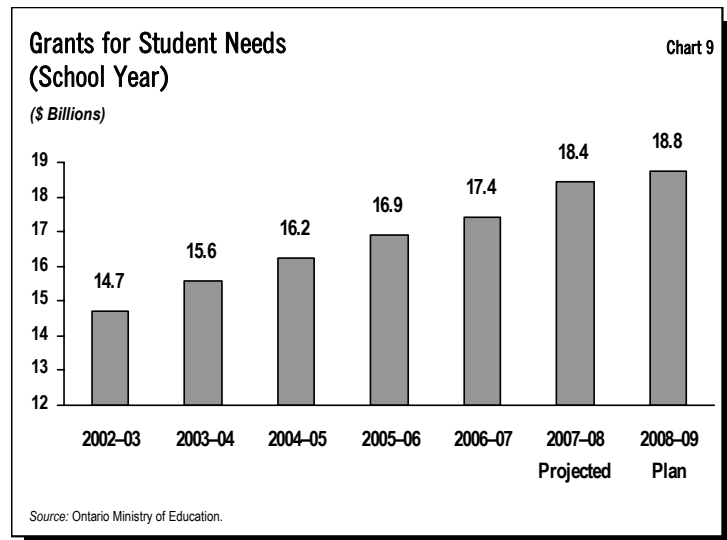


The government's \$6.2 billion Reaching Higher plan helps to ensure that postsecondary education is accessible and of high quality. An additional \$1.5 billion over three years under the Skills to Jobs Action Plan announced in this Budget will directly support further postsecondary improvements and training initiatives to equip workers with skills for higher-value jobs.

## Higher Levels of Student Achievement

Through substantial increases in funding and by partnering with schools and school boards, the government has built a strong foundation for student achievement. The Province's education plan is creating a learning environment in which all students of diverse backgrounds are welcomed and valued — and where all students are better able to achieve their full potential. Over the next four years, this foundation will be strengthened through the following initiatives:

- Further improving the school funding formula — Grants for Student Needs funding in the 2008–09 school year will increase to \$18.8 billion, a 20.3 per cent increase since 2003–04. The formula will be reviewed by 2010 to ensure that it supports the government's priorities of improved student achievement in all Ontario schools.
- Boosting child literacy by investing \$10 million in the 2008–09 school year for about 160 additional library staff and additional library resources.
- Investing \$3 million in the 2008–09 school year in a range of coordinated initiatives to ensure that environmental education is part of every child's learning and that schools incorporate environmental awareness in planning their resource needs, operations and facilities.



## Literacy and Numeracy

The government is investing an additional \$8 million in 2008–09 for programs to continue to improve literacy and numeracy, bringing the total annual investment to \$65 million. The government is committed to helping students improve their reading, writing and math skills so that 75 per cent of Grade 6 students are reaching the Provincial standard on reading, writing and math assessments.

Over the past four years, test scores in reading, writing and math have increased significantly. Grades 3 and 6 test results have increased by an average of nine percentage points from 2002–03 to 2006–07, the last year of testing:

- 65 per cent of Grade 3 students are at or above the provincial standard — up from 54 per cent in 2002–03.
- 61 per cent of Grade 6 students are at or above the provincial standard — up from 54 per cent in 2002–03.

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## ONTARIO STUDENTS EXCEL

A recent international study gave Ontario’s education system high marks for excellence:

- Ontario’s Grade 4 students were among the highest-achieving participants in an international assessment of reading skills — the 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. Of the 45 countries and provinces participating in the international study, only the Russian Federation and Hong Kong performed at a higher level than Ontario in overall reading achievement.

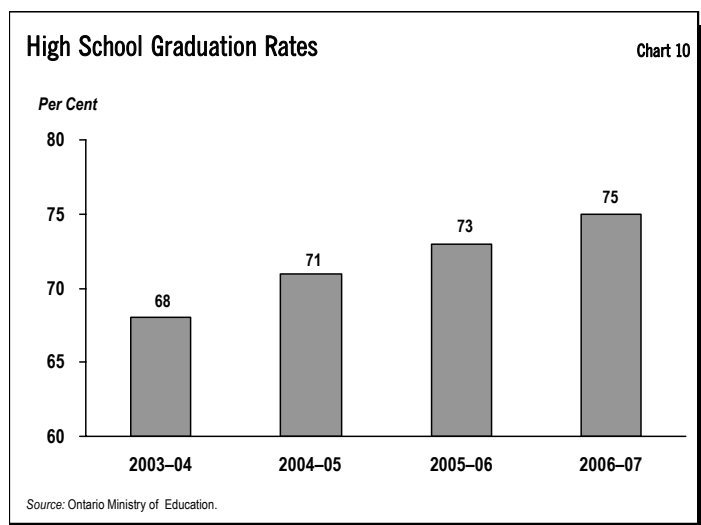
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## Graduation Rates

A key measure of student achievement is the number of students who graduate. The high school graduation rate is up from 68 per cent in 2003–04 to 75 per cent in 2006–07, resulting in 10,500 more students graduating every single year. The government has set an 85 per cent graduation rate target by 2010–11.

The government will provide more than \$16 million in 2007–08 to expand the successful Pathways to Education program to increase the number of at-risk youth finishing high school. The government will

also invest over \$50 million more in the 2008–09 school year for programs to help more students graduate. These include co-op support, dual credits, specialist high skills majors and supports for chronically absent students.



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## HELPING STUDENTS GRADUATE

The government's Student Success Strategy helps students in Grades 7 to 12 tailor their education to their individual strengths, goals and interests. Many programs have been established for students pursuing university, college, apprenticeships or the workplace after graduation.

- Specialist High Skills Majors allow students to focus on a future career through a bundle of classroom courses, workplace experiences and sector certifications.
- Expansion of Cooperative Education allows students to count hands-on learning towards two compulsory high school credits.
- E-Learning provides students with online courses and allows teachers to share resources across the province.
- Dual Credits count towards a student's high school diploma as well as a college certificate, diploma or apprenticeship certification.

Support is also being provided to struggling high school students so they can get back on track to graduate.

- The Elementary to Secondary School Transition Program helps students succeed in high school through customized timetables and other programs.
  - Lighthouse projects help students refocus on graduation through unique opportunities developed by local school boards.
  - Student Success Teams (composed of the principal, student success teacher, guidance counsellor, special education teacher and other educators) provide extra attention in every high school to students who need it.
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## Reduced Gaps in Student Achievement

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A core priority for the government is a quality education for *all* students in publicly funded schools. Supporting conditions need to be established to reduce gaps in student performance. Schools need specialized resources to help each student realize his or her full potential. Special attention must be paid to students who are socio-economically disadvantaged, or who face particular cultural challenges or educational hurdles while at school.

To help every child succeed, the government is responding with the following initiatives:

- Investing \$10 million for English as a Second Language (ESL) in the 2008–09 school year. Since 2003, the government has enhanced ESL funding by \$64 million, and plans to increase funding for this program to 18 per cent over 2007–08 funding levels by 2011–12.
- Investing \$67 million in special needs funding in the 2008–09 school year through the GSN. This investment will support the continuing reform of special education, enhance school boards' capacity to serve students with special education needs, and improve student achievement. The government will provide \$24 million in additional targeted funding outside the GSN to support students with special needs. This is in addition to enhanced annual funding of \$20 million beginning in 2008–09 for services for children with complex special needs.

- Investing an additional \$32 million over three years in the Student Nutrition Program. The new investment will more than double annual funding for this program.
- Increasing the number of Parenting and Family Literacy Centres in the province by 34 with an additional investment of \$2 million in the 2008–09 school year, so that families from all backgrounds can help their children start school ready to learn. These centres help prepare children for successful school entry by supporting early positive connections to future schools and building home and school partnerships.

## Increased Confidence in Publicly Funded Education

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Public confidence is key to creating communities that value learning and are committed to maintaining and improving publicly funded schools. Ninety-five per cent of Ontario’s students attend publicly funded schools.

Students in smaller classes receive more attention and have greater success in the early grades.

The government is continuing to work with school boards to consolidate the substantial gains made in implementing its plan to cap 90 per cent of primary classes in Ontario at 20 or fewer pupils.

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### PRIMARY CLASS SIZES

Students in junior kindergarten to Grade 3 are receiving more individual attention from their teachers. In primary classes:

- 99.7 per cent now have 23 or fewer students this year compared to 64 per cent in 2003–04
- 88.4 per cent now have 20 or fewer students this year compared to 31 per cent in 2003–04.

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The government is building on results achieved to date and strengthening schools and communities by doing the following:

- Supporting a \$750 million investment, beginning in the 2008–09 school year, to build new schools and repair school facilities. Since 2005–06, school boards have used government funding under the Good Places to Learn initiative to undertake over 10,600 renewal projects to address urgently needed repairs in more than 2,500 schools across Ontario.
- Investing \$10 million through the new Program Enhancement Grant in the 2008–09 school year to help students receive a well-rounded education through arts, music programs, physical education and outdoor education programs.
- Increasing funding for the Community Use of Schools program by \$13 million in the 2008–09 school year to ensure that space for after-school activities is affordable for all Ontario families and free in communities that need it most. The government will double the existing \$20 million funding for this program to more than \$40 million in 2009–10.

- Making Ontario schools healthier by introducing Bill 8, the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2007, that would, if passed, ban processed trans fats from food and beverages sold in school cafeterias and remove unhealthy foods and beverages from school vending machines.
- Ensuring a safe and positive learning environment. The government has a comprehensive strategy to help ensure that students have a safe and positive school environment in which to learn and grow. To support this strategy, the government will invest \$57 million in the 2008–09 school year, including \$10 million in new funding for high schools in urban communities.

## Helping More People Go On to Higher Education

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Under its \$6.2 billion Reaching Higher plan, the government has provided more opportunities and financial assistance and improved the quality of higher education for Ontario students. This is the largest multi-year investment in postsecondary education in 40 years.

The Reaching Higher plan has been a success for Ontario students. It has allowed record numbers to find opportunities in the province's colleges and universities — 93,000 more since 2002–03 — a 22 per cent increase.

The government's employment and training strategy, Employment Ontario, provides over \$1 billion annually to help raise the skills of Ontarians.

The government is implementing new initiatives in 2008–09 to increase the affordability of postsecondary education. The government will also expand the number of skilled workers in Ontario through more apprenticeships, and help unemployed workers train for new careers under its \$1.5 billion Skills to Jobs Action Plan.

This Budget provides funding to support new or enhanced postsecondary education and training initiatives, including:

- \$385 million over three years for a new annual Textbook and Technology Grant for full-time university and college students, starting with grants of \$150 per student this fall, \$225 in the fall of 2009 and \$300 in subsequent years
- \$27 million over three years for a new Distance Grant to assist postsecondary students from rural and remote areas with travel costs
- more than \$7 million over three years for an International Ontario Strategy to attract postsecondary students from around the world
- more than \$1 million over three years for Global Edge, a program that facilitates international work and learning opportunities for enterprising postsecondary students

- \$355 million over three years for a Second Career Strategy to help 20,000 unemployed workers obtain the skills for new careers
- \$75 million over the next three years to further expand apprenticeship programs.

For additional information on these postsecondary education and training initiatives, see Section A: *A Stronger Ontario: Building Skills and Creating Jobs*.