

## **EDUCATION**

Investment in publicly funded education is vital to Ontario's future prosperity. In the 2009 Ontario Budget, the government will build on the achievements of the past five years and continue to invest in three core educational priorities — supporting higher levels of student achievement, reducing gaps in student achievement and increasing confidence in publicly funded education.

### **Education Funding**

To reach every student and further strengthen the education system, funding to school boards will increase in 2009-10 and continue to increase in future years. Education sector spending is projected to rise to \$14.2 billion in 2009-10, a \$0.9 billion increase over the previous year, and to \$15.4 billion in 2011-12, a 15.6 per cent increase since 2008-09.

### **Peace and Progress in the Education Sector**

A climate of peace and progress in the education system is essential for improved student achievement. The funding increases noted above will support provincial framework agreements between trustee associations, teacher federations and unions.

Through these initiatives and others, students will benefit from additional supports through:

- Targeted class-size reductions in Grades 4 to 8
- Additional Student Success teachers and Literacy and Numeracy coaches in Grades 7 and 8
- Additional arts and specialist teachers
- Additional education support staff to keep our schools safe and healthy
- Expanded secondary programming
- Additional staff to support special needs students
- The Ontario Education Leadership Strategy, which will help attract and foster strong leadership in our schools.

### **Investing in Student Success**

#### *Literacy and Numeracy*

Since 2003-04, the government has made great strides towards helping students improve their reading, writing and math skills. Over recent years, these programs have helped more students achieve the provincial standard on province-wide tests — 65 per cent met the provincial standard in the 2007-08 school year, up from 54 per cent in 2002-03.

Additional annual investments to improve literacy and numeracy in 2008-09 totalled \$65 million. A new \$15 million library book investment provided hundreds of new books and resources to every elementary school across the province. Building on this funding, the Ontario government will continue to invest in initiatives that will make our students more competitive, including the following investments in 2009-10:

- An additional \$12 million for programs that support literacy and numeracy, including \$7 million for Schools Helping Schools – a program that twins high-performing schools with lower-performing schools
- \$10 million to expand Homework Help programs and provide additional learning opportunities outside the classroom
- The government awaits Dr. Charles Pascal's report on full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, an important initiative to build a stronger workforce, starting in the early years of education.

### *Graduation Rates*

Since 2005, the government's Student Success Strategy has been helping students in Grades 7 to 12 tailor their education to their individual strengths, goals and interests. Graduation rates increased from 68 per cent in 2003-04 to 77 per cent in 2007-08. This means that an additional nine per cent or 13,500 more students are graduating each year compared to 2003-04.

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 (including 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.

The government will invest more than \$23 million in increased funding for programs to improve high school graduation rates. Over \$300 million in total will be invested in 2009-10 to help students graduate and move on to college, university, apprenticeships or the workplace.

### *Primary Class Sizes*

Students in junior kindergarten to Grade 3 are receiving more individual attention from their teachers. The government's goal to reduce the size of primary classes has been achieved:

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

### *Excellence*

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, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

### **Communities and Schools**

As a component of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the government will make investments that support community hubs where people can stay active, gather to learn, and participate in the activities of community-based organizations.

- Funding for Community Use of Schools programs will increase by more than \$3 million, bringing the total annual investment in this program to over \$42 million
- About 20 additional Parenting and Family Literacy Centres will be opened to help students in high-needs neighbourhoods prepare for kindergarten
- A new investment of \$3 million in 2009-10 will help to establish community hubs in selected low-income neighbourhoods. These hubs will bring together a range of community partners to identify and provide social and educational supports.