



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

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Michael Barrett
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October 24, 2014

To: Pauline McNaughton, Director (Acting), Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch
Richard Franz, Director of the Research, Evaluation and Capacity Building Branch
Ministry of Education, Queen Park, Toronto

Re: OPSBA Member Board Information Regarding 34+ Credit Strategy Implementation

Since it was first announced in March 2012 and then implemented in September 2013, OPSBA has been monitoring the impact of the 34+ credit strategy among our member boards. We were asked by our members to gather information about how this change in funding affected board finances and programming operations. Last Spring we contacted the senior business officials at boards and asked them to complete a short survey about this issue.

Although not everyone responded, the following is a summary based on the responses from 18 member boards:

- More than 90% of respondents indicated that the board is now absorbing additional programming costs as a result of the reduced funding.
- Additional cost per board ranges from \$160,000 to \$1.5 million.
- All respondents indicated that they continue to offer 34+ credits through regular day school. In addition, 25% indicated that they also offer these credits through continuing education and 50% through e-learning.
- Almost all respondents indicated a desire to have a broader exemption policy for certain students taking 34+ credits.
- A quarter of respondents indicated scheduling issues caused by this strategy resulting in wait lists, class size caps & limited course options.

From this we understand that many of our boards have not changed their program offering or delivery model based on the change in funding for 34+ credits. Our boards feel strongly about supporting all students and doing what is in their best interests. This is why, to continue supporting the continuity of student learning, they are absorbing the costs pressures associated with the reduced funding.

We know that the Ministry initiative encourages students to complete their secondary courses in four years and does not prevent any student from returning for an additional year to take more credits. However, OPSBA and its member boards want students to be successful and do not want any barriers in place to impede this success. We will continue to advocate for funding to support these students and stress the importance of guidance counsellors to ensure that students have all the help and resources along the way to plan their educational pathway.

Some additional comments were received when boards were asked specifically about further exemptions. These responses reinforced many of the suggested exemptions we voiced in 2012 and include the following:

- Recent arrivals from other countries often with High School instruction in other countries such as PLE courses or ESL courses including Math and Science.
- Students who are not accepted into their program of choice and need to return to complete additional postsecondary requirements – these students have had a change in focus.
- Students enrolled in specialty programs such as OYAP, SHSM, Creative Arts Students and Co-Op Programs.
- Students considered to be in risk or at risk. We realize this would be difficult to track but again, we are concerned about those students who may be in jeopardy of not graduating.

We will be including commentary about the funding impacts in our feedback to the Ministry's education finance consultation and continue to follow the impacts of this strategy with our member boards.

We ask that the Ministry consider the above exemptions and contact us to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gail Anderson".

Gail Anderson, Executive Director
Ontario Public School Boards' Association