

OPSBA Initial Review of the Grants for Student Needs

May 7, 2021



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

Grants for Student Needs (GSN) funding for the 2021-22 year is projected to be \$25.6 billion, which represents an increase of approximately 2.2% over the prior year, with an average provincial per-pupil funding amount of \$12,686.

The GSN announcement included \$1.6 billion in support for school boards to respond to ongoing COVID-19 safety needs and cost pressures, though it was highlighted that Boards are expected to budget for only half of that amount. School boards will be notified in the fall if the government deems the release of the second half necessary. The \$1.6 billion includes:

Grants within the GSN

Temporary support to the Language Grant - \$79.6 million

Technology - \$14.9 million

Mental Health - \$10 million

Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF) Grants

Staffing - \$304 million*

School Operations - \$29.4 million*

Transportation - \$65.5 million*

Special Education and Mental Health - \$49 million*

Re-engaging Students and Reading Assessment Supports - \$20 million

Connectivity Supports for Remote Learning - \$20 million

Reserve Funds and Ministry Top-up

School board "unlocked" Reserve Funds and Ministry of Education-supported funds - \$507 million (can only budget up to 1% of operating funds from reserves)

Centrally Administered

Centrally procured PPE - \$450 million

School Health Nurses employed by Public Health Units - \$86 million

* can only budget ½ of this amount

Included in the GSN are updates to COVID-19 supports as noted above, as well as changes to how online learning classes are funded, transfers from PPF, enhanced accountability measures, and ongoing investments to reflect the third year of the labour agreements.

- **Online Learning** – In 2020-21, the Online Learning Adjustment Allocation was based on the number of credits offered in 2017–18, funded at an average class size of 30. To align the policy with the funding benchmarks, beginning this year the secondary benchmark will use a funded average credit load of 7.5 credits per pupil split between online learning (approximately 0.081) and in-person learning (approximately 7.419). The online learning

credit load benchmark assumes approximately 8% of secondary students will take one course online in 2021-22. For planning purposes, school boards can anticipate the participation rate to be adjusted to approximately 16% in 2022-23 and 26% in 2023-24. These planning assumptions may be reviewed based on experience and policy objectives.

- **PPF Transfers to GSN**
 - Specialist High Skills Major
 - After-School Skills Development Programs
 - Integrated Services for Northern Children
- **Accountability Measures**
 - The Indigenous Education Grant (IEG) is being adjusted to include greater accountability measures, including enveloping and requiring any surplus funding generated by running First Nations, Métis and Inuit Studies or Language course to be reported through the Board Action Plan.
 - The ministry will be introducing additional requirements to enhance reporting for library staffing funding to get greater insight into how school boards are using the funding.
- **Central Agreements** – The ministry will adjust salary benchmarks by 1% for positions other than Senior and School Administration. The ministry will also provide benefits funding that vary by employee group, reflecting central agreements, which include up to 1% increases for benefits' plan maintenance or improvements and additional inflationary increases.
- **School Renewal Funding** – The Ministry of Education will continue to invest approximately \$1.4 billion to maintain and improve the condition of schools. The School Condition Improvement is projected to be approximately \$940 million and School Renewal Allocation is projected to be approximately \$373 million.
- **Student Transportation** – The Transportation review that started in January 2020 continues. While the review is underway, the overall Student Transportation Grant will remain unchanged, with adjustments only for enrolment growth.

2021-22 Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF)

To facilitate school boards' budget planning for 2021-22, the Ministry confirmed approximately \$122 million of PPF funding to school boards and school authorities to support ministry priorities.

Additionally, PPF will provide up to \$288 million in funding to education partners to support student needs.

While repurposing of 2019-20 PPF was permitted for emerging COVID-related supports, this approach is not being replicated for 2020-21 PPF funds. Given the additional COVID-related investments that have been issued via both GSN and PPF to support students in the 2020-21 school year, all PPF funds should be spent for the original purpose that is intended and articulated in signed transfer payment agreements. Unspent 2020-21 PPF funds must be recovered by the ministry and will not be available for repurposing or carrying forward.