

# Plan to Catch Up



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## A Message from the Minister

**Over the last two years**, students, families, teachers and education workers have shown remarkable resilience as they've responded to pandemic disruptions. As we look ahead to the 2022-23 school year, it's never been more important that we have a plan supported by resources and programs so that students continue to learn new skills, develop and succeed in the jobs of the future.

This is Ontario's *Plan to Catch Up*.

Our plan starts with a return to in-person learning, on time, and with all the experiences students need and deserve like sports, clubs and field trips. Nothing is more important.

Our plan also provides historic supports to help keep students engaged and on track so they can reach their goals, including a new province-wide tutoring program – the largest of its kind in the country – and expanded summer learning.

When students are in class, we need to make sure they're learning the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow. In a digital world and fast-changing economy, we're teaching students from grades one and up about coding, financial literacy, and a renewed focus on science, technology, engineering and math. By 2025, one out of every five jobs will be in the skilled trades. That's why we continue to modernize school curriculum to ensure we're teaching the skills students need to graduate into good paying jobs. By doing so, they can pursue real pathways to rewarding, innovative and high-wage careers.

Classrooms are nothing without high-quality educators. Ontario has never invested more money in public education, with historic funding that's helping to hire 3,000 more staff as we invest \$14 billion to build new schools, major renovations and ventilation upgrades.

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Lastly, Ontario's *Plan to Catch Up* continues to make investments in student mental health – over 420 per cent higher than when we started – as well as more supports for special education.

Our government continues to support the learning recovery of all students, including those disproportionately affected by learning disruptions. That is why families need to continue to receive updates on the progress of their child's learning, including with complete report cards. Above all, we know that students need and deserve a full return to normalcy in the classroom, with the supports and skills they need to succeed.

Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education



## Introduction

After two years of pandemic disruptions, Ontario has a plan to catch up. It includes:

- Kids being **back in the classroom**, on time with a full school experience that includes extracurriculars like sports, band and field trips;
- **New tutoring supports** to fill gaps in learning;
- Preparing them for the **jobs of tomorrow**, including the skilled trades;
- More money to **build new schools** and improve education; and
- Expanded supports for **students' mental health**.

This plan and the sector as a whole are supported by record funding for the 2022-23 school year of over \$26.6 billion - the highest investment in public education in Ontario's history and almost 10 per cent greater than in 2017-18.

# Ontario's Plan to Catch Up

## Back to Normal: Safely, On-Time with a Full School Experience

Ontario's *Plan to Catch Up* starts with students back in the classroom, on time, with a full school experience that includes extracurricular activities like sports, band and field trips.

After two years of pandemic disruptions, students deserve to go back to a normal school experience for their learning and social development.

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Our government and sector partners have the tools in place to support a safe and enriching learning experience through the 2022-23 school year, which will mean:

- Getting kids back in the classroom for the 2022-23 school year on-time, and keeping schools safe and open.
- Supporting an enriching school experience that enables academic success and lets students take advantage of the activities and programs that enhance classroom learning and build social and life skills.
- Having the appropriate and up to date health and safety measures in place, such as ventilation improvements, and safe practices, such as frequent hand washing, enhanced cleaning protocols and screening policies supported by free rapid tests in alignment with provincial guidance.

We also recognize the importance of supporting parent choice, and so are enabling the option of remote learning in the coming school year for those that feel it is the right decision for their family, recognizing the government's focus is on the return to in-person learning.

# Keeping Schools Safe

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Throughout the pandemic, our government focused on delivering the best educational experience for students, while protecting schools against the spread of COVID-19.

We took major steps to support health and safety in schools:

- Investing over \$665 million on ventilation improvements across the province since August 2020, including over 100,000 standalone HEPA filter units and other ventilation devices for schools and upgrades to school ventilation infrastructure;
- Deploying over 293 million masks in the education sector since March 2020, and millions of rapid antigen tests for staff and students, including access to take home tests;
- Introducing health and safety guidance and a comprehensive testing strategy based on expert medical advice; and
- Providing over \$1.6 billion directly in the pockets of parents to help offset the costs of online learning and child care.

We also took decisive action to bolster staff capacity and equip them with the right tools to educate, support and protect students, including by bringing in additional staff by enabling retired teachers to work more days and those in teacher education programs to begin teaching.



# Expanded Student Supports: Tutoring, Literacy, and Special Education

Since April 2022, school boards have been offering enhanced tutoring support programs focused on literacy and math, made possible by our government's landmark \$175 million investment – the largest investment in tutoring in the country.

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From May to June 2022, on average approximately 49,000 students participated in tutoring programs each week, with an average group size of less than five students to provide tailored and focused support. This expanded access to tutoring is benefiting thousands of students across the province.

Our government is also taking immediate action to improve student literacy and is making longer-term reforms to the way reading is taught in schools, with a focus on evidence-based approaches. As a first step, and in response to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's report on the *Right to Read*, this year, we made a \$25 million investment in evidence-based programs to support student achievement in literacy, as well as for professional assessments. This investment is already supporting learning recovery and will carry through into the 2022-2023 school year. Beyond the school year, students and families will continue to be supported through summer learning programs in reading and math.



We are also preventing and removing barriers for students with disabilities to ensure our most vulnerable have every opportunity to succeed with confidence. For the 2022-23 school year, Special Education Grant funding is projected to increase by \$93 million to over \$3.25 billion - the highest amount ever provided. We are also providing school boards with over \$40 million to support programs that will benefit students with special education needs, and nearly \$6 million more for supports in local communities. We also continue to support those students most at risk and those in racialized communities to ensure all students have every opportunity to succeed.

Building on these actions, we will continue to monitor emerging student achievement trends, including through student assessments and progress reports, and direct further efforts across the province and to areas of need to get every student back on track.





## Preparing Students for the Jobs of Tomorrow

Preparing students for the world of work and the jobs of tomorrow is a core pillar of our plan. Over the past four years, our government has modernized curriculum to ensure students have the life and job skills they need to succeed and get good paying jobs. We are linking curriculum expectations to labour market needs. This includes:

- Revising the career studies course to include personal financial management, budgeting and financial planning tools, as well as providing opportunities for students to investigate careers in high growth industries.
- Overhauling the math curriculum to be focused on foundational math skills, financial literacy, budgeting and coding in grades one to eight, to bring this learning back to real-life applications and skills, and building on this learning in the de-streamed grade nine math course.

- Modernizing the new elementary science and technology curriculum, along with a new de-streamed grade nine science course with new learning in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills, engineering design processes, hands-on experiential learning, the skilled trades, coding, Indigenous knowledges and perspectives, contributions to science and technology, food literacy, and the environment, to be implemented for the 2022-23 school year.
- Ensuring that students learn about STEM-related concepts and skills from kindergarten to grade 12, and increasing opportunities for more experiential, hands-on and outdoor learning and connections to STEM-related careers.
- Revising the grade 10 mandatory civics and citizenship course where students learn about civic engagement, leadership and digital literacy, to ensure we graduate leaders driven to serve and lead.
- Completing the de-streaming of all grade nine courses, to remove barriers for at-risk students and offer all grade nine subjects in one stream with enhanced supports so that all students can reach higher and achieve their full potential.

These changes to curriculum mean that Ontario is equipping students with the knowledge, tools and experience to navigate and shape their future successfully. With the growing automation of jobs, extraordinary technological advancements, and the realities of a changing global economy, students are being prepared for leadership, innovation, and the dynamic nature of work and civic life in a digital age. Going forward, Ontario will continue to update curriculum on a regular basis to ensure it is aligned with the ever-changing global economy and so that students are prepared to pursue any career they choose.

A number of job skill programs are also available to bring career pathways to life and foster unique skills that are connected to work – particularly for high-demand and high-impact fields.

# By the numbers

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- **Over 50,000 students**, or roughly 15 per cent of all grade 11 and 12 students, participating in [Specialist High Skills Majors](#) programs that focus learning in growing labour markets.
- **14,000 students** were projected to participate in the **Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program** in 2021-22.
- Over **\$39.6 million** in investments made over three years to expand direct **programming related to the skilled trades**.
- **\$1 million invested** in 2021-22 and 2022-23 to provide approximately **1,000 student bursaries each year** for those who have plans to pursue the skilled trades and have financial or other barriers to completing their Ontario secondary school diploma.
- **\$1.8 million** invested in 2022-23 to fund **entrepreneurship pilot projects** that promote entrepreneurship education for secondary students and are developed and provided in partnership with local organizations that have expertise in entrepreneurship, for example, local chambers of commerce. Projects related to STEM and the skilled trades are encouraged.
- **\$3 million** in the 2022-23 school year to provide experiential professional learning for **guidance teacher-counsellors** to enhance their understanding of the skilled trades and apprenticeships, and the benefits of a skilled trades career.
- Beginning in 2021, over **\$33 million** of investment committed to support 4,000 students pursuing training as a **personal support worker (PSW)**.

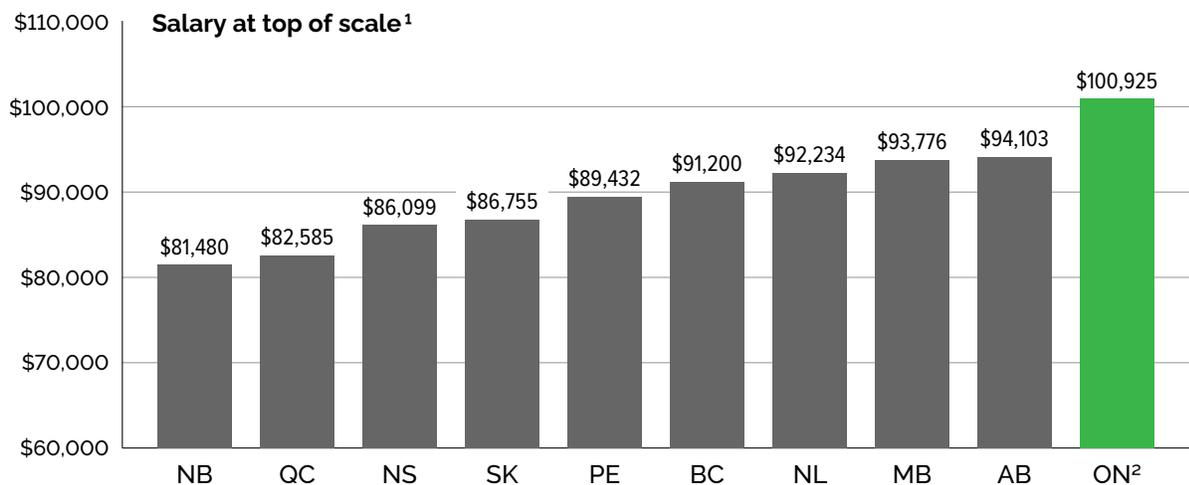
Finally, Ontario is improving access to employment for students with disabilities through an experiential learning pilot that supports the development of essential employment skills through partnerships with industry, community organizations and school boards.

# More Money to Build Schools and Improve Education

Our government recognizes the critical importance of state-of-the-art schools and classrooms that support healthy, safe and modern learning, and having high-quality educators at the front of those classrooms. To support students with better schools and high-quality education, we are:

- Delivering record funding of over \$26.6 billion for the 2022-23 school year - the highest investment in public education in Ontario's history;
- Investing \$14 billion to build state-of-the-art schools and classrooms and renew and repair existing schools, including \$2.1 billion for the 2022-23 school year;
- Allocating \$304 million of time-limited funding to support the hiring of up to 3,000 more front-line staff, including teachers, math specialists and educational assistants; and
- Ensuring that teachers are hired on their merit and qualification so the best teachers are hired to lead instruction in Ontario schools.
- Planning to provide a fair deal for teachers and education workers, while ensuring kids are back in school on time in September and with a full school experience.

## Annual Statutory Teachers' Salaries, 2019-20



**Source:** [Table C.6.3 Annual statutory teachers' salaries in public institutions, by level of education taught and teaching experience, Canadian dollars, Canada, provinces and territories, 2019/2020 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#), published March 2022

<sup>1</sup> Salary is the salary of the most prevalent teacher qualification. The annual statutory salaries are based on 2019-2020 salary scales in collective agreements, except in Ontario, where they reflect a salary grid used for funding purposes in 2019-2020.

<sup>2</sup> Ontario salary varies in the table from the 2019-20 technical paper salary of \$99,925 as it does not reflect the outcome of the 2019-22 central collective agreements at the time of its publication.

Because of our significant investments, there are more than 300 child care and education building-related projects in development across Ontario, with more than 100 actively under construction. And since 2018, we have invested over \$2 billion in capital projects in education, including 100 new schools, 88 additions and renovations to existing facilities and 6,410 new licensed child care spaces. Our government is also collaborating with Infrastructure Ontario and select school boards through a pilot designed to build schools in shorter periods of time - critical in fast growing communities of the province.



When it comes to our valued workforce, we ensured teaching hiring policies support merit, diversity, and the unique needs of the school and community. This action will support the elevation of quality educators, including talented new and young educators.

By revoking the former hiring practice that prioritized seniority over quality, we are putting more emphasis on qualification and diversity in Ontario's classrooms, helping students to see themselves reflected in their educators and ensuring that teacher hiring in Ontario puts students and their learning first – not seniority.

We will also continue to invest in Ontario's teachers and education workers to ensure we have the most qualified staff in our classrooms. That includes continued professional development – from the promotion of positive mental health, to financial literacy and the skilled trades – designed to empower our educators to support student success.

We are also committed to giving teachers and education workers a fair and reasonable pay raise. Ontario teachers earn on average approximately \$94,000 and when compared to other provinces, they have the highest salary for teachers at the top of the grid at \$100,925.



## **Mental Health:** the Foundation for Student Success

For students to succeed, they need access to mental health supports where and when they need them. Our government increased mental health funding by over 420 per cent since 2017-2018, providing \$80 million of mental health investment for Ontario students and an additional \$10 million to strengthen mental health initiatives and supports for students to help respond to pandemic disruptions.

Student mental health and well-being will continue to play a critical role in students catching-up. Beginning this Fall, our government looks forward to hearing from consultations with parents, students, and experts like children's hospitals, on how to best strengthen learning to support student mental health and well-being.

Our work will continue to be guided by the following principles:

- Mentally healthy classrooms and learning environments;
- Effective and responsive school mental health supports; and
- Connections to the broader provincial system of mental health care.

# Getting Back on Track

As we look to get students and classrooms back on track, we will build on the gains we have made together with our frontline partners, like modernized and improved curriculum, hiring practices that reward merit, and investments in modern schools that are internet-connected, STEM-focused and well-ventilated.

We will also continue to support those students who need our help the most. We are reinforcing our commitment to programs that are helping, and will explore new ways to provide support as we learn more about our students' needs.

**Together, we will ensure Ontario students catch up.**

