

2025-26 Education Funding Engagement Guide

October 2024

INTRODUCTION

The government is committed to delivering a world-class education system built on strategic investments that are aimed at boosting student achievement by focusing on strengthening reading, writing and math, and other STEM disciplines. The government continues to implement measures that will continue to focus school boards on academic achievement and the development of life and job skills.

Through Core Education Funding, the government continues to focus on going back-to-basics and preparing students for the jobs of tomorrow, by investing a projected \$29.1 billion in education funding for the 2024-25 school year.

For more information about the Core Education funding model, please see [Education funding, 2024-25](#) on the Ministry of Education's website.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The government remains committed to discussing education funding reform in Ontario with education stakeholders and partners through a process that allows stakeholders and partners to provide the benefit of their expertise, experience, and ideas.

This year's guide focuses on:

1. Core Education Funding Model Reform
2. Special Education funding
3. Efficiencies and Reducing Administrative Burden
4. Community Use of Schools
5. Student Safety and Well-Being

However, you may also submit feedback on education funding topics not outlined in this guide.

To ensure your feedback is considered, please forward your electronic submission by **November 8, 2024** to: EDULABFINANCE@ontario.ca. If you have questions about this process, please send them to the email address noted above.

CORE EDUCATION FUNDING MODEL REFORM

For the 2024-25 school year, the Ministry of Education introduced Core Education Funding (Core Ed), a transformed funding formula intended to support two goals:

1. Streamlining the funding formula to make it simpler to understand
2. Strengthening school board accountability

The Core Ed funding model also introduced a renewed enveloping framework to bring greater clarity to how funding is to be used to support student achievement and well-being.

Considerations:

- i. Now that the Core Ed funding model has been implemented, please provide your feedback on the reform. For example, did it achieve (or in time do you expect that it will achieve) the two goals set out above of simplification and strengthening accountability?
- ii. In the refreshed enveloping framework, the ministry introduced limits on funding that can be applied towards student transportation and school facilities expenditures. What opportunities or challenges is this presenting to school boards?
- iii. Are there other ways in which school board accountability can be further enhanced, either through the Core Ed Funding model itself or other mechanisms?
- iv. In the 2024-25 Education Finance Information System (EFIS) Estimates reporting cycle, Data forms B, C, and D were suppressed. These schedules provide detailed information on school board expenditures versus funding allocations. Should the ministry re-introduce these forms in the future, what are key considerations to ensure consistency and comparability between school boards that would provide meaningful information to the ministry?

SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING

The Ministry of Education currently provides district school boards with the majority of special education funding through the Special Education Fund. The Special Education Fund is for the additional or incremental costs of the programs

and services provided by school boards. This supports equity for all students with special education needs.

For the 2024-25 school year, the Special Education Fund is projected to increase to approximately \$3.71 billion, representing an increase of \$154 million, or 4.3 per cent, over 2023-24. An additional \$10 million is also being invested to support students with extraordinarily high special education needs, as part of the modernization of the Special Incidence Portion (SIP) component.

Considerations:

- i. School boards are given flexibility to use the Special Education Fund and other funding to support their special education policies and priorities to meet local priorities. How are school boards prioritizing ministry supports to meet the special education needs of their students? What other Core Ed funding are boards using to complement their Special Education Fund?
- ii. Is there a way to allocate the Special Education Fund (or portions of this fund) more effectively and/or efficiently, without creating the need for new provincial funding or increasing administrative burden?
- iii. How can the ministry further support school boards in the accurate reporting of students with special education needs and associated expenditures to ensure consistency among school boards?

EFFICIENCIES AND REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

The ministry is committed to continuous improvement in looking for ways to reduce administrative burden and further streamlining reporting for the education sector. Part of this work includes reviewing how the ministry measures ongoing program effectiveness as part of its strong financial accountability, all while trying to avoid urgent and/or stand-alone requests to school boards.

In addition, transferring funding from Responsive Education Programs (REP) to Core Ed provides predictability for school boards in financial planning. However, related data reporting requirements are generally reduced during this process to further reduce administrative burden.

- i. How can the ministry best collect data from school boards in the following instances:
 - a. Information that is infrequently requested (e.g., during the pandemic, to support central bargaining)
 - b. Programs particularly in the early stages of transition from REP to Core Ed
- ii. Are there other areas where there is potential or opportunities to find new reporting efficiencies, within EFIS or other reporting requirements to the ministry?

COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOLS

Community Use of Schools (CUS) provides funding to school boards to reduce rates for, and/or increase access to school space for community not-for-profit groups during non-school hours. CUS funds are to help school boards with the costs involved with keeping schools open after hours such as heating, lighting, and cleaning. School boards are responsible for matters related to the use and access of school space and resources.

Considerations:

- I. What criteria do you use, to determine rates for use of school space?
- II. What criteria do you use to prioritize access to school space, if any?
- III. How do you make your rates and access policies known to the public?
- IV. What criteria do you use to identify which schools are available to book?

STUDENT SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

The Urban and Priority High Schools Program (UPHS)

UPHS is delivered in 41 schools in 12 English and French school boards in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, London, Ottawa, Waterloo, and Windsor. Participating schools develop and implement action plans coordinated by a steering committee composed of the principal, staff, students, parents and local partners to

support student leadership, parent/community engagement initiatives, and programs dedicated to improving students' attendance and performance in the classroom.

Protective factors supported through UPHS include:

- Increased access to after-school or extra-curricular activities
- Support for academic achievement
- Increased access to mental health and other intra-personal supports
- Increased access to mentorship and volunteer opportunities to develop leadership skills
- Increased awareness of conflict resolution and other practices for positively contributing to school climate

Considerations:

For those school boards that receive this funding:

- i. Do you conduct any independent evaluation of the effectiveness of funding such as UPHS?
- ii. Are there any areas where funds are underutilized or overutilized?
- iii. Are there any gaps that the current UPHS funding levels can't fill?
- iv. Are there any emerging needs that UPHS could be better positioned to address?

Safe and Accepting Schools

The Safe and Accepting Schools Component provides funding for:

- Non-teaching staff (child and youth workers, social workers, educational assistants and attendance counsellors) to work with students who are at-risk of suspension or expulsion (risk factors include mental health/family challenges or living in precarious housing).
- Programming to support academic and non-academic needs of students who have been expelled or are on long-term suspension.

Considerations:

- i. What portion of your school board funding is generally dedicated to offering suspension and expulsion programming as required by PPM 141 and PPM 142? And how much of this funding supports prevention, positive behaviour supports and alternatives to suspension programming?
- ii. How is the funding generally split across the two elements (staffing versus programming supports) in your school board?
- iii. Are there any emerging needs that your school board is addressing through this funding?
- iv. Is there enough flexibility within this component to address student behavioural needs in your school boards and suspension and expulsion policies/programming?

CONCLUSION

As always, we thank you for your continued collaboration and partnership to support Ontario students. We remain committed to working closely with you to facilitate the next school year, with the best interest of Ontario's students in mind.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide, and we look forward to receiving your submission.