
Agenda – Education, Policy and Operations Committee Meeting

Wednesday, June 4, 2025

Limestone Education Centre

220 Portsmouth Avenue, Kingston, Ontario

Public Viewing: <https://bit.ly/LDSBEPOCMTGJun425>

Public Meeting – 5:30 p.m.

Land Acknowledgement: “The Limestone District School Board is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee. We acknowledge their enduring presence on this land, as well as the presence of Métis, Inuit, and other First Nations from across Turtle Island. We honour their cultures and celebrate their commitment to this land.”

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

3. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

4. PRESENTATION

4.1 Skills Ontario Competition Recognition

5. REPORTS FOR ACTION

5.1 Policy 15 Update – Director Burra (Pages 2-9)

6. REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

6.1 LDSB Before and After School Program (BASP) Review – Superintendent McDonnell (Pages 10-13)

6.2 Staff Absence Trends – Superintendent McWilliams (Pages 14-33)

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

8. NEW BUSINESS

9. CORRESPONDENCE

10. NEXT MEETING – September 3, 2025

11. ADJOURNMENT

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Administrative Report: Policy 15 Update

Education, Policy and Operations Committee Meeting

June 4, 2025

Purpose and Link to the Strategic Plan/Goal: Student Learning, Achievement and Well-Being

To update current Policy 15 (Trustee Attendance, Electronic Meetings and Participation of Board Members) to ensure compliance with Bill 98 and associated regulations (463/97).

Background

Bill 98, the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023, and resulting regulations have led to necessary changes to Policy 15, particularly related to trustee attendance at board meetings and committee of the whole meetings. It should be noted that some of these changes will be phased-in until full implementation in September 2025. In December 2024 at EPOC, a preliminary report with necessary policy changes to ensure compliance for September 2025 was shared with trustees. Trustees wanted further edits to ensure compliance, with some flexibility to accommodate unforeseen circumstances, preventing a trustee from being physically present at a meeting.

Ontario Regulation 463/97: Electronic Meetings and Meeting Attendance requires that all trustees be physically present in the meeting room for regular Board or Committee of the Whole meetings unless the Chair approves the trustee participating by electronic means. This regulation, together with s.228(1)(e) of the Education Act, means that missing one regular Board or Committee of the Whole meeting, public or private, would result in a trustee vacating their seat if the trustee fails to be physically present and has not been approved to participate by electronic means, or fails to participate by electronic means if approved to do so.

Under s.228(1)(b) of the Education Act, a trustee's seat is automatically vacated if the trustee is absent from three consecutive regular meetings of the board during each twelve-month period, unless the absence is authorized by the board of trustees.

While Regulation 463/97 and Section 228(1)(b) appear to conflict, the revised Regulation includes a process for a Trustee with sufficient notice, or in rare, unforeseen circumstances to be absent from a meeting without vacating their seat.

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Current Status

Significant edits have been made to Policy 15 to ensure regulatory compliance with Regulation 463/97. Appendix A is a copy of the existing Policy 15. Appendix B is a revised copy of Policy 15 with recommended, updated edits with additional legal consultation, to align with language set out in Regulation 463/97. The recommended edits provide further support for some flexibility to take into account unforeseen circumstances preventing a trustee from attending and/or providing notice in advance of the meeting. It also attempts to reconcile what appears to be a conflict between Regulation 463/97 and Section 228(1)(b). A process is embedded to allow absences to be approved at the subsequent board meeting, but the onus is placed on the trustee who was absent to ensure an explanation is provided to their colleagues. The edits captured in Appendix B reflect changes since the May EPOC meeting in sections 2.3.0, 2.4.0, and 3.3.0 section vi.

While trustees discussed potential adjustments to the structure of Board Committees at the May 2025 EPOC meeting, no further direction was provided. Moving forward, trustees could potentially consider the current structure of some committees. The provisions of Regulation 463/97 apply to Board Meetings and Committees of the Whole.

Next Steps and Recommendations

Trustees approve the recommended changes to Policy 15 with, or without, additional edits:

- (a) Approval of changes to Policy 15 with, or without, edits as outlined in Appendix B.

Prepared and reviewed by: Krishna Burra, Director of Education

Appendices

- a. Current Policy 15
- b. Policy 15 with edits to ensure compliance for September 2025

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ELECTRONIC MEETINGS AND PARTICIPATION OF BOARD MEMBERS

A. ELECTRONIC MEETINGS

1.0.0 Provision of Electronic Systems

Limestone District School Board shall provide for the use of electronic systems to allow members of the Board to take part in meetings of the Board and its committees, including a Committee of the Whole Board, from remote sites. In addition, the Board shall make public access to meetings available by streaming Board Meetings, Board Committees, and Committee of the Whole Board (EPOC).

2.0.0 Attendance at Meetings

2.1.0 The following persons shall be present at each meeting of the Board or Committee of the Whole Board:

- i) The Chair of the Board or their delegate;
- ii) At least one additional member of the Board;
- iii) The Director of Education of the Board or their delegate.

2.2.0 The following persons shall be present at each meeting of a committee of the Board:

- i) The Chair of the committee of the Board or their designate;
- ii) The Director of Education of the Board or their designate.

2.3.0 At the request of any Board member, the Board shall provide the member with electronic means of participating in one or more duly constituted meetings of the Board or its committees.

The request for making electronic means available to Board members for duly constituted meetings of the Board or its committees must be made at least 24 hours before the scheduled meeting.

- 2.4.0 A member of the Board who participates in a meeting through electronic means shall be deemed to be present at the meeting.

B. PARTICIPATION OF BOARD MEMBERS

- 1.0.0 The electronic means used for these meetings shall permit the member to hear and be heard by all other participants in the meeting.

- 1.1.0 Pupil representatives to the Board who are participating through electronic means shall not participate in any proceedings which are closed to the public.

- 1.2.0 The electronic means shall be provided in such a way that the rules governing conflict of interest of members are complied with.

2.0.0 Public Participation in Board Meetings

- 2.1.0 The Board shall make public access to meetings available by streaming Board Meetings, Board Committees, and Committee of the Whole Board (EPOC).

- 2.2.0 Such participation shall be in accordance with Board Policies

Revised: July 2021



TRUSTEE ATTENDANCE, ELECTRONIC MEETINGS AND PARTICIPATION OF BOARD MEMBERS

1.0.0 Attendance at Meetings

1.1.0 The following persons shall be present at each meeting of the Board or Committee of the Whole Board (EPOC):

- i) The Chair of the Board or their delegate;
- ii) At least one additional member of the Board;
- iii) The Director of Education of the Board or their delegate.

2.0.0 Trustee Attendance

2.1.0 In-person attendance requirements effective until August 31, 2025 [to be revoked September 1, 2025]:

- i) The Chair of the Board or designate shall be physically present in the meeting room of the board for at least half of the meetings of the Board during each 12-month period beginning November 15, 2022, and,
- ii) A Trustee shall be physically present in the meeting room of the Board for at least three regular meetings of the Board during each 12-month period beginning November 15, 2022.

2.2.0 In-person attendance requirements effective September 1, 2025:

- iii) All Trustees must be present in person for all Regular and Special Meetings of the Board, and all Committee of the Whole Board Meetings unless authorized to attend via electronic means as outlined in section 3.3.0, or unless the absence has been approved by board motion in alignment with section 228 of the Education Act.
- iv) Failure to attend a meeting in-person, or by electronic means when approved, or as authorized by Board motion, may eventually result in the Trustee vacating their seat. In accordance with section 228(1)(b) of the Education Act, a Trustee vacates their seat if they are absent from three (3) consecutive board meetings, unless the absence is authorized by resolution of the Board.

- v) In-person attendance requirements do not apply to Student Trustees. Student Trustees may participate in any Board meeting or committee meeting via electronic means and permission to do so is not required.
- vi) The only exception for in-person Trustee attendance for all Trustees is if all schools of the board are closed under an order made in accordance with Ontario Regulation 463/97. In these cases, all Trustees and staff may attend a meeting electronically and the physical meeting space will not be open to permit in-person attendance by members of the public.

2.3.0 At the start of each Board Meeting, a motion to accept Regrets from the previous Board Meeting or Committee of the Whole Meeting may be moved by the Vice-Chair before approval of the agenda. Each individual Regret will require a separate motion. Regrets that are approved upon said motion will be classified as approved absences. Trustees whose absences are approved absences are deemed to be compliant with O. Reg. 463/97 and/or section 228 of the *Education Act*.

2.4.0 In the circumstance that a Trustee is unable to provide regrets to the Chair, Vice-Chair, Director, or Recording Secretary before a Board Meeting or a Committee of the Whole Meeting, their absence will be marked as an unapproved absence. The Trustee shall have an opportunity to make a case for requesting the absence be changed to an approved absence before approval of the minutes at the next Board Meeting. If the absence is not approved in a motion by the Vice-Chair pursuant to 2.3.0 of this Policy, the Trustee may bring a motion to have their absence changed to an approved absence. This motion will pass upon the majority of Trustees voting in favour. Trustees whose absences are approved absences are deemed to be compliant with O. Reg. 463/97 and/or section 228 of the *Education Act*.

3.0.0 Electronic Attendance Requirements

- 3.1.0 If a Trustee proposes to participate in a meeting described in section 2.2.0 by electronic means, the Trustee shall submit a request in writing and the reasons for the request to the Chair of the Board before the meeting begins.
- 3.2.0 If the Trustee making a request for participation by electronic means is the Chair of the Board, the Chair shall submit a request in writing and reasons to the Vice-Chair of the Board.
- 3.3.0 The Chair or Vice-Chair: if it is the Chair making the request, may approve a request if they are satisfied that one or more of the circumstances identified below exist(s):
 - i) the distance from the Trustee's primary place of residence within the area of jurisdiction of the board to the meeting location is 125 kilometres or more;
 - ii) weather conditions do not allow the Trustee to travel to the meeting location safely;
 - iii) the Trustee cannot be physically present at a meeting due to health-related

- issues;
- iv) the Trustee has a disability that makes it challenging to be physically present at a meeting;
 - v) the Trustee cannot be physically present due to family responsibilities in respect of one or more of the following: the Trustee's spouse; a parent, step-parent, or foster parent of the Trustee or the Trustee's spouse; a child, step-child, foster child, or child who is under legal guardianship of the Trustee or the Trustee's spouse; a relative of the Trustee who is dependent on the Trustee for care or assistance; or a person who is dependent on the Trustee for care or assistance and who considers the Trustee to be like a family member; or
 - vi) The Trustee is not physically located within 125km of the meeting location area at the time of the meeting for personal reasons as outlined in 3.3.0 i)-v).

3.4.0 The Chair shall not approve a request for a Trustee to participate by electronic means in a Board Meeting or Committee of the Whole Meeting if the request would result in fewer than one Trustee of the Board, in addition to the Chair of the Board or their designate, being physically present in the meeting room. The same applies for the Vice-Chair approving a request from the Chair.

3.5.0 A member of the Board who participates in a meeting through electronic means shall be deemed to be present at the meeting if approved in advance of the meeting as outlined in section 3.3.0.

4.0.0 Provision of Electronic Systems

4.1.0 At the request of any Board member whose absence has been approved prior to the meeting as outlined in section 3.3.0, the Board shall provide the member with electronic means of participating in one or more duly constituted meetings of the Board or its committees.

4.2.0 The Board shall make public access to meetings available by streaming Board Meetings, Board committees, and Committee of the Whole Board

5.0.0 Participation of Board Members

5.1.0 The electronic means used for these meetings shall permit the Board member to hear and be heard by all other participants in the meeting.

5.2.0 Student Trustees who are participating through electronic means shall not participate in any proceedings which are closed to the public.

5.3.0 The electronic means shall be provided in such a way that the rules governing conflict of interest of members are complied with.

6.0.0 Public Participation in Board Meetings

- 6.1.0 The Board shall make public access to meetings available by streaming Board Meetings, Board Committees, and Committee of the Whole Board.
- 6.2.0 Such participation shall be in accordance with Board Policies.
- 6.3.0 Unless attending as part of an approved delegation, members of the public are not participants in Board Meetings or Committee of the Whole Meetings, and there is no requirement for the provision of two-way communication via electronic means.

Revised: June 2025

References:

Education Act, Section 228

Ontario Regulation 463/97 Electronic Meetings and Meeting Attendance

OPSBA Guide to Good Governance

Administrative Report: LDSB Before and After School Program (BASP) Review

Education, Policy, and Operations Committee Meeting

June 4, 2025

Purpose and Link to the Strategic Plan/Goal: Student Learning, Achievement, and Well-Being

To provide Trustees with an update on the Limestone District School Board (LDSB) Before and After School Program (BASP) Review. This work supports the LDSB Strategic Plan focus to improve responsiveness and service to families, staff, and community partners.

Background

Before and After School Programs (BASP) are programs that provide childcare and recreational activities for children in Kindergarten to Grade 6 outside of the regular school day and funded through parent fees. The Ministry of Education provides guidelines and regulations to ensure safety and effectiveness of programs.

School boards in Ontario have a responsibility to offer BASP in publicly funded schools for children in Kindergarten to Grade 6, where there is sufficient demand and/or viability ([O. Reg. 221/11](#)). In accordance with the Education Act and regulation, school boards may directly operate Before and After School Programs or they may enter into an agreement with a third-party.

LDSB has entered into agreements with third-party providers to deliver BASP programs to students from Kindergarten to Grade 6 and is in compliance with the legislation and requirements laid out by the Ministry of Education in fulfilling its duty to provide BASP. There are currently 27 third-party BASPs in LDSB elementary schools.

Authorized recreational and skill-building programs are another BASP model provided by some third-party providers. Currently, LDSB has four of these programs running in four schools, however the scope of the present LDSB BASP Review does not include authorized recreational and skill-building programs.

The current LDSB BASP Review is in response to Trustees' request for further information following concerns raised this year by a constituent related to access to BASP for students in the LDSB. These

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concerns aligned with concerns expressed by some families in previous school years. Following the Trustees' request for further information, a BASP Review was initiated. The process included a family survey, a focus group with third-party providers, a question for School Councils, and a review of Education Act regulations; the Child Care and Early Years Act; Ministry of Education and municipal guidelines; and resources related to the provision of BASP, along with literature related to best practices.

Current Status

The family survey was conducted between April 14 to 25, 2025, and was open to all current LDSB families with children in Kindergarten to Grade 6. The survey was also sent to all families who had registered their child for the first time for Kindergarten in LDSB for the 2025-2026 school year. The survey provided families with the opportunity to identify needs and barriers in accessing BASP. One thousand nine hundred and ten (1,910) survey responses were received.

The focus group discussion with third-party providers of BASP in LDSB schools and Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSM) from local municipalities, was conducted on April 30. Two questions for discussion were shared ahead of time:

- What do you see as the barrier to providing accessible BASP services to families in the LDSB?
- What strategies can you identify to address the barriers and leverage more access to this service?

School Councils were asked to respond to the following question:

- What improvements or changes would you suggest for the accessibility of Before and After School Programs in your area?

Eleven School Councils responded.

There were several recurring themes and key issues identified from the family survey, School Council question, and third-party provider focus group related to current gaps in service, anticipated needs for next year as well as the most common barriers to accessing BASP.

The following chart summarizes some of these key issues and recurring themes:

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Key Issues	Family Survey and School Council Feedback	Third-Party Provider Focus Group
1. Waitlists	Not enough spots to meet needs	Staff shortage and high turnover impact ability to accommodate requests for additional spaces.
2. No program access	No program in school or area	Staff shortages impact ability to open additional programs
3. Support for students with diverse needs	Not enough spots to meet needs, specifically for students with special education needs	Staffing shortages make it difficult to accommodate enhanced support for students with special education needs
4. Flexibility (full time/part time, schedule)	Some families need after school care only, some need before school care only, some need before and after school care, need to support different work schedules	Staffing challenges contribute to program availability

The data from the review highlights a recurring concern from families that there are not enough programs and not enough available spots to meet their family needs. In addition, third-party providers identified the shortage of staff as the major barrier to providing more BASP spots for families. It was also noted that staffing rural area schools is particularly difficult for providers. Several LDSB schools do not currently have a BASP at their school site. These include Prince Charles PS (Verona), GREC, Land O'Lakes PS, Amherst Island PS, Perth Road PS, W.J. Holsgrove PS, J.G. Simcoe PS, Storrington PS, Glenburnie PS, Clarendon Central PS, Centreville PS, Enterprise PS, and Tamworth ES.

Next Steps and Communication Plan

The LDSB has been working diligently with the third-party providers and the CMSMs to address access to BASPs by advertising for Expressions of Interest for BASP in the schools currently without this service, working with third-party providers to share all job postings with all LDSB Educational Assistants (EAs) and Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), and, where possible, supporting courtesy busing requests for families to access third-party BASPs in the community.

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Based on the BASP Review, the following are next steps:

- Review additional data sources to support decision-making related to identifying community needs. For example, EDI, Baragar–Can Census, mapping of other third-party BASP options outside of LDSB schools according to community/region needs.
- Consider busing or catchment area changes in specific school communities to increase access to third-party BASP.
- Continue supporting third-party providers in recruitment of LDSB ECEs/EAs.
- Explore further expansion/partnerships with authorized recreation and skill-building programs where feasible
- Consider prioritization of BASP Extended Day (JK/SK) Programs in LDSB schools.
- Investigate an in-house LDSB pilot.

Recommendations

That Trustees receive this report for information.

Prepared by: Alison McDonnell, Superintendent of Education and Val Arsenault, Principal

Reviewed by: Krishna Burra, Director of Education

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Administrative Report: Staff Absence Trends

Education, Policy, and Operations Committee Meeting

June 4, 2025

Purpose and Link to the Strategic Plan/Goal: Student Learning, Achievement, and Well-Being

To provide Trustees with an overview of sick leave trends for staff, with a focus on the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years. Supporting consistency in instructional programming for students, is a cornerstone of student achievement and well-being and therefore promoting regular staff attendance is foundational to every strategic goal.

Background

Although there are several reasons staff may be absent, including, but not limited to, sick leave, medical appointments, personal leave, bereavement, professional development and student activities, the focus of this report is sick leave/sick medical leave usage.

For many years, the Board has participated in an annual absence study conducted by School Boards Cooperative Inc. (SBCI). Participating boards provide sick leave data to SBCI who in turn analyses the data and provides each board with their own sick leave usage statistics together with benchmarking against aggregate school board statistics across the province. This trend analysis has been helpful in demonstrating how Limestone performs year-over-year as an individual board, as well as in comparison to boards across the province. It should be noted that the Ministry now requires all boards to share their SBCI data, or similar absence data if they are not part of SBCI.

Data demonstrates that over the past five school years, Limestone has generally trended below the provincial average for sick leave usage, despite experiencing an increase in sick leave usage for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years.

As a result of increasing sick leave, a second Health and Wellness Specialist was hired for a one-year term appointment to support efforts at overseeing sick leave and implementing the board's Attendance Support Program. With the addition of this staff member, intentional messaging was shared in the fall promoting the importance of regular, consistent attendance, as well as advising all employees of follow up that could be expected from supervisors and/or human resources staff as employees reached established thresholds.

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Current Status

A preliminary analysis of sick leave usage for the 2024-2025 school year indicates a similar trend to the 2023-2024 school year overall, with a slight decline in sick leave usage. That said, efforts to maintain two Health and Wellness Specialists to support employee sick leave and promote regular attendance have been hindered due to unforeseen circumstances. The goal remains to have two Health and Wellness Specialists for the 2025-2026 school year focused on sick leave, attendance support, return to work and accommodation.

The Attendance Support Program is a mechanism to identify attendance concerns, provide appropriate supports, establish attendance goals, and monitor ongoing progress with the goal of improving attendance for identified employees. The employee Health and Wellness Specialists will play a key role in the implementation and monitoring of Limestone's Attendance Support Program.

Although Limestone has had an Attendance Support Program for many years, it has recently been reviewed and updated to meet PPM 171 – Attendance Support Programs. The new policy framework is intended to enhance employee well-being and attendance to support student achievement. Those boards that do not already have an Attendance Support Program must develop and implement a program by June 2026. All boards are required to post their program publicly on their respective websites.

While Limestone has a full complement of permanent employees, we do experience some challenges in specific teaching areas at times. For example, technological studies and computer science at secondary, and French language qualified teachers from Kindergarten to Grade 12. Shortages are much more pronounced in other parts of the province and for some boards requiring more French First Language teachers. Additionally, given retirees can only work 50 days in any given school year, we do face some challenges filling temporary vacancies with qualified teaching staff. This challenge is ubiquitous for school boards across the province. As a result of these conditions, the Ontario Council of Directors of Education (CODE) recently published a report: Ontario Education Staffing Crisis-Addressing the Shortage of Certified Teachers in Ontario Classrooms. This report can be viewed in [Appendix A](#). Further Limestone context for this report will be shared at the June 4, 2025, EPOC meeting.

Next Steps and Communication Plan

A presentation at the EPOC Meeting on June 4 will accompany this report and provide more detailed information on sick leave trends. This data will continue to be monitored moving forward to assess trends and support employee attendance.

Recommendations

That Trustees receive this report for information.

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Prepared by: Susan McWilliams, Superintendent of Human Resources

Reviewed by: Krishna Burra, Director of Education

Attachment: Appendix A: CODE Report: Ontario Education Staffing Crisis- Addressing the Shortage of
Certified Teachers in Ontario Classrooms.

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April 2025

ONTARIO EDUCATION STAFFING CRISIS

Addressing the Shortage of Certified
Teachers in Ontario Classrooms

A Call for Immediate Action



COUNCIL OF ONTARIO DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION
CONSEIL ONTARIEN DES DIRECTIONS DE L'ÉDUCATION

1123 Glenashton Drive
Oakville, ON L6H 5M1
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01

Executive Summary

There is a significant and growing

teacher shortage in Ontario, affecting all 73 publicly funded school boards across our province – English, Catholic, and French. The education sector is experiencing significant daily classroom teacher shortages across the sector primarily due to teacher absences, capped enrolments at Faculties, as well as shortages of certified early childhood educators and education assistants (Ontario Principals' Council, 2023; People for Education, 2024). Additionally, in specific parts of the province, there are shortages of certified teachers in specific subjects such as Technological Education, Indigenous Languages and French – including French as a Second Language, French Immersion and Francophone teachers in our French Language School Districts.



Too many students, already suffering from the pandemic upheaval, are now subjected to a series of unqualified adults in charge of their learning.

*Kathy Hibbert, Associate Dean
Teacher Education
Western University*

While daily staffing challenges across the sector impact schools and more importantly, students, this report focuses on the teacher shortage in Ontario. It explores the contributing factors and offers practical strategies to mitigate these daily and longer-term shortages to ensure high-quality education for all students. Without immediate investment in the profession, shortages are expected to worsen in the coming years, especially by 2027 (Jones, 2024).

The number of applicants who are interested in entering the teaching profession has never been stronger, with the number of funded spaces in faculties of education insufficient to accommodate the interest.

High-quality classroom instruction by certified teachers is critical for students to learn and succeed.

Research from the OECD shows that certified teachers have a significant positive impact on student achievement. Students taught by well-trained, certified teachers generally perform better in academic assessments. Their findings highlight the importance of a strong teaching force for high educational outcomes across OECD countries. This is primarily measured through data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Key points about the impact of certified teachers based on OECD findings:

- **Higher student achievement:**
Studies consistently link higher levels of teacher certification with improved student performance in various subjects, including reading, math, and science.
- **Quality of initial teacher training:**
The content of teacher education programs, particularly those including strong subject matter knowledge, assessment and evaluation, pedagogy, and practical teaching experience, plays a crucial role in teacher effectiveness.
- **Teacher stability and retention:**
A well-trained and certified teaching force is associated with lower teacher turnover, which supports the continuity of student learning and improve student achievement.
- **Impact on disadvantaged students:**
Certified teachers can have a particularly significant impact on the academic achievement of students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds (OECD).

02

Issues

Factors Contributing to the Teacher Shortage

As teachers retire or leave the profession, there are not enough new teachers to replace them. The Ministry of Education warns the situation will get worse in the coming years (Callan & D'Mello, 2024; Jones, 2024).

At the same time the shortage of certified teachers is growing, overall enrolment in Ontario schools is also increasing. The result is a demand for even more certified teachers (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2024b).

The teacher shortage is particularly challenging in specific subject areas including French and Technological Education (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021, 2024a; Ontario Public School Board Association 2020, 2021). Teacher shortages in the French-language education system have been ongoing since 2016 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021).

The limited supply of teachers is also exacerbated in certain areas of the province including northern, rural and remote areas.

In 2015, Ministry policy changes increased the length of time to complete teacher education programs (Kitchen & Petrarca, 2022). This meant fewer graduates were available to fill yearly vacancies. In 2011, over 7,600 students were admitted to teacher education programs. This number dropped to 4,500 by 2022. (Ontario College of Teachers, 2022). Additionally, it has been challenging to attract teachers from other provinces and countries as shortages exist nationally and internationally. The number of new teachers from other provinces and countries was 1,916 in 2023, down from 2,415 in 2011. The Ontario College of Teachers forecasts a need of 1,500 more new teachers every year by 2030 (Ontario College of Teachers, 2022).

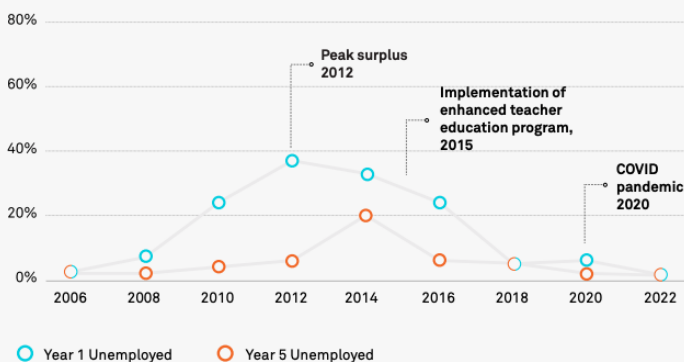
The number of teachers certified has also declined since 2005 when more than 9,000 teachers were certified, with a high of 9,638 in 2008. For the past three years, the numbers of teachers certified were (Ontario College of Teachers, 2024):

- 2021 - 5,747
- 2022 - 7,957
- 2023 - 7,171
- 2024 - 8,139

Key Factors

- **Aging workforce and retirements:** A significant portion of the teaching workforce is nearing retirement age, leading to a large number of vacancies in the coming years (Ontario College of Teachers, 2023).
- **Increased student enrolment:** In some regions, rising student populations, especially newcomers, are outpacing the supply of new teachers (Jones, 2024). Enrolment has been on the rise within the French-language sector since 2005-06 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021). A commitment by the Government of Canada to increase the presence of French-speaking immigrants outside of Québec is now having a significant impact on the student enrolment within Ontario's French-language system (IRCC, 2023).
- **Increased sick leave access:** Policy changes to sick leave entitlements, along with a lack of financial resources, have contributed to the number of daily, unfilled vacancies. The average number of days absent for elementary teachers in 2023-24 was 15.59 days, and for secondary teachers was 13.25 days (SBCI, 2023-24) – for an overall absentee rate of one and a half days a month for every teacher.
- **Teacher Education Programs:** The increase to the length of teacher education programs in 2015, combined with a cap on post-secondary funding, has resulted in a decrease in the supply of certified teachers. In 2024, a total of 9,019 applications to the two-year program within Ontario faculties of education were received, with less than 50% of applicants, on average within faculties of education, accepted due to existing funding and enrolment caps; this figure does not include applications to concurrent or Master's programs (The Ontario University Applications Centre [OUAC]).

Figure 1
Trend reported unemployment, teaching Years 1 and 5, 2006-2022



(Ontario College of Teachers, 2022)

2012
Peak of teacher supply

2015
Change to 2-year teacher education program

2015-2025
Decline in teacher supply

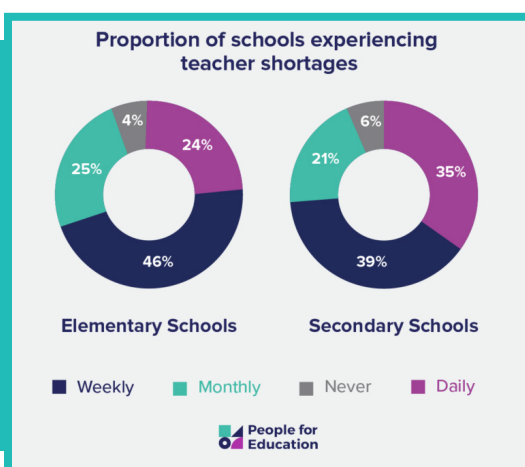
- **Limited pathways to teacher certification:** Barriers to entry for internationally educated teachers and those seeking alternative certification routes restrict the pool of certified candidates. In addition to these barriers, certification delays add to daily unfilled jobs by certified teachers (Balintec, 2022).
- **National and international teacher shortages:** With other provinces and countries experiencing teacher shortages, incentives from other jurisdictions have drawn from the number of certified teachers within the province (BC Gov News, 2024). With the recent federal requirements on international student caps, it is critical that these are not imposed on international teacher education candidates.

Impact on the Education System

The teacher shortage impedes the progress towards achieving Ontario's education priorities and negatively impacts learning for Ontario's students. On a daily basis across the province, principals and vice-principals scramble each day to implement plans to address unfilled vacancies (Teotonio, 2024). These plans may include the temporary reassignment of another teacher, often from intervention supports, to cover the class. Unfilled vacancies exist where there are no certified teachers or no certified occasional teachers to cover the class. As a result, classes are either cancelled or uncertified 'teachers,' including university students, are utilized to supervise the classroom to address safety compliance concerns. Safety compliance is not the same as teaching, and as a result, the quality of education is being impacted (Ontario Principals' Council, 2023).

In areas of the province where the shortage is at a "crisis" level, significant numbers of uncertified staff serve as the regular classroom teacher.

In some cases, the lack of certified teachers has resulted in schools being partially closed. In one Northern school board, for example, part of the school is bussed over an hour one way to another school due to the inability to hire permanent certified teachers.



(People for Education, 2024)

70% of elementary schools and 74% of secondary schools are experiencing daily or weekly shortages of qualified teachers.

School-based Impact

- **Increased reliance on uncertified teachers:** To fill vacancies, administrators utilize uncertified staff, potentially impacting the quality of education (Jones, 2024; Ontario Principals' Council, 2023).
- **Difficulty filling specialized positions:** Shortages are particularly acute in specific subject areas such as French and Technological Education, compounded by recent Ministry of Education policy decisions to mandate more Technological Education courses as a graduation requirement (Jones, 2024; Zwaagstra, 2024).
- **Inequitable access to education:** Teacher shortages disproportionately affect rural and remote communities, as well as schools serving greater proportions of underserved marginalized populations (e.g., First Nation communities).

03

Calls to Action

Strategies to Address the Teacher Shortage

An intentional and formalized plan, with short-term and long-term strategies, is needed to address the critical and immediate teacher shortage in Ontario. The shortage of teachers in Ontario cannot be resolved by school boards and faculties of education without significant investment in the education sector by the provincial government.

There has been a steady erosion of education funding across the province as a result of funding formulas not keeping up with inflation. While the overall funding has increased, this is due to increased student enrolment. Without adjustments for inflation, there are fewer funds within the sector to address a multitude of challenges, including teacher shortages (See et al., 2020).

There is a need for the government and the Ministry of Education to formally acknowledge and address the staffing shortages that exist in the education sector. The immediate short-term solutions with appropriate funding must be prioritized.

- **Fund more teacher education seats within Ontario Faculties of Education:** Teacher education programs have reported that they have twice as many applicants as they have funded spaces.

More funded spaces in existing teacher education programs will immediately increase the pool of certified teachers (Ontario Teachers' Federation, 2024), as opposed to making any significant changes to the length of the program. The length of the program has been a topic of much discussion with the suggestion that there should be a return to a one-year program. The support for the addition of compressed programs may be the best solution, ensuring that teacher candidates are well prepared for the role while meeting the needs of the sector, especially in high demand areas.

Reducing the length of the program back to one-year may also have the unintended consequence of impacting the readiness of new teachers as they begin their teaching career. Increasing the number of seats in teacher education programs would also better meet current and immediate needs. Connected to this issue is the requirement to restore or boost the overall program funding to faculties of education which was also reduced by 50% with the change to the two-year program.

- **Increase use of retired teachers:** Provide immediate support by increasing the number of days for retired teachers from 50 to 95 days. This is not a long-term solution, but rather one that will address immediate needs until other strategies are implemented.
- **Streamline pathways to teacher certification:** Facilitate the certification of internationally educated teachers and those with alternative qualifications to expand the pool of certified candidates:
 - Review the recent policy changes at the College of Teachers to determine the efficacy of the program changes to attract more international and interprovincial teachers;
 - Support internationally educated teachers to allow them to fully understand the uniqueness of Ontario's education system and be successful as classroom teachers;
 - Review the impact of transitional certificates based on school board input (Ontario College of Teachers, 2024) with funding provided to faculties to support the implementation of the transitional certificate.
 - Recognize the expertise and experiences of education assistants and early childhood educators who may wish to proceed to teacher education programs;
 - Review the existing time constraints for the College of Teachers to grant certifications.
- **Offer incentives for teachers to work in high-demand areas:** Financial incentives, housing assistance, and student loan forgiveness programs can encourage teachers to work in underserved communities (BC Gov News, 2024). This could include signing bonuses and service retention bonuses for graduates who choose to relocate to underserved and northern areas of the province.
 - One potential model would be the three-year subsidy (2023-2026) that the province of Ontario instituted to pay for Basic Constable Training (\$15,450 as of 2023) to increase the pool of available police officers. This model could be utilized for overall recruitment, to hire within specific subject areas, or to attract teachers to specific geographic regions of the province.
 - Expand the Learn and Stay Grant beyond the health care sector to the education sector.
- **Offer incentives for teacher candidates to complete their practicums in other parts of the province:** There are insufficient practicum placements in areas of the province due to many factors (e.g., small schools, teacher demographics), with incentives ensuring that teacher candidates complete this critical program requirement.
- **Target recruitment efforts and incentives to attract teachers for specialty areas such as French, Technological Education, and Indigenous languages:** Under the current central bargaining approach, the province is responsible for teacher compensation decisions. The province needs to create monetary incentives to attract specialty area teachers and to work with the provincial unions to address the staffing crisis in Ontario.

- **Review New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP):** The recent changes to education means there is a need to review NTIP. The current shortage of occasional teachers prevents school boards from providing a fulsome induction and mentoring program for new teachers. In some areas of the province, teacher demographics combined with the increasing demands of the profession result in fewer teachers available to mentor new teachers.
- **Increase support and incentives for internationally educated teachers:** Internationally educated teachers need specific support to better understand the Ontario classroom context including diverse student and behavioural needs. Providing incentives would assist in attracting them. Additionally, all teachers could benefit from learning about the unique experiences and skills that internationally educated teachers bring to all Ontario classrooms..
- **Expand alternative certification programs:** Create more alternative pathways for individuals with relevant experience to become certified teachers and transition into teaching, especially in high-need subject areas such as Technological Education and Indigenous languages..
 - In addition to more pathways into the profession, fund more compressed teacher education programs to decrease the time requirement to become a certified teacher in Ontario (Gaudreau, 2023). Again, compressing a two-year program would ensure the preparedness of teacher candidates.
- **Partner with universities to increase teacher education enrolment:** Provide funding to offer scholarships and incentives to encourage students to pursue teaching degrees, especially for Indigenous and racialized candidates in light of the research demonstrating the value of a diverse teaching force. Research from literature consistently shows ‘benefits of access to same-race/ ethnicity teachers on the outcomes of students of color, including increased test-score performance (Dee 2004; Egalite, Kisida, and Winters 2015), academic expectations (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016), and reduced absences, suspensions, and expulsions’ (Blazar, D., & Lagos, F., 2021).
 - The government has recently implemented free or reduced tuition in the health care sector to address significant labour shortages in the sector. Follow this implementation model for the education sector.
- **Promote the teaching profession:** Public awareness campaigns and initiatives to encourage young people to consider teaching and/or support positions in education as a career can help attract new talent to the profession; including the creation of a Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) education pathway for a variety of teaching and other occupations in the education sector.
- **Increased funding for education:** Allocate more resources to schools to hire additional staff, including permanent occasional teachers, and to improve overall teaching conditions. It is important to note that there are also support staff shortages in all boards, which directly impact teaching and learning.

- **Data collection leadership:** The Ministry of Education should implement a standardized system for tracking teacher data including shortages by region, division, and subject.
 - Create forecasting models to more accurately track retirement trends and demographics of certified teachers.

Strategies to Address the Teacher Shortage Within the French-language System

All the strategies identified above are also pertinent for the French-language system. In addition, in January 2021, a French-language Working Group submitted a report to Ontario's Ministry of Education addressing the ongoing shortage of French-language teachers since 2016. The report included recommendations in three main areas:

- Teacher Training Programs and Labour Market Needs (24 recommendations);
- Professional Integration and Retention of New Teachers (four recommendations);
- Promoting the Teaching Profession and Employment Opportunities (two recommendations).

The report also highlighted the need for funding to implement these five recommendations. (Report on the shortage of teachers in Ontario's French-language education system, 2021).

Despite efforts since 2021, Ontario still faces a shortage of French-language teachers in 2025.

The strategies identified in the 2021 report and action plan developed by the Ministry based on these recommendations should be updated to include the new strategies outlined above in this report. Both the English and French-language systems share the same legislation and regulations, although the minority context presents additional challenges.

- **Increase funding for French-language education:** Invest in programs to attract and retain French-language teachers. The shortage of French-language teachers is significant across Canada.
- Considering the number of newcomers accepting teaching positions in the French-language system and considering the lack of French-language services for newcomers in the province, provide additional financial support to French-language school boards to support these teachers during their first and second years of teaching.

Hiring French-language teachers from abroad has become part of the solution for French-language systems across Canada. In Ontario, until local education program expansions produce more teachers, recruiting international teachers is part of the solution (180-200 teachers from abroad since 2023, La Passerelle, Centre franco). This situation requires more funding to support the integration of these teachers within the Boards.

The New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), despite its orientation towards professional learning, should incorporate flexibility in its mandatory teacher appraisal process during the first year of teaching for teachers from abroad. It is essential for these educators to acclimate themselves to the school's culture and pedagogy before undergoing an appraisal.

Addressing the shortage of French-language teachers in Ontario is crucial to ensure the provision of quality education for young francophone students.

04

Conclusion

The teacher shortage in Ontario is having immediate and significant implications for the education system and for student achievement and success. Addressing this shortage requires an immediate, multi-faceted approach involving the Ministry of Education, the Ontario Treasury Board, provincial school boards and Trustee Associations, principal associations, faculties of education, the Ontario College of Teachers, the Ontario Teachers' Federation and its member unions (Hibbert, 2024).

Implementing the strategies outlined in this report is a step forward to ensuring that Ontario continues with a strong education system and that all students have certified and dedicated teachers.

The strategies in this report will set Ontario on a positive path forward. Implementing them will help ensure that students have access to the certified teachers they deserve and maintain Ontario's status as one of the most effective public education systems in the world.

CODE looks forward to working closely with the Ministry of Education to implement our Calls to Action and ensure the public remains confident in Ontario's Kindergarten to Grade 12 publicly funded education system.

About CODE

The Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) is the professional association which represents Directors of Education of the 73 publicly funded District School Boards in Ontario.

Strategic Priorities

To achieve our goals, CODE has established three strategic priorities:

- **Advocacy:** We advocate for policies and programs that improve student achievement, ensure safety, and promote well-being. That means working with decision-makers, securing funding, and supporting the recruitment and retention of skilled staff.
- **Leadership:** We help members grow as leaders by offering networking, mentorship, professional development, and opportunities to share solutions to community challenges.
- **Equity and inclusion:** We promote equity and inclusion to ensure all students learn practical knowledge, job skills, and life skills in safe, supportive environments—no matter who they are.

05

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