

# Reach Every Student Energizing Ontario Education

Today, students are doing better in reading, writing and math and are graduating in higher numbers.

But we have more to do.

Over the next four years, we will keep working with parents and other education partners to improve the publicly funded education system for Ontario's two million students.

If we had to pick one word that epitomizes our vision for education, it would be a system that “energizes” everyone.

## Our Commitment

We are committed to helping every student reach his or her full potential.

A strong, publicly funded education system is at the heart of our government's mandate and is vital to the prosperity of Ontario.

This is an outline of our government's plan to continue working with you – our partners – to energize Ontario education.

Delivering on our ambitious agenda will take a lot of determination and focus.

That's why we need your excitement, enthusiasm and positive energy to get us there!

## Our Education Priorities

Our work during the next four years will focus on three core priorities:

### 1 Higher levels of student achievement

Strong literacy and numeracy skills are the critical foundation for all academic achievement and for a lifetime of success.

Our goal is to have 75 per cent of our Grade 6 students achieving the provincial standard (that's a “B” grade or 70 per cent) in reading, writing and math.

That's up from the 54 per cent of students who were meeting the standard in 2002-03. We will achieve this goal by building upon and expanding our Literacy and Numeracy strategy.

Our goal is to have 85 per cent of students graduating from high school. When that happens, over 20,000 more students will graduate every year, compared to 2003-04. As part of our Student Success Strategy, we will continue to expand course choices and innovative programs already helping more students graduate.

### 2 Reduced gaps in student achievement

We know that some students struggle for a wide variety of reasons.

Boys, students with special education needs, children from low-income families, aboriginal students, recent immigrants, and students with English or French as a second language are some of the students who face barriers to learning.

Equity and excellence go hand in hand. We need to work together to help all students.

### 3 Increased public confidence in publicly funded education

A key goal of our work will be to build confidence in the publicly funded education system.

Ontario students are performing among the best in the world on international tests. These results are cause for pride and confirm strong achievement.

However, our schools are not just buildings for learning. They are also the heart of our communities.

We want parents and the broader community to enthusiastically support our schools and get involved.

*Wherever illiteracy is a problem, it's as fundamental a problem as getting enough to eat or a place to sleep. The native language takes precedence over every other subject of study: nothing else can compare with it in usefulness.* NORTHROP FRYE

## How We Will Get There

We have identified other factors that need to be in place if we are going to achieve our three priorities. Some of these include:

### **Early childhood learning**

- We are committed to phasing in full-day learning for all four- and five-year-olds. Early learning is crucial for student success at the elementary level and is the foundation for success in later years.

### **Parent engagement**

- We will continue to work on identifying and promoting specific practices that will help to break down barriers to parent engagement.

### **School buildings**

- We will continue to invest in our schools to upgrade facilities and improve buildings and grounds.

### **Small class size**

- Small class size will continue to be a priority. Our goal is to have 90 per cent of primary classrooms (JK through Grade 3) with 20 or fewer students.

### **Character development and student engagement**

- Schools contribute to a cohesive society. The shared vision is schools that are safe, caring and inclusive places where students and staff treat one another with respect and students thrive.

### **Arts education**

- Arts education fosters creativity, innovation and critical thinking. We will continue to be strong supporters of the arts in both elementary and secondary schools.

### **Safe and healthy schools**

- We will continue to work with our partners to make our schools safe for all students, staff and visitors.
- We have also launched the next steps in our healthy schools strategy designed to promote a life-time of smart food choices and active living, including dropping trans fat from school cafeteria menus and vending machines.

## Energizing Ontario Education

Ninety-five per cent of Ontario's students attend our publicly funded schools.

Our goal is to make those schools the first choice for *all* parents.

Let's brag about our students' successes whenever we can. Ontario has a great story to tell – let's tell it proudly and passionately.

The next four years are a new call to action – for parents, students, the sector and communities – to energize education and create a stronger Ontario.

We all have a role to play in improving Ontario's publicly funded education system.

We must work together to help all students reach their full potential, and promote their participation in our society.

Today's students are the workforce and citizens of tomorrow. They represent our future prosperity.

Together, we can reach every student, and energize education in Ontario!

*We need more than ever to look at the public education system as the primary tool we have to ensure that children are able to grow up to become citizens.*

JOHN RALSTON SAUL

## Questions For Discussion

Here are some questions to get you started:

- **Are there programs or events happening at your school that you think can help other Ontario schools?**
- **What do you feel is the most important factor in reducing gaps in student achievement?**
- **How can you get involved at your school?**

This document provides highlights from the government's plan for education for the next four years. The full version is available at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/energize](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/energize)