



February 15, 2019

To: Toronto Education Workers/Local 4400 Early Childhood Educators

From: Toronto Education Workers/Local 4400 Executive

Ministry of Education Consultations re: Class Size Engagement and Ontario School Board Hiring Practices

Below are some example points on “Class Size averages instead of caps” and “having an Early Childhood Educator and Teacher in Full Day Kindergarten” that will help support the FDK model that TDSB is currently using.

We are asking you to write an e-mail to the Ministry of Education - edulabfinance@ontario.ca as they are currently taking consultations on *Class Size Engagement and Ontario School Board Hiring Practices* using the example points below and any other information that you feel will help to strengthen the fight against the impending possible cutbacks to the full day kindergarten program in Ontario.

Sample Points on Class size averages instead of caps:

- Class size averaging does not work. In recent years, we have seen some classes of 35 and other classes of 20. That’s not fair for students or teachers.
- Students cannot get the individualized instruction that they need. And there are safety issues when classes are too large.
- Smaller class sizes are particularly important given that there are many more students with special needs and mental health issues in many classes that require additional attention by the teachers and ECE’s.
- The latest research strongly supports the premise that class size is an important determinant of student outcomes. Smaller class sizes in primary grades have provided greater opportunity for ECE’s and teachers to meet the learning needs of each student.

Sample Points on having an early childhood educator and teacher in Full Day Kindergarten

- The model for full-day Kindergarten was set up by experts. We’re not talking about kids sitting at desks. These early learners, who are in school for the first time are getting involved in play-based learning in a very deep way.
- Each partner in the team is bringing specialized expertise into the classroom to meet the critical learning and socio-emotional skills of these children.
- Ontario has made a big investment in full-day Kindergarten. And parents have come to expect and trust the two educators and what they bring to the Kindergarten classroom.
- Studies have shown that those countries that have provided a better start see their young children do better as they progress through grades. These students have higher graduation rates and better skills around self-reliance, critical thinking and problem-solving.



Additional Sample Points:

- Prior to the regulation limiting maximum enrollment in kindergarten to 29 students, the sizes of kindergarten classes were based upon an average. It was not uncommon to see up to 36 students in a kindergarten class. With the regulated maximum at 29, parents and staff can be assured that these classes will not be too greatly over-crowded. Permitting exemption to allow class sizes up to 32 is detrimental to the students and their learning environment. The regulation (O.Reg. 132/12 Class Size) under the Education Act should continue to set hard caps on Kindergarten class sizes.
- One way to ensure this would be for school boards to spend their Early Learning funding allocation on kindergarten classrooms. Currently, many school boards are directing this allocation into other programming leaving these boards under-hired for ECEs and therefore lacking the specific expertise these education professionals bring to early learning.
- Increasing the class size, at any grade will have an impact on learning outcomes. Students have less access to individual coaching and feedback. There is also less time and opportunity for students who require accommodations for learning and less time for contact with parents.
- A board-wide average is not an effective mechanism to set class sizes, if that was the only guarantee of class size. Local class size maximums must be in place to provide protections for students along with the funding generated as a result of the average.
- Working to an average alone would introduce too much volatility in class sizes.
- Board-wide averages also makes programming difficult to determine, as classes that are limited due to physical space cannot be adequately managed.
- Board-wide averages in isolation are not feasible because a school board's geography and demographics are not homogeneous. Northern and rural school boards can have a dramatically different class size in the same course in different schools.
- Although class sizes for special education classes for students with exceptionalities are mandated in Regulation 298 under the Education Act, the class sizes in these self-contained classes are routinely pierced and must be lowered. Furthermore, because classes that have students with multiple exceptionalities have higher class size maximums, OSSTF/FEESO has found that some school boards avoid reporting a single exceptionality on a student's IEP in order to have a higher class size

We appreciate the work you do and we know how valuable you are to the learning needs of all of the students within the TDSB.