

FUNDRAISING AND FEES

This report is an excerpt from the 2015 Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools.

Many schools in Ontario rely on fundraising to support student enrichment and engagement, providing funds for field trips, learning materials, and athletics. This extra support can be particularly important for increasing opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities, which are associated with student success and improved school climate.¹

However, fundraising can also exacerbate gaps between schools in high- and low-income neighbourhoods.²

The fees that many schools charge for enrichment and experiential learning opportunities can also be a barrier to participation for some students.³

I couldn't offer our enrichment and enhanced programs without these funds.

Elementary school, Upper Canada DSB

It's challenging for a small school like mine with very limited abilities to raise [money] through fundraising. This can create very clear "have" and "have not" scenarios in our board with respect to things like playground equipment, sports equipment, and tech devices.

Elementary school, Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB

In 2012, Ontario's Ministry of Education released guidelines for both fundraising and fees to address some of these issues.⁴ Although the guidelines sought to respond to concerns about fundraising and fees, the stipulations in the guidelines remain broad and, in several instances, are subject to varying interpretation.

QUICK FACTS

- 99% of elementary schools and 78% of secondary schools report fundraising activities by parents, students, and staff.
- Schools report raising from \$0 to \$250,000.
- 47% of elementary schools fundraise for learning resources (e.g. classroom technology, online resources, and textbooks).

FUNDRAISING

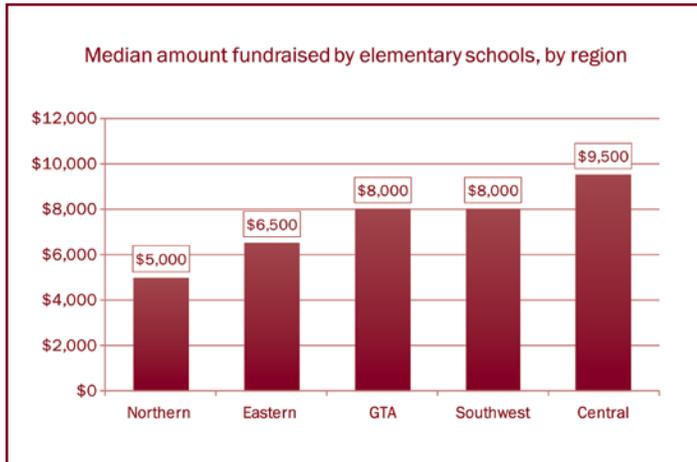
Ministry fundraising guidelines allow fundraising for "Supplies, equipment or services that complement items funded by provincial grants (for example, extracurricular band equipment, audio-visual equipment)," as well as things such as field trips, guest speakers, and scholarships. Schools may also fundraise for upgrades to sporting facilities, schoolyard improvements, and infrastructure improvements as long as they don't increase the size of the school and are not already funded by provincial grants.

Under the guidelines, it is unacceptable to fundraise for classroom learning materials and textbooks, or for facility renewal, maintenance, or upgrades that are currently funded through provincial grants.⁵

It is clear from the results in this year's survey that provincial guidelines are loosely followed:

- 47% of elementary schools report fundraising for learning resources. Among those schools:
 - 94% fundraise for technology resources;
 - 25% fundraise for online resources; and
 - 12% fundraise for textbooks.

Figure 1



WIDE GAPS MAY CREATE WIDE INEQUITIES

The range in the total amounts raised is very wide, from \$0 to \$250,000. The top 10 percent of elementary schools raised the same amount as the bottom 69 percent combined. The top 5 percent of secondary schools raised the same amount as the bottom 85 percent combined. There are also regional differences in funds raised. (See Figure 1)

Our families (over 70%) live in government subsidized housing. Our ability to fundraise is negligible. Our school has no playground equipment.

Elementary school, Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB

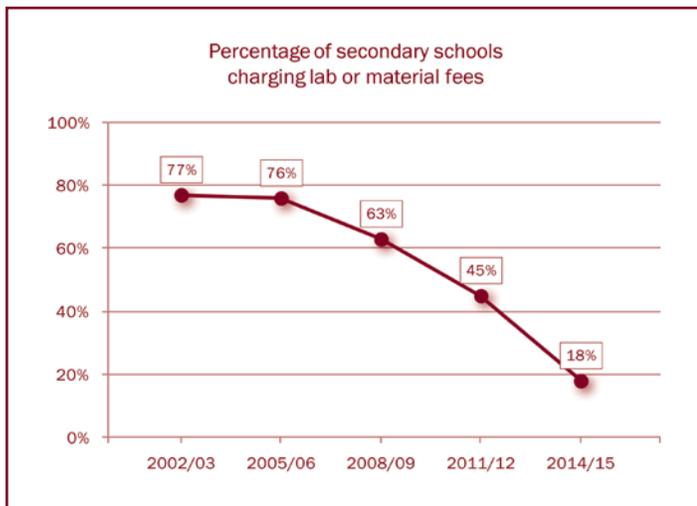
FEES

Ontario's *Education Act* states that "A person has the right, without payment of a fee, to attend a school ... in which the person is qualified to be a resident pupil."⁶

Although this right is largely upheld in Ontario's schools, there are a number ways that students may pay fees indirectly:

- 93% of elementary schools report asking parents for fees for field trips.
- 61% of elementary schools report asking parents for fees for extracurricular activities.
- 78% of secondary schools report having athletics fees, which range from \$5 to \$1,200.
- 91% of secondary schools report having a student activity fee. The fees range from \$5 to \$110.

Figure 2



Some schools also charge fees for course-related materials, but that number has declined steadily since the Ministry introduced clearer guidelines that restrict charging fees for core materials necessary to teach the curriculum.⁷ (See Figure 2).

Approximately 98 percent of schools report that they either subsidize or waive fees for students that cannot pay. In previous reports, People for Education found that school councils often fundraise to help cover costs for sports or field trips. In some cases, those funds are used to cover the costs for students whose families cannot afford to pay.⁸

We are lucky to have a very involved parent group, for a school of this size. Parents have fundraised for tech equipment (SMARTboards and iPads), yard improvement (playground equipment, track grading) and subsidized busing for major trips to bring the cost of the busing down for parents.

Elementary school, Hastings and Prince Edward DSB

NEXT STEPS

Ontario has a renewed vision for education that includes policy goals for students' academic achievement and their well-being. If we are to realize this broader vision for success, it is vital to recognize that education is about more than just what goes on inside the classroom. The quality of the learning environment has an impact on students' chances for success. When schools rely on fundraising and fees to support those learning environments, it creates inequities in the system. It is time for policy that clearly and concretely articulates what should be present in all schools to ensure that all students have access to the education, the supports, and the learning environments that they need and deserve.

NOTES

- 1 Willms, J.D. (2003). *Student engagement at school: A sense of belonging and participation*. Paris, France: OECD: National Research Council Institute of Medicine.
Ferguson, B. and Power, K. (2014). *Broader Measures of Success: Physical and Mental Health in Schools*. In *Measuring What Matters*, People for Education. Toronto: November 8, 2014.
- 2 People for Education (2013). *Fees and Fundraising*. Toronto: Author. Link: <http://peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/fees-and-fundraising-2013.pdf>. Accessed May 28, 2015.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2012). *Guideline for School Fundraising*. Link: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/Fund2012Guideline.pdf>. Accessed May 28, 2015.
Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2012). *Guideline for Fees for Learning Materials and Activities*. Link: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/feesGuideline.pdf>. Accessed May 28, 2015.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 *Education Act* Section 32. (1) 1997, c. 31, s. 13.
- 7 Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2012). *Guideline for Fees for Learning Materials and Activities*. Link: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/feesGuideline.pdf>. Accessed May 28, 2015.
- 8 People for Education (2010). *Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools*. Link: <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Fees-and-Fundraising-in-Schools-2010.pdf>. Accessed May 28, 2015.



People for Education is a registered charity that works to support public education in Ontario's English, French and Catholic schools.

For more information, contact us:

phone: 416-534-0100 email: info@peopleforeducation.ca

web: <http://www.peopleforeducation.ca>