

SUPPORT FOR FRENCH AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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

Ontario schools are home to students who speak more than 100 different languages and English-related dialects. These range from African, Asian, and European languages to Caribbean Creole and Jamaican Patois.¹

Some students come to Ontario with strong literacy skills in their home language. For others (refugees in particular) this may be their first experience of school, or any form of literacy. The majority of Ontario schools—73 percent of elementary and 66 percent of secondary—have students who require language support.

REACHING PROFICIENCY IN ACADEMIC ENGLISH LANGUAGE

There is a distinct difference between everyday English and academic English. Everyday English is required to hold conversations and navigate daily activities, and may only take one or two years to acquire. Academic English represents a deeper knowledge of the language that is used in school settings, and often takes more than five years to master.²

Formal support for English Language Learners (ELL) seeks to develop students' proficiency in academic English. Students in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs have adequate literacy skills in their first language and only require language learning. English Literacy Development (ELD) programs cater to students whose first language is not English and who have limited literacy skills in any language. These students have often had limited formal schooling.³

Ministry of Education language policy points out that the success of ELLs is a school-wide responsibility. Schools that embrace diversity and inclusion not only help ELLs feel welcome and supported, but create a more enriching environment for all students.⁴

QUICK FACTS

- 73% of elementary and 68% of secondary schools have students who are either English or French language learners.
- In schools reporting English Language Learners, an average of 8% of elementary and 6% of secondary school students are ELLs.
- In French-language elementary schools, an average of 17% of students per school are identified as French language learners.
- 80% of elementary schools and 69% of secondary schools in Ontario have a formal identification process for ELL/ELD students.

MOST ONTARIO SCHOOLS HAVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

In the survey, 73 percent of elementary schools and 68 percent of secondary schools report they have ELLs.

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Schools with 10 or more ELLs report an average ratio of 76 elementary ELL students per ESL teacher, and an average of 42 secondary ELL students per ESL teacher.

FRENCH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Parents who were educated in French and those who immigrated to Canada from French-speaking countries have a right to send their children to schools in Ontario's French-language system. However, because many of these families live in predominantly English speaking communities, a large proportion of the students require French-language support.

In French language schools, this support is made available through Actualisation linguistique en français (ALF)/and the Programme d'appui aux nouveaux arrivants (PANA) curricula.

- On average, 17% of students in French language elementary schools are identified as French language learners.
- A large majority of French language elementary schools (85%) report having at least one ALF and/or PANA student.
- 62% of French language elementary schools report having an ALF/PANA teacher, and 26% have an itinerant.

FUNDING DOES NOT MATCH NEED

Funding for ESL/ELD and ALF/PANA is not based on the number of students who need language support.⁵ Instead, funding is based on a formula calculated by using the number of immigrants from non-English or French-speaking countries who have been in Canada for four years or less, and the number of children whose language spoken most often at home is neither English nor French. ALF funding is based on the percentage of children requiring "assimilation" support.⁶

This method for allocating funds is not well-aligned with Ontario's ELL policy, which states that school boards should provide students with the support they need to become proficient in English to the extent required to succeed in school.⁷ According to some school administrators, funding is insufficient to provide the instruction that students require to meet this goal.

The socio-economic needs of our school are great. While only 10% of our population are current ELL students, at least 30% [of ELLs in the school] are new Canadians whose first language is not English. We are also an inner-city school with the typical issues that students from that demographic face (eg. poverty, low education of parents, family instability, etc.).

Secondary school, Algoma DSB

NEXT STEPS

Ontario has well-articulated and ambitious policy for English and French language learners. The policy is intended to support students so that they will be able to "develop their talents, meet their goals, and acquire the knowledge and skills they will need to achieve personal success and to participate in, and contribute to, Ontario society."⁸

Unfortunately, Ontario's funding model does not match its policy goals.

For families and students struggling with a combination of language, economic, and settlement issues, four years of funding for language support may be insufficient. To ensure that Ontario's policy supports the reality on the ground, it may be time to re-evaluate the funding model so that it provides support until language goals are met, and so that it is integrated with community supports for families.

NOTES

- 1 Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2007). *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9-12: English As a Second Language and English Literacy Development, 2007*. Link: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/esl.html>. Accessed April 29, 2015. Accessed May 28, 2015.
- 2 Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2013). *Capacity Building Series; Canadian Born English- Language Learners. Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat*. Link: http://www.edugains.ca/resourcesLNS/Monographs/CapacityBuildingSeries/CBS_CdnBornELL.pdf. Accessed April 25, 2015.
- 3 Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2006). *Many Roots, Many Voices*, Toronto. Link: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/manyroots/ELL_LPS.pdf. Accessed April 30, 2015.
- 4 Ministry of Education, Ontario. (2007). *English Language Learners, ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12*. Ministry of Education, Ontario. Link: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/esleldprograms/esleldprograms.pdf>. Accessed May 22, 2015.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ministry of Education, Ontario (2007) *English Language Learners ESL and ELD Programs And Services Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12*. Link: <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/esleldprograms/esleldprograms.pdf>. Accessed May 28, 2015.



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