

Report – Preliminary Discussion on 2019-2020 Priorities

Input is being sought from all trustees and school boards

How are priorities developed? Priority-setting at OPSBA follows a four-step process:

1. Input on priorities sought from all trustees and school boards
2. Individual responses discussed at Regional Meetings and further input added
3. Complete input from trustees, Member Boards and Regional Meetings considered at April Board of Directors meeting
4. Presentation of priorities and endorsement at OPSBA's AGM in June

Priorities – For Discussion

1. The Whole Child & Student Well-Being for Today and Tomorrow

OPSBA believes that improving student achievement and student engagement is directly linked to ensuring that we work collaboratively to support the social, emotional, mental and physical well-being of all children and youth in our increasingly complex world.

The Focus of our Advocacy

- Participate in processes to implement Ontario's vision for education
- Collaborate with relevant provincial ministries to ensure strong, equitable, accessible, and responsive services and supports for children and youth mental health
- Continue leadership and advocacy for social justice, equity and inclusion
- Work to support equitable and diverse learning opportunities for all students in our member school boards
- Build on progress achieved for differentiated resourcing, programming and services to support students, especially in northern school boards, rural and remote areas
- Continue to provide input and feedback to the Ministry of Education regarding the content, measurement and implementation of the Ministry's Well-Being Strategy
- Monitor and promote increased opportunities, supports and coordinated services for students with developmental disabilities and special needs with a focus on early intervention to maximize learning outcomes for students
- Monitor the implementation of the pending federal legalization of cannabis and its implications for school boards through 2020
- Continue to advocate for teacher training and professional development that meets the learning needs of students, and reflects the diverse nature of Ontario, including its Indigenous Peoples
- Advocate for technological programs and skilled trades as viable student options, and for support for individuals working in the trades to become teachers

- Advocate for a graduation diploma or equivalent that has value for students no matter what program pathway they choose, including directly into the world of work
- Continue to support environmental sustainability practices in curriculum and capital planning
- Advocate for a comprehensive government review of the current delivery of French as a Second Language

2. Advancing Reconciliation: First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education

OPSBA believes that through education we will move towards a Canada where the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians is founded on mutual respect and OPSBA, therefore, supports the Calls to Action of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

The Focus of our Advocacy and Actions

- Advocate for a comprehensive Ontario curriculum that contains clear expectations that every Ontario student will acquire knowledge and understanding of Treaties and of the historical context that gave rise to residential schools, the impact on First Nation, Métis and Inuit children and their families, and the ongoing legacy that is the responsibility of all Canadians
- Advocate for sufficient provincial funding to cover curriculum resources, and staff training, to support the implementation of the comprehensive Ontario curriculum
- Ensure the needs and aspirations of First Nation, Métis and Inuit children and their families are a prominent focus of OPSBA's other priority areas
- Respect the TRC Call to Action regarding retention and revitalization of Indigenous languages in Ontario schools, taught by fluent Indigenous speakers
- Expand capacity of First Nation trustees and increase understanding by all trustees of First Nation, Métis and Inuit issues
- Advocate for equity at the federal level in education funding for First Nations students
- Explore the issues of representation of First Nation, Métis and Inuit students in urban environments
- Support the development of mechanisms to increase the hiring of Indigenous staff, including in leadership roles
- Advocate for supports needed to ensure the well-being of Indigenous students.

Each year, a range of initiatives are undertaken to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Education and trustee representatives sit on the Minister's Advisory Council on FNMI Education.

OPSBA's [Indigenous Trustees' Council](#) is the primary advisory body on FNMI Education. The Chair of the Council sits as the First Nations Director on OPSBA's Board of Directors. The Council

provides advice on matters pertaining to FNMI Education programming, curricula, training and resourcing and facilitates partnerships with FNMI organizations.

3. Trustees as Leaders in Public Education

OPSBA believes that local democratically elected trustees make a significant and direct contribution to the achievement of all students through their leadership in directing the policies and priorities of the local school board that shape a culture of continuous improvement.

The Focus of our Advocacy

- Continue promotion of the role of trustees, including advocacy for clear government support for the role of trustees as a matter of public confidence in education
- Advocate for public education on the significant role and value of local, democratically elected school board trustees
- Provide supports for first-term trustees and new chairs in the 2018-2022 term of office, including mentorship and active promotion of OPSBA and OESC resources developed specifically to support trustees in their multi-faceted role
- Continue professional learning for trustees as to scope and legal implications of trustee duties and building of deeper awareness of the day-to-day trustee requirements, including accountability and governance, collaboration with municipal partners, conflict management and relationship building
- Support the development of communication materials and/or resources for trustees to use in their role to support social justice, equity and inclusion in their board and communities
- Further strengthen the role of Regional Vice-Presidents and Board of Directors members as OPSBA ambassadors to boards in their region
- Advocate for improvements in communication from the Ministry to OPSBA, including meaningful consultation and partnership in strategies that affect school boards
- Advocate for the inclusion of local school board governance in the government/civics curriculum (Grade 5 and Grade 10)
- Continued advocacy for greater school board autonomy in hiring
- Enhance representation of student voice through elected student trustees within OPSBA and at member boards

4. Education Funding

OPSBA believes that strong and equitable education funding a foundational factor in setting the conditions that promote and sustain student achievement.

The Focus of our Advocacy

- Advocate for an ongoing cycle of review of the funding model grant categories to ensure that they support the current local needs of all school boards

- Advocate for more flexibility in local spending
- Advocate for resolution of pressing problems in funding, such as Special Education and student transportation
- Advocate for expanded funding and services to support children and youth mental health and well-being
- Continue to advocate for full funding by the Ministry of any new initiative
- Promote collaboration among the four school board systems and enhancement of partnership among boards
- Advocate for infrastructure funding including flexibility in funding approaches, transparency in the approval process for capital projects, alignment between government priorities and capital funding
- Participate and advocate for OPSBA member board issues during the Ministry's 2018-19 Urban Student Accommodation Engagement
- Ensure strong school board participation in and contribution to the next steps in implementing the recommendations of the Community Hubs Strategic Framework and Action Plan
- Continue to emphasize the role of First Nation trustees with regard to effective implementation of Education Services Agreements
- Advocate for adequate funding to allow boards to meet AODA compliance deadlines and maintain ongoing compliance in future years

Our advocacy consistently focuses on the specific needs of our Member Boards to ensure all students are fully supported.

5. Labour Relations

OPSBA believes that teachers and education workers deeply influence a positive and productive learning environment for students and are supported in this role through the peace and stability engendered by successfully negotiated collective agreements.

The Focus of Our Advocacy

- Ensure OPSBA priorities are reflected in collective bargaining strategies and positions
- Continue leadership as a Designated Employer Bargaining Agent in the bargaining of central agreements under the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act
- Provide leadership in the discussions of central terms and conditions that respects the contributions of principals and vice-principals and their role in improving student achievement and well-being
- Ensure government initiatives (legislation/policy) are assessed from the labour relations/collective bargaining perspective
- Provide support to all OPSBA member boards in ongoing labour relations/collective bargaining services

- Facilitate information and learning exchange through the OPSBA Board of Directors, Labour Relations Symposium, Senior Negotiators Committee and the Public Council of Ontario Directors of Education
- Track board experience with contract implementation for forward planning
- Maintain relationships with key education partners
- Enhance communications support to school boards regarding labour relations
- Participate in the work of the Provincial Health and Safety Working Group, which is addressing the issue of violence in classrooms as it affects the safety, health and well-being of all employees

It is OPSBA's goal to negotiate fair and equitable collective agreements through the collective bargaining process. Our priority continues to be the improvement of student achievement and well-being. That remains the focus of our bargaining.

The collective bargaining framework for the education sector features a two-tier bargaining process, or central and local bargaining as it is often referred to. This means issues such as salary, benefits, and paid leaves are negotiated on a province-wide basis at a central table. Participants at the central level include the government and trustees' associations as co-management partners, bargaining with teachers' federations and education worker unions.

Before bargaining commences, the parties agree to which items will be negotiated centrally. All other issues are then negotiated locally. The parties to local bargaining are individual school boards and their respective local bargaining units.

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