

# **Special Education and the Funding Formula:**

**PEOPLE FOR EDUCATION**

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## Special Education and the Funding Formula: Emergency Service Only

*“...due to the overall lack of funding the Ministry funding formula has, in effect, focused efforts and policy on student punishment rather than on early intervention and prevention programs.”*

**JK to 5 school,  
Halton District  
School Board**

After five years of tracking the impact of the Funding Formula it is clear that the funding provided for special education is inadequate and the criteria for assessing student needs is too restrictive. Special education is degenerating into an emergency service offered only to the most needy students. Students with more moderate needs are increasingly stranded on waiting lists or left without access to specialist teachers and programs—that is, until their needs become so severe that they too qualify for emergency service. The Funding Formula has created a triage system of special education in which only the most needy are served.

It has also made it difficult to address the needs of the “whole” child. The funding formula is divided into separate spending envelopes, and is based on an arbitrary distinction between classroom and non-classroom spending, on average costs for wages and supplies, and on overall spending limits. A child who doesn’t fit neatly into a spending envelope either gets left out completely or only gets his or her most easily categorized need met.

### Regional Inequities

*“This is a small school. We are most concerned that we cannot provide adequate support for children with special needs. Small schools have few resources... small rural schools have even fewer due to the added cost of transportation...and no access to self-contained special education classes!”*

**JK to 6 School,  
Kawartha, Pine Ridge  
DSB**

Though the funding formula was intended to provide equitable funding across the province, students across Ontario do not have equal access to special education teachers, psychologists, social workers or speech language pathologists.

Elementary schools in Northern and South-western Ontario reported averages of 25 special education students per special education teacher compared to lows of 20 or fewer in Toronto and Central Ontario. Secondary schools in South-western Ontario reported the highest student-teacher ratios in the province with averages of 69 special education students per special education teacher.

Over one-third of Northern Ontario schools reported that the services of a board psychologist were not available compared to Toronto where every school had at least on-call access to service. Less than a third of secondary schools in Northern and South-western Ontario reported regularly scheduled or on-call services

of social workers, compared to over two-thirds of secondary schools in Toronto and Central Ontario.

It is important to note that even when staff are available, the numbers of hours they are available to provide service to students has dropped. In elementary schools, where most students are first assessed, the average number of hours psychologists were available in schools reporting regularly scheduled hours dropped 16% since 1999/00.

The salary estimates in the funding formula are well below those actually paid in most boards and have not been increased since

### **Funding doesn't reflect reality**

*“...individual support for students with behavioural exceptionalities, learning or physical disabilities will decrease throughout the system in the fall...due to a lack of Intensive Support Amount (ISA) funding from the province.”*

**Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario**

the Funding Formula was introduced.

In 2003/04 all boards will have their overall funding slashed when the fifth year of the old secondary school program is phased out. This change will result in an estimated 10% cut in the Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA) grants to boards. However, most of the SEPPA money is needed to serve students in the lower grades and will result in a disproportionate cut to the already inadequate special education budgets.

Boards were told that the ISA (Intensive Support Amount) funding for a very small number of very high needs students would be

### **No “Live” Funding for Approved ISA Claims**

provided according to new baselines in time for the 2002/03 school year. The Ministry has since announced that funding will not go “live” until the 2003/04 school year, leaving boards across Ontario millions of dollars short for special education expenses.

The criteria for the ISA funding has proven to be exceptionally strict and required enormous effort on the part of special education staff to complete the claims to establish the new baselines. In many boards, cut-backs to special education staff have made it difficult to complete the reviews of individual ISA files and have resulted in greatly reduced service to students.

Results of the 2001 grade ten literacy test show that students in the Applied Stream continue to trail far behind students in the

*“Most of the time this year of our psychologist, education consultant and learning support staff has been wasted on the government's demand for huge volumes of paperwork for ISA funding.”*

**JK to 8 School,  
Greater Essex County**

## Secondary School Reform Failing Thousands of Students

Academic Stream. While 87% of the students in the Academic Stream passed the Literacy test, only 44% of the students in the Applied Stream were successful. Of the students identified as special needs, 60% failed.

Successful completion of the test is a prerequisite for graduation, which means that over 30,000 students may now be unable to graduate.

*“All students formally identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)*

### RECOMMENDATIONS

People for Education recommends that the provincial government:

- provide a one-time grant to eliminate existing special education waiting lists,
- adequately fund the Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA), including realistic salaries, and protect the allocations in the funding formula for psychologists, social workers, speech pathologists and child and youth workers,
- ensure that school boards with small populations have access to the services of these professionals,
- design less restrictive criteria for the Intensive Support Amount (ISA) funding, and
- provide funding for a sufficient number of special education teachers and educational assistants to allow school boards the flexibility to make local choices about how to deliver special education programs.
- develop an appropriate curriculum and alternative secondary school certificate for students who would previously have studied Basic or General level courses
- lower class sizes to:
  - ⇒ no more than 24 students in kindergarten to grade 5
  - ⇒ no more than 30 students in grades 6 to 12

## ANALYSIS

*must have access to an education that will enable them to develop the knowledge and skills they need in order to participate in the life of Ontario's communities. The Education Act and regulations made under the act require school boards to provide exceptional pupils with special education programs and special education services that are appropriate for their needs.”<sup>1</sup>*

Funding for special education services cannot be examined without looking at the adequacy of other grants within the Funding Formula. Our research shows that although core services like

### **Over-all Cuts Have Adverse Impact on Special Education Programs**

*“My biggest concern is when we lost the resource teacher.... We have a lot of high needs kids that unfortunately are not able to receive extra assistance now with our limited supports.”*

**K to 6 School,  
Kawartha, Pine Ridge  
DSB**

classroom teachers have been maintained, there has been a steady decline in almost every other area over the past five years. Students across Ontario have fewer principals, vice-principals, guidance counselors and ESL teachers. Under-funding and restrictive criteria in other “envelopes” such as transportation, board administration and classroom resources have a disproportionate impact on special education students.

For example, the Ministry’s current funding formula for English as a Second Language programs allows students only three years of ESL support to acquire adequate skills. Because of this cut-off many students lose ESL support before they are ready and are often incorrectly placed into special education programs in an effort to provide them with additional support.

Cuts to other programs and services have resulted in a “triage” system of special education in which only the most needy students are served and thousands of others are left on waiting lists or are not even considered for assessment.

Two special education grants provide funding for the costs of delivering special education programs and services.

### **How Special Education Funding Is Intended to Work**

The Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA) is based on a school board’s total enrolment. It is intended to pay for the entire range of programs and services from psychologists, social workers and educational assistants to remedial classes and congregated

classes for learning disabled or gifted students.

The Intensive Support Amount (ISA) provides funding for a very small number of very high needs students who meet a strict set of criteria. Boards submit ISA claims for each individual high needs student. When and if the process is fully implemented boards will receive funding in proportion to the total number of claims approved. The money is pooled with the SEPPA funding, rather than being assigned to individual students.

Other costs, such as those for regular classroom teachers, educational assistants, professional support services and learning materials are covered under the Foundation Grant, which is a per pupil amount for every student in Ontario. Professionals and paraprofessionals such as psychologists, psychometrists and speech language pathologists are funded through a combination of the Foundation Grant, the Special Education Grant and additional Special Purposes Grants.<sup>2</sup>

Boards may also pay for special education services through Special Purpose Grants like the Early Learning Grant or the Learning Opportunities Grant. Special education students who are placed in congregated classes may be bused to other schools. Transportation costs are not part of the special education budget, but come under the boards' overall transportation costs.

In 2001, the Provincial Auditor conducted an audit of Ontario's special education grants to school boards for elementary and secondary schools. The report found that:

### **Provincial Auditor's Report Shows Funding Shortfall**

- the amount school boards must spend for special education services is \$95 million more than they are allocated by the provincial government,<sup>3</sup>
- decisions about how to serve students are being made based on budgetary considerations.<sup>4</sup>
- boards all have back-logs for professional services which are prioritized to ensure that the most serious cases are seen first, resulting in waits of between 6-12 months for less serious cases and in low priority cases being left out of the backlog altogether.<sup>5</sup>

When the Ottawa board was taken over by the province in September, one of the first cuts was to 45 resource teachers in elementary and secondary schools. The Special Education Advisory

## **The Impact of Cuts in Ottawa**

Committee of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board noted that the loss of these teachers means that Ottawa-Carleton's remaining Special Education teachers will be forced to reduce or eliminate support to students with more moderate needs and provide support only to the most needy students. They calculated that the overall impact of the cuts would be a reduction or loss of support to 1,645 secondary students and 1,505 elementary students.<sup>6</sup>

Education Minister Elizabeth Witmer said, "There are no changes for the students who have been identified as having special needs. There will be no changes for the disadvantaged or the high needs children."<sup>7</sup> It is clear, however, that boards are increasingly being forced to abandon services to students with moderate needs.

The funding formula was intended to correct regional inequities, but special education students across Ontario do not have equal access to special education services.

## **Access to Special Education Services Inequitable**

Our research found regional inequities in access to Special Education teachers and professional services.

In Northern Ontario over one-third of all schools reported that the services of a board psychologist were not available, while every school in Toronto had on-call or regularly scheduled access to service.

Access to the services of social workers also varied across the province. Over two-thirds of schools in Toronto and Central Ontario reported regularly scheduled services of social workers, compared to under one-third of schools in Northern and South-western Ontario.

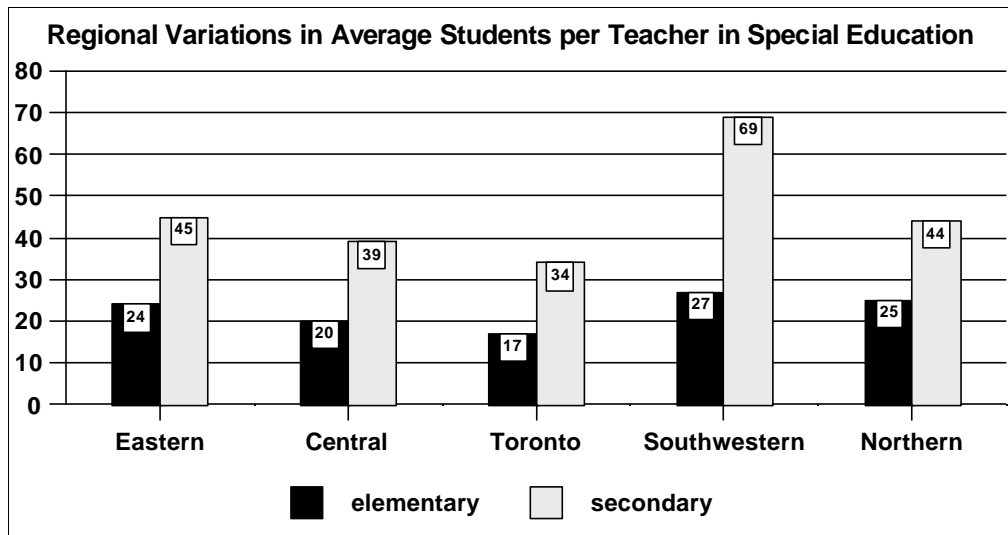
The Auditor General's report found that there was also wide variation in Speech Language services, depending on where families live. Some boards provide only assessment services, while others provide some language and/or speech therapy service.

### **Teachers**

Elementary schools in Northern and South-western Ontario re-

ported averages of 25 students or more per special education teacher compared to 20 or fewer in Central Ontario and Toronto.

In secondary schools, the average number of special education students per teacher varied widely across the province.



- in South-western Ontario schools reported an average of one teacher per 69 students and
- in Toronto the average was 1 teacher to 34 students.

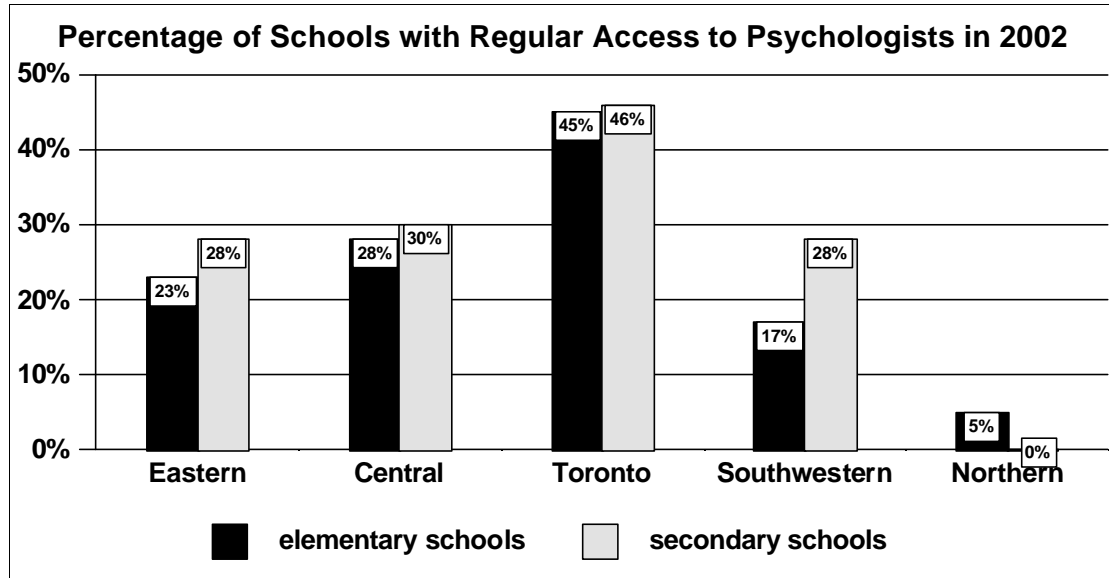
Our survey shows that 86% of secondary schools reported that students are integrated into regular classrooms for all or a significant part of the day. One of the results of integration is that instead of supporting special needs students directly, special education teachers are only able to provide support to classroom teachers, who are not specifically trained to deliver special education programs.

### Professional Support Services

Over one-third of Northern Ontario schools reported that the services of a board psychologist were not available compared to Toronto where every school had at least on-call access to service. Over two-thirds of secondary schools in Toronto and Central Ontario reported regularly scheduled or on-call services of social workers, compared to under one-third of secondary schools in Northern and South-western Ontario.

Funding for professional services is included in the Foundation

Grant, but those services are not protected. Furthermore, professional staff are funded according to an average salary of \$43,686



per year. However, Ontario Job Futures lists the average salary

### Cuts in Hours, Cuts in Professional Staff

for psychologists at 1995 rates as \$56,640 per year.<sup>8</sup> OSSTF lists a range of \$63,000--\$70,000 per year for psychologists and \$50,000--\$63,000 for speech language pathologists.<sup>9</sup> Many boards have cut positions for psychologists, social workers and speech-language pathologists.

This finding was confirmed by the Auditor General in 2001. “The boards we visited all had backlogs for professional services such as psycho-educational and speech-language assessments.”<sup>10</sup>

In 2001/02 there was:

- a 38% increase in the number of elementary schools reporting that the services of a social worker were not available,
- a 16% drop in the average number of hours psychologists were available in elementary schools reporting regularly scheduled hours.

It is important to note that even when staff are available, the numbers of hours they are available to provide service to students has dropped. In elementary schools, where most students are first assessed, the average number of hours psychologists were available in schools reporting regularly scheduled hours dropped 16% since

1999/00. The average number of hours Social Workers were available dropped 31% over the same period.

There are an estimated 39,700 students on waiting lists for special education services in Ontario elementary schools, representing a 14% increase in the number of students on waiting lists since 1999/00. Access to the support services of the psychologists, social workers and speech pathologists who work with special education students has decreased dramatically over the five years of

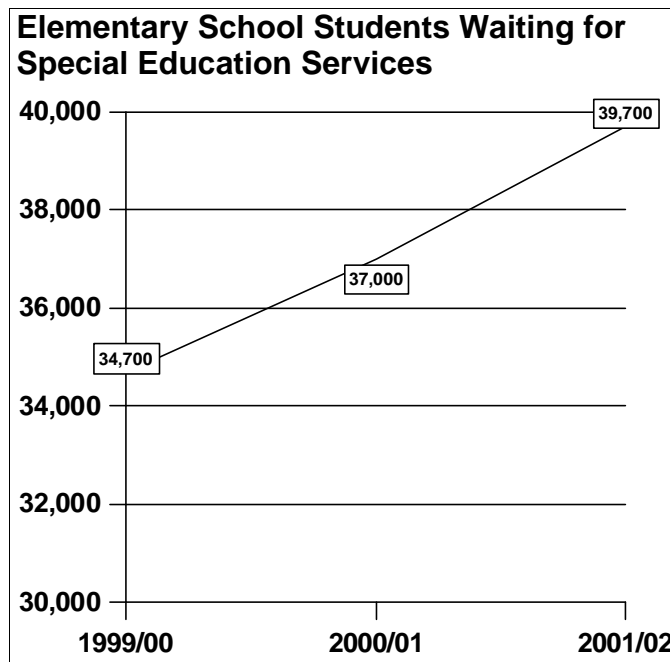
### Thousands on Waiting Lists for Special Education Services

our study.

Unlike elementary schools, where most of the identification of special education students takes place, the numbers of students on waiting lists for services in secondary schools tends to be fairly low. However, there has been an increase in the number of secondary students waiting for assessment for special education services from an average of 3.8 per school in 2000/01 to 4.92 this year.

*“Loss of special education team (psych/soc) is a real problem. Speech pathologists are only doing assessments now. Students from families without the income to go outside the system must sit on interminable waiting lists.”*

**JK to 6 School,  
Ottawa-Carleton DSB**



### Two-tiered system

Those parents who can afford private assessments pay up to \$1700 to by-pass waiting lists and access special education services faster than those who cannot afford to pay.

The new secondary school curriculum offers few program choices for students with special needs. In the past many students who were marginally successful in elementary school were enrolled in the Basic level program but this program no longer exists.

The Ministry of Education allows boards to create and offer “Locally Developed Courses” to serve students experiencing dif-

### **Secondary School Students Falling Through the Cracks**

ficulty in the Applied stream. But the courses are only available in large high schools or in technical schools. They are not available in all boards, and they are not standardized across the province.

Results of the 2001 grade ten Literacy Test show worrying trends. While 87% of the students in the Academic Stream passed the Literacy test, only 44% of the students in the Applied Stream were successful.<sup>11</sup> Results for students in Special Education and Locally Developed Courses are even worse. Only 40% of students identified as special needs passed the test.<sup>12</sup>

Successful completion of the test is a prerequisite for graduation, which means that over 30,000 students may now be unable to graduate.

In June, the Minister of Education acknowledged that the new secondary school curriculum is problematic for students who would formerly have been in the basic or general levels. She promised to find a solution. When students returned to school in September nothing had been done to solve the problem.

Paper-work for ISA funding is time-consuming, limits time spent with students and creates longer waits for assessments and services. The Auditor General’s Report also noted concerns about the eligibility criteria and administrative effort needed to prepare and validate ISA claims.

The criteria for ISA funding are so restrictive that many students who need service do not qualify for additional funding. For exam-

*“Special needs students are not being served and likely will not be able to graduate. Under new definitions for the ISA process, students will be denied because they are not needy enough.”*

**Secondary School,  
Toronto Catholic  
District School Board**

### **No Solution in Sight in Funding for High Needs Students**

ple, a child with autism must also be assessed as having an additional problem or label, such as “behavioural”, in order to have an ISA claim approved.

## **No “Live” Funding for Approved ISA Claims**

The Ministry began a comprehensive audit of ISA files on high needs students in 2001/02. Once all files are audited they will be used to establish a stable baseline for ISA funding based on the incidence of approved claims. Once the baseline is established, boards will only have to claim files for students new to the system or whose needs have changed.

Boards were told that the ISA funding would be provided according to the new baselines in time for the 2002/03 school year. However, the Ministry has since announced that funding will not go “live” until the 2003/04 school year, leaving boards across Ontario millions of dollars short for special education expenses. Although all but three boards submitted balanced budgets for 2002/03, almost all said they would have to make cuts to special education services or use reserve funds to meet obligations to special needs students.

## **Catch-22 files**

Many ISA claims fail because of a “Catch 22” in the process. Boards are required to show that they are providing extra supports such as Educational Assistants for high needs students in order to have the file approved for ISA funding. However, because boards don’t have the money to pay for the extra supports, they are unable to demonstrate the need for ISA funding and the claims are rejected.

## **Staff cut-backs hinder ISA reviews**

In many boards, cut-backs to special education staff have made it difficult to complete the reviews of ISA files in time to meet the deadline this fall. Because each file generates between \$12,000 and \$27,000 per file boards are using all available staff to work on the claims. The loss of a single claim will result in a significant reduction in the baseline established for each board’s overall special education budget.

## **Reduced service to students**

In our Tracking Surveys, many schools commented that because board special education staff are working on the ISA audits, they are not available to provide service to students.

In a report on the ISA Audit Process by the Peel District School Board, staff listed all the special education services that had been

affected during the audit. The list included,

- suspension of all psycho-educational assessments for non-ISA students
- suspension of attendance at regular IPRC's
- reduction of staff training
- increase in the number of families waiting for social work services
- reduction of speech and language support to students
- delay in IPRC referrals and IEP development<sup>13</sup>

The intense focus on the special education audit, along with cuts to psychologists, social workers and speech language pathologists, led to longer waiting lists for special education services in 2001/02.

The Education Equality Task Force, charged with reviewing the education funding formula, held ten days of hearings this fall. Consistent themes in all parts of the province included concerns about the following issues:

- inadequate Special Education funding,
- paperwork that takes time away from students,
- inadequate funding for salaries, and
- inadequate funding for students at risk.

## **The Task Force Review of the Funding Formula**

### **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SURVEY FINDINGS FOR 2001/02**

#### **STUDENTS**

- there were an average of 46.5 special education students per school, compared to 47.6 in 2000/01, and
- an average of 11.5% of the school population received special education, compared to 11.4% in 2000/01.

#### **TEACHERS**

- schools reported an average of 1.9 special education teachers per school, compared to 2.1 in 2000/01, and
- schools reported an average of 1 full-time special education teacher per 21.6 special education students, compared with 1 full-time special education teacher to 20.9 special education students in 2000/01.

## Regional Differences

Special education students across Ontario do not have equal access to special education teachers. Student/teacher ratios vary from an average of 17:1 in Toronto to 27:1 students per teacher in South-western Ontario.

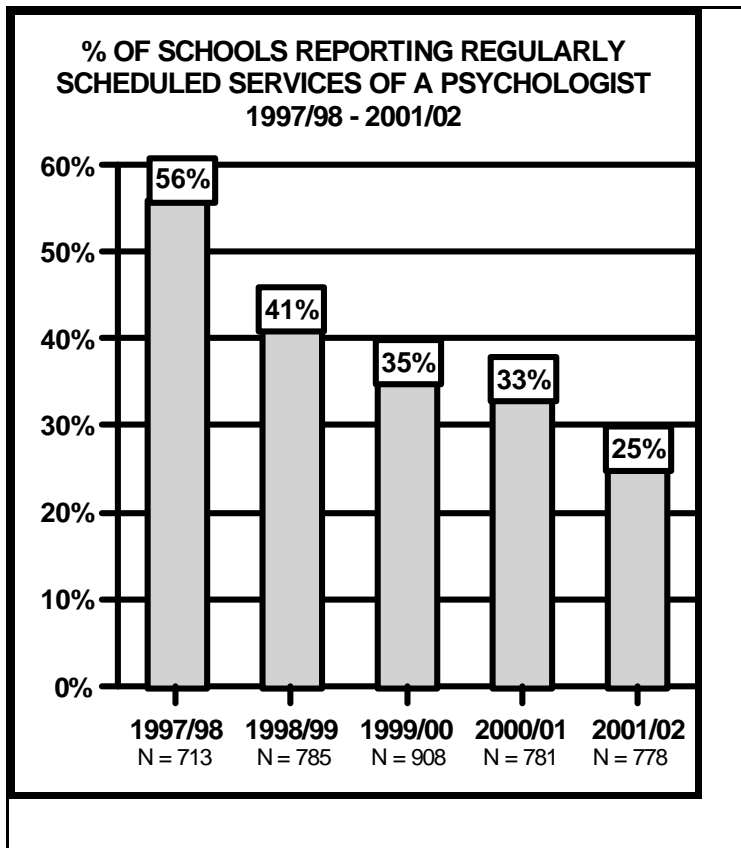
- in Northern and South-western Ontario schools reported averages of 25 students or more per special education teacher compared 20 or fewer in Central Ontario and Toronto.

## Special education students per special education teacher

	Eastern	Central	Toronto	South-western	Northern
average # students per special education teacher	24	20	17	27	25

## PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Funding for psychologists, social workers, speech language pathologists and child and youth workers is provided in the Foundation Grant, and supplies one professional for every 769 students. This funding is not protected.



## PSYCHOLOGISTS

Psychologists assess students and make recommendations to teachers, parents, students and the Identification, Placement, Review Committee (IPRC) for appropriate program modifications and placements. They may provide additional consultation to parents and teachers.

There has been a 55% drop since 1997/98 in schools reporting access to the regularly scheduled services of psychologists.

- 25% of schools reported having the regularly scheduled services of a psychologist, a 55% decrease since 1997/98, when 56% reported regularly scheduled services,
- 63% said they had access to a board psychologist on an on-call basis, compared to 52% in 1999/00, and
- 12% of schools did not have access to board psychologists, compared to 8% in 1999/00.

It is important to note that even when staff

are available, the numbers of hours they are available to provide service to students has dropped. In 2001/02

- the average number of hours psychologists were available in schools reporting regularly scheduled hours dropped from 12.7 hours per month in 1999/00 to 10.6 hours per month, a decrease of 16%.

### Average # Hours Psychologist Available per Month by

	Eastern	Central	Toronto	South-western	Northern
Elementary	8	13	14	12	2
Secondary	13	17	17	13	N/A

### Region

### Average # Hours Social Worker Available per Month by

	Eastern	Central	Toronto	South-western	Northern
Elementary	11	12	10	12	16
Secondary	24	30	23	11	44

### Region

### Regional Differences

Access to the services of board psychologists varied dramatically across the province.

- in Northern Ontario 35% of schools reported that the services of a board psychologist were not available, compared to only 5% of schools in Toronto.
- in Northern Ontario only 5% of schools reported that the services of a board psychologist were regularly scheduled compared to 45% of schools in Toronto.

### % of Elementary Schools Reporting Psychologist Availability by Region

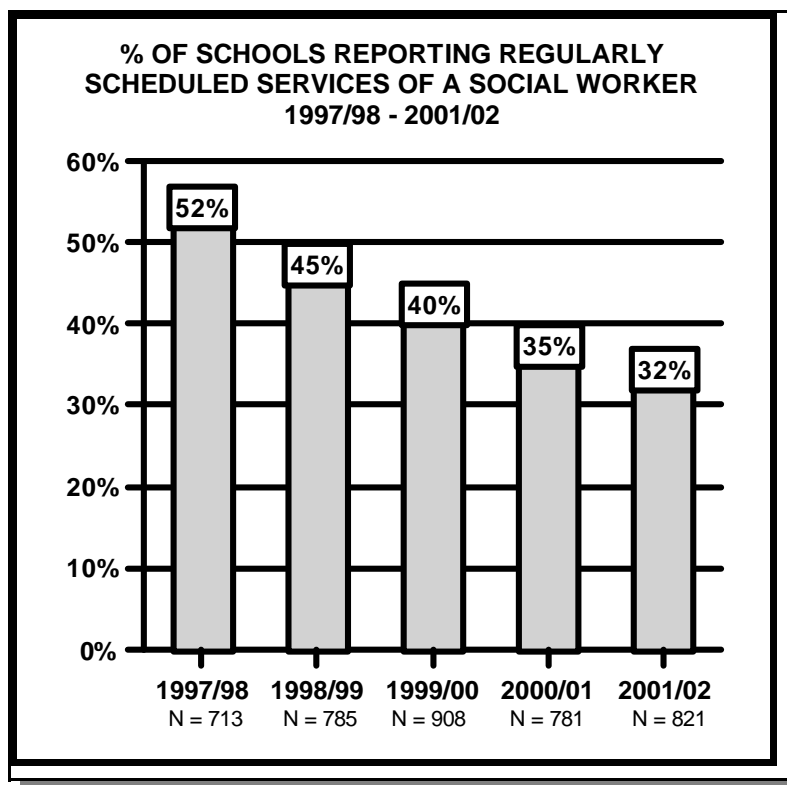
	Eastern	Central	Toronto	South-western	Northern
% not available	11	8	5	12	35
% on-call	66	63	51	70	60
% regularly scheduled	23	28	45	17	5

## SOCIAL WORKERS

Social workers provide counselling for students, families and groups within a school setting. They provide consultation to teachers, referrals to community services and co-ordination of services.

There has been a 38% decrease since 1997/98 in the number of schools reporting the regularly scheduled services of a social worker.

- 32% of schools reported having the regularly scheduled services of a social worker, compared to 52% in 1997/98,
- in schools reporting regularly scheduled hours, social workers were available 12.2 hours per month, compared to 17.7 hours per month in 1999/00 a decrease of 31%,
- 42% of schools reported having access to the services of a social worker on an on-call basis, compared to 37% in 1999/00, and
- 26% of schools reported that the services of a social worker were not available, compared to 19% in 1999/00, a 36% increase.



## Regional differences

Access to the services of social workers varied widely in schools across Ontario.

- in over one-quarter of schools in Ontario, outside Toronto, the services of social workers were not available,
- only 4% of schools in Toronto reported that the services of a social worker were not available, and
- in Northern Ontario 38% of schools reported that the services of a social worker were not available.

## % of Elementary Schools Reporting Social Worker Availability by Region

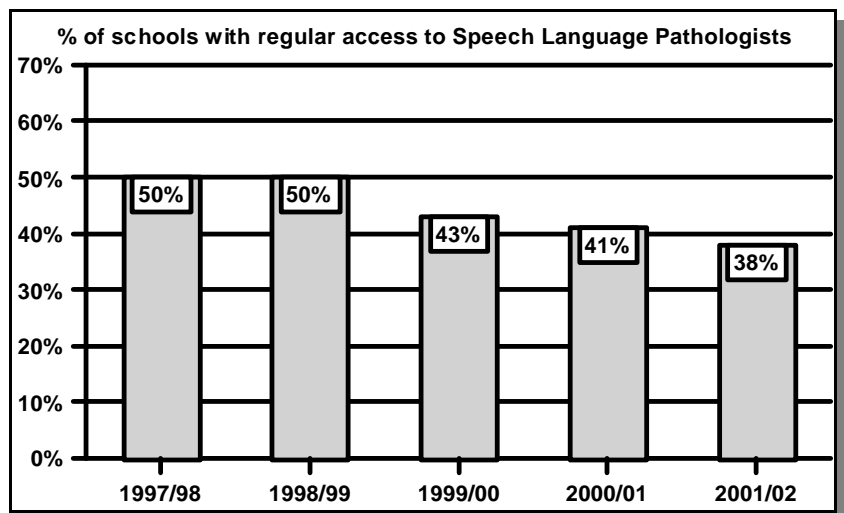
	Eastern	Central	Toronto	South-western	Northern
% not available	25	31	4	36	38
% on-call	44	35	53	35	43
% regularly scheduled	31	34	42	30	19

## SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS

Speech Language Pathologists provide assessment and treatment for children who have communication disorders. They educate and counsel students, families and teaching staff regarding students' speech language development.

There has been a 24% drop since 1997/98 in the number of schools reporting regularly scheduled services of a speech language pathologist.

- 38% of schools reported having the regularly scheduled services of a speech language pathologist, compared to 50% in 1997/98,
- in schools reporting regularly scheduled hours, speech language pathologists were available an average of 10.6 hours per month, com-



- pared to 8.4 hours per month in 1999/00,
- 52% of schools had access on an on-call basis, compared to 49% in 1999/00, and
- 10% of schools reported that speech language pathologists were not available, compared to 3% in 1999/00.

## WAITING LISTS

There has been a 14% increase in the number of students on waiting lists for special education services since 1999/00.

In the 84% of schools reporting students waiting for special education services in our 2001/02 survey:

- schools reported an average of 9.7 students per school on waiting lists, compared to 9.3 per school in 2000/01,
- 65% of students on waiting lists were waiting for assessment, a 12% increase since 2000/01,
- 23% were waiting for IPRC, and
- 12% were waiting for placement.

## Students on Waiting Lists for Special Education Services

(Extrapolated province-wide)

1999/00 N = 914	34,700
2000/01 N = 790	37,000
2001/02 N = 741	39,700

## SURVEY COMMENTS

### Cuts to staffing, increased paperwork, longer waits

Over one-quarter of the schools commented that there had been decreases in staffing at the school level or board level. They said there had been cuts to teachers or educational assistants resulting in greater workloads and reduced service to students. At the board level, cuts to psychologists and other support staff meant that there was less support for students or classroom teachers.

**Many schools also commented that ISA claims and other paper work were much more time-consuming, limited time spent with students and created longer waits for assessments and services.**

## **EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS**

Educational assistants may be assigned to work in special education classes or with an individual special needs students under the supervision of special education staff. In most boards they do not require any specialized training.

In 2001/02

- 69% of schools reported educational assistants assigned to individual students, compared to 66% in 1999/00.
- 48% reported educational assistants assigned to special education classes, unchanged since 1999/00.

Schools commented that although they had greater numbers of identified students needing educational assistants, they had the same number or fewer educational assistants.

## **PROGRAMS**

Special education students are served in a number of ways. The options for placement include:

- placement in a regular class with support such as an educational assistant or modification to a program,
- placement in a regular class with withdrawal to a class delivered by a qualified special education teacher, such as Learning Centre,
- placement in a congregated class with other students with similar exceptionalities with a special education teacher, such as Learning Disabilities or Gifted classes, and
- placement in a congregated class with students with different types of exceptionalities.

In our 2001/02 survey schools reported the following programs, with many schools reporting more than one category:

- SERT (Special Education Resource Teacher), 51% of schools,
- Learning Centre/Remedial, 38% of schools,
- Literacy, 25% of schools,
- Learning Disabilities, 24% of schools,
- Generic, 15% of schools,
- Gifted, 15% of schools,
- Behaviour, 11% of schools,
- Developmentally Delayed, 10% of schools,
- Speech Language, 6% of schools,
- Autism, 4% of schools,
- Mild Intellectual Delay, 4% of schools,
- Multiple Exceptionalities, 3% of schools, and
- Physical (including Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing and Blind/Low Vision), 2% of schools.

# SECONDARY SCHOOL SURVEY FINDINGS

## STUDENTS

Our 2001/02 survey shows:

- 88% of schools reported special education students,
- in schools reporting special education students, 13% of the school population received special education services.

## TEACHERS

Our 2001/02 survey shows:

- an average 45 special education students for every full-time special education teacher,
- an average of 3 special education teachers per school, compared to 3.4 in 2000/01.

The average number of special education students per teacher varied widely across the province from a high 69:1 students per teacher in South-western Ontario to 34:1 in Toronto.

### Average Number of Special Education Students per Special Education Teacher by Region

	Eastern	Central	Toronto	South-western	Northern
average # special education students per teacher	45	39	34	69	44

## COMMENTS FROM THE SURVEYS

We asked how special education services had changed since last year. As in last year's survey, there were many comments about increased paperwork, increased workloads, and fewer staff resources for more students.

## PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

### PSYCHOLOGISTS

Psychologists assess students and make recommendations to teachers, parents, students and the IPRC (Identification, Placement Review Committee) for appropriate program modifications and placements. They may provide additional consultation to parents and teachers.

In our 2001/02 survey:

- 28% of schools reported having the regularly scheduled services of a psychologist, compared with 29% in 2000/01,
- in schools that reported regularly scheduled psychologists, they were available for an average of 15.2 hours per month, compared with 18 hours in 2000/01,
- 61% said they had access to a board psychologist on an on-call basis, compared with 58% in 2000/01,
- 11% reported no access to the services of a board psychologist, compared to 13% in 2000/01.

## Regional Differences

Access to the services of psychologists varied across the province. While every school in Toronto had at least on-call access to service, over one-third of Northern Ontario schools reported that the services of a board psychologist were not available.

### % of Secondary Schools Reporting Psychologist Availability by Region

	Eastern	Central	Toronto	South-western	Northern
% not available	17	5	4	9	33
% on-call	56	65	50	63	67
% regularly scheduled	28	30	46	28	0
% average # hours available per month	13	17	17	13	N/A

## SOCIAL WORKERS

Social workers provide counselling for students, families and groups within a school setting. They provide consultations to teachers, referrals to community services and coordination of services.

In our 2001/02 survey:

- 51% of schools reported having the regularly scheduled services of a social worker, compared with 52% in 2000/01,
- in schools that reported regularly scheduled social workers, they were available for an average of 25.5 hours per month, compared with 27.2 hours in 2000/01
- 29% of schools had access to a social worker on an on-call basis, compared with 29% in 2000/01,
- 19% reported no access to the services of a board social worker, unchanged since 2000/01.

## Regional Differences

Access to the services of social workers varied across the province. Over two-thirds of schools in Toronto and Central Ontario reported regularly scheduled services of social workers, compared to under one-third of schools in Northern and South-western Ontario.

### **% of Secondary Schools Reporting Social Worker Availability by Region** **SURVEY COMMENTS**

	Eastern	Central	Toronto	South-western	Northern
% not available	22	19	0	27	33
% on-call	28	10	32	50	38
% regularly scheduled	50	71	68	23	29

Schools commented that assessments for students were more difficult to get, or were not available this year. Some noted that many students are not officially identified as special education students, although they may have an IEP (Individual Education Plan) that requires regular classroom teachers to make specific modifications to programs.

Some schools expressed concerns for students they say are “falling through the cracks” because the curriculum does not address the needs of students who would previously have studied at the Basic level.

## PROGRAMS

Schools reported the following programs or services, with many schools reporting more than one program or service\*:

- 21% of schools had programs or services for students with Intellectual Exceptionalities (Mild Intellectual Delay, Developmentally Delayed),
- 22% of schools had programs or services for Intellectual Exceptionalities (Gifted),
- 39% of schools had programs or services for students with Learning Disabilities,
- 14% had Remedial/Learning Centre/Resource Supports,
- 12% had programs or services for Behavioural Students,
- 7% had programs or services for students with Physical Disabilities,
- 6% had programs or services for students with Communication Disorders,
- 3% had programs or services for students with Multiple Exceptionalities.

*\*It is important to note that the percentage of programs reported*

*may not reflect the numbers of teachers or students within those programs.*

Many secondary special education students are integrated into regular classrooms for all or a significant part of their day. Schools reported that 86% of students were integrated into regular classes.

Special education teachers who provide support to these students are often working with from three to eight subject teachers per student. With the average at 45 students per special education teacher, it is unlikely that students are receiving extensive amounts of direct support.

Unlike elementary schools, where most of the identification of special education students takes place, the numbers of students on waiting lists for services in secondary schools tends to be fairly low. However, there has been an increase in the number of students waiting for assessment for special education services this year.

### **Average Number of Students per School Waiting for Special Education Services**

	2000/01	2001/02
Assessment	3.8	4.9
IPRC	3.9	3.7
Placement	1.8	1.6

## **SECONDARY SCHOOL REFORM**

Secondary School Reform is one of the cornerstones of the provincial government's education policy. The former five-year secondary school curriculum was reduced to four; the curriculum itself was completely re-written and streaming was re-introduced.

Streaming gives students in Grades 9 and 10 a choice between Academic or Applied courses; in grades 11 and 12 the streams are based on the students' planned destination: Workplace, College, College/University or University.

Many of the students in the Applied Stream would formerly have been in the Basic or General level. When the new secondary school curriculum was introduced, no curriculum was written for these students. There is a Workplace stream in Grades 11 and 12, but because these students cannot pass the Grade 9 and 10 Applied they cannot get to the Workplace Stream.

Every group involved in the consultations about the new curriculum expressed concern at the lack of alternative curriculum for students who would be unable to succeed in either the Applied or Academic streams.

### **Students in Applied Stream failing**

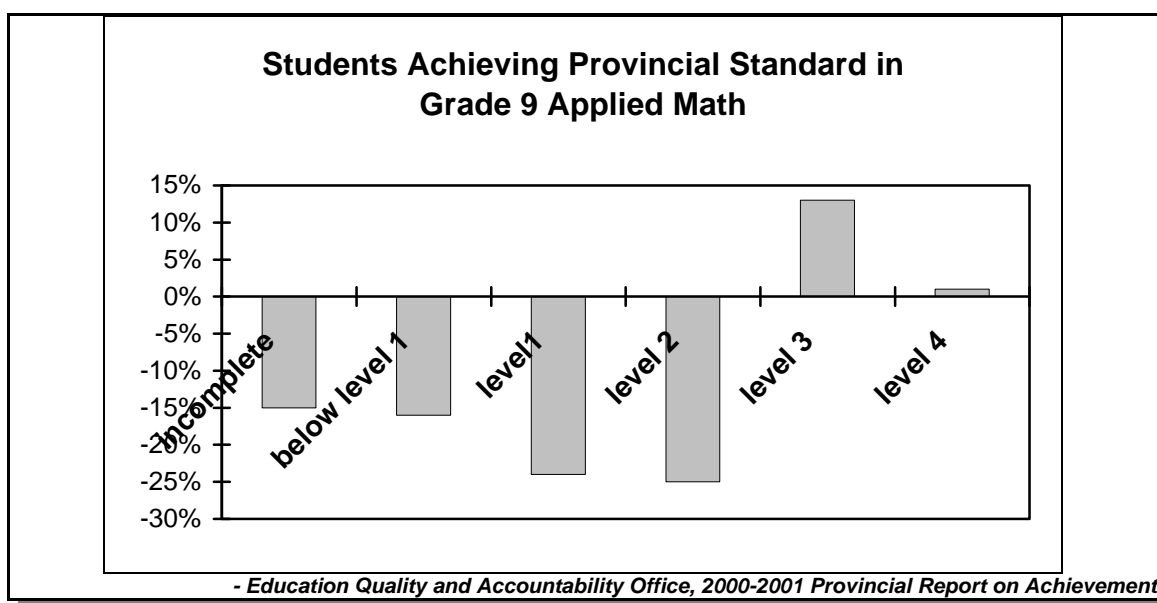
A report commissioned by the Minister of Education shows a dramatic drop in the number of students able to complete the required credits for grade 9 in the first year of the new curriculum. And the problem is especially acute for students in the Applied stream, where 44% are missing at least one credit, and 16% are missing three or more.<sup>14</sup>

### EQAO results

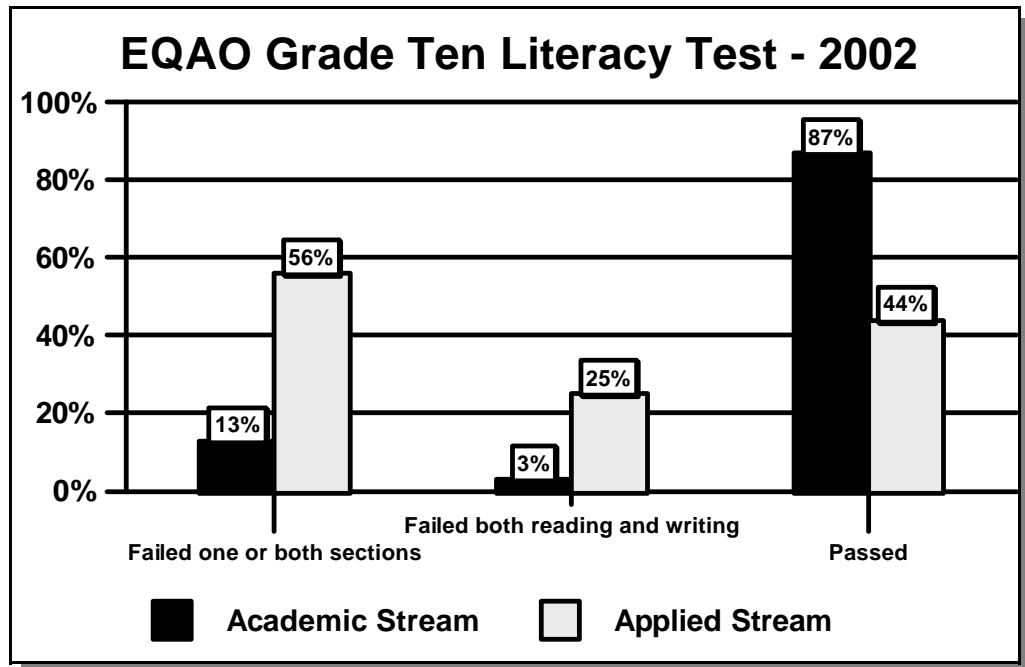
Credit Accumulation for Grade 9 Students in General/Applied Streams	Old Curriculum (General) 1998/99	New Curriculum (Applied) 1999/00
	Completed all credits for Grade 9	70%
Missing 1 – 2 credits	20%	28%
Missing 3 or more credits	10%	16%
<i>data from the Ministry of Education Double Cohort Survey, January 2002</i>		

Results from the first province-wide Grade 9 Mathematics test shows the trend continuing in 2000/01. Eighty-three per cent of English-language students in the Applied Stream failed to meet the standard established by the government, with 55% failing outright (level 1 or lower). Of French-language students in Applied, 57% failed outright and 89% failed to meet provincial the provincial standard.<sup>15</sup>

### Results of EQAO Literacy Test



Results of the 2001 Literacy test show that while 87% of the students in the Academic Stream passed the Literacy test, only 44% of the students in the Applied Stream were successful.<sup>16</sup> Results for students in Special Education and Locally Developed Courses are even worse. Only 40% of students identified as special needs passed the test.<sup>17</sup>



### Minister of Education fails to keep her promise

In June, the Minister of Education acknowledged that the new secondary school curriculum is problematic for students who would formerly have been in the basic or general levels. She promised to find a solution. Students in the Applied stream were disappointed to find that nothing had been done to solve the problem when they returned to school this fall. Graduation is now in jeopardy for over 30,000 students.

### No curriculum for Basic/General Students

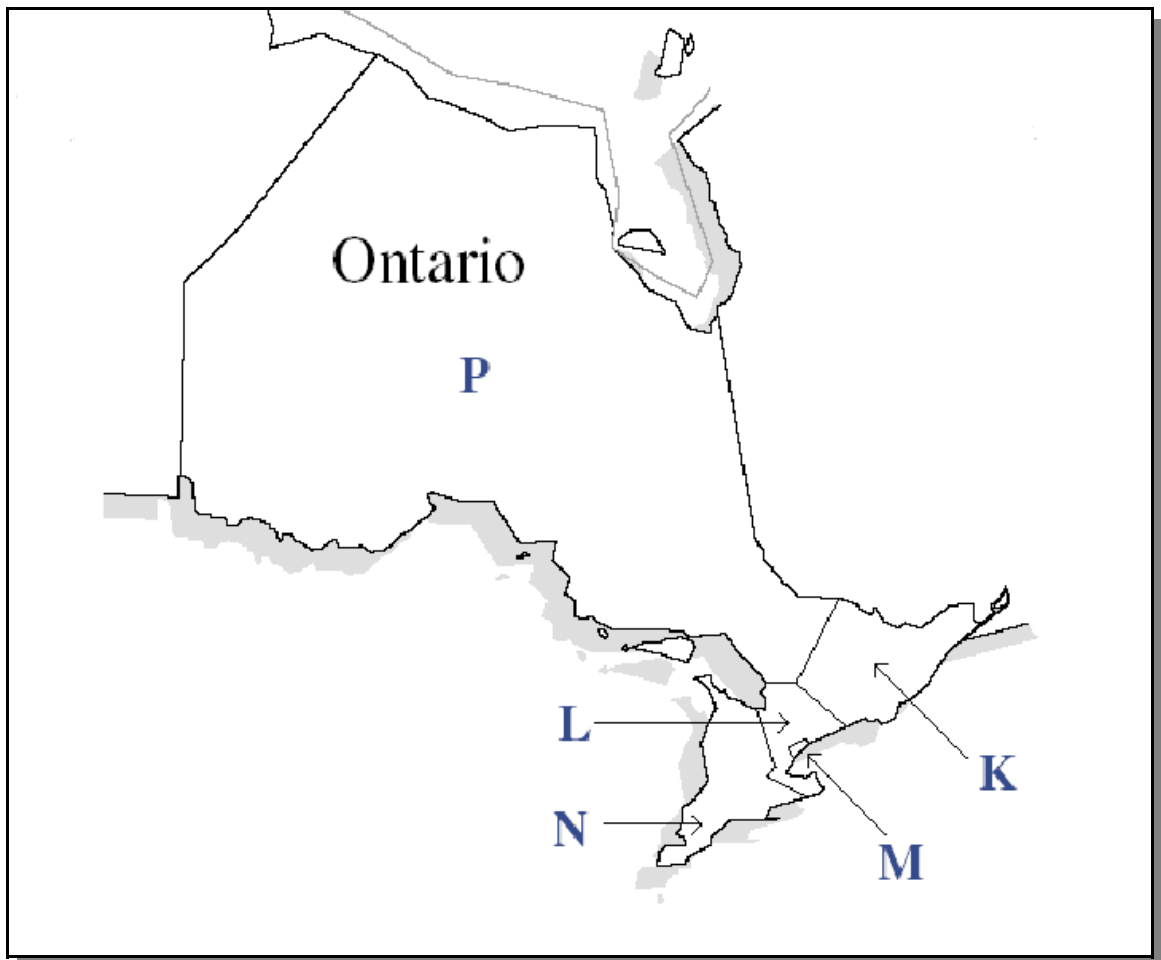
Most students who failed the literacy test were informed after school began this fall – too late to attend summer school or to take remedial courses to prepare them to rewrite the test on October 23/24. Fifty-six percent of students in the Applied Stream will be unable to graduate unless they can successfully rewrite the test.

## METHODOLOGY

The data in this report was gathered for the fifth annual elementary People for Education Tracking Survey and the second annual secondary survey. Provincial reports were released in 2002. More detailed explanations of our response rates and methodology are available with copies of the reports.

Each report contained sections on special education that sparked this further inquiry. For this report some regional numbers were run using Canada Post postal codes:

K	Eastern Ontario
L	Central Ontario
M	Toronto
N	South-western Ontario
P	Northern Ontario



This method allowed broad geographic analysis, avoiding board by board comparisons. Numbers were rounded to the nearest whole number so percentages do not always add up to 100%.

### **Elementary Responses**

Eastern Ontario	20.9 % of total sample
Central Ontario	21.9 %
Toronto	20.6%
South-western Ontario	24.1%
Northern Ontario	12.5%

### **Secondary Responses**

Eastern Ontario	12.5 % of total sample
Central Ontario	30.6 %
Toronto	19.4 %
South-western Ontario	22.2 %
Northern Ontario	15.3%

## ENDNOTES

Ontario Ministry of Education. *An Introduction to Special Education in Ontario*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2002.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/ontario.html>

<sup>2</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. *Student Focused Funding Technical Paper, Spring 2002*. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Auditor General, Office of the Provincial Auditor of Ontario. *2001 Annual Report*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2001, p. 147.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 135.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 135.

<sup>6</sup> Special Education Advisory Committee, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. "Impact of Cuts to Special Education" *Press Release*. September 9, 2002. <http://www.ottawa-seac.ca/sc-newsletter-sept02.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Richard Mackie, "School boards face big cuts after Ontario takeover" *The Globe and Mail*, Thursday, August 29, 2002. <http://english.montrealplus.workopolis.com/servlet/Content/qprinter/20020829/UONTAM>

<sup>8</sup> Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. *Ontario Job Futures 2000, 4151 Psychologists*. [http://www.on.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/english/lmi/eaid/ojf/4151\\_e.html](http://www.on.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/english/lmi/eaid/ojf/4151_e.html)

<sup>9</sup> OSSTF, District 8 - Avon Maitland PSSP Bargaining Unit. *Pay Equity Settlement and Collective Agreement Settlement, September 1, 2000 to August 31, 2002*. OSSTF: December 14, 2001.

<http://www.osstf.on.ca/www/services/protective/bulletins/pssp/d08-pssp.html>

<sup>10</sup> Auditor General. *2001 Annual Report*. p. 135.

<sup>11</sup> Education Quality and Accountability Office. *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, February 2002: Report of Provincial Results*.

Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario. 2002, p.12.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Adamson, Ian. ISA Audit Process—Expenditure Estimates. Special Education Advisory Committee, Peel District School Board, January 15, 2002, <http://www.peel.edu.on.ca/trustee/high/b020122.htm>

<http://www.peel.edu.on.ca/trustee/high/b020122.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Ontario Ministry of Education. *Double Cohort Survey. Memorandum from Suzanne Herbert, Deputy Minister*. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education, Jan. 7, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Education Quality and Accountability Office. *Ontario Provincial Report on Achievement: 2000- 2001*. Toronto: Queen's

Printer, 2001. [http://www.eqao.com/eqao/home\\_page/010e/10\\_2e.html](http://www.eqao.com/eqao/home_page/010e/10_2e.html)

<sup>16</sup> Education Quality and Accountability Office. *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, February 2002: Report of Provincial Results*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario. 2002, p.12.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 11.