

spite the presence of ESL students in many of Ontario's classrooms. The new ESL policy *suggests* that it would be beneficial for teachers, particularly in urban schools, to acquire ESL training, but it doesn't make it mandatory.

New requirements for reporting

A number of school boards report they spend a substantial portion of their ESL funding on things like school maintenance.

With this year's funding, the province added a transparency requirement – for the first time, boards will have to report publicly on exactly how they spend their ESL money. This may be a first step in ensuring that sufficient ESL funding is available for Ontario's newcomer students.

what schools told us...

"We only have staff to accommodate 15 students, however, we have approximately 250 students who should be receiving ESL assistance."

An elementary school in Toronto DSB

"...we have 15 identified ESL students, and a further 80 of our students were born in Canada but came to school not speaking

English. Even so, we only have one half-time ESL teacher."
An elementary school in Durham DSB

"We have an increase of students needing support. We carved out some support last year with creative timetabling, but we were unable to do so this year."

An elementary school in Toronto DSB with 75 ESL students and no ESL teacher

The full report is available at www.peopleforeducation.com.

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

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language support for newcomer students

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people for
Education

BECAUSE EDUCATION MATTERS MOST

language support for newcomer students

Each year, Ontario receives well over 100,000 immigrants. One third are under the age of 19, and three-quarters from countries where English is not the first language.

Recent data from Statistics Canada shows that more than one quarter of Ontario's population is foreign-born – the highest proportion of all 10 provinces and the highest in Ontario's history.

Many, if not most, immigrants come to Canada in search of a

brighter future for their children. But in Ontario there remains a wide gap between the percentage of students who require English language support and the per cent actually receiving it.

Supports don't match need

There have been increases in funding for English as a Second Language programs over the last five years, and some of that increase is reflected in slight improvements in the percentage of schools with ESL teachers this year, but a disconnect remains – between what is needed and what boards are able to provide.

ESL students and the Grade 10 Literacy Test

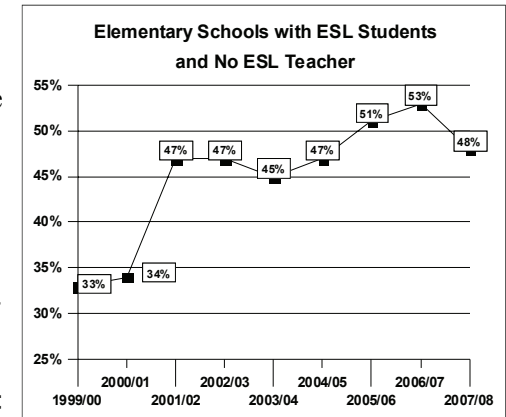
To graduate from high school in Ontario, all students must pass either the Grade 10 Literacy Test or an equivalent Literacy course in Grade 12. For students who speak English as a second language, this is a challenge. One third of ESL students in 2007 chose to defer their test. Of the ESL stu-

dents who wrote the test, only 52% passed. Advocates for ESL students continue to raise concerns that the test contains colloquial language and knowledge that is difficult for new English-speakers to understand, particularly as they are not allowed to use dictionaries to translate.

New ESL policy falls short

In the fall of 2007, in response to recommendations from, among others, the provincial Auditor General, the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, the Atkinson Foundation and People for Education, the Ministry of Education released new ESL policy. The new ESL policy provides guide-lines and recommendations, but it is not mandatory. The policy:

- states that students should continue to receive ESL support until they are able to function academically in English, but does not provide funding beyond four years;
- recommends students achieve an acceptable standard of English before ESL supports are removed, but it does not define what that ac-



ceptable standard might be;

- notes that there are some newcomer students with much higher needs than other immigrant students: these students arrive as refugees, some from war-torn countries and some never having attended school. They may not be literate in any language. The policy acknowledges their different needs, but it does not provide any differentiated funding to meet them; and
- states that all ESL funding *should* be spent on ESL programs, but doesn't mandate it.

Few new teachers with ESL training

Most regular classroom teachers have no ESL training, de-

ESL in Ontario schools in 2008

- ❑ More than one third of all immigrants are school-age.
- ❑ Nearly half of secondary schools report they have ESL students – but only one-third have ESL teachers.
- ❑ Some urban/suburban schools report that over 90% of their students require ESL support.
- ❑ 48% of elementary schools with ESL students have no ESL teacher.