

In Canada, public education is a provincial responsibility. This tip sheet will help you understand the structure of Ontario's public education system and the roles played by schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education.

## The Provincial Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education is responsible for overseeing all aspects of Ontario's public education system. Ontario's Education Act sets out the duties and responsibilities of the Minister of Education, school boards, supervisory officers (superintendents), principals, teachers, parents and students. The Ministry is responsible for:

- Setting policies and guidelines for school boards
- Allocating funding to school boards using the Funding Formula
- Establishing the provincial curriculum (what students will learn in each grade)
- Setting requirements for graduation (diplomas and certificates)
- Creating lists of approved text books and other learning resources

The Minister of Education is appointed by the Premier, and is an elected Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP).

You can contact the Ministry of Education at [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca) or by calling 1-800-387-5514.

## Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)

The EQAO is an independent government body that oversees the province-wide standardized testing in grades 3, 6, and 9 and 10. It is responsible for:

- developing and administering tests in reading, writing and mathematics
- reporting standardized test results to the Ministry and the public

- providing recommendations to improve test results

You can contact the EQAO at [www.eqao.com](http://www.eqao.com) or by calling 1-888-327-7377.

## Ontario College of Teachers

The Ontario College of Teachers regulates the teaching profession. Its responsibilities include:

- establishing the requirements for a teaching certificate and setting standards for teacher training programs
- maintaining a provincial register of qualified teachers
- investigating complaints against teachers

You can contact the Ontario College of Teachers at [www.oct.ca](http://www.oct.ca) or by calling 1-888-534-2222.

## School Boards

There are 72 school boards in Ontario, including 31 English public boards, 29 English Catholic boards, 4 French public boards, and 8 French Catholic boards. There are also several 'school authorities' that oversee schools in hospitals, treatment centres, and in remote regions of the province.

School boards are responsible for:

- deciding how to spend the funds they receive from the province for things like hiring teachers and other staff, building and maintaining schools and purchasing school supplies
- deciding where new schools should be built and when and if schools should close
- providing programs in schools such as special education, programs for newcomers and French Immersion
- developing local education policy (eg. safe schools, homework)
- setting an annual balanced budget for the school board

- ensuring schools follow the rules set out in the Education Act
- establishing a school council at each school and a Parent Involvement Committee for the board

Trustees are elected to the school board during municipal elections. They represent the interests of parents and students in their area. Trustees sit on committees regarding expelling students, and make decisions about the school board's budget. You can find out who your trustee is by asking at the school office or checking your board's website.

School superintendents or "supervisory officers" are board staff responsible for groups of schools in each school board. Superintendents may be involved in suspension appeals, special education meetings, and requests to attend a school other than the home school. Superintendents may also be assigned by the board to oversee board-wide programs (e.g. Superintendent for special education). You can contact your school superintendent if you can't get the help you need from the school principal. You can find a complete list of the province's school boards at: <http://esip.edu.gov.on.ca/english/core/BoardDirectory.asp>

## Schools

**Principals** are responsible for the management of individual schools. They may have one or more **vice-principals** assigned to help them. Principals are responsible for:

- overseeing the teaching and curriculum in the school and making decisions about the School Improvement Plan
- supervising teachers and other staff
- admitting students and making decisions about special education placements
- administering the school's budget and ensuring the building is maintained
- making decisions about the allocation of specialized staff such as department heads, arts specialists or library staff
- maintaining student records and ensuring report cards are sent to parents
- overseeing student discipline and making decisions about suspensions and possible expulsions
- working with the school council to encourage parent involvement, assist in decisions about fundraising and develop new policy about things like homework and the school's Code of Conduct

**Teachers** in Ontario must have a recognized teaching certificate in order to teach students in the public education system. Teachers are responsible for:

- preparing lesson plans, teaching classes, and evaluating student progress
- maintaining discipline in the classroom
- running extra-curricular sports, clubs and activities (voluntary)
- communicating with parents about students' progress

**School Councils** provide advice to the principal and school board. Every school must have a school council, and members include parents, the principal, a teacher, a student (in high schools), a non-teaching staff member, and a community representative. The majority of members must be parents and the chair must be a parent. Principals do not vote on school council decisions.

School councils are responsible for:

- sharing information with parents and the community and seeking their input on matters the council is discussing
- providing advice to the principal and school board on issues such as school year calendars, strategies to improve school performance, codes of conduct and dress, selection criteria for principals, and board policies that will affect the school

Many school councils are also actively involved in organizing social events for the school community and fundraising.

For more information on school councils go to:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/council/guide.html>

## For More Information

To find out more about Ontario's education system and how you can be involved in it, you can contact:

People for Education at:

[www.peopleforeducation.com](http://www.peopleforeducation.com)

The Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education at:

[www.oapce.on.ca](http://www.oapce.on.ca)

The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations at:

[www.ofhsa.on.ca/](http://www.ofhsa.on.ca/)



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Copies are available in several languages at [www.peopleforeducation.com](http://www.peopleforeducation.com).

For more information, call 416-534-0100 (toll-free 1-888-534-3944) or email [info@peopleforeducation.com](mailto:info@peopleforeducation.com)

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