

April 11, 2022

The Honourable Stephen Lecce  
Ministry of Education  
438 University Ave., 5th Floor,  
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

Dear Minister Lecce,

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of education in Ontario. The Halton District School Board (HDSB) has used all the tools available to ensure our students continued to learn during this difficult time. The disruptions have impacted student learning, well-being and engagement, all necessitating a heightened need for everyone in the system to think creatively and adjust our priorities to ensure that no student is left behind.

While we appreciate the resources provided by the Ministry, including additional COVID supports, we want to make you aware of the deep challenges that still exist. [Results](#) from a recent budget-related survey to HDSB stakeholders indicated that people expect the HDSB to do more to bridge the learning gaps. HDSB continues to be one of the lowest funded school boards in the province on a per student basis, and at the same time the needs are growing exponentially. Trustees are approaching this budget cycle with great trepidation. Although HDSB staff have been able to find creative ways to support our students, difficult decisions are being made and some of these decisions, due to lack of resources and funding, are creating future gaps in service and support to students, staff and school communities.

At the Board meeting held April 6, 2022, the following motion was adopted unanimously:

**Whereas literacy and numeracy are foundational to the academic success of students throughout their schooling and adult lives and;**  
**Whereas HDSB staff have identified alarming gaps in literacy and numeracy due to two years of disrupted learning due to the pandemic and;**  
**Whereas Learning Resource Teachers provide targeted support for individual students with lagging or missing literacy and numeracy skills;**  
**Be it resolved that the Chair write a letter to the Minister of Education requesting an increase in funding for the 2022-2023 school year for the purpose of hiring additional Learning Resource Teachers to provide targeted support directly to students to close the unprecedented learning gaps in early literacy and numeracy that have widened through two years of disrupted learning during the pandemic.**

The government has taken great strides in supporting students with the launch of the Tutor Support Program, the early release of the Grants for Students Needs (GSN) which allowed boards to plan out their road map for the upcoming year, and the development of a Learning Recovery Action Plan. These are great first steps, however, more needs to be done. The funding and timing of this program is limited to the current year which will not provide adequate time to fully address the identified academic needs. In addition, tutoring partners are not required to be certified teachers and may not always have the expertise in addressing student needs. In order for these programs to have the impact intended, there must be additional funding to match the needs these programs are meant to address.

The trustees of the HDSB implore you to listen to education experts who are noting the significant learning gaps in student achievement and mental health challenges that have emerged over the continuously interrupted and disrupted education environment during the pandemic. These early literacy and numeracy gaps could have significant long-term effects in achievement and would be best addressed by qualified Learning Resource Teachers who are part of the education system. To this end, we are requesting an increase in funding for the 2022-2023 school year for the purpose of hiring additional Learning Resource Teachers to provide targeted support directly to students to close the unprecedented learning gaps in early literacy and numeracy that have widened through two years of disrupted learning during the pandemic.

As always we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Margo Shuttleworth  
Chair of the Board of Trustees, Halton District School Board

Cc: Hon. Ted Arnott, MPP  
Stephen Crawford, MPP  
Hon. Parm Gill, MPP  
Hon. Jane McKenna, MPP  
Effie Triantafilopoulos, MPP  
Ontario School Board Chairs (English Public, English Catholic, French Public, French Catholic)  
Cathy Abraham, President, Ontario Public School Boards' Association