



May 29, 2019

Honourable Lisa Thompson  
Minister of Education  
22nd Floor  
900 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON, M7A 1L2

To the Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Education,

As you are aware, when the Ministry of Education made announcements regarding its “New Vision for Education”, it also launched consultations on class size increases at the elementary and secondary level, four mandatory centralized e-learning courses, and teacher hiring practices with a submission date of May 31, 2019. Trustees are grateful for the opportunity to provide input and as such respectfully submit our report as attached.

Trustees are mandated by the Education Act to maintain focus on student achievement and well-being, to assist the board in delivering effective and appropriate education programs to its pupils and to bring concerns of parents, students and supporters of the board to the attention of the board.

Since the announced changes will have a profound impact on Halton students, coupled with the knowledge that the current government values input from the people of Ontario, the Trustees of the Halton District School Board put forward a motion to form a Trustee-only committee to generate a submission for these consultations. To inform the submission, Trustees invited Halton parents, students and community members to a series of three community conversations and/or to provide electronic input. Conversation materials were taken directly from Ministry documents so as to ensure that input was aligned with the Ministry consultation purpose and goals. We thank the Ministry for being open to revisiting what has been proposed based on input from stakeholders.

**Trustees received an overwhelming response of 6,854 online survey submissions** as well as many thanks for the opportunity to contribute feedback. The Halton District School Board regularly surveys parents and the community for school and budget feedback, but this is the single largest response rate to date. As well as the online submissions, the Halton District School Board received a formal report from

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[www.hdsb.ca](http://www.hdsb.ca)

the HDSB Student Senate outlining student voice on the various consultation topics. The proposed education changes are clearly of great interest to students, families and supporters of public education.

A formal report has been prepared by the Trustees of the Halton District School Board and it has been attached, along with an in-depth report with recommendations prepared by the Student Senate to provide student voice.. A number of Trustees have professional experience with consultation techniques and data analysis and were able to pull this report together in time to meet the May 31<sup>st</sup> deadline.

At community meetings, Trustees were careful to indicate that the Ministry was the “owner” of the proposed changes. Trustees fielded many questions that could not be answered because details have not been provided from the Ministry, especially concerning the mandatory e-learning proposal. Many attendees asked what the point was in completing this consultation after the announcements have already been made and implementation of class size changes has begun. Trustees indicated that **since the government was seeking feedback from education partners, parents and the community on these topics through an expensive consultation, that it should be committed to changing course based on the feedback it receives.**

### Input Highlights

The results indicated that there is very little middle ground in the opinions of the people of Halton on most of these topics. An overarching theme to the feedback was about the province’s goal that education reforms be evidence based, yet many felt that evidence has not been made available, and given the importance of getting this right, the pace of change should be slowed. Some highlights include:

- **Seventy-five percent (75%) of respondents indicated that the proposed new elementary class size was too high**, with the top three concerns being the teacher’s ability to teach all students, student achievement, and student well-being. Forty-six percent (46%) of respondents thought that the current class size average was already too high.
- **Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents declared that the proposed 28:1 class size average in high school was too high.** Specific concerns included: student achievement, the teacher’s ability to teach all students, student well-being, loss of program choice and loss of extracurricular activities for students. Seventy-six percent (76%) of respondents said that the current class size average ratio of 22:1 was appropriate and only 6% declared it too low. Additionally, 15% declared that the current 22:1 ratio is too high.
- **Less than 4% of question respondents express that they were in favour of implementing mandatory e-learning courses** as currently envisioned. Many respondents cited that there has been no empirical research showing that adding this requirement will improve student achievement and well being and in fact, most raised concerns that it will decrease both of these areas. *It’s important to note that the Halton District School Board has a long history with e-learning and runs approximately 60 e-learning courses locally as an option for students to choose. The completion rate for students that choose to take an e-learning course is 75%. Presumably, completion rates for mandatory courses may be lower, as it would not reflect student choice.*

- It is important to point out that only about 25% of consultation participants responded to the questions about proposed changes to hiring practices. Many respondents indicated that they either don't have enough information or don't know enough about the topic to provide meaningful input. Of those that provided additional input, they were divided on agreement and disagreement with what is being proposed. Many commented that students deserve the best opportunity to learn.

These results reflect the input of members of our community who care deeply about students. There was diversity in participants and in opinion. The key themes above reflect strong trends, and provide an indication of how proposed reforms are viewed. The entire report helps to elaborate on these themes, and is animated by quotes from individuals. This information should be read with our letter of April 9, 2019 about proposed education changes.

### **Immediate Impacts**

As course planning and implementation of the changes of class size average has begun for the next school year, Trustees are seeing class sizes soar at the secondary level. Due to Attrition Protection, the Halton District School Board will be moving from 22:1 to 24.85:1 for the 2019-2020 school year and, even with incremental change, the effects at some schools are profound.

Larger classes occur to help preserve smaller class size opportunities in a school. As an example, classes in the skilled trades that involve machinery have a safety cap of 20 students so, in order to make a class size average work and for a school to be able to run the skilled trades classes, the balance of the enrollment gap must be made on the higher side of the average. Trustees received a staff report called, "Update for Trustees on Class Size and Course Cancellations for 2019-2020" (attached) that samples the changes in class sizes from this school year to the next due to the mandated growth in class size average.

As an example, at "School A" in the current school year there were seven classes with an enrolment of 36-37 students even though the ratio is currently 22:1. Next year the same school will have 52 classes with an enrollment range of 35-41 students. That change is occurring after only moving the class average from 22:1 to 24.85:1. School boards are mandated to move the average to 28:1 over the next three years. One can see how this trend of increasing class size will have dramatic impact over that time.

Large class sizes coupled with the loss of smaller elective classes and mandatory e-learning credits will have detrimental effects on student achievement and well-being. Trustees have no doubts that the graduation rate will fall due to lack of student engagement and necessary staff support.

Given the overwhelming negative response of Halton's parents, students and community members to the proposed changes to elementary and secondary class size average as well as the four mandated centralized e-learning courses, and taking into account the example provided of very real impact to classrooms, the Trustees of the Halton District School Board emphatically urge you to pause and reconsider the announced changes to class size and e-learning and allow time for additional analysis and creative, collaborative problem solving; exactly a process taught through current curriculum to our students.

Trustees also ask that any changes to the Ontario public education system adhere to the Ministry's own stated goals of Student Achievement, Protecting Front Line Staff, Fiscal Responsibility and Evidence Based Decision Making. These goals are widely supported by those who participated in this consultation and provide a valuable grounding and starting point.

The Trustees' full report, "Halton District School Board Community Consultation in Response to Ministry Consultation on Class Size, E-Learning and Hiring Practices", which also includes the "HDSB Student Senate Education Feedback Consultation 2019" has been attached along with the HDSB Staff Report, "Update for Trustees on Class Size and Course Cancellations for 2019-2020" for your convenience. Thousands of unedited comments, submitted through the online survey tool, are also available to peruse at the [HaltonEducationAction.ca](http://HaltonEducationAction.ca) website.

The Trustees of the Halton District School Board look forward to receiving your timely response and would welcome a meeting at your convenience to discuss the findings of the Halton District School Board community consultation and subsequent consultation submission.

Sincerely,



Andréa Grebenc  
Chair of the Board of Trustees, Halton District School Board

Enclosures: Trustee Report: *Halton District School Board Community Consultation in Response to Ministry Consultation on Class Size, E-Learning and Hiring Practices*  
Update Report on Class Size

Cc: Ted Arnott, MPP  
Stephen Crawford, MPP  
Parm Gill, MPP  
Jane McKenna, MPP  
Effie Triantafilopoulos, MPP  
Ontario Public School Board Association  
Ontario English Public School Board Chairs  
Ontario Student Trustees' Association  
HDSB Board of Trustees  
HDSB Senior Staff  
HDSB School Councils  
HDSB Student Councils  
HDSB Student Senate  
HCDSB Trustees

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## Update For Trustees on Class Size and Course Cancellations for 2019-2020

### Introduction

To meet the province's new 28:1 average class size ratio in secondary schools, all boards will be staffing their secondary schools at a higher student to teacher ratio than this year. For 2019-2020 the HDSB student to teacher ratio is 24.85:1. To get an idea of the impact of this change, 5 schools have been chosen with a view to compare large classes and cancelled classes for the current year and those expected next year. The following schools were chosen to provide data from secondary schools with a variety of sizes and student pathways:

- School A (large school)
- School B (medium size school)
- School C (small school)
- School D (medium size school)
- School E (small school)

It is important to note when reviewing the school data provided that in staffing HDSB secondary schools, "Article 18" of the local Collective Agreement is a significant factor. It sets recommended class sizes for various grades, pathways, and subject areas in contrast to some other boards that have hard caps on class size. Because of this, our schools have more flexibility and discretion at the school level. HDSB school leadership teams make conscious and strategic choices about which classes to cancel, combine, or run with smaller/larger class sizes as they work towards their total number of allocated classes.

### School Data and Analysis

#### School A

There are no unexpected course cancellations at School A. Instead, programs that typically run with smaller class sizes have been maintained for the most part by running senior University bound courses at larger sizes as well as by running fewer sections for multi section courses so that increased class sizes are spread over multiple classes. In this school, class sizes in the sciences have stayed largely status quo and prioritized as a result of safety considerations.

#### School A Snapshot

	2018-2019	2019-2020
enrolment as of Oct 31st (projected for Oct 31st 2019-2020)	large school (enrolment greater than 1500 students)	Increase of approximately 30 students

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# classroom teachers/total # of classes	109/654	95/570
# courses cancelled	21 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 gr 10</li> <li>• 9 gr 11</li> <li>• 10 gr 12</li> </ul>	6 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 gr 11</li> <li>• 3 gr 12</li> </ul>
# large classes (greater than 35 students)	3 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 gr 11</li> <li>• 1 gr 12</li> </ul> 7 total classes ranging from 36-37 students	13 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 gr 11</li> <li>• 6 gr 12</li> </ul> 52 total classes ranging from 35-41 students

## School B

At School B, no courses were cancelled in planning for the 2018 - 2019 school year. In planning for 2019-2020, courses in one Arts sub discipline will not run. It typically is offered every other year. The numbers of students who selected three different courses in this discipline were all very small. There are also two additional courses that will not run next year.

## School B Snapshot

	2018-2019	2019-2020
enrolment as of Oct 31st	medium size school (enrolment between 800 - 1500)	increase of approximately 50 students
# classroom teachers/total number of classes	66.5/399	59.5/357
courses cancelled	No courses cancelled	5 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 in gr 10</li> <li>• 2 in gr 11</li> <li>• 2 in gr 12</li> </ul>
large classes (greater than 35 students)	1 gr 12 class, 38 students	18 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 gr 9</li> <li>• 3 gr 10</li> <li>• 2 gr 11</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 gr 12</li> </ul> 27 total classes ranging from 35-41 students
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## School C

In planning for 2018-2019, eleven courses were cancelled at School C. For 2019-2020, twelve courses have been cancelled. For both years, the cancelled courses were all grade 11 and 12 elective courses with the exception of a grade 10 Technological education course cancelled next year.

## School C Snapshot

	2018-2019	2019-2020
enrolment as of Oct 31st (projected for Oct 31st 2019-2020)	Small school (enrolment under 500)	increase of approximately 35 students
# classroom teachers/total number of classes	22/132	22/132
courses cancelled	11 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 gr 11</li> <li>• 5 gr 12</li> </ul>	12 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 gr 10</li> <li>• 5 gr 11</li> <li>• 6 gr 12</li> </ul>
large classes (greater than 35 students)	3 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 gr 10</li> <li>• 2 gr 11</li> </ul> 4 total classes ranging from 38-40 students	3 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 gr 10</li> <li>• 1 gr 11</li> </ul> 4 total classes ranging from 36-39 students

## School D

In 2018-2019 additional elective courses courses were added to School D's program booklet and eleven courses ultimately had to be cancelled, two of these being courses that had never previously been offered. For 2019-2020, fourteen courses will be cancelled. Six of these courses have either never been offered before or never run but were offered to determine if there was student interest.

## School D Snapshot

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	2018-2019	2019-2020
enrolment as of Oct 31st (projected for Oct 31st 2019-2020)	medium size school (enrolment between 800 - 1500)	increase of approx 120 students
# classroom teachers/total number of classes	50.5/303	48/288
courses cancelled	11 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 gr 11</li> <li>• 7 gr 12</li> </ul>	15 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 gr 9</li> <li>• 1 gr 10</li> <li>• 2 gr 11</li> <li>• 11 gr 12</li> </ul>
large classes (greater than 35 students)	None	3 gr 11 courses 3 total classes ranging from 36-38 students

## School E

School E also added a significant number of additional elective courses for 2019-2020. This was an attempt to gather information regarding student interest in a variety of new course options and preempted the provincial changes to class size ratios. The additional course offerings allowed for approximately 20 new courses to run for next year and 15 additional course cancellations as a result of low interest in some of the many new offerings.

### School E Snapshot

	2018-2019	2019-2020
enrolment as of Oct 31st (projected for Oct 31st 2019-2020)	small school (enrolment under 800)	increase of approx 30 students
# classroom teachers/total number of classes	31/186	30/180
courses cancelled	2 gr 11 courses	17 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 gr 9</li> <li>• 4 gr 11</li> <li>• 12 gr 12</li> </ul>
large classes (greater than 35 students)	2 gr 12 courses 2 total classes ranging from 36-40 students	3 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 gr 11</li> <li>• 1 gr 12</li> </ul>



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		3 total classes ranging from 36-40 students
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