Education Advocacy

Advocating to parents in the publicly funded education system



Presented by
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Publicly funded education

Why advocating to & with parents is important.



Parents don't know what they don't know.

In the current education landscape after the pandemic we are seeing an increase in stress in both school communities and the workers, students and their families that make up that space.

"Many things can wait. Children cannot. Today their bones are being formed, their blood is being made, their senses are being developed. To them we cannot say 'tomorrow."

- Gabriela Mistral

Advocacy Challenges

Parents still don’t know what is happening in schools.



Advocacy challenges to parents include:

- They don’t know how to advocate for their children
- Less transparency at both, school boards and the Ministry of Education
- Little understanding of the complexity of the education system and the underfunding
- Underfunding affecting all aspects of the education system



Publicly funded schools, a tale of two realities:

How narratives can be countered *

Provincial Government

touting historic investments in education, injecting more money than ever into everyday programs, infrastructure, and targeted initiatives.

VS.

Education advocates and researchers

concerns around larger class sizes, deteriorating buildings, rising school violence, and dwindling resources for students who require additional supports due to disability, low socio-economic status, or other circumstances.

- *Canadian Policy Alternatives*

Underfunding Publicly funded schools:

Students are being failed by the government not educators.



Per-student funding, has declined since 2018-19

A **$220-per-student cut** adds to an estimated **$453 million** budget shortfall for the 2026-27

Since 2018, boards redirected $2.3 billion of general funding to special education

And yet supervised boards are still in a deficit!

37 per cent of Ontario schools were in a state of disrepair in 2024

up from 29 per cent in 2020

$6.5 BILLION

The accumulated shortfall for Ontario schools since 2018-19. Total amount that Ontario's school boards have lost compared to what they would have received **if** their funding had kept pace with enrolment and inflation over the past eight years.

The Impact on students

Attendance policy



The new changes to policy are confusing for both administrators, educators and parents. The policy doesn't take into consideration the **diverse student population needs**.

Parents have questions around how to log absences, concerns around **15% of the final mark in Grades 9–10** and **10% of the final mark in Grades 11–12** , how it will be evaluated. What is an acceptable absence? Inequities from school to school since it appears that it is up to administration to determine if one type of absence is valid over another type of absence. No changes to how absences are logged. Elite sports are ok according to Minister by school related trips, sporting events and other events aren't?

Inequity for students with diverse socio-economic, special needs and other personal circumstances are not being considered.



Mandatory e-learning requirements

Many students don't feel comfortable taking them, post secondary institutions are wary of them

Localized bargaining

Students in different regions have disticntly different challenges regarding courses, offering electives and large class sizes.

The Impact on students



Support in schools

Large class sizes, forced inclusive classes, destreamed courses, with no additional support, mental health issues, and IEPs need to be addressed with more support not less.

Exclusions for students who are unable to attend classes **without support** are being pushed to consider homeschooling or private schools.

Technology in schools

EDWIN has been chosen to be the exclusive provider of academic resources over textbooks by the provincial government.

Staff Shortages

Due to shortages of staff and underfunding, a lot of **elective courses** are not being offered, which means that there are many **academic pathways that are cut off** for students.

Skilled Trades

Students are being encouraged to pursuit the skill trades, funneling them into a sector that might not fit their skill set, interest and/or strengths.

EQAO

Grade 9 math will be counted as part of student's summative evaluation and is **20%** of a student's **final grade for Grade 9**. Increasing Math Anxiety and Test-Taking Pressure in students could affect students.

The Impact on students



What is your union – OSSTF/FEESO – fighting for in this round of bargaining?

Schools where students and workers can learn and work without fear of violence.

Violence in schools

Increase in violence in schools is a growing problem. Addressing it will more police in schools is not the solution especially for racilized and special need students. Having more skilled staff, more access to educators by maintaining smaller class sizes and developing relationships with students creates the change we need in our schools.

What is your union – OSSTF/FEESO – fighting for in this round of bargaining?

Supports to meet the diverse and increasingly complex needs of students.

Special Education

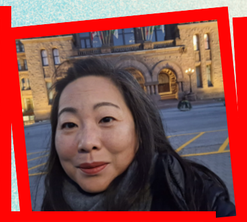
Special Needs students are being pushed to the margins forcing students into INCLUSIVE classrooms. This creates increased violence, mental health issues and potentially dangerous situations for students in high school.

Advocacy in Action

Sandra Huh

Parent Education Advocate



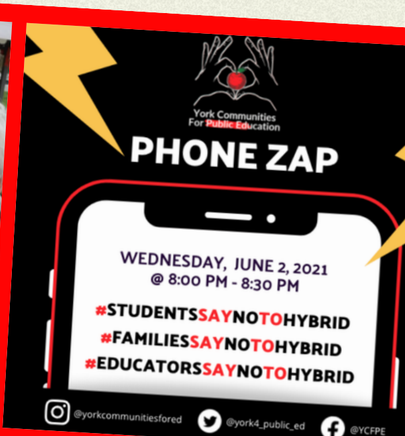
























Flipping the switch

Talking to parents



1 **Talk about the underfunding in real world terms**

: “Have you noticed, larger class sizes for your teen?”
“Have you an understanding of mandatory e-learning?“
“How does the attendance policy affect your teen?”

2 **Listen and respond**

: “I am sorry to hear you are dealing with issues around X. Proper funding would have meant that your teen would have access to more XYZ by the hiring of more education workers, more reources. Parents are finding it difficult to find answers from the board.”

3 **Ask them to take one action and do it consistently and share**

: “What could you do to get your concern to the government? Would you be willing to talk to your parent network? Would you be willing to call Doug Ford? Would you be willing to sign a petition?”

Tip:

Go to where parents are that could be joining parent council meetings to hear what the concerns are in your specific community, join organizing groups like **FUND OUR SCHOOLS,** seek out opportunities to talk to parents at hockey practice, sporting events, grocery stores, community events. **FIND INFLUENCER Parents!**

Practical Advocacy Strategies





Action:

- Get out to where parents are
- Build relationships with key parent influencers in your local schools
- Join a parent engagement action via your school, union, Fund Our Schools or TEAN

Tips:

- Keep it simple
- Join like minded members into action
- Commit to doing one thing consistently & frequently.

Tools & Resources

Toronto Education Advocacy Network

- forpublicschools@gmail.com
- Toronto Education Advocacy Network Linktree





Helpful Online Resources

Parent Councils Advocacy

Trustees Who are they?

Advocacy in Action

Did you know fact sheet Zine



“Any action is often better than no action, especially if you have been stuck in an unhappy situation for a long time.”

-Eckhart Tolle.



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