



MORE PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR ALL STUDENTS

Children's Mental Health Ontario cites that one in five children and youth under the age of 19 has a mental health issue. This means that 20 per cent of the students in an 'average' classroom are struggling with some type of challenge such as anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts—making it hard for them to learn or relate appropriately, and increasing the chances they will drop out. One parent in four also reports that they have missed days from work because of their children's mental health needs. All of this points to a need to increase school and community resources available to students with mental health issues.

Similarly, the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists reports that 10 per cent of school-age children have speech and language delays or disorders that could affect their academic, social and vocational success. School-based speech and language services are crucial for students experiencing these challenges in the classroom.

Research has found that student services professionals (for example, psychologists; social workers; speech-language pathologists; educational assistants; and child and youth workers), are essential for student success and well-being, and that these services should be delivered by board-employed professionals, complemented by the services of community agencies.

In recent polling, Ontario parents overwhelmingly agreed that school boards could reduce violence in our schools by providing students with more access to student support professionals. Ensuring that there are enough adults in our schools to maintain a safe, inclusive environment is essential for student learning and success.

OSSTF/FEESO CALLS FOR A BEST-PRACTICE STUDENT SERVICES MODEL THAT INCLUDES:

- An increase in school and community services available to students with mental health issues.
- More school-based speech and language services, which are needed to support students in the classroom.
- Increased funding for services provided by board-employed practitioners.
- Predictable, stable and dedicated funding which will ensure a high level of service across the province, regardless of school board.
- Increasing mental health literacy for educators.
- Appropriate violence prevention resources and space.
- An education sector regulation under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.