

# What Adult Secondary Schools Offer

Adult students for curriculum purposes are defined as those over age 18 who have been out of school at least one year. Ontario's adult day schools offer these learners a wide range of options, from adult basic literacy and English as a Second Language non-credit programs to academic courses to enable someone to finish the requirements for a Secondary School Diploma. These courses are taught by certified teachers with specialized training in adult education and years of experience in secondary schools. Ontario public secondary schools offer courses tailored to the needs of these students, including co-operative education to provide valuable on-the-job experience, portfolio development to showcase learning and skills for future job applications, and credit courses adapted to their specific needs.



Adult daytime secondary schools work (see data below) because they are in every community, and offer courses without fees. The environment is familiar and supportive. Day care may be available in the same building for the large portion of the students who are single parents. Vital support personnel such as guidance counsellors and social workers are on-site, especially in the schools that combine alternative programming aimed at keeping at-risk youth in school until age 18.

## Who Are These Adult Students?

Adult daytime secondary schools serve individuals age 21 and over. In 1996, an OSSTF survey found that among adult students: 48% were trying to get off welfare, 53% needed literacy upgrading or additional credits, 62% were female, and 16% had disabilities.

## Adult Day Schools Succeed

- 83% of graduates go on to jobs or further education.
- 50% of individuals who return to school as adult learners escape welfare.
- Secondary diplomas are earned faster in full daytime programs than other programs.
- The more we help adults return to school and graduate, the more Ontario's economy benefits. Restoring funding to these programs saves taxpayers money in the long run.

## Adult Day Schools Were Devastated By Tory Cutbacks

In June, 1996 the Mike Harris government passed Bill 34, the *Education Amendment Act*, that cut funding for adult education programs and made junior kindergarten an optional program. The government abandoned adult learners (mostly women) and took away their second chance at getting a high school diploma. The Tories took this action solely to save money. It was a destructive social and public policy decision.

Between November, 1995 and June, 1996 funding to adult secondary schools was slashed by 70%. The funding dropped from about \$7,000 to \$2,257 per adult student and wiped out the support services adults needed to ensure successful outcomes. An OSSTF survey found



that where school boards closed their full service adult day schools and programs and moved to a continuing education model, 85% of their student population vanished between September, 1995 and September, 1997. By 2004, less than 10% of the former adult daytime student enrolment remains.

### No. of adult day school students

1993 - 94	76,800
2000 - 01	5,843*
<b>Net loss</b>	<b>70,957</b>

\*Restricted to large, urban boards

## Combining Adult Programs With Stay In School Programming

Many of our most successful adult secondary programs are offered in conjunction with alternative programs for students who are at risk of dropping out. If Ontario truly believes that students should stay in school until 18 or until graduation, then co-operative education, youth apprenticeships, support systems for troubled teens, welcoming environments in community schools, and specialist teachers and programs are needed. Many of the needs of an adult re-entry student are the same as the needs of a vulnerable 17 year old, and combining their programs can offer a cost-effective delivery of secondary education.

## **Summary**

- Adults return to school to improve their language skills, their job skills, and to receive a secondary school graduation diploma that they can use to find a better job or to access university or college.
- Public secondary schools are found in every community.
- Public secondary schools provide equity of access to no cost credit courses.
- Public secondary schools provide a welcoming environment to enhance student success.
- One in five Ontario children live in poverty. Helping their parents helps them too.
- Reinvesting in adult education programs at the secondary school level is one of the best ways to invest in the citizens of Ontario and in our province.



**We call on the Ontario government to make the necessary financial commitment for adult learners NOW rather than paying a much higher price later**

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### **Adult Education**

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