

Class Size Consultation Guide

About this Consultation

The ministry concluded this year's consultation on the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) in December 2018. As a follow-up to that consultation, the ministry undertook a further consultation on class sizes in Ontario which recently concluded on February 22, 2019.

We appreciate all of the input from our education partners who participated in both of these consultations. The feedback we have received, and which we continue to consider, has helped to shape the government's plan to modernize classrooms and education funding in Ontario. The plan outlined in this consultation guide was shaped by the advice and feedback in the prior consultations. It is a measured and responsible approach.

This guide is intended to support stakeholders in understanding the government's plan for class sizes in Ontario and assist in the development of stakeholder submissions. This guide sets out some considerations and questions with the aim of supporting a dialogue about the government's plan.

The government is committed to discussing class size options, through a consultation process that allows partners to provide the benefit of their expertise, experience, and ideas. Therefore, the ministry would be pleased to meet with education sector labour partners to continue the dialogue on the planned changes contained in this guide.

In order to ensure your feedback is considered, please forward your electronic submission by May 31, 2019 to: EDULABFINANCE@ontario.ca. If you have questions about this consultation, please send them to the email address noted above.

Goals

We are pleased to share with you our planned class size changes and next steps which are guided by the following key goals.

1. **Student Achievement:** Success and well-being of every child.
2. **Protecting Front Line Staff:** The planned changes are to be managed through attrition protection for teachers.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility:** Delivering services in an effective and efficient manner.
4. **Evidence-based Decision Making:** Grounded in sound policy, inter-jurisdictional scans, and empirical research.

Grades 1-8

GRADES	CURRENT STATUS	PROPOSED CHANGES
Grades 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 90 per cent of primary classes of a board must have 20 or fewer students All school boards have a class size limit of 23 students The funded average class size is 19.8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change
Grades 4-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Averages vary by board as identified in the class size regulation The funded average class size is 23.84 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum board-wide average class size of 24.5, with no exceptions Funded average class size of 24.5
Mixed Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All mixed-grade classes consisting of primary grade students combined with students from junior-intermediate grades (grades 4 to 8) must have 23 or fewer students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change

What We Heard In Support of the Plan

- The feedback from sector partners showed considerable support for class size caps in grades 1 to 3 to ensure these young learners continue to be supported in small class sizes.
 - The ministry heard how important class size caps are for children in grades 1 to 3. The ministry is not proposing any changes.*
- Some stakeholders indicated that flexibility is important and prefer averages to caps. Some also felt that current class size averages for grades 4-8 is a fair way for school boards to manage class size.
 - The ministry believes that children and parents should expect consistency on maximum class size averages wherever they are in the province. The old model for students in grades 4-8 wasn't fair and the ministry proposes to fix that, while continuing to provide flexibility on classroom composition through the use of averages.*

Consultation Questions:

1. What are the opportunities of the planned changes in relation to the four key goals?
2. Will the status quo in grades 1-3 and modest changes to grades 4-8 allow for continued flexibility in organizing school board class sizes?
3. Are there any other comments on the planned changes, keeping in mind the key goals outlined above, you would like to provide?

Grades 9-12

GRADES	CURRENT STATUS	PROPOSED CHANGES
Grades 9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School board class size averages must not exceed 22 in grades 9 to 12• The funded average class size is 22.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School board class size averages must not exceed 28 in grades 9 to 12• The funded average class size is 28.0

The government remains committed to modernizing education while continuing to support students and families. In addition to the planned changes in the table above, starting in 2020-21, the government plans to centralize the delivery of all e-learning courses to secondary students in Ontario to allow students greater access to programming and educational opportunities. Secondary students will take a minimum of four e-learning credits out of the 30 credits to fulfill the requirements for achieving an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. That is equivalent to one credit per year, with exemptions for some students on an individualized basis. This will include increased class size for online courses to 35 students.

What We Heard In Support of the Plan

- Schools and school boards require the flexibility to organize courses and pathways to meet the needs of secondary students and the school community which cannot be achieved through hard caps.
 - *The ministry heard of the importance and requirement for flexibility and will continue to provide the flexibility that is important in meeting the needs of students and school communities.*
- Feedback received from sector partners stated that the ideal class size for grades 9-12 ranged between a low of 20 students to a maximum of 30 students.
 - *The ministry's plan will align our secondary class sizes to better reflect other jurisdictions in Canada and follows a fiscally responsible approach. Please see appendix A for information on class sizes in other jurisdictions in Canada and a comparison of class sizes between Ontario and Quebec.*

Consultation Questions:

1. What are the opportunities of the planned changes in relation to the four key goals?
2. The new vision for e-learning is intended to provide more programming options for students. What comments and advice do you have?
3. Class size caps exist in many local collective agreements. Do these caps pose a barrier to implementing the new class size requirements?
4. Are there other comments on the planned changes, keeping in mind the four key goals, you would like to provide?

Financial Impact:

The following is a summary of the estimated financial impact of the planned changes, in relation to the goal of fiscal responsibility.

Financial Summary (in %)	2019-20	2020-21
Grades 4 to 8	(0.2)%	(0.5)%
Secondary	(0.1)%	(0.6)%
Total Fiscal Impact	(0.4)%	(1.0)%

Note:

Table reflects government fiscal year figures. The percentage is in proportion to the 2018-19 projected Grants for Student Needs.

Conclusion

In formulating the planned changes set out above, the government is approaching these issues with four goals to guide decision making:

1. **Student Achievement**
2. **Protecting Front Line Staff**
3. **Fiscal Responsibility**
4. **Evidence-based Decision Making**

In addition to these goals we were guided by your feedback in the first two consultations. This feedback was extremely valuable and helped shape this plan.

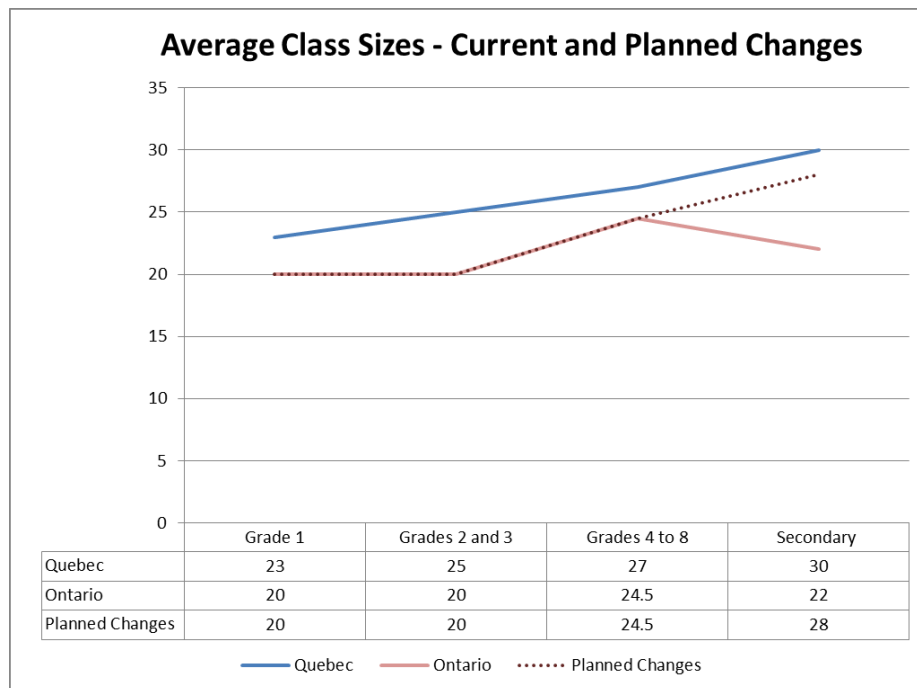
The ministry would be pleased to meet with education sector labour partners, which includes the teachers' federations, education worker unions and trustees' associations, to continue dialoguing on the planned changes contained in this guide, upon request.

We are committed to supporting students and families as we modernize education funding in a responsible manner while ensuring that funding decisions are having the greatest impact in the classroom.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. Once again, we look forward to working with our sector partners and your continued feedback.

Appendix A

- Ontario has among the lowest class size averages and caps compared to other provinces in Canada with restrictions on class sizes.
- In other Canadian jurisdictions, class sizes tend to increase as students move through the education system. This means that average class sizes in higher grades tend to be larger, as the maturity of learners grows.
- The trend toward increasing class sizes is shown in the example of Quebec, in the tables below. This is compared with the current average class sizes for the different panels in Ontario and the planned changes.
 - Currently, in Ontario, classes follow a similar increasing until the junior-intermediate grades, at which point the average class size drops again at the secondary level.



Notes on Ontario Class Sizes:

1. Funded average class size of 19.8 to support school boards to meet the class size caps (90% of classes must have 20 or fewer students, up to 10% of classes up to 23).

Notes on Quebec Class Sizes:

1. The class size averages and maximums indicated on this table are in reference to “regular groups” of students as stated in the Provincial Collective Agreement 2015-2020, Quebec has significantly lower class size requirements for groups of students with different characteristics and need (i.e. economically disadvantaged areas or special education needs).
2. Class size requirements as they relate to secondary general education courses, Quebec has denoted different class size requirements for other secondary programs (i.e. technical exploration courses or temporary individualized paths for learning)