

Ontario teachers seek smaller class sizes^[1]

Author: Rushowy, Kristin

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EXCERPTS

Class sizes should be adjusted to take into account the number of special-needs students, so that teachers can give all children the attention they need, says the union representing Ontario's elementary teachers in its new education agenda.

The document, **Building Better Schools**^[2], to be released Wednesday, also calls on the government to limit class sizes in full-day kindergarten - some teachers have as many as 34 little kids in the room - as well as decrease the average size of Grade 4 to 8 classes, currently higher than those in the province's secondary schools.

"With an increase in class size and integration, and an increasing number of students who ... need specific special education programs, resources and assistance, it increases how complicated and difficult it is for every student in that classroom to get the individual attention they need, in particular special-needs students," Sam Hammond, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, said in an interview with the Star.

He said that as school boards cut back or eliminate education assistants in regular classrooms, there is a real need for smaller classes.

The union is advocating for some kind of "weighting factor" to "reduce class size in accordance with the number of students identified with special needs integrated into regular classrooms," says the report.

The union is also seeking more hands-on, experiential learning for all elementary students, and broader curriculum expectations instead of the hundreds of specific ones now spelled out, so that teachers have time to explore subjects in depth.

Among the union's priorities:

- Ensure smaller classes for all elementary students, especially full-day kindergarten and students in Grades 4 to 8. Currently, full-day classes average 26 students, but other primary classes are capped at 20.
- The current class size averages 25 in Grades 4 to 8; teachers would like to see that lowered to 22, the same average as high school classes.
- Reduce widespread standardized testing (in Grades 3 and 6) to random sampling.
- Ensure every elementary school has a qualified gym teacher, a teacher-librarian and guidance counsellor.
- Bring back family studies, and design and technology, in Grades 7 and 8.
- Provide specific grants for schools in needy communities to cover the cost of field trips and extra learning materials, much like the Toronto District School Board earmarks funds for its Model Schools for Inner Cities program.
- Provide more resources for special-needs students, and base grants "on the educational needs of students."

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- reprinted from the Toronto Star

Region: Ontario^[3]

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Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/14/04/ontario-teachers-seek-smaller-class-sizes> [2] <https://www.buildingbetterschools.ca/> [3]

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