



# Grand Erie District School Board

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April 25, 2019

Hon. Lisa Thompson, MPP  
Minister of Education  
14<sup>th</sup> Floor, Mowat Block  
900 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Thompson,

Re: Proposed Class Size Changes and E-Learning Requirements

The Grand Erie DSB SEAC is writing in support of the concerns expressed by the Durham Catholic DSB contained in their letter of April 9, 2019 and attached herein.

We share the concerns about the impact the proposed changes will have on all students, but particularly the risks to a successful education this poses for students with special needs.

We further agree with the concerns about mandatory e-learning with respect to inequitable access to technology and the lack of teacher support required by some students as well as the variance in learning styles.

In closing, we join in requesting the Minister seriously reconsider the proposed class size changes and the mandatory secondary credits via e-learning.

Sincerely,

Kyle Smith, Chair  
Grand Erie DSB SEAC

Cc: Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees

Enclosure(s):

1. April 9, 2019, Copy of letter from Valerie Adamo, Chair SEAC Durham Catholic DSB

*SUCCESS* for Every Student



**DURHAM CATHOLIC  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**  
*Learning and Living in Faith*



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APR 18 2019

Tuesday April 9, 2019

Dear Minister Lisa Thompson  
Minister of Education  
Mowat Block 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
900 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

I am writing today, on behalf of the Durham Catholic District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee to express our concern about the recent changes to the provincial funding model for class size averages and mandatory e-learning courses.

We are very concerned about the impact these changes are going to have on students with special education needs and our students who are at-risk for a variety of social, emotional and academic reasons. These most recent changes will have a detrimental impact on their education. The proposed class-size average of 28 is not in the best interest of any student, especially students for whom individual attention, additional support, and a differentiated program is essential for their success. Relationships with teachers are critical for this group of students. The research is very clear; children and youth develop resiliency when they have strong connections with one or more caring adults. Students who are not connected at school and are struggling as a result are not likely to develop the connections with teachers when they are in classes of 30 or more.

Students with special education needs or students who are at risk require significant support to have meaningful and equitable access to education. This drastic increase in the class-size averages is the opposite of such support. When secondary schools begin timetabling to meet your proposed class average, fewer teachers will mean a reduction in course options or sections. The negative impact will be multifaceted.

- Fewer courses mean fewer teachers to support our students in terms of their well-being.
- Fewer courses mean fewer electives; electives are often the glue that keep students connected to school.
- Fewer courses means specialized classes that support students with learning needs (e.g., Learning Strategies (GLEs)) will disappear because they typically have lower enrolment.
- Fewer courses means that students' options will be limited which will in turn limit the pathway choices of our students.

The proposed change requiring all students to take four mandatory e-learning credits is equally as concerning for this particular group of students. Besides the obvious issue of inequitable access to technology and Wi-Fi across the province, e-learning will simply not benefit all students. Individual learning styles are varied and not all students have the independence, problem-solving skills or resiliency to be successful in e-learning platforms. This includes, but is not limited to students with special education needs or students who are already at-risk for learning difficulties. Four mandatory courses will further erode choice from students who need to have the opportunity for as much choice as possible.