

**THE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR
GENERAL OF ONTARIO**

**2015 ANNUAL REPORT
SUMMARY IMPACTING THE
EDUCATION SECTOR**

**REGIONAL INTERNAL AUDIT TEAM
TORONTO AND AREA**

**December 8,
2015**

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Background

The Office of the Auditor General tabled the 2015 Annual Report on December 2, 2015

- This is a presentation to summarize the observations of the Auditor General's Office as it relates to Education sector audit and follow up engagements
- The Office of the Auditor General of Ontario conducted 14 value-for-money audits in four broad thematic categories:
 - Maximizing the value of programs that help vulnerable people
 - Student Transportation Audit
 - Infrastructure Planning Audit
 - Ensuring public safety
 - Stewardship of spending and public resources; and
 - Delivering an essential service
- Two common recurring issues are:
 - Access to equitable service regardless of location of residence; and
 - Better information needed to support decision-making

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION AUDIT 2015

Student Transportation - Background

Background

- Each day 830,000 Ontario students travel to school and back on approximately 19,000 vehicles, at an estimated cost of \$880 million for the 2014/15 school year.
- More than 70% of children transported were in kindergarten or elementary school.
- Although the Education Act does not explicitly require school boards to provide transportation service, every board provides some level of service to students.
- Transportation grants for 2014/15 school year were estimated to be \$880 million.
- Almost all student transportation in Ontario is provided through contracts with school bus operators.

Student Transportation – Funding Summary

Figure 3: School Board Funding, Actual Transportation Expenditures and Number of Students Transported, 2008/09–2014/15

Source of data: Ministry of Education, Education Financial Information System, and Student Transportation Survey

School Year	Total School Board Operating Grant (\$ million)	Transportation Grant (\$ million)	Transportation Grant as a % of Total Operating Grants	Actual Transportation Expenditures* (\$ million)	Students Transported (#)
2008/09	18,892	816.0	4.3	815.2	817,918
2009/10	19,537	827.6	4.2	825.7	818,189
2010/11	20,271	839.8	4.1	840.6	824,024
2011/12	20,985	852.5	4.1	858.1	823,462
2012/13	20,967	850.0	4.1	852.9	833,685
2013/14	20,768	866.6	4.2	861.7	834,229
2014/15 estimate	22,449	880.0	3.9	Not yet available	Not yet available

* When actual expenditures exceed grants received, school boards whose consortia have an effectiveness and efficiency review rating of moderate and above will receive, in whole or in part, additional funding to cover the shortfall in the year of review. This effectively resets the transportation funding in subsequent years. Otherwise, school boards have to make up the shortfall from other program areas.

- 94% of expenditures on student transportation are payments to contracted bus operators
- According to the Ministry, school boards can use any portion of the transportation grant for non-transportation-related expenses

Source: Auditor General of Ontario Annual Report 2015

Student Transportation – Number of Students Transported 2013/14

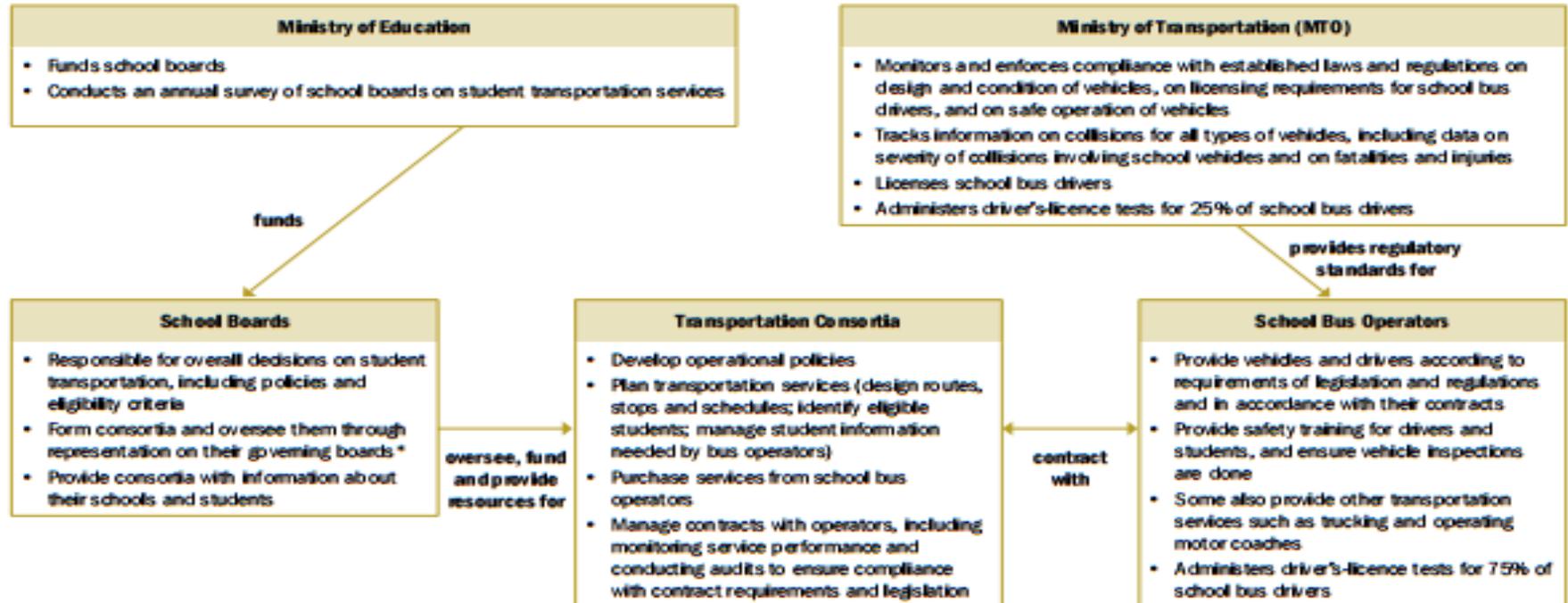
Type of Program or Need	#	%
Students without special needs		
General programs (students meet distance eligibility criteria)	570,014	68.3
Special programs – French Immersion	114,210	13.7
Special programs – other (eg., gifted, arts, music, technical)	18,720	2.2
Hazard (not eligible based on distance but hazardous walk for age/grade)	55,626	6.7
Courtesy (not eligible based on distance but empty seats are available)	33,323	4.0
Subtotal	791,893	
Students with special needs	39,798	4.8
Other (Section 23 schools and provincial schools*)	2,538	0.3
Total	834,229	100.0

* Section 23 schools are correctional and custodial facilities. Provincial schools are operated by the Ministry of Education and provide education for students who are deaf or blind, or have severe learning disabilities.

Student Transportation – Key Stakeholders

Figure 2: Roles and Responsibilities of Parties Involved in Ontario Student Transportation

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario



* One school board is not part of a consortium and manages transportation services directly.

Student Transportation – Audit Objectives and Scope

Audit Objectives

- To assess whether effective systems and procedures were in place to safely and efficiently transport elementary and secondary students
- To ensure the level of service across the province is equitable and based on need
- To measure and report on performance

Audit Scope

- Audit work primarily conducted at 3 transportation consortia and the Ministry of Transportation (MTO)
- At the 3 transportation consortia (accounting for almost 20% of student transportation costs incurred, serving 9 school boards), audit work performed included
 - Review of the transportation planning, including the eligibility criteria applied
 - Bus utilization
 - Safety provisions included in contracts with school bus operators
 - Training of students on riding the bus safely
 - Oversight practices for ensuring operators maintain their vehicles and hire and train competent drivers
 - Whether collisions are tracked and analyzed
 - Process to develop efficient and safe routes
 - Procurement practices used to acquire their current transportation services
 - Surveyed the 30 other consortia on key issues identified

Student Transportation – Audit Objectives and Scope

Audit Scope (continued)

- At the MTO, audit work performed included
 - Frequency of ministry inspections of school buses
 - Audits of school bus operators and investigators of privately owned Motor Vehicle Inspection Stations that conduct semi-annual mechanical inspections of school vehicles
 - Gained an understanding of the school bus driver licensing process and assessed whether safety performance data, tracked by MTO, is accurate and up to date.
- At the school boards, audit work performed included
 - Met with senior school board management and select trustees to discuss oversight of the consortia
- At Ministry of Education, audit work performed included
 - Review adequacy of the effectiveness and efficiency reviews of consortia and the basis for funding
- Other audit work performed included
 - Met with members of the Transportation Committee of the Ontario Association of School Business Officials
 - Met with Colin Campbell, a retired Justice of the Ontario Superior Court, contracted by the Education Minister to chair an expert panel to identify best practices and explore options for acquiring student transportation services

Student Transportation - Observations

Observations related to the Safe Transport of Students

Better oversight and monitoring are needed by the consortia to ensure school bus driver competence.

The transportation consortia need to oversee and monitor driver competence around spot audits of drivers, allowing the bus operators to make the selection of drivers for review, and criminal record checks.

Improvements are needed by consortia and MTO in ensuring school vehicles are in good condition.

The transportation consortia and Ministry for Transportation should improve the way they ensure that school vehicles are in good condition.

MTO did not target vehicles that are most at risk for safety violations, perform inspections on a timely basis, or ensure that defects noted during inspections were fixed. A small sample of vehicles are visually checked.

Ministry of Transportation not aware of all school buses on the road.

In 2013/14 the consortia reported approximately 19,000 school vehicles from operators to the Ministry of Education, however, the Ministry of Transportation system lists approximately 16,000 vehicles. This number should be much higher as it should also include school vehicles used by private schools and other organizations.

Student Transportation - Observations

Observations related to the Safe Transport of Students (continued)

Little oversight of school bus operators who are allowed to certify their own buses for mechanical fitness.

Over the last five years only 12 stations belonging to school bus operators had been inspected by MTO.

Ministry of Education has not mandated bus safety training for students.

Only 16 of 33 consortia had mandatory general school bus safety training, and only 5 had mandatory orientation for new riders.

Many consortia were not collecting their own information on collisions and incidents involving school vehicles to identify problems and take corrective actions.

Ministry of Education has not set guidelines for the reporting of school vehicle collisions and incidents. Only limited information is being tracked on incidents impacting students that could be used to identify the causes and develop strategies to prevent them.

Student Transportation - Observations

Observations related to Efficient Transportation of Students

Funding for school transportation is not based on need.

It is based on the board's 1997 spending level with adjustments for various items including enrolment, inflation and fuel costs. The formula does not take into account local factors, such as enrolment density, availability of public transit, and number of special need students.

There are differences in eligibility for Student Transportation services across the province. This often happens when government funds a program based on historical levels rather than on a current assessment of actual needs. Where appropriate, we recommend that ministries base funding decisions on actual measured needs.

School busing is not available on an equal basis to students across the province.

Eligibility criteria for busing varies among school boards served by the same consortium and among schools within the same board. Ontario has no provincial eligibility standard for busing, and, as a result, school boards can determine which groups of students they will provide transportation for and spend their funding on.

Although the cost of transporting students varies widely among school boards, the Ministry of Education has not followed up with the boards to determine if these variances are justified.

The Ministry has not determined if the disparity is also partly due to inefficiencies in providing busing services such as, not optimizing route planning software and coordinating common days off between boards.

Student Transportation - Observations

Observations related to Efficient Transportation of Students (continued)

Reliable bus utilization data is not available.

Consortia we visited did not typically track the number of riders. As well, each consortium set its own capacity for a bus and used different methods to calculate the utilization rate.

Consortia are contracting for more bus services than they need.

The consortium could save money if it contracted fewer buses and used them for additional trips.

Only 50% of the consortia in the province had competitively procured their current transportation services.

Best practice, from Supply Chain Ontario, show that qualitative criteria should be weighted at 65% and price at 35%. This was not observed in the consortia sampled. The weighting of safety criteria varied significantly among the three consortia.

Student Transportation Recommendations

Recommendations

The audit report contained 15 recommendations, consisting of 31 actions, to address audit findings.

Below are the three main recommendations.

#1 – A better oversight of bus operators and their drivers, better processes for ensuring the safe operation of school vehicles, better tracking and analysis of collisions and incidents may even further reduce risks to students. The transportation consortia in conjunction with school boards should:

- Develop and conduct consistent and effective oversight processes for school bus operators to confirm their compliance with contract and legal requirements for driver competence and vehicle condition; and
- Track the rate of bus driver turnover, accidents and incidents such as dropping students at the wrong stop, to help determine if there is a link between driver turnover and safety risks, and if action is needed.

#2 – To help promote good practices and safe driving by drivers of school vehicles, the Ministry of Transportation should monitor the delivery of the School Bus Driver Improvement Program and review its effectiveness.

#3 – In order for the Commercial Vehicle Operators' Registration program (CVOR) to effectively track the on-road performance of school buses and trigger ministry intervention when school bus operators' ratings reach unacceptable levels, the Ministry of Transportation should:

- Ensure that safety infractions are update in the CVOR in a timely manner and that these are reflected in the operator's safety rating for the full 24 months from the time the infraction is input into the system;
- Ensure that information in the CVOR is easy to interpret and provides safety information on local terminals of school bus operators; and
- Consider ways to verify the accuracy of self-reported information on the number of vehicles in the operators' fleets and the number of kilometres driven.

INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AUDIT

2015

Infrastructure Planning in the Education Sector - Background

Background

- Ontario has 5,000 schools with more than 26 million square metres of space and 1.96 million students valued at \$22.8 billion, the third largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's infrastructure portfolio
- The average age of schools is 38 years
- The province released two long-term infrastructure plans in the past decade
 - ReNew Ontario, 2005 – identified transportation, health and education sectors, among others, as needing investment. More than \$10 billion was committed to improve school and postsecondary facilities.
 - Building Together – Jobs & Prosperity for Ontarians, 2011 – a 10 year plan to prioritize future investments, including investing in elementary and secondary schools
- Over the past decade, \$12.7 billion has been spent to build 700 new schools and make major additions and renovations to more than 725 existing schools.
- Over the next 10 years, the estimated planned spending for education is \$21 billion (schools and post-secondary institutions)

Infrastructure Planning as it relates to the Education sector – Audit Objectives and Scope

Audit Objectives

- To assess and report on whether the province's infrastructure-planning process ensured that infrastructure projects are prioritized based on need
- To assess whether existing assets are maintained and renewed in accordance with sound asset-management principles

Audit Scope

- Significant portion of the work was conducted at the office of the Treasury Board Secretariat
- Reviewed infrastructure plans and related documents submitted by ministries
- Analyzed information prepared by the Secretariat
- Interviewed personnel responsible for submission or assessment of infrastructure plans at both the Secretariat and five ministries (including Ministry of Education)
- For Ministry of Education, reviewed business cases submitted by broader-public-sector entities and examined their respective processes for assessing need and selecting projects, and for monitoring capital projects in development
- Reviewed provincial budgets and the government's significant infrastructure plans to identify major commitments made by the province and whether approved capital funding is in alignment with these commitments
- Met with industry associations and researched how other jurisdictions plan for infrastructure

Infrastructure Planning as it relates to the Education Sector - Observations

Observations

The Secretariat does not have access to a reliable estimate of the condition of all provincial assets.

This information is needed to determine funding priorities. There is no consistency among ministries on how to measure the condition of various asset classes making it difficult to make comparisons when prioritizing and allocating funding.

Significant infrastructure investments needed to maintain Ontario's existing schools and hospitals, which current funding levels cannot meet, creating a backlog.

The Ministry of Education and MOHLTC have each conducted independent assessment over the last five years of their schools and hospitals. For schools, 80% of the assessments completed identified \$14 billion of total renewal needs, requiring an investment of \$1.4 billion a year to maintain the schools in a state of good repair. However, actual annual funding on a school year basis over the last five years has been \$150 million per year, increasing to \$250 million in 2014/15 and \$500 million in 2015/16.

Existing funding does not address significant pressures faced by ministries for new projects.

Investment is needed to expand the existing portfolio of assets and replace aged assets. About \$2.6 billion worth of projects are submitted to the Ministry of Education by school boards for funding consideration every year. However, in the last 5 years, the Ministry has approved only about 1/3 of the projects every year, since it's annual funding envelope under the program has averaged only about \$500 million on a school year basis.

Infrastructure Planning as it relates to the Education Sector - Observations

Observations (continued)

Prioritization of infrastructure needs favor new project over renewal of existing assets.

The province's guidelines say there should be an appropriate allocation of funds for asset renewal and construction of new projects to maintain existing service levels. Although analysis shows 2/3 of the province's capital investments should go towards renewals of existing assets, the current 10 year capital plan allocates only 1/3 to renewal.

Prioritization of infrastructure needs across various sectors is not done.

The Secretariat generally evaluated each ministry on a stand-alone basis and no comparison was done at an overall provincial level to ensure the most pressing needs are prioritized for funding.

Infrastructure Planning as it relates to the Education Sector - Recommendations

Recommendations

The audit report contained 15 recommendations.

There are no recommendations that relate uniquely to the Education sector. However, as the Treasury Board Secretariat adopts and implements the Auditor General of Ontario's recommendations, there will be an impact on the information requested from each ministry in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the infrastructure planning processes at the Treasury Board Secretariat.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS STRATEGY FOLLOW-UP 2015

Healthy Schools Strategy - Background

Background

- Increasing incidence of overweight children in Canada is a significant public concern
- Nearly one in three students is overweight and 12% are considered obese. This is almost twice as many as in the late 1970s
- In 2012, the Ontario government set a goal of reducing childhood obesity by 20% in five years
- The Ministry of Education has established the Healthy Schools Strategy to support students' learning and growth through proper nutrition and physical activity
- The Ministry of Education relies on the support of other government ministries, such as Health and Long-term Care and Children and Youth Services
- At the time of the follow-up, the Ministry had spent about \$7.8 million over the 3 fiscal years 2012/13 to 2014/15 (\$5.8 million over the three preceding fiscal years) on activities relating to healthy eating and physical activity initiatives

Healthy Schools Strategy – Key Observations

Key Observations

Neither the Ministry, nor the sampled school boards had effective monitoring strategies to ensure that food and beverages sold in schools complied with the nutrition standards in the Ministry's School Food and Beverage Policy. There had not been a review of the food and beverages sold in the school cafeterias of the schools sampled.

A review of sample menu items at one school board identified a number of items that did not meet nutrition criteria in the food and beverage policy, to a significant degree.

Both the Ministry and school boards sampled had limited data to assess whether the Policy contributed to better student eating behaviors. After healthier food choices were introduced, secondary school cafeteria sales decreased between 25% and 45%.

There was no formal monitoring by the Ministry, school boards and schools sampled to ensure students in grades 1 to 8 had the 20 minutes of daily physical activity during instruction time as required by the Ontario Curriculum.

The Ministry's requirement for physical activity at secondary schools was much lower than it was in other jurisdictions. In Ontario, students had to complete only one credit course in health and physical education during their four years of high school. While in Manitoba, four credits are required to graduate and in British Columbia, students are expected to participate in at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week.

Healthy Schools Strategy – Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

#1 – To help ensure that offering healthier food choices in schools contributes to improved student eating behaviors and their goals of improving student health and academic achievement, the Ministry and school boards should:

- Develop consistent and effective strategies to monitor compliance with the Ministry’s School Food and Beverage Policy, especially ensuring that all items sold in schools comply with the policy’s nutrition standards.**

Status:

Ministry - In the process of being implemented by June 2017

School boards sampled – Little or no progress

Ministry officials visit school boards to see how the Healthy Schools strategy and policies (including the Policy and daily physical activity policy) are being implemented. Since the 2013 audit report, the Ministry has visited an additional 35 boards and plans to visit the remaining 25 boards by the end of 2016/17.

As part of its site visits, the Ministry now asks questions about the extent to which the Policy has been implemented and whether there are monitoring processes in place. However, it does not verify that these processes actually ensure compliance with the Policy.

School boards with vendors who sold food and beverages in schools were to confirm in writing to school principals that they will comply with the Policy. However, there is no process to verify compliance.

Healthy Schools Strategy – Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

#1 – To help ensure that offering healthier food choices in schools contributes to improved student eating behaviors and their goals of improving student health and academic achievement, the Ministry and school boards should:

- **Capture additional data on the benefits of and challenges to implementing the School Food and Beverage Policy in order to assess the policy’s impact and identify areas on which to focus future efforts.**

Status:

Ministry - In the process of being implemented by June 2017

School boards sampled – Little or no progress (1 of 3 to implement by June 2016)

Ministry collects information through site visits to school boards and schools. Some positive practices noted include working with public health units to ensure Policy requirements are met and integrating healthy eating in to the classroom to promote changes.

Some challenges noted include decreases in profits of school cafeterias and schools’ lack of time to work with food service providers to ensure they meet Policy requirements.

The Healthy Eating in Secondary Schools Grants program was introduced in 2014 to increase awareness and access to food and beverages that comply with the Policy. An evaluation of the project is to be provided by an external party and the final report is expected in June 2016.

The three sampled school boards have not made any significant progress in implementing this recommendation and one school board noted lack of volunteers and funds, not enough parental awareness and insufficient training for volunteers and school staff as challenges it faces.

Healthy Schools Strategy – Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

#1 – To help ensure that offering healthier food choices in schools contributes to improved student eating behaviors and their goals of improving student health and academic achievement, the Ministry and school boards should:

- **Ensure that school administrators and teachers receive sufficient training and supports on how to implement the policy and promote healthy eating concepts in the classroom**

Status:

Ministry - Little or no progress

School boards sampled – Little or no progress

Since the 2013 audit, the Ministry has not taken any steps to determine if school administrators and teachers received sufficient training and supports to implement the Policy or to integrate and promote healthy eating concepts in the classroom.

The Ministry makes resources available to teachers and administrators on how to implement the Policy and gave school boards \$6.3 million for the 2015/16 school year to promote students' wellbeing. The boards could choose to use some of this funding for training resources.

Of the school boards sampled, one has given teachers documentation of available resources on the Policy and creating training for new hires to be provided in 2015/16 school year. However, at all three boards sampled, staff had not been given any training. Another school board informed that it will give training every second year to all school administrators and they will share the information with staff in their schools.

None of the three school boards assessed whether teachers and administrators had sufficient training on how to implement the Policy and promote healthy eating concepts in the classroom.

Healthy Schools Strategy – Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

#1 – To help ensure that offering healthier food choices in schools contributes to improved student eating behaviors and their goals of improving student health and academic achievement, the Ministry and school boards should:

- **Develop measurable objectives and related performance indicators for healthy eating activities, and periodically measure progress in achieving these objectives.**

Status:

Ministry - Little or no progress

School boards sampled – Little or no progress

The Ministry has not developed any specific measurable objectives and related performance indicators to assess whether offering healthier food choices in the schools contributes to improved student eating behaviors, or health and academic achievement.

The three school boards sampled have indicated they would like to take direction from the Ministry.

Healthy Schools Strategy – Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

#2 – To help safely increase physical activity as well as contribute to reduced sedentary behavior and improved academic achievement, the Ministry and school boards should:

- **Assess options, including practices in other jurisdictions, for providing sufficient physical activity to both elementary and secondary school students.**

Status:

Ministry - In the process of being implemented by June 2017

School boards sampled – Little or no progress

There are several initiatives to increase physical activity among students, including

- A long term goal to have children able to access 60 minutes of physical activity in the school day and
- The objective in the Secondary Schools Grants program to increase the number of students that participate in physical activity outside of instruction time.

The Ministry is reviewing a recent study by Public Health Ontario on the implementation status of the Ministry's Daily Physical Activity Policy, to find ways to increase physical activity for elementary school students. The study found that only 60% of schools and 50% of classrooms meet the requirements.

Healthy Schools Strategy – Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

#2 – To help safely increase physical activity as well as contribute to reduced sedentary behavior and improved academic achievement, the Ministry and school boards should:

- Ensure that elementary school administrators and teachers receive sufficient training on good practices and on how to effectively incorporate daily physical activity into the day.**

Status:

Ministry - Little or no progress

School boards sampled – Little or no progress

Since the 2013 audit, the Ministry has not taken any steps to determine whether elementary school administrators or teachers are knowledgeable about incorporating daily physical activity into the school day.

The Ministry makes resources available on how to implement daily physical activity into the school day.

Healthy Schools Strategy – Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

#2 – To help safely increase physical activity as well as contribute to reduced sedentary behavior and improved academic achievement, the Ministry and school boards should:

- **Familiarize teachers with physical activity safety guidelines**

Status:

Ministry - Little or no progress

School boards sampled – Little or no progress (1 of 3 to implement by June 2016)

In 2013, none of the elementary teachers interviewed had received training on the physical activity safety guidelines, yet believed some training would be beneficial.

Since the audit, the Ministry extended its contract with the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association to make the physical activity safety guidelines available on a publicly accessible website.

The school boards sampled have provided some form of training to various teacher groups and one school board has designated Healthy Schools leads at each elementary school.

Healthy Schools Strategy – Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

#2 – To help safely increase physical activity as well as contribute to reduced sedentary behavior and improved academic achievement, the Ministry and school boards should:

- **Set specific goals and targets for increasing physical activity in schools, and periodically monitor, measure and publicly report on the progress made.**

Status:

Ministry - Little or no progress

School boards sampled – Little or no progress (1 of 3 to implement by June 2016)

The Ontario's Healthy Kids Strategy (developed by MOHLTC) does not contain any goals and targets.

The Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed (developed by Ministry of Child and Youth Services) contains three indicators to determine whether youth are physically healthy but no targets were set for these indicators.

Although the Ministry set a long term goal in 2014 to provide children and youth access to 60 minutes of physical activity connected to their school day, it has not set a target date for implementing the goal.

The Ministry's monitoring of its Daily Physical Activity Policy requires improvement.

Healthy Schools Strategy – Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

#3 – To help encourage healthier eating and increased physical activity among students, the Ministry and school boards should further explore opportunities to improve communication with parents and assess the effectiveness of such efforts.

Status:

Ministry - Little or no progress

School boards sampled – Little or no progress

Information about healthy eating and physical activity is provided on the Ministry's website.

There has not been an assessment of the effectiveness of the Ministry's communication with parents.

The sampled school boards have not done anything to improve their communication with parents since the last audit. One board plans to meet with the Parent Committee in 2015/16 school year to identify more effective ways to communicate with parents.

Healthy Schools Strategy – Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

#4 – The Ministry and school boards should work more effectively with other relevant organizations with similar goals to better integrate and leverage their activities to help encourage healthier eating and physical activity among students.

Status:

Ministry - In the process of being implemented. The Ministry believes the nature of the recommendation is ongoing and has not provided a completion date.

School boards sampled – Little or no progress

Although it was noted during the audit, that school boards work with many organizations, the activities of these organizations did not formally factor into the boards' strategies.

The Ministry already works with MOHLTC to promote children and youth to have 60 minutes of physical activity connected to their school day. The Ministry is also working with Children and Youth Services; Tourism, Culture and Sport; and Municipal Affairs and Housing; Ontario Physical and Health Education Association; ParticipACTION; and ACTIVE AT SCHOOL.

The three school boards sampled work with local public health units, local boys' and girls' clubs and other relevant organizations, such as the YMCA.

However, the boards had only limited information about what these organizations contributed to the development of healthier eating habits and/or the increase in their physical activity.

AUTISM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN FOLLOW-UP 2015

Autism Services and Supports for Children - Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

Autism Services and Supports in Schools

#4 – To better ensure that children with autism receive cost-effective supports while in school, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, should:

- Review the need for the use of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) consultants at many school boards that already employ people to provide similar services, and ensure that all ASD consultants are effectively utilized.**

Status: In the process of being implemented by June 2016

The Ministry supports the incorporation of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) methods in the school system and the building of the capacity of schools to support students with autism, including funding for ABA experts and training activities for educators.

In May 2015, the Ministry and Ministry of Children and Youth Services began examining what resources are available to schools compared to what students with autism and their educators need. This will be completed by June 2016.

Autism Services and Supports for Children - Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

Autism Services and Supports in Schools

#4 – To better ensure that children with autism receive cost-effective supports while in school, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, should:

- Define minimum training requirement to assist existing and future educators to use Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) principles in the classrooms, and monitor uptake of these education programs.

Status: Fully implemented

In April 2014, the Ministry notified all boards, that training for educators who work with autistic students should include a specific set of five principles.

The Ministry partnered with the Geneva Centre for Autism, to offer a new online certificate course that incorporates these principles. The course was launched in September 2014.

Autism Services and Supports for Children - Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

Autism Services and Supports in Schools

#4 – To better ensure that children with autism receive cost-effective supports while in school, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, should:

- Assess the usefulness of various online and other resource tools available to assist teachers with effective educational practices for students with autism, and facilitate cost-effective access to the best tools available.**

Status: Fully implemented.

In April 2014, the Ministry launched an online forum for ABA expertise professionals in school boards containing resources effective in improving the outcomes for students with autism.

In January 2015, the Ministry launched a dedicated page on Edu-GAINS, a website that supports educators programming for students with autism.

The Ministry partnered with the Geneva Centre for Autism, to monitor the use of the online certificate course.

Autism Services and Supports for Children - Status of Actions Taken on Recommendations

Transition Services for Older Children

#5 – To help ensure that appropriate services and supports are available to persons with autism as they prepare to leave the children and youth system, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, in conjunction with the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Education, should develop processes to assess whether individuals with autism made successful transitions, including surveys to gauge satisfaction for those who made the transitions and their families.

Status: In the process of being implemented by February 2016

In September 2014, the three ministries began to implement a framework to collect information to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of their transition-planning protocols.

At the time of follow-up, the three ministries were still developing the survey and expect to implement it in February 2016.

After collection of the responses, there is a plan to analyze the information and make necessary adjustments to transition-planning protocols.

Conclusion

Source: Office of the Auditor General of Ontario's – 2015 Annual Report

For more detailed information of the results of the report, please visit:

http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/reports_2015_en.htm