



ETFO Member Engagement 2019

Myths versus Facts

Myth: The education system is broken and needs to be fixed. Parents need value and choice when it comes to education for their children.

Facts: Consumer ‘choice’ in education – through vouchers or Charter schools funded by public dollars – is a false choice intended to privatize education. Many Ontario students would not have access to such schools particularly in rural areas. When ‘consumer choice’ was introduced in the United States with funding tied to outcomes, it created a downward spiral leaving many public schools in tatters. Charter schools in Alberta, British Columbia and the U.S. have not improved educational outcomes.

The heart of Ontario’s public education is that it provides an equitable education for every student regardless of family income, race or ability. If money is syphoned off to pay for alternative schools, that will put many Ontario schools in jeopardy with less funding and resources.

Rather than privatize education to benefit the wealthy, the government must undertake an independent external review of the education funding formula. More resources are needed for crumbling schools and for the actual needs of students with special needs.

Myth: Assessment practices need to be improved.

Facts: Standardized testing does not accurately measure individual student success. Teachers’ professional judgement and their ongoing assessment and observations are far more reliable than a standardized test.

Students and teachers are stressed by the EQAO tests, particularly in younger grades. EQAO tests should be cancelled for grades 3 and 6. Too much time is spent ‘teaching to the test.’ Skills like real world problem-solving, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking are what employers are looking for and students need experiences with a full range of learning in science, the arts and physical education.

EQAO results are misused by real estate agents and others to rank schools. Other jurisdictions around the world are decreasing their focus on standardized testing. Funds saved by ending EQAO testing could be put into critical education needs like repairing schools or more resources for special needs and mental health.

Myth: The delivery of Full-Day Kindergarten needs to be reviewed.

Facts: The current model for Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) was set up by experts to have a focus on play-based learning. Each partner in the team brings specialized expertise to meet the critical learning and socio-emotional skills of early learners. The model provides lasting benefits for children's reading, writing, numeracy, self-regulation and social skills. It's the kind of start that leads to higher graduation rates and improved skills around self-reliance, critical thinking and problem-solving. Maintaining the current model, with its educator team, class size caps and play-based foundation ensures early learners get their best start. The Ford government has not committed to fund the current FDK model past the 2019-2020 school year, causing anxiety for educators and parents.

Myth: Class size does not matter. Students will learn despite larger classes.

Facts: Class size matters. Smaller class sizes in primary grades enable educators to provide more one-on-one and small group instruction and provide more attention to the intellectual, social and emotional needs of every student. They can better support students with special needs who require additional educator and support staff. Currently, class sizes in grades 4-8 are the largest in the K-12 system. Smaller class sizes should be extended to these upper elementary grades with a cap of 24 students.

Myth: Regulation 274 is not working. It creates more problems than it solves.

Facts: A 2013 review commissioned by the Minister of Education found that when implemented properly by school boards, Regulation 274 results in a more consistent, transparent and fair hiring process for Ontario's occasional teachers. It makes the path to permanent employment clearer for all applicants, including recent graduates. There has been no impact on hiring for diversity.

Myth: There is too much waste in the education system. Efficiencies need to be found.

Facts: Ontario does not have a spending problem; it has a revenue problem. Its public program spending as a share of GDP is second lowest in the country. Billions of dollars in revenue have been lost by maintaining some of the lowest corporate tax rates in North America, even though these tax cuts have not generated new jobs.

Since being elected, the Ford government has cancelled \$100 million for school repairs and further slashed \$25 million for education programs. Ontario's elementary schools need more money to meet diverse needs of their students in schools that are well maintained. Ontario public teachers are highly qualified. This level of professional qualification is a key factor in making the system one of the best in the world.