

School Board Efficiencies and Modernization

A Submission to the Minister of Education

November, 2013



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association



Ontario Catholic School
Trustees' Association

OUR MISSION

Inspired by the Gospel, we provide leadership, service and a provincial voice for Catholic School Boards in promoting and protecting Catholic education.

OUR VISION

In keeping with our Mission, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association:

OPERATIONAL VALUES

- **Embodies** and promotes the values and traditions of our Catholic faith in all Association activities.
- **Respects** the principles of democratic and accountable governance.

POLITICAL ADVOCACY

- **Protects** the constitutional right of the Catholic community to govern, control and manage Catholic schools.
- **Promotes** education in our province that reflects the Catholic principles of social justice.
- **Advocates** for government recognition of the distinctive nature of Catholic education.
- **Advocates** for provincial policy, legislation and funding support that enable Catholic boards to provide quality Catholic education.
- **Influences** the strategic and political direction of the Ontario government and opposition parties regarding issues that impact Catholic education.

INFORMATION & SERVICES

- **Provides** faith formation and professional development resources and opportunities for its members.
- **Provides** to member boards information and services that recognize their diverse circumstances and needs.

COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC RELATIONS

- **Develops** effective structures that enhance communication and working relationships among OCSTA and its member boards.
- **Communicates** with member Boards and Catholic partners regarding relevant educational issues and OCSTA activities.
- **Promotes** public understanding of and support for Catholic education.
- **Celebrates** and **highlights** Catholic education's significant and continuing contribution to Ontario society.

PARTNERSHIPS

- **Stimulates** ongoing visioning of how Catholic education partners can collaborate to serve the interests of Catholic education.
- **Builds** significant partnerships within and beyond the Catholic community in support of Catholic education.

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INTRODUCTION

The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA) was founded in 1930. It represents 29 English-language Catholic district school boards. Collectively, these school boards educate approximately 600,000 students from junior kindergarten to grade 12.

Inspired by the Gospel, the Mission of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association is to provide leadership, service and a provincial voice for Catholic school boards in promoting and protecting Catholic education.

UNDERUTILIZED AND SMALL SCHOOLS

Preamble

Over the past number of years the government has provided supports to school boards to keep underutilized and small schools open. These supports are necessary for many of those small and underutilized schools which are in small remote communities or rural areas where transportation to nearby schools is impossible or may be detrimental to student learning. There are certainly situations where school closure or consolidation can be reasonable and not impact student achievement, however, opponents often use the fact that Ministry supports are in place to justify that those schools should remain open. The government could initiate a study, in consultation with representatives of school boards, to establish guidelines and or regulations that school boards would use to objectively assess the need for school closure or consolidation. Those guidelines and/or regulations should include:

- Minimum size for schools, both elementary and secondary
- Minimum utilization rates
- School condition and cost of future repairs/ upgrading
- Distance to nearby board owned schools.

Note that some of these criteria, particularly the distance to nearby schools, may be different depending on the geographic area. For example, the transportation distance and time guidelines to a nearby school should be different in an area with low to moderate annual snow fall accumulation compared to an area with above average snow fall accumulation.

Answers to questions:

- 1) The school foundation grant and top-up funding could be provided only in circumstances where schools meet the criteria established above.
 - The school foundation grant funds in-school administration. The funding assumes that each school should staff a Principal and Secretary. There are examples where twinned schools or teaching principals can be effective. The clustering of schools is a process utilized by Special Services staff/programs. This model can be reviewed for Administration purposes as well.
 - The role of the School Secretary is important in the school. They have hands on, direct contact with the students and the parents on a regular basis. The role has changed over the years and professional development for school administrative staff would assist especially in the use of technology. For example, a significant amount of time is spent dealing with cash handling and financial duties. Introducing an on-line payment system for all schools/boards would help reduce time spent handling cash, however, boards do not have the funds to do this and where it can be implemented, the cost often is downloaded to the parents via user fees. In addition some rural areas do not have adequate internet access for such a robust system.

- 2) Financial support needs to be provided to those schools that are considered remote. Criteria to determine what schools are remote will vary depending on the geographic region and ability of the board to transport students to a nearby board owned school.
 - Trend enrolment information is required for Underutilized schools. Certain areas may be experiencing enrolment growth and new residential development, while other areas have reached capacity and will not yield further development.
 - Distance between underutilized schools and a nearby board owned school is key in ensuring that students will not be disadvantaged in getting to a new location. Limitations on duration of bus rides, road conditions and start times are required.
 - Conditions for urban and rural will also be different. Complex situations can exist in rural areas. In a rural setting there is less opportunity for partnerships to make use of underutilized space. Consider the proximity to other facilities such as arenas, gyms, recreation centers.
 - Class sizes in small and underutilized schools will generally be smaller. Additional teachers required due to small classes is often the major cost associated with small schools. Where it is necessary to keep these schools open some recognition should be

given to the cost of additional teachers. The *Remote and Rural Grant* should be reviewed to ensure it is adequate for the purpose intended.

- 3) A school closure process is largely political not financial. Guidelines that reduce the politics would assist in a more collaborative process. It can take up two years to complete the ARC process and close a school. Trustees in their second term of office are less likely to want to close a school in an election year. Establishing clear guidelines for funding small and underutilized schools would assist with the board's arguments for closing a school.
- In addition, the Accommodation Review process should be reviewed to simplify the process. A two tier process could be developed that distinguishes between situations that clearly meet the parameters established in the regulations versus those situations which may not meet those parameters but still, in the board's opinion, should be closed or consolidated.
 - Funding for the new or remaining school(s) must be guaranteed.
 - The message from the Ministry regarding the ARC process needs to be clear. Communities believe the Ministry wants to keep small and underutilized schools open. The emotional aspect of ARCs needs to be eliminated/reduced.
 - Legislating the process or providing regulations will encourage boards to follow through with the review process.
- 4) Funding for principals and secretaries could be provided based on schools meeting the criteria as noted above.
- The Ministry has invested in Safe Schools and Safe welcome programs, security, access and cameras in schools. This should be contributing to safer environments for students. Can the allocation for Vice-Principals be reduced given the strong controls for safety in place?
 - The School Foundation grant may be able to build on the rural/urban aspects of boards. Where urban boards have schools in close proximity could the ratios for staffing Principal and Vice-Principal be altered or reduced and encourage a 'hub' service or teaching principals?
 - Ministry of Education and other Ministries continue to download responsibilities on the schools – i.e. childcare, full-day kindergarten, Community Use of Schools, etc. This detracts the principal from the student achievement strategy.

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- 5) The barriers to change are often the parents and other local agencies in communities with small or underutilized schools. People in small communities, even those that may be within large municipalities, consider the local school(s) to be an essential part of the community. In some cases, the schools provide a community hall, recreation facility and playground. The closure of the facility is not just the closure of a school but the elimination of a community asset and loss of their identity as a community.
 - 6) Community Use of schools has introduced significant use of the school space – but usually only after hours. The guidelines should be reviewed to allow more day use of the facilities, although, this does introduce complications regarding access to students and the requirement of Criminal Reference checks.

DECLINING ENROLMENT SUPPORTS

Preamble

Declining enrolment grants support Boards in two ways: transitional support and ongoing support.

Transitional support cushions the impact of declines in enrolment, giving Boards an opportunity to make the necessary adjustments to the cost drivers, particularly staffing. All Boards benefit from this support when they experience decline. If the Ministry is considering reducing this type of support, Boards would require greater flexibility with respect to class size averages and caps which is currently an impediment to reducing cost.

Ongoing support would help Boards when it is extremely difficult to reduce costs due to a decline in enrolment. Small Boards and Boards with a predominance of small and underutilized schools are particularly in need of this type of support as there may be no viable option to close schools.

- 1) The impacts to grants resulting from declining enrolment is complicated and can have dramatic impact on boards in that situation. A review of all the grants needs to be thorough and detailed. The review should include both Ministry and board staff and any recommendations need to consider the impact on individual boards. The Ministry should study the possibility of providing ongoing declining enrolment support to Boards through the School Foundation Grant, for those schools in decline that adhere to the previously mentioned criteria (see Small and Underutilized Schools) of:
 - Minimum size
 - Minimum utilization
 - Maximum Facility Condition Index
 - Minimum distance to nearby Board-owned schools.

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- 2) The determination of which grants could be restructured from on-going to transitional should be included in the study mentioned above. A study of the possibility of new transitional and ongoing support grants should be considered by the Ministry of Education to support Boards establishing an Administrative Shared Services model. Participation/eligibility would be voluntary, denominational rights protected and full cost recognition would be important guidelines for such a study. The study could include a review of enrolment based grants versus fixed grants.

Transportation and Special Education Grants cost structures are complex and not neatly tied to enrolment and therefore further study would be required before any steps could be taken to reduce the support given to Boards for declines in enrolment.

- 3) Expanding e-learning has the potential of reducing costs at the secondary level. This issue may not be effective for elementary schools and students as a viable way to reduce cost. The schools that would benefit the most would be smaller, rural secondary schools. Therefore broadband and connectivity would have to be sufficient to reach all areas of the province, especially some of the remote and rural areas. The Ministry should study further how best to provide the necessary and affordable bandwidth to every student in Ontario.

IMPROVED ACCOUNTABILITY

Answers to questions:

- 1) The effectiveness of EPO programs is hindered by the number programs, the extensive reporting and the size of the grants. Providing fewer but larger grants with guarantees of multi-year funding would enhance the effectiveness of the program and reduce reporting. The EPO grants could also be rolled into the GSN. Boards could be required to submit one report each year to identify student achievement results, which is the major accountability factor.

In most cases, EPO funding requires a contract to be completed by boards that detail how the funds will be used in the system. The Ministry should be able to rely on this report that the board will follow-through. The Regional Internal Audit Team can be involved with periodic review of how boards utilize the EPO funds which would eliminate the need to submit interim and final reports to Ministry.

An additional input field in EFIS can be used to track total EPO Funds received and total EPO spending.

- 2) Targeted GSN funds must be treated like all other GSN funds. It's up to the board to meet its obligations and report the use of all GSN. Specific allocation of spending for target GSN can be included in the EFIS.

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- 3) Linking results to reporting requirements may produce unintended results. For example, if a board consistently has a deficit financial position there is no link to academic results. The deficit could be tied solely to benefit costs / contractual obligations / operational or maintenance needs.
 - 4) Reduction of demographic-based grants which change as demographics change is problematic for boards. Often these grants are tied to staff and any reductions may cause staff reductions. Phasing in such changes helps boards who experience a loss in funding but disadvantages boards whose demographics indicate a real need for additional resources. A fund to allow a phasing of reductions but provide immediate support where increases are warranted may provide a solution.

SHARED EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

Preamble

Shared efficiency initiatives can take different forms. The concept of shared service arrangements has been discussed. Those arrangements, typically, involve numerous organizations coming together to address common needs or operations in order to capitalize on the benefits of scale that result from pooling or consolidating resources.

Shared services involve standardizing and managing process performance through defined service level agreements.

Ontario school boards face financial pressure and budget constraints. Many core functions are repeated in various versions/systems/processes across the sector. An extensive study recently completed concluded that there are some benefits of a shared services model, although the costs to implement may be a barrier. The extensive work done for this study could be the basis for further research on shared services in select areas of the province.

From the study, identified savings were contingent on thorough implementation planning and sound execution. The shared services opportunity would not be achievable without Ministry leadership, resources and support. Many of the opportunities identified in the study could be scaled across the province. A shared services opportunity would require addressing key risks, including the legal barriers presented by collective agreements, and the need for significant funding of implementation costs. Critical success factors for implementing shared services:

- centralized leadership/strong leadership and effective governance is needed
- legislation: legal barriers could hinder the opportunity
- implementation financing: significant investment is required
- opportunities outside of board administration i.e. technology

Key benefits typically realized by organizations that have moved to shared services environments:

- gain economies of scale and reduce costs
- Standardize processes
- Improved service levels

Answers to questions:

- 1) Shared efficiency initiatives can also include joint initiatives between school boards and the Ministry. Whether among school boards or in partnership with the Ministry the efficiency measures must be economically beneficial to all parties involved. Significant savings must accrue to the school boards to entice those boards to participate and take ownership of the efficiency measures.

Shared savings initiatives usually have significant upfront costs. Boards need to have access for infrastructure and set-up costs for such programs. Other impediments include loss of autonomy and control over policies and procedures. There are several examples where school boards have developed shared services such as the Ontario School Boards' Insurance Exchange (OSBIE), the School Boards' Cooperative Inc. (SBCI) and Catholic School Boards' Services Association (CSBSA) as well as various local procurement consortia. The Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace (OECM) is an example of a government initiated program that has significant promise, however, there has not been significant uptake by school boards. The reasons are not clear but a survey to determine the barriers to school boards joining OECM may be helpful. It should be noted that many shared savings initiatives would involve the use of technology to improve efficiency but the use technology itself would not necessarily achieve significant savings. Administrative costs are largely related to staff, therefore significant savings can only be achieved by reducing staff. This is problematic as the recent MOUs and collective agreements contain restrictions to reducing staff complements.

- 2) Incentives, through sharing of savings with the province or other such sharing, for boards to develop voluntary shared savings initiatives would encourage boards to seek out those initiatives. The Ministry could solicit voluntary proposals from boards and those proposals could include the sharing of savings which could, initially, favour the school board and then diminish over time.

E-BOOK AND E-LEARNING

Answers to questions:

1. To require all students to complete a course by e-learning would require access for all students to appropriate devices and bandwidth. If students do not have a device or sufficient bandwidth at home, then options to complete course requirements at home would be inequitable compared to students who did have home access. Students would need to ensure that for at least that one course, they were able to find access to the online resources. For some, this could pose some difficulty if they have limited access at school or at home. As such access might need to be provided after-hours at the school or a local community centre.

For the majority of teachers not participating in that 'one course' the implications would initially be small. If successful, and e-learning opportunities were expanded there would be pressure on teachers to increase their use of e-learning tools. Professional development and access (devices, bandwidth) for teachers would be needed.

E-learning may not be suitable for all students. Teachers would need to determine if e-learning was appropriate for a particular student. For some students it may be a more engaging way to learn and would provide an opportunity to begin work in an environment that will provide essential skills as they move either to the workplace or higher educational institutions.

2. Rich, robust e-books and the use of assessment of and for learning opportunities would provide an efficient way to deliver content to the student at the appropriate reading level and could enhance the learning experience. Today, many e-books are simply digital forms of the traditional text book which may not support this goal. Those e-books that are more advanced and functional, and able to deliver a richer experience, however, may be prohibitively expensive.

Assuming the e-learning course has been constructed by embedding rich instructional practices such as assessment FOR and AS learning, and differentiated instruction, the course will enable personalization and precision beyond what many courses today currently provide. In addition, the ability to provide a standard, vetted course that has been co-constructed by instructionally strong teachers will enable all students in the province regardless of location to participate in a rich and high quality learning experience. They will also all have access to the same information and learning opportunity, which is not guaranteed when content is delivered by hundreds of different teachers.

3. **Barriers to e-books**

- Current access to computers/devices could be an inhibitor - either at school or home
- Bandwidth could also be an inhibitor to access, especially for rural students at home. This is particularly true when e-books are highly interactive.
- Currently full function e-books are proprietary to a specific device – which further limits generally available access or increases the access challenge.
- They have not proven to be less expensive to buy from publishers to date
- Some students prefer to work with printed materials and to take notes on the ‘margins’. This would mean that some would likely be printing more than expected. This change in acceptance to digital may take time for this ‘cultural’ and/or preference change to take root.
- onerous USER ID and license tracking management requirements.

Barriers to e-learning

- Current access to computers/devices could be an inhibitor - either at school or home
- Bandwidth could also be an inhibitor to access, especially for rural students at home
- Might not be appropriate for the learning styles and/or needs of the student

4. **Opportunities to improve efficiencies with e-books**

- More robust content (this is a possibility but not a given)
- Easier to update – resulting in more current and accurate information being available
- Anywhere / anytime access
- Lighter/less impact on students in terms of carrying them
- Tighter integration into e-learning courses with interactive links from one to the other
- Positive impact on the environment in terms of paper requirements

Opportunities to improve efficiencies through e-learning:

- May fit in with a student's schedule more easily so that they can work part-time, participate in other extra-curricular activities, care for someone in their home, etc.
- May fit in with a teacher's schedule more easily so that they can have more flexible working conditions that might for example, enable them to care for someone in their home or participate in other school-related activities more easily (i.e. coaching, mentoring, etc.)
- Can deliver courses to students who would otherwise not have the opportunity to take it given the number of students within the school or district interested in taking it.
- Can offer students the opportunity to collaborate with and learn from teachers and students that they otherwise would not have met.
- Potentially a reduction in the number of staff required to meet the needs to deliver a course. However, if the teacher is using rich instructional practices and providing the types of coaching, mentoring and facilitating that is recommended in any 21st Century environment, there is the potential that they will be unable to interact with any more students than they currently do in the traditional bricks and mortar classroom.
- Potential to have more equitable, standardized, quality courses co-constructed by 'master' teachers and delivered to all students in the province regardless of location.
- Positive impact on the environment as the resources used in the delivery will largely be digital (i.e. students will use online digital resources and submit electronically, thereby reducing paper / printing costs)
- Assessment AS, OF and FOR learning may be enhanced as the learning is digital and analytic, tools can more easily be applied to the work being completed to understand where the student is / how they are progressing / what additional supports may be needed.
- Opportunity to work with teachers who will be teaching this course to improve practice, particularly with respect to online learning and effective instructional strategies in distance learning

Other Comments:

- 1) Boards could be required to identify programs that are suitable for e-learning and develop a proposal to establish the infrastructure and provide training. The Ministry could review proposals and provide some funding to boards. Some of the opportunities could include joint proposals from two or more boards.
- 2) In addition, there are opportunities to use existing technologies that students may have, such as laptops, hand-held devices or e-books. Publishers could be required to offer electronic versions of textbooks and other curriculum material that could be downloaded directly to the student's device or to a "cloud" where the student could access it. That electronic material could be updated regularly as new material becomes available.
- 3) The use of libraries should be reviewed including the staffing of libraries, much of which is required by collective agreements. Many collective agreement provisions have been in place for many years and technology has changed significantly in that time.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Answers to questions:

1. Electronic workflows and forms can reduce paper and manual effort required for processing. More robust and consistent content means more effective delivery of program material. Anywhere anytime access means student don't need to rely on and take teacher's time to get access to material and information. Advanced analytics can measure and determine effectiveness of interventions, assessments, certain resources, instructional processes – allowing a district to then eliminate ineffective ones and reduce wasted spending
2. One of the major barriers is the cost to provide access (devices/infrastructure). Districts need to be prepared to purchase enough devices to ensure equitable access. By comparison to other public sectors the K-12 sector typically provides less than 1% of operating budgets for devices, software, infrastructure and other technology expenditures. Other public sectors provide approximately 4% of operating budgets for technology. This funding gap while understandable, dramatically limits the potential of technology to truly reform the sector.

School boards are unable to fund, construct and deliver district-wide professional development to all teachers for any given type of reform – from new instructional processes through to new technology uses. Until this funding and human capacity issue is addressed all system-wide or provincial-wide reforms will be limited at best.

3. **Bring Your own Device (BYOD)**

- Use of students own devices, so districts can potentially reduce spending on devices, creates an equity issue. If a district has to provide enough devices for say 15% of their students who can't bring a device to school than any potential savings are lost.
- May force (encourage) staff to embrace technologies in their classroom
- Need for ongoing professional learning to support teachers and other staff.
- There will also be a need for boards to provide service to allow all devices access to school servers.

Cloud-Based Learning Environments

- Staff can access applications and resources outside of school in order to plan or perform certain tasks anytime/anywhere
- Ability of all students to have the appropriate access outside of school that would enable them to take advantage of cloud based learning wherever they are
- Selection of digital resources that support the learning will run “potentially” across all platforms.

Even today all browsers and all cloud-based applications are not created equally – so while they all should run regardless of the device – there are still some instances where this is not the case.

- There will be a need for ongoing professional learning to support teachers and other staff
 - Provides potential for a provincial digital repository that is used by all school districts in the province and that will encourage collaboration and sharing
 - Some cloud-based applications (such as email) are currently advertised by some providers as being available for “no charge” as far as licensing is concerned and most of the technical support. There are “hidden” costs such as the networking and internet costs to get access to these “free” applications (see comments under *Shared Efficiency Saving*).
 - There are risks associated with cloud based environments including privacy of staff and student information
4. OECM is already in place as a provincial buying group to maximize the financial benefits at a provincial level. This has proven to be somewhat ineffective as it is difficult to ensure that the OECM price is lower than offerings available from other vendors in the marketplace. Also for this concept to have a more significant impact, use of it needs to be mandated.

Other Comments:

There are several uses for new technology which would assist school boards to be more efficient in administration and program delivery. Examples are:

- 1) Some administrative applications and related IT services and support could be centralized on a province-wide basis:
 - Student Information System (SIS)
 - Data Warehouse
 - eMail
 - HR
 - Finance and Payroll

Services should not be centralized to one vendor. Competition between vendors is necessary to optimize pricing and support services. While having one vendor in the province may not be practical, or advisable, once centralized with 2 or 3 vendors these applications could then be “cloud enabled” where the running and management of the IT data centre could be outsourced to companies who specialize in hosting and/or managing IT systems. School districts should then be able to use these software applications as a “service” vs. hosting and maintaining them themselves.

- 2) Consider removing all PC-based applications from the OSAPAC (Ontario Software Acquisition Program Advisory Committee) list, as they drive a significant amount of support costs and do not work on most BYOD devices. Standardize on Web applications only.

Further the province could mandate that all applications (not just the OSAPAC applications mentioned above) used in K-12 must be web based (except secondary school specialty applications). This would significantly reduce technical support costs and create an environment where essentially any device or operating system would be able to run the software. While this would reduce costs there would be objections to not be able to use “Apps” which are now being downloaded from the Apple store (iTunes) or the Google store (Google Play), etc. as they often only run on proprietary devices.

- 3) Create and implement a Google, Microsoft Office 365 and Desire 2 Learn (D2L) USER ID for each student in the province. This would save significant time, energy and licensing costs that districts are currently incurring as they are each trying to do this, or part of this, on a district by district basis. If there were a centralized provincial SIS system (see point 1 above) then doing this would be significantly easier than it is to do in the current environment.
- 4) Mandate that ORION (Ontario Research and Innovation Optical Network) be used in all school districts for providing network and internet bandwidth. It is a less expensive pipe (i.e. bandwidth) to internet applications like YouTube, Google and Microsoft than other alternatives.
- 5) Providing a mobile computer or tablet for every teacher and teaching professional in the province would create significant savings in paper costs because all workflows, forms and processes that today require paper and manual efforts to process that paper, could be automated and made

electronic. And since every educator would have a device everyone could participate in the new digital processes, so the all duplicate “paper-based” processes could be discontinued. Obviously, there is a significant front end cost, but that cost would be saved in a relatively short period of time.

- 6) Rather than rely on e-books that have the above listed barriers, leverage and mandate the use of the provincial Learning Management System (LMS) and Learning Object Repository (LOR) that is already in place from eLearning Ontario (eLO). eLO has already implemented a province-wide standardized product for these functions. The provincial standard is based on a product called Desire 2 Learn (D2L).
- A lot of content is already available in this LMS and LOR.
 - 125 secondary English-language and 79 French-language e-learning credit courses have already been developed and are available for any district to use.
 - New functionality even allows a district to have their own “view” of the repository so they can focus on just the learning objects created or selected by their district – but if wanted they can share these resources with any other district in the province.
 - By using these tools all districts could develop or assemble exemplary digital learning resources and potentially dramatically reduce the need to purchase traditional print-based text books.

Summary

Some comments on program delivery have been addressed in the preceding section. Some of the newer technologies require staff time and expertise to investigate and develop. Some boards, particularly smaller boards, may not have the necessary staff resources. A collaborative venture involving several boards as well as technology consultants would assist in the developing processes using more advanced technologies.

Adopting BYOD and cloud-based environments requires that a board have expertise in various technologies and requires sophisticated security. For some families, providing students with their own device may not be financially feasible. Addressing those needs is paramount to achieving student achievement opportunities for all students.

The reduction in the classroom computer portion of the Pupil Foundation Grant has caused boards to reduce their technology initiatives in schools. Restoration and enhancement of the grant is necessary for boards to take advantage of new technologies.

The best way to address barriers is to establish a collaborative process involving stakeholders and expert consultants. This advisory group could also investigate possible joint procurement of technology related goods and services.

OTHER – Getting the Balance Right

There are other areas, such as Special Education, that need to be addressed. The High Needs Amount has not changed to keep pace with the increasing number of students needing IEPs or other specialized services. The components of the Pupil Foundation Grant should be reviewed to ensure the grant reflects the current classroom supports required in today's schools.

As previously stated, wide consultation with stakeholders and expert consultants is necessary. Each potential initiative under the “Efficiency and Modernization” umbrella cannot be viewed in isolation. The impacts of changes in one area may affect other areas and the overall funding of school boards needs to recognize the changing needs of schools. Much has already been done by school boards to achieve efficiencies without negatively impacting student achievement. We should look to build on those successes as well as discussing new initiatives.

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