



Public Statement

Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026

The Ontario Principals' Council acknowledges the introduction of the *Putting Student Achievement First Act, 2026*. Based on our initial review, this bill falls short of the government's stated focus on accountability and student success.

We support strong, effective public education and recognize the importance of clear governance and the responsible and transparent management of public resources. At the same time, the proposed changes represent a significant shift in how school boards are governed in Ontario, with broader implications for system leadership, classroom practice and the student learning experience.

Effective governance and accountability must be balanced with transparency, local voice and meaningful consultation with education partners, including principals and vice-principals, whose experience provides critical insight into how decisions impact schools and student success.

While we appreciate that a smaller number of elected trustees will continue to serve, we are concerned that this is accompanied by a diminished scope of their authority and the broader shift toward increased centralization of governance and decision making. The experience of principals and vice-principals in public schools in boards under supervision has shown that this model has yielded little positive impact and in some cases, has contributed to worsening relationships and increased role confusion for system leadership teams who are unsure of their discretion to make decisions.

We recognize the government's stated objective of ensuring more consistent learning experiences for students across Ontario. However, we are concerned that proposed changes included in "Ensuring More Consistent and Effective Learning Experiences," particularly new exam requirements and the inclusion of attendance and participation in final marks, may unduly limit boards' ability to respond to local contexts. There are inherent risks in moving to a more standardized approach that does not reflect the diverse needs and lived experiences of students and school communities.

The introduction of common resources across schools may also limit educators' ability to exercise professional judgement in how they apply responsive, inclusive practices, such as

universal design for learning, which supports flexible approaches to meeting the unique needs of students.

We are concerned that changes which make tools such as school climate surveys optional may limit access to important data used to identify and address student experiences, including those related to equity, inclusion and well-being. The ability of partners, including students, to provide anonymous feedback through these tools has provided critical insight for boards in responding to the diverse needs of students and school communities.

We also have concerns about the impact of these changes on the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, a trusted advocate for public education. Changes affecting trustee participation in a professional organization may limit access to resources which supports good governance through professional learning and the sharing of best practices.

We will continue to review the proposed legislation in detail. As this is proposed legislation, we are hopeful the government will support meaningful consultation through the legislative process, including opportunities for education partners to present, submit input and participate in committee hearings. Meaningful engagement with the government and education partners is critical to ensure changes strengthen public education and increase supports for student achievement in Ontario.