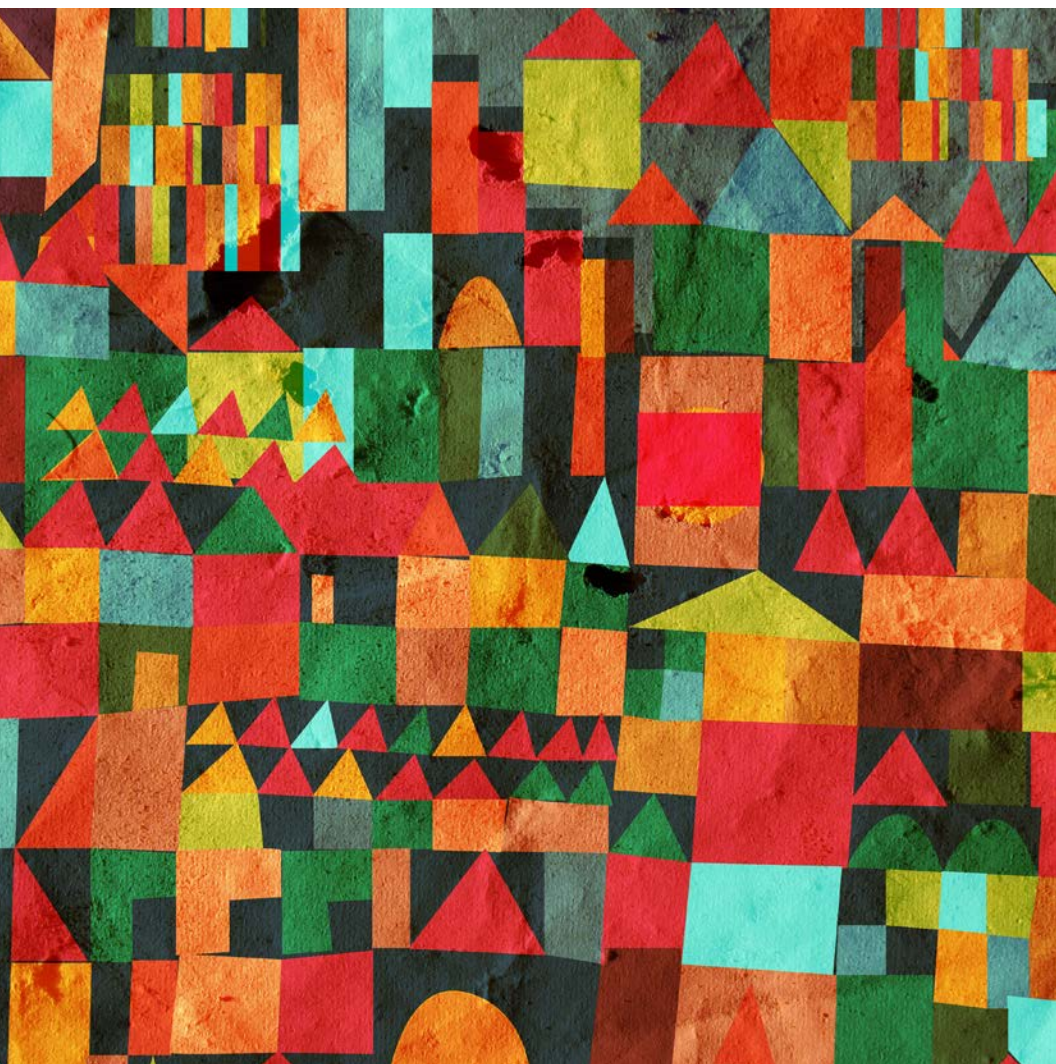




ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

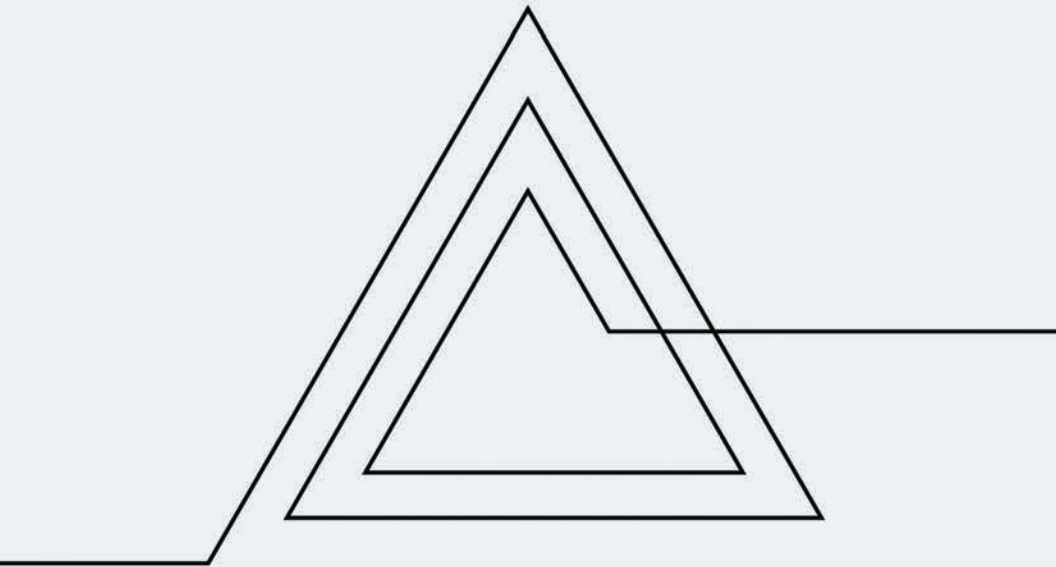
Leading Education's Advocates

2014/2015
Key Work



What we believe

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association represents 31 public district school boards and 10 public school authorities across Ontario, which together serve more than 1.2 million public elementary and secondary students. The Association advocates on behalf of the best interests and needs of the public school system in Ontario. OPSBA is seen as the credible voice of public education in Ontario and is routinely called on by the provincial government for input and advice on legislation and the impact of government policy directions.



Statement of mission and beliefs

The mission of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) is to promote and enhance public education by:

- Helping member boards to fulfill their mandates;
- Developing effective partnerships with other groups interested in public education; and
- Providing a strong and effective voice on behalf of public education in Ontario.

OPSBA believes that the role of public education is to provide universally accessible education opportunities for all students regardless of their ethnic, racial or cultural backgrounds, social or economic status, individual exceptionality or religious preference.

Excellence in education is achieved by:

- Promoting high standards of individual achievement;
- Providing the understanding and basic skills required for active, compassionate participation in the life of the family, the community, the province, the nation and a global society;
- Cultivating a love of learning;
- Recognizing the value of diversity among learners and communities; and
- Exploring creative educational alternatives.

To maintain excellence, the public school system must be accountable to the communities it serves and work to fulfill its mandate through building strong community partnerships.

Local, democratically elected school boards play a key role in ensuring that schools remain responsive to both provincial program requirements and local needs and resources.

President's message

Michael Barrett *President Ontario Public School Boards' Association*



Thirty-one district school boards. Ten school authorities and children's treatment centres. More than 1.2 million elementary and secondary students and 140,000 education workers.

Ontario's public school board trustees know the education of children is a calling that comes with profound responsibility. Along with school administrators, staff, community and parents, we have the privilege of touching the future, contributing to the shaping of generations yet to come. In taking on this work we know that the outcome of our decisions may not be felt for many years. It is work that requires a long vision rather than immediate satisfaction.

2014 was a school board election year. On December 1 we will be coming together as elected trustees to form new school boards for the next term. As my colleagues, you are the only democratically elected officials responsible for the education of our society's youngest and most vulnerable. You have the strength and expertise of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) to support you in your work and we are committed to offering you the resources to be effective and credible advocates for publicly funded education, both locally and provincially.

As trustees we have a responsibility to engage with people in our communities across the province and ensure that we strengthen local democracy. We are of the community, by the community and for the community and we must listen to the voices of those who care about their local schools and the decisions that affect their

community. I have been a trustee with the Durham District School Board since 2003 and I know firsthand that we are committed to doing just that.

School boards are accountable to the people who elected them for providing sound educational opportunities for all students; for creating conditions that promote student learning and well-being; and for providing opportunities for parents, staff and the public to become involved in setting priorities that work for the local school board and community. We are also responsible for budgets that turn provincial education funding into programs and services that meet student needs in diverse communities. Decisions that have a profound impact on day-to-day school experiences should be driven by those who understand local needs. Local governance ensures that voices are heard and defines how decisions are made.

In striving to enrich learning environments and educational opportunities for all students, Ontario has experienced a number of fundamental shifts in education. One of the key changes affecting school boards is the introduction of the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014* (SBCBA). It is recognized that maintaining a harmonious labour relations environment has a vital influence on the conditions affecting student learning. The SBCBA ensures that school boards are equal

partners with the government and the unions representing school board employees in the negotiations that lead to renewed collective agreements and to stability in schools. OPSBA advocated strongly for a key place for the voices of school boards as this legislation was drafted and is proud to take on the role of bargaining agent for English language public school boards. In taking on this role, we also take on great responsibility and we see no obligation greater than ensuring that the best interests of students are key to the work we do on behalf of school boards. In OPSBA's governance model we reflect the collective decision-making of boards and this is the important basis for how we will move forward with our new responsibilities. In approaching this new era, OPSBA through its member boards will work from a foundation of approved principles. We will focus on safe and positive learning environments and the critical importance of student well-being and success; we will value the engagement of our staff; and we will keep before us the vital role of parents as partners in an effective and vibrant education system.

While labour relations and collective bargaining will undoubtedly have an expanding role in OPSBA's key work in 2014-15, we will maintain a strong focus in a number of other important domains – how we influence Ontario's future education strategy; how we advocate for sustained investment in the work school boards do in the areas of technology in learning and teaching, children and youth mental health and well-being; how we support successful education experiences for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students; how we continue to enrich the governance resources for trustees, particularly as we work with both new and re-elected trustees; how we work strenuously for education funding that serves our students equitably; how we contribute to the successful final

implementation of early learning. These are the priorities by which we measure ourselves as the voice of public education.

In advance of the Municipal and School Board Elections occurring across Ontario in October 2014, OPSBA staff worked with our association partners and the Ministry of Education to prepare a wide range of digital and print campaign resources designed to underscore the vital importance of locally elected trustees and promote greater voter participation in elections to school boards. A renewed version of the *Good Governance* guide, a comprehensive reference resource for trustees, will be available in print and online in December 2014.

OPSBA's priority planning process for 2014-2015 addressed how the Association will engage with you as you start a new term of office, offering practical resources and professional development opportunities to support you in your local governance role. The unique value you add as a member of your school board is making education funding and government policy relevant and meaningful for students, families and communities at the local level. OPSBA's full range of services and expertise will be at your disposal as you take on this commitment to strengthen our publicly funded education system and champion the needs of students and parents.

Ontario offers students a world-class public education experience. We are the envy of the world for our capacity to deliver quality with equity, ensuring optimum life chances for every child. That is a calling you can give your heart to.

Michael Barrett
President
OPSBA

How are priorities developed?

Priority-setting in 2014 followed a four-step process:

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- Input on priorities sought from all trustees and school boards
 - Individual responses discussed at Regional Councils and further input added
 - Complete input from trustees, Member Boards and Regional Councils considered at April Board of Directors meeting
 - Presentation of priorities and endorsement at OPSBA's AGM in July
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What steps are taken to put priorities into action?

After the AGM, OPSBA's Executive Council holds an in-depth planning session. This results in a recommended framework for action which is sent to the Board of Directors for approval. Planning incorporates:

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- Consideration of the priority areas approved for 2014-15;
 - Review of the significant concerns of Member Boards;
 - Member board resolutions approved at the AGM; and
 - Analysis of the critical issues on the public education front.
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The key priorities and actions become the Association's major areas of focus for the year ahead. They drive how OPSBA directs resources, manages issues and plans activities. This positions the organization to meet the challenges of the education agenda in the current environment. The priorities describe to the broader public what the Association stands for and what its specific positions

are on the key forces affecting public education in Ontario today. These are the positions that the Association directs its expertise, time and resources towards. They also help OPSBA to consider decisions in the year ahead, e.g. "Will this decision contribute to achieving the Association's leading priorities?" A report on progress achieved in priority areas is provided each June in the Annual Report.

How is the ongoing work of OPSBA managed?

There will always be a range of ongoing and emerging initiatives and issues relevant to the Association's mission and connected to the key priorities. They are a focus of attention because they clearly support the values of publicly funded education, the interests of Member Boards and take into account government policy directions. Above all, they are focused on the best interests of students.

OPSBA is an issue-driven organization and exists to provide for the service needs

of its members. Its role is to advocate for public education. Members expect emerging, as well as current issues, to be identified, prioritized and managed in a time-sensitive and effective way. They also expect a range of information, professional development and advocacy services to support their responsibilities at the local and provincial levels. Each year's work plan ensures a balance between timely, strategic response to critical issues and a continuum of services to Member Boards.



OPSBA's leading priorities for 2014-2015

The Whole Child and Student Well-Being
New Generation Education
Trustees – Building Leadership Capacity
Labour Relations
Education Funding

The Association's priorities are designed to advocate for conditions that support and improve student achievement and well-being. All students must be given the opportunity to experience success in school and in life.

Education must be supported within a framework of values that ensures young people will become caring, responsible, and productive citizens.

First-rate curriculum and teaching must be reinforced by a culture that nurtures the values of universality, inclusiveness, human rights, respect and kindness.

OPSBA's Board of Directors has assigned areas of emphasis to these priorities and endorsed actions aimed at achieving successful outcomes.

The Whole Child & Student Well-Being

Our Vision

OPPSBA believes that improving student achievement and student engagement is directly linked to ensuring that we work collaboratively for the social, emotional, mental and physical well-being of all children and youth.

THE FOCUS OF OUR ADVOCACY AND ACTIONS

- Active participation in the implementation processes related to Ontario's renewed vision for education
- Deepening collaboration among relevant provincial ministries in relation to child and youth mental health, students in risk and poverty reduction
- A strong, accessible, responsive and equitable level of children's mental health services in Ontario, with emphasis on early intervention and adequate funding for assessments within the context of implementation of Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy
- Sustained focus on children and youth mental health for years four to 10 of the Comprehensive Provincial Strategy
- Continued leadership in the Coalition for Children and Youth Mental Health to promote collaboration in provision of accessible and responsive mental health services for children and youth
- Increasing student achievement for First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) students through ongoing input into the 2014-2016 implementation phase of Ontario's Policy Framework
- An emphasis on compulsory curriculum for all students in FNMI histories including the Residential Schools system
- A focus on the strengths of FNMI students, including in the area of Special Education
- Development of a strategy to promote the goals of the OPSBA Endorsement of the Charter of Commitment on FNMI Education
- Continued dialogue with the Ministry's Special Education Branch on issues affecting delivery of Special Education in school boards, including monitoring of changes to the High Needs Amount and associated impact on student programming
- Effective monitoring of implementation of Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) including the availability of resources, inclusive curriculum and coordination of services and supports for special needs children
- Shared leadership in implementation of the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy including ongoing promotion of positive school climates for learning and working for all Ontario students and staff
- Effective dialogue with Ontario's deans of education concerning the content of the two-year pre-service teacher education program (due in September 2015), including FNMI perspectives and cultures, children and youth mental health, the integrated use of technology in the classroom and mathematics

New Generation Education

Our Vision

OPSBA believes that preparing students for success in the 21st century means that our educational programs and instructional practices must incorporate the skills, attitudes, values and knowledge that are needed for today's complex global context.

THE FOCUS OF OUR ADVOCACY AND ACTIONS

- Promotion of OPSBA's vision paper, *Learning and Teaching in a Digital Age*, as foundational to implementation of Ontario's renewed vision for education during discussions on the implementation of the next phase of the province's education strategy
- Effective dialogue, including FNMI representation, with the Ontario College of Teachers and Faculties of Education to influence both pre-service and additional qualification course offerings
- Research into apprenticeship policies and practices with the goal of developing a strategic plan to address access and opportunity challenges for high school and college/university students in trades and technology. OPSBA will also seek to join the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum and become an Apprenticeship Champion
- Continue to review and refine OPSBA's draft discussion paper on EQAO and large-scale testing
- Advocacy for removal of barriers to recruitment of Aboriginal teachers and school support staff to better reflect provincial demographics
- Advocacy, through the Minister's Advisory Council on First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education, for continued capacity building for teachers and other staff in FNMI histories, culture and perspective and for promotion of broader definitions of student success
- Discussions with the Student Achievement Division to provide examples of exemplary skills passports/portfolios with the goal of supporting all students in their pathway towards a graduation diploma or equivalent, regardless of post-secondary destination
- Promote the review of traditional school structures and calendars to explore alternatives that support improved student achievement and program viability in rural areas
- Promote the work of school boards in sharing effective, leading practices that promote environmental sustainability, with a curriculum and capital focus
- Promote equitable access for all students to a range of school activities, with a focus on issues for students in rural areas

Trustees - Building Leadership Capacity

Our Vision

OPPSBA believes that trustees make a significant and direct contribution to the achievement of all students through their leadership in directing the policies and priorities of the local school board that shape a culture of continuous improvement.

THE FOCUS OF OUR ADVOCACY AND ACTIONS

- Continued work on a multi-year plan for comprehensive trustee capacity-building and professional development
- Continued promotion of trustees' roles amid follow-up to 2014 school trustee awareness campaign
- Continued professional learning for trustees as to scope and legal implications of trustee duties and building of deeper awareness of the day-to-day trustee requirements (meetings, quasi-judicial roles)
- Increased visibility and scope to expand capacity of First Nation trustees and increased general understanding of issues affecting First Nations
- Professional learning and mentoring programs for new chairs
- Advocacy for improvements in communication from Ministry to trustees, including meaningful consultation and partnership with trustees in strategies that affect school boards
- Capacity-building in the area of community involvement, including trustee roles in Parent Involvement Committees
- Professional Development to support trustees in their role as political advocates
- Pursuit of legal and regulatory protection of the role of trustees, e.g. with regard to broad impacts of conflict of interest legislation
- Design of an expanded and comprehensive Public Education Symposium program in January 2015, focused on the needs of newly constituted boards of trustees
- Creation of four comprehensive professional development modules for trustees covering: What Makes a Great Board Chair?; Code of Conduct; FNMI Education for School Board Trustees; and Social Media
- Improved profile for school board trustees
- Improved opportunities for networking among trustees and Member Boards

Labour Relations

Our Vision

OPSBA believes that teachers and education workers deeply influence a positive and productive learning environment for students and are supported in this role through the peace and stability engendered by successfully negotiated collective agreements.

THE FOCUS OF OUR ADVOCACY AND ACTIONS

- Implementation of, and leadership in, the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act*
- Collaboration with Member Boards to identify common issues on which OPSBA will represent our Member Boards in the provincial context
- Representation on the Provincial Benefits Working Group
- Provision of learning and information exchanges, through the annual Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium and Provincial Labour Relations Network, as well as special meetings and conference calls as necessary
- Ensuring government initiatives (legislation/policy) are assessed from the labour relations/collective bargaining perspective and influenced, where necessary, on behalf of OPSBA Member Boards
- Partnerships with unions and federations
- Sound organizational decisions that enable OPSBA to determine how it will operate as a Designated Bargaining Agent
- Improved functions/services on the Provincial Portal based on feedback and input from the users
- Effective service to all OPSBA Member Boards in ongoing labour relations/collective bargaining services

Education Funding

Our Vision

OPSBA believes that strong and equitable education funding is a foundational factor in setting the conditions that promote and sustain student achievement.

THE FOCUS OF OUR ADVOCACY AND ACTIONS

- Advocacy for a full and complete review of the current funding model, with OPSBA involvement and representation, to ensure that it supports the current needs of all school boards
- Resolution of pressing issues in funding such as student transportation and special education
- Continued advocacy for full Ministry funding of any new initiative (e.g. impact of labour agreements)
- Advocacy for exploring alternative methods for funding capital projects
- Advocacy for alignment between government education program priorities and capital funding
- Continued advocacy for funding of Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy
- Support for the impact on boards of ongoing funding formula changes such as Board Administration Advisory Group recommendations and Special Education High Needs Amount
- Promotion for full collaboration among all four school board systems and enhancement of partnership among boards
- Advocacy for action to address the Federal-Provincial discrepancy in funding for FNMI students
- Provision of a high level of service to OPSBA Member Boards and OPSBA staff with respect to education finance matters

Continuing initiatives and ongoing issues management

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities:

OPSBA has been a lead partner in developing the OPSBA/Ontario Education Services Corporation (OESC) TeachAble Project – theteachableproject.org – that is currently in use as school boards in Ontario meet the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. The TeachAble Project offers training resources that address both generic training for all staff and specific training for classroom staff related to accessibility awareness. OPSBA will continue to provide support and resources to boards throughout the 2014-2015 year as additional requirements are introduced.

Copyright: OPSBA, as the lead association, represents the Canadian School Boards' Association in collaborating with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and other national education groups to advocate for the education

sector in matters of copyright legislation. Advocacy priorities include provisions that are beneficial to schools, e.g., a legal framework for students and for teachers regarding the use of freely-available Internet materials for educational purposes without fear of infringing copyright.

Media Relations/Communications:

OPSBA's Communications team monitors emerging issues in the education sector and key government activities that affect school boards and are likely to garner media attention. The focus of communications and media relations is to ensure that OPSBA's identified priorities are presented to the public strongly and positively, reinforcing that OPSBA is a leading voice of public education. This involves providing Member Boards with communications strategies including suggested deliverables, key messages and website copy. The Association also

ensures that there is coordination across school boards of information that is helpful to parents and communities in understanding labour relations developments. OPSBA also actively invests in social media strategies to improve relationships with key audiences, develop a collaborative online public education community and enhance the public profile of the Association.

Lobbying and Advocacy: OPSBA takes several approaches to advocacy including: speaking to individual government policy staff, political staff, politicians, meetings with government committees, and having representation on government committees, advisory groups, and the Minister's Partnership Table. Some approaches that are more formalized involve work team activities. These demand not only staff and the Executive Table Officers but other Executive Council members and individuals with expertise in particular education policy areas. A focus for the Association will be on relationship building.

Full-Day Kindergarten and Child Care: OPSBA continues to actively follow the final year of implementation of Full-Day Kindergarten. Focus will be on the government's goal to modernize child care. Consideration will also be given to potential next steps on province-wide before-and-after-school programming for children ages six to 12, post FDK-implementation.

Governance Issues: OPSBA will continue to support the role of school board trustees as democratically elected officials who govern in the best interests of children and youth, their parents and the broader community. Work has resulted in signifi-

cant amendments and greater clarity in the area of governance. Staff will complete work with the OESC on new PD modules.

Municipal Elections: The 2014 Municipal and School Board Elections took place on October 27, 2014. OPSBA actively promoted the role of local democratically elected school board trustees through a comprehensive website at elections.ontarioschooltrustees.org. Staff will continue to meet with representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC), the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario and Student Vote.

Legislative or Regulatory Changes: It is important, when planning and prioritizing, to recognize that legislative and regulatory change can come along at any time, and work based in this area is primarily reactive rather than proactive. OPSBA will continue to monitor and take action on emerging legislation to promote the best interests of school boards and further action in OPSBA's priority areas.

Key Legislative Dates Scheduled in 2014-15

December 11, 2014 - The Legislative Assembly of Ontario rises for Winter Break

February 17, 2015 - The Legislative Assembly of Ontario resumes

March 16 to 20, 2015 - Constituency Week (March Break)

April 6 to 10, 2015 - Constituency Week

May 18 to 22, 2015 - Constituency Week

June 4, 2015 - The Legislative Assembly of Ontario rises for Summer Break

Note: Subject to change. As of November 2014.



OPSBA's service areas

OPSBA offers a full range of services to its Member Boards in the following areas:

Program Policy

Proactive analysis, policy input and professional development aimed at education program reform, support for children's services and progressive social policy

Issues Management and Policy Development

In-depth analyses in emerging policy areas and cogent, effective responses to government announcements including submissions developed in collaboration with Member Boards

Legislation and Regulation Monitoring and Analysis

Timely legal and policy analysis of legislation and regulations affecting school boards; advice to government on impact of policy directions

Communications and Media Relations

Dynamic services that help shape public opinion and influence policy development on education issues through print and broadcast media, offering the primary and credible voice of public education

Information Services

Timely updates and commentary on key issues in the education environment through media releases, Fast Reports, OPSBA's website, Twitter and *Education Today* magazine

Labour Relations

Continuous service to Member Boards in support of labour relations and collective bargaining through the successful implementation of the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act*, regular meetings of the Labour Relations Council and Provincial Labour Relations Network, provision of the annual Education Labour Relations

and Human Resources Symposium, and the maintenance of collective bargaining data, grievance arbitrations, collective agreements, Ontario Labour Relations Board and Human Rights Tribunal decisions on the Provincial Portal

Education Finance

Meaningful and timely financial analysis for lobbying and creating public awareness on education finance issues; support from comprehensive Finance Database and expert Finance Technical Team

Government Relations

Centralized lobbying focusing on local, provincial and national issues influencing decision-makers through advocacy for all children; resources for trustees and Member Boards for local lobbying; developing effective partnerships

Networking and Facilitation

Creating opportunities for information sharing, joint actions and collaborative services to strengthen the public education system; engaging in joint projects with education partners, the business community and other agencies

Professional Development and Issues Awareness

Comprehensive professional growth opportunities to support an educated, informed and influential membership through OESC training modules

Association Operations

Finely-tuned management of resources to deliver on priorities and provide the foundation to support Member Boards and OPSBA initiatives through the work of Executive Council, Board of Directors, Work Groups, Regional Councils and ad hoc committees

Conferences, meetings and events

Rich professional development is critical to supporting trustees in their public education advocacy role and as informed decision makers. Symposia, provincial and regional meetings, workshops and seminars for trustees and board employees focus on key education issues.

OPSBA Scheduled Events – 2015

2015 Public Education Symposium (PES)

This annual symposium offers a unique and rich combination of information and resources: guest speakers who are recognized experts in their field, forums and plenary sessions that raise the most critical issues of the day, and access to experienced and dedicated professionals.

Public Education Symposium:

January 29 to 31, 2015, at the Sheraton Centre Hotel in Toronto.

2015 Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium

New and emerging issues combined with traditional challenges demand a rethinking of the employer-employee relationship and the provincial context of collective bargaining, particularly with regard to the new bargaining structure.

2015 Education Labour Relations and Human Resources Symposium:

March 26 to 28, 2015 at the Sheraton Centre Hotel in Toronto.

2015 Annual General Meeting & Program

At the AGM OPSBA Members determine priorities and directions for the coming year, elect officers and plan for the future. This event also includes a comprehensive professional development program for trustees. OPSBA's Western Region is this year's host.

2015 OPSBA AGM:

June 11 to 13, 2015 at the Westin Trillium House at Blue Mountain.

Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health

The Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health is now scheduled to occur every two years, with the previous event occurring in April 2014. It is designed to deepen knowledge about mental health among all those who work with children and youth, and to highlight programs and services that have been proven to work. The next Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health will occur in April 2016.

For more information:

Susan Weinberg, Policy and Professional Development Coordinator, 416-340-2540 x128 or (for Labour Relations Symposium) Vicky Skypas, Manager, Labour Relations Services x119.

Regional Council Meetings

Regional Council Meetings offer trustees and administrators opportunities to exchange information and keep current on relevant local and provincial issues. The workshop-style meetings encourage trustees to explore practical and political issues and develop positions and solutions that are locally sensitive. Each Region holds a meeting in conjunction with the PES and the AGM, and additional meetings are held at a local board in the Region throughout the year. A common meeting in all Regions is scheduled for **April 11, 2015**.



Michael Barrett
President
Ontario Public School
Boards' Association



Gail Anderson
Executive Director
Ontario Public School
Boards' Association

Ontario Public School Boards' Association
439 University Avenue, 18th floor
Toronto, ON M5G 1Y8
Tel: (416) 340-2540
Fax: (416) 340-7571
E-mail: webmaster@opsba.org
Website: www.opsba.org



@OPSBA_official