



ISSN 1180-4327

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 19 May 2010

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 19 mai 2010

**Standing Committee on
Public Accounts**

2009 Annual Report,
Auditor General:
Ministry of Education

**Comité permanent des
comptes publics**

Rapport annuel 2009,
Vérificateur général :
Ministère de l'Éducation

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
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Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

COMITÉ PERMANENT DES COMPTES PUBLICS

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The committee met at 1232 in committee room 1, following a closed session.

2009 ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Consideration of section 3.07, literacy and numeracy secretariat.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts meeting today in consideration of section 3.07, literacy and numeracy secretariat, based on the 2009 Annual Report of the Auditor General.

I note the presence of the deputy minister and your group. You have a presentation to make, and I know that you've clocked it at about 20 minutes. Please introduce yourself and your group for Hansard and proceed.

Mr. Kevin Costante: It's a pleasure to be here this afternoon. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Kevin Costante. I'm the Deputy Minister of Education. I'm joined at the table today by, on my right, Laurie Kukulewich, from the student achievement division; on my left, Mary Jean Gallagher, who is the chief student achievement officer for Ontario and the assistant deputy minister of the student achievement division; and immediately beside her is Judy Kokis, a staff member in that same division.

I want to begin by thanking the Auditor General and his team for the recommendations on how to enhance the outcomes of the literacy and numeracy secretariat. We do appreciate the time that staff spent with us reviewing the activities of LNS in order to make recommendations that were in the report. I want to emphasize that the ministry and the division, led by Mary Jean and her team, have taken these recommendations very seriously, and we will be using the report and the subsequent discussions from today to help ensure that the ministry and school boards measure the effectiveness of our programs and that we are making efficient use of the funding to support student learning and achievement.

I'll start by providing you with a brief overview of the secretariat and the work that it has undertaken. Then I'll move on and give a bit of an overview of the audit findings and indicate our plan of action and the progress that we've already made, since the publication of report, to address the recommendations.

The literacy and numeracy secretariat was created in 2004 with a mandate to partner with Ontario's 72 school boards and over 4,000 elementary public schools in an effort to boost the achievement levels of students in junior kindergarten to grade 6 and to close the gaps in achievement levels among groups of students and schools who, for whatever reason, needed extra help.

The work of the secretariat has changed over time, beginning with a common sense of purpose and urgency and growing to influencing a shift in the teaching and learning culture in elementary schools. Achieving large-scale change such as this in a way that motivates our education partners in the field has been accomplished through joint ownership of our goals and tasks. The secretariat functions in a continuous cycle of research and dialogue with school boards and schools, development of strategies and specific initiatives and pilot implementation, followed by assessment, review, refinement and then expansion. The secretariat is now a permanent branch of the Ministry of Education and is part of the student achievement division.

Thanks to the working partnership between school boards and the secretariat, the ministry and the student achievement division, Ontario is now recognized as a global leader in education. Other countries now look to us for advice and guidance. Ontario is one of the very few jurisdictions recognized internationally that has been in a period of continuous improvement in our student achievement on a year-over-year basis for six years now at least.

In international testing such as PIRLS, which stands for Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, and TIMSS, the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, Ontario has improved at a faster rate than many other jurisdictions. Ontario's achievement in PIRLS and TIMSS has been at the higher levels internationally.

As you know, education remains a priority of this government, especially in ensuring that Ontario's students achieve their full potential. The government's three core priorities remain high levels of student achievement, reducing the gaps in student achievement and increased public confidence in publicly funded education. We have been making significant gains in all of those.

The literacy and numeracy test results have steadily improved; we know that thanks to province-wide Education Quality and Accountability Office assessments. Those assessments, the EQAO results, show that in

2002-03, 54% of students were achieving at or above the provincial standard. It's worth noting that the provincial standard in Ontario is level 3, which corresponds to roughly a B. That level of achievement has improved, so in 2008-09, 67% of grade 3 and grade 6 students were achieving at or above that standard, which is a 13% gain.

There are many reasons why this very positive improvement has been achieved. First of all, a very multifaceted approach to student success has been implemented. The LNS student achievement officers who come to us from school boards across the province are themselves respected superintendents, principals and classroom teachers who, in turn, work directly with schools and school boards. They build knowledge and develop capacity to implement evidence-informed strategies to improve students' reading, writing and math skills.

The secretariat's initiatives work in an integrated way to improve student learning and achievement and narrow the gaps. While the individual programs are evaluated by various means, it is difficult to quantify the exact degree of impact of individual strategies. Evidence that the secretariat's approach has credence exists in the analysis of overall outcomes. This reaffirms that, through our partnerships with school boards and schools, the ministry is significantly improving student achievement and closing the gaps.

Working together, LNS and board initiatives are having a positive overall impact. The literacy and numeracy secretariat has had direct impact on those results. In spring 2009, based on a review that took place from 2006 to 2008, the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network, or CLLRNet for short, released an evaluation report called *The Impact of the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat: Changes in Ontario's Education System*. This report is available on the ministry's website for those who may be interested in reading it.

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According to this report, "The consistent finding across all components of the study is that over its brief history," the secretariat "has had a major, and primarily highly positive, impact on Ontario's education system." The report also stated "there has been a significant shift in the culture of Ontario schools that is focused on enabling the success of all students. There has also been sustained improvement in student achievement. These are major accomplishments."

There are many initiatives that LNS has put in place over the past six years to nurture these accomplishments. Some of these key initiatives include the Schools on the Move program; the Ontario focused intervention partnership, or OFIP; OFIP tutoring; schools in the middle; the character development initiative; the school effectiveness framework; and professional development for educators through classroom-embedded resources, conferences, workshops, summer programs, webcasts and many publications.

Schools and school boards in varying circumstances benefit from differing levels and types of supports. The

ministry supports may be provided as additional financial and human resources supports for educators through professional learning, print and multimedia resources, and finally self-assessment tools to support school and board improvement planning.

As per the CLLRNet report I cited earlier, "While the improvement of literacy and numeracy skills has been the focus of" these initiatives, "increased attention to evidence, research, evaluation and data can be expected to provide general, long-term benefits, across all areas of Ontario's education system." As with the Auditor General's report, the literacy and numeracy secretariat has examined each of the CLLRNet recommendations and has explored its implications for the ministry's future work.

Now I'd like to turn my focus to the Auditor General's findings on our plans and the progress we've made against those recommendations so far. I believe that committee members all have a status report that describes the ministry's completed and planned undertakings with regard to the auditor's recommendations. I trust that provides confirmation that we have taken the auditor's report very thoroughly and are giving it careful attention. We have taken steps to address all five of the recommendations, and I'm going to begin with recommendations 4 and 5 because we have implemented all the necessary actions.

For example, as suggested in recommendation 5 of the Auditor General's report, we have developed an online version of the Ontario statistical neighbours database that provides school board superintendents with access to an information management system. We agree with the Auditor General that access to this system will be useful for developing strategies for improving student achievement at the board and school levels. This information will enable school boards and schools to identify whether their results are improving, declining or remaining static and to compare themselves with similar schools or boards based on demographics and other program information. Superintendents will be able to share this information with their school principals. We are currently in the process of providing training to superintendents on how to use the online OSN system and expect to have that training completed by the end of June this year.

The ministry has used Ontario statistical neighbours to identify schools needing support, including a number of coasting schools that perform above average, but are not making continued gains. It has also enabled the ministry to identify a set of schools on the move, schools that have been particularly successful in raising student achievement. Staff members at those schools are expected to share their knowledge and practices through networking with other schools across Ontario.

I'm also pleased to advise that, as suggested in recommendation 4 of the Auditor General's report, the ministry has commissioned a study comparing student report card marks with grade 3 and grade 6 EQAO achievement results to ascertain if there is comparability. The study determined that in fact, there is comparability between

the two different measures of student achievement. However, further analysis of the data is needed to confirm the extent of the relationship and to identify other factors that influence that relationship. So our work in this area is indeed ongoing.

I would next like to address the first of the three recommendations in the auditor's report and the progress we've made there to date. The first recommendation is that more comprehensive indicators for measuring effectiveness in student achievement be developed. The ministry agrees that additional indicators would be useful in this regard.

As you are aware, the ministry uses the EQAO test results over time as one method of measuring improvement in student learning and achievement in grades 3 and 6. Provincial assessments provide us with a snapshot of student achievement at a particular point in time. Parents want to know how their children are doing based on objective measures of achievement in relation to the Ontario curriculum. One key outcome of the provincial assessments is that teachers, principals, superintendents and directors are now looking at data from many sources and making decisions based on what the data say about students' needs. The diagnostic relevance of these assessments must be emphasized. They allow educators to target extra supports to groups of students who are not doing as well as they could.

In addition to using EQAO results, the ministry will implement two additional indicators to provide information to parents on student achievement through our school information finder program. The first indicator will provide a summary of report card marks at the school level, and the second indicator will provide similar data with respect to the assessment of learning skills. We hope to be providing that information on the school information finder in the next few months, as we have some changes that will take place in that online tool.

An example of an initiative that LNS has analyzed each year for effectiveness in improving student achievement is OFIP, or the Ontario focused intervention partnership program. OFIP is one of the ministry's key initiatives that have made a difference in student learning and achievement. Schools identified as low-performing or static, based on EQAO results, require different types of assistance than schools that are improving.

Since its inception in 2006-07, \$25 million each year has been invested into the OFIP program. An additional \$8 million has been provided for OFIP tutoring initiatives to allow schools to provide tutoring to students in need, both before and after school.

In 2009-10, OFIP funding was adjusted to reflect the significant reduction in the number of low-performing schools. Schools in Ontario that were low-performing—where there were less than 34% of students achieving levels three and four. We reduced that overall number of schools in that category from 19% to 6%. This is very good news, in that there are fewer low-performing schools in Ontario.

This reduction in OFIP funding has enabled LNS to provide funding support to what we call the schools in

the middle initiative, demonstrating that LNS does measure student outcomes to assess program effectiveness and make revisions, as needed.

The schools in the middle are schools where 50% to 74% of the students are achieving the provincial standard on four out of the six EQAO assessments in grades 3 and 6 reading, writing, and mathematics. Boards receive a base amount of funding depending on the number of schools that fit the "in the middle" criteria. In 2009-10, approximately \$9 million was provided to boards in order to provide support for over 1,400 schools that fit in that category.

As part of the assessment, review and refinement process, LNS initiatives require school boards to report on funding received, the effectiveness of the strategies and lessons learned so that appropriate adjustments can be made to the initiatives on a going-forward basis. Feedback to LNS from our partners in the field has also helped to shape and refine ministry initiatives to improve student learning and achievement.

I'll next move to recommendation 2 of the Auditor General's report. It said the ministry should work toward a more formal review and monitoring process of board improvement plans and more enhanced accountability.

Let me first explain the purpose of the board improvement plans. First of all, it is a living document that is designed to plan specific student achievement goals on an annual basis as developed through the board's analysis of their needs assessment data. Secondly, it improves achievement for all students in the board. It also provides a tracking and monitoring plan for improving student achievement. Lastly, it provides an evaluation of the board's progress in meeting their goals.

One of the key reasons for Ontario's success in improving student learning and achievement is the enormous support in place for our educators, along with the right amount of pressure and the working partnership that LNS has established with our boards. This partnership has enabled effective implementation of initiatives and monitoring of results that have contributed to overall student improvement in outcomes.

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In 2008, Dr. Douglas Reeves, a global leader in enhancing student achievement and improving planning, was commissioned by the ministry to perform a comprehensive review of all 72 board improvement plans and processes in Ontario. This review provided improvement recommendations to each board and formed the basis for board improvement plan processes to be refined over the last couple of years.

In January 2010, the ministry had mid-year meetings with all boards to determine the progress made toward improved student achievement. Boards advised that they were more focused on instruction, capacity-building, building school networks and the use of data to guide and inform their practices, setting priorities and allocating resources.

In response to the Auditor General's recommendations, LNS student achievement officers are providing

more complete accounts of their conversations with school boards relating to board improvement plans and the actions taken. LNS will continue with its efforts to strengthen their documentation in this process.

As further evidence of our commitment to the recommendations, I would also like to speak to a number of enhanced accountabilities that the ministry has put in place with school boards. The ministry has formal transfer payment contracts in place with each school board for funding initiatives that clearly outline our expectations. School boards provide the ministry with financial and activity reports on an annual basis.

Also, there's a considerable number of legislative and regulatory controls that are now in place. Those include a director's annual report that is to be posted on board websites by January 31 of each year—I am able to advise the committee that all 72 school boards have posted their reports, which can be accessed through the ministry's website. There are also board annual reports, and they have required components, such as the latest EQAO results and specific actions pursued to improve outcomes for students with low levels of achievement and for low-performing schools. And lastly, boards are being asked to develop a multi-year strategic plan to achieve specified student achievement and well-being targets as provided for under Bill 177.

With respect to the third recommendation, the Auditor General suggested that formal evaluations are needed to assess the effectiveness of the secretariat's initiatives in improving student achievement and that LNS program funds are allocated to the areas of greatest need.

In response, I am pleased to inform this committee that the ministry has placed more focus on evaluation tools to assess the effectiveness of the programs. LNS has moved forward and refined its strategies and initiatives, informed by current research and effective practices, including those in other jurisdictions.

As mentioned previously, LNS works in partnership with school boards to implement initiatives that make a difference in student learning and achievement by providing human expertise and financial resources. Current initiatives require boards to report back on funding, program effectiveness and lessons learned so that LNS can make any needed adjustments.

One example of an initiative that has made a difference is the Schools on the Move program. This initiative supports increased confidence in publicly funded education by providing examples of schools that are making significant and sustained progress in raising student learning and achievement and reducing the gaps in the targeted groups. Schools on the Move began in 2006 as a network of 23 schools and now includes over 140 schools that are continuing to implement evidence-informed strategies for improving student learning and achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.

The schools in the program represent the geographic diversity of the province and include schools from urban and rural communities and French, English, Catholic and public district school boards. In June of this year, 33 new

schools will join the initiative under the theme "schools in a variety of challenging circumstances working to meet the needs of every student."

Funding decisions within specific programs are made according to several criteria. Some of the needs of the boards are addressed through student enrolment funding, while other board needs are supported with targeted funding. An example of an initiative that has resulted from evidence-based research and has been targeted as an area of greatest need is the small and northern board numeracy initiative. In 2009-10, about \$2 million to \$3 million was provided to 17 school boards to reach over 400 small and northern schools, in order to build capacity in numeracy, teaching and learning. Math facilitators are supporting teachers in deepening their understanding of effective instructional practices for mathematics.

Also as part of the third recommendation, the auditor asked that we undertake to examine the role of banker boards, which we call lead boards. He also made recommendations around supporting documentation of funds and expenditure needs so that that documentation is more complete.

The secretariat is reviewing its financial processes and developing a logic model to address the need for improved documentation and to further define program objectives, outcomes, measures and reporting requirements.

The ministry will be undertaking a review of lead board use, which we expect to have completed by the end of this fiscal year. In the meantime, we have taken interim steps to bring many initiatives administered by lead boards back into the ministry. On a go-forward basis, LNS will carefully consider, on a case-by-case basis, when it may be more appropriate to use a lead board.

As an example, when a regional meeting is being held with school leaders from the area around Kenora, the use of a lead board would be more appropriate. The board has knowledge of the best facilities to hold regional events in terms of best location, what is available and what is most economical. These boards provide their own technology, equipment, supplies and often human resources rather than incur additional costs for the ministry. Obviously, a final decision on the ultimate continued use of lead boards will be based on the results of our review.

Since receiving the Auditor General's report, the secretariat has reviewed its documentation that supports the amounts paid to the council of directors of education and to the lead boards. I'm happy to advise that financial documentation has been centralized, and is in place for all the initiatives in those two areas.

In closing, I would like to thank you again for this opportunity to address the committee today. Myself and other members of staff are willing to take questions and do whatever we can to assist you in your deliberations.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): Thank you very much for your presentation, Deputy Minister. We'll work our way around the room by party in 20-minute rotations, and we'll begin with the Liberals.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Okay, where will I start? Welcome, everybody.

Maybe I'll start with the funding. Actually, I don't see Didem here, because this may be some finance sort of stuff. The auditor had raised some questions around the logic behind how the funding model worked for some of your different program lines. I'm assuming that, in some ways, the secretariat almost has two strands of thinking in the sense that some of what you do is focused on making sure that there's excellent teaching for every student, so some of what you do is focused at every student, and some you're focused on special cases in cases where special assistance is required to improve performance. Can you talk a bit about how the funding that flows to the boards is actually determined? Because the auditor raised some questions about that.

Mr. Kevin Costante: I think what you described is exactly right. I think we know that in every board there are schools and in every school there are children that need assistance. Part of our funding approach is to support every board. Sometimes that's done through providing a per pupil amount and it's not based necessarily on need or low-performing schools. Often every board will get a little bit of money.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: So there's a per capita amount.

Mr. Kevin Costante: I think in principle we also want to make sure that boards that are doing well don't fall back and that we continue to support them so that they can maintain and, indeed, continue to improve.

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The second portion, then, is where we identify, largely in the past through EQAO results, where there are particular needs. I think the math project in small, northern and rural schools is a good example. The EQAO results showed clearly that we had some issues there in terms of math performance in those small schools, and then we direct money that way.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Using that as an example, would that have been done by looking at the test scores in individual schools, or would that have been done by simply identifying that the EQAO results—and certainly the early EQAO results showed up really strongly that the rural and northern boards were lagging behind the more urbanized boards. I just remember that as a matter of looking at the early results. So would that just have been done on the geographic location of the board or would it have been drilling down lower to the number of schools that were struggling?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: We first look at board-level data so that we sort of get a broad picture of what's going on in the province and where there may be other areas of greater need. Then we start to look not only at individual school data, but at the numbers of schools. So when we're looking at funding a particular board at various levels, as the deputy has said, there is a certain amount of money that is on a per capita basis. Often, that buys either resources for students or it buys time for teachers to meet and do their planning, and that is enrolment-based.

On the other hand, some of our programs are more focused on schools that may be demonstrating that they're dealing with some challenges. Sometimes a comparison of the public data about low-performing schools or lower-performing schools and the actual results are different as well because, for instance, in many school areas in the north in particular, the schools are so small that the EQAO suppresses the public data because individual students can be identified. We at the LNS have access to that private data as well, which helps us inform things.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: So in fact, when you look at the public data, it may tend to be skewed towards low performance in urban areas simply because the classroom cohorts in northern and rural schools are so small that the data is suppressed.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: That's possible. It's also possible—when we look at funding as well, though, we understand that some boards need additional funding because of geographic distances and the distances people have to travel. In the example the deputy gave of our newer program, the small and northern boards program, we came to the conclusion, looking at our work in the collaborative inquiry in mathematics program, that we were in a situation where small and northern boards with a lot of schools that were very widely disseminated really didn't have the capacity to be able to take advantage of some of our programs to the extent that they needed to, in terms of being able to actually carry that program to the school. So in 17 boards' cases, we actually directly funded an additional staff member to spend a week in this school working with teachers and a week in another school working with teachers so that we could make sure that we were reaching those schools.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Those would have been schools that were so geographically dispersed that if you did the workshop at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, they couldn't get there because it was a five-hour drive; it was over by the time they got there, that sort of situation.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: And evidence is now telling us as well that some of that classroom-embedded professional learning is actually going to have a greater impact on changing teacher practice.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: So if there are sort of two streams of funding, one of which is enrolment-based and one which is more program-specific risk-based, when you're looking at accountability for the boards on how that money is being spent and whether what you want to achieve is being achieved, how do you get at the accountability in those two different sets of circumstances? For example, the auditor mentioned things like cohort tracking; also around specific programs, do we have data that show whether that specific program is successful or not? Can you look at the actual accountability in those different styles of programs?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Absolutely, yes, we can. It's difficult to determine in a program, of course, how much of an increased outcome is the result of a particular program, because we have several programs operating in

every board. But things, for instance, like our OFIP program—a report that was produced by our research department looked at our work in OFIP 1 and 2 schools, which are the schools where the performance of 34% or fewer of students reach provincial benchmarks; then, the OFIP 2 are the 34%-to-50% category.

We know, for instance, by looking at the specific schools where those programs took place—and we funded those activities—and by comparing their results on the EQAO tests to the overall provincial results, that those schools demonstrated, over their involvement in the program and in a subsequent year, far in excess of the improved achievement of the average of Ontario schools. When I say “far in excess,” on the six indicators, they were at least double the improvement outcomes of the average across the province, and several of the indicators had higher outcomes in excess of three times. So we have that piece, for instance.

One of the processes that we go through now—a part of our problem is that we know improving outcomes for kids is urgent, and we also know that we have to be able to scale our programs up, if they’re successful, very quickly to a lot of schools across the province. We don’t have time to do a two-year or three-year analysis and study of what’s going on; we need to work with information and data on an annual basis, and not only the quantitative data but the qualitative data that our student achievement officers, who are assigned to each board and who work with the boards and the schools in those boards, bring us back.

If I could use one example: for instance, our collaborative inquiry in mathematics. Two years ago, we looked at the fact that we needed to provide a greater focus on mathematics learning across Ontario in our schools. We developed a program based on evidence and research that we thought would be successful, and we implemented it in 12 school boards—six pairs of coterminous boards across the province. We worked with those boards for a year. The following August, of course, when the EQAO results come out, we’re pretty quick, busy and excited to get those results, because they do help us fine-tune our programs, even for that immediate September.

We looked at the results, in particular, for those 12 boards and came to the conclusion that in 11 of those 12 boards, the mathematics improvement was greater than the provincial average. We know it’s not an absolute relationship, and you don’t always see the results in that very first year, because teachers are implementing changes and they’re learning new things, but we could see an indication in 11 of those 12 boards that we were on to something that we defined, at that point, as a promising practice. So we took that program and made some refinements. We also, in that program, by the way, had an independent university-based researcher following up with surveys during the first year of implementation of the program, getting some of that qualitative data back from teachers, boards and schools involved in the program.

We scaled that program up to include 24 boards this existing year. We’ve had the external researcher working

with us on it, giving us feedback throughout. Our version of the program this year is refined based on the feedback we got from the first year and the evaluation of the first year of the program. So we have 24 boards. Our in-program evaluation tells us that they think it is a very effective way of leveraging increased results. On that basis, we are tentatively planning a further expansion of the program this year, but we will, this August, be once again looking at the schools involved, the boards involved, in the program and what their results are compared to the norm across the province. That’s sort of the cycle of thinking and evaluation that we are engaged in.

I guess the thing that has been particularly significant for me in the recommendations from the Auditor General is that while those cycles of sort of thoughtful planning and expansion were going on in the LNS over quite a bit of time, we did not keep the kind of documentation of our records of those activities to the point that they were satisfactory to the Auditor General, and I think it was a very good point. So we are becoming more thorough and more careful about making sure that we document this.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Can I turn it over to my colleague, and then when we come back on the second round—I’ve got some more questions—I’ll lead off again?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): No problem.

Ms. M. Aileen Carroll: Or I can wait.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: No, it’s okay. You go ahead.

Ms. M. Aileen Carroll: When you learn from the initiatives that you’ve taken—what’s working and what’s not, if I can just go right into layman’s language. Having benefited from the outcomes that you’ve observed, you now see that this particular initiative or this particular fine tuning of a program is beginning to really produce some efficacious results. How long does it take—forgive the analogy—to turn an ocean liner like the Ministry of Education to start target implementing those?

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Where I live in Toronto, I look out the window of my place and I look at Nelson Mandela school and frequently watch the youngsters walking to and fro. When I then come and prepare for committee, I think of that school and I wonder, “What’s happening there? How is that school benefiting from what you’re doing to respond to the Auditor General? How quickly will those youngsters going in the door today benefit?” You don’t mind if I’m direct? If you do, it’s probably too late now, anyway.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Actually, if there was an absolute answer to how quickly that can happen, I could probably market it and the ministry would be quite wealthy in the revenue from the presentations I could make there.

Change implementation is not an easy thing. In fact, that’s borne out by the fact that Ontario is the only jurisdiction that can actually show a track record of sustained year-over-year improvement on a system-wide basis. There are lots of places where you can find three or four excellent classrooms in a school of 20 or half a dozen excellent schools in a group of 15, 20 or 25. There’s lots of research on effective schools and how you help kids learn.

What there are not are a lot of researched examples of that kind of systematic change. We're improving in almost 5,000 schools, elementary and secondary, and that is incredibly exciting. It really represents a fundamental culture shift in teaching and learning that's taking place in our schools today. By that, I mean that in Ontario today, compared to four or five years ago, even compared to two years ago, classrooms are much more open and there's a much more collaborative culture in existence in our schools. While that sounds like it might be fluffy teacher-speak, it's not. It's the key to how you have teachers and principals own the changes that are taking place. The kinds of changes and improvements we're putting in place have to be owned by the teachers and the principals who are putting them in place if they're going to be sustainable. So that's sort of the context to the answer.

When you look at how quickly we can reach those schools, there are a number of factors. There's a readiness on the part of the school staff that we have to help create. There's an understanding of why it matters and why these things are better. The history of improvements in education is an ongoing saga that comes rolling through the staff meetings, staff rooms and schools of "This program is going to be the answer," and "This program is going to be the answer," and "That program is going to be the answer." There are no specific programs that are the answer. The answer is high-quality teaching focused very specifically on the individual kids in the classroom and focused on what kinds of changes in teacher practice have to take place in order to meet the needs of those kids. That's an uneven implementation at best. With respect, my experience out in the school board and in leading a school board not too long ago, actually implementing change in classroom is not something that historically the ministry or government has been very successful at up until the last few years. It's sort of a long way to the grade 1 classroom in Nelson Mandela school from Queen's Park.

Ms. M. Aileen Carroll: It only takes 10 minutes for me to drive.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: I know. It takes a little longer if we're talking about some other parts of the province. But the thing that's really exciting about what we're doing right now—the LNS was created originally as something distinct from the ministry, sort of associated with but not directly part of, so that it would have the flexibility to be able to move quickly.

Ms. M. Aileen Carroll: Is it still separate?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: No.

Ms. M. Aileen Carroll: So you haven't—

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: We are now part of the Ministry of Education, part of the student achievement division with student success learning to 18. From the experience of the person who's been responsible for making that change happen on the ground, there are a number of constraints in the large 65,000-sized public service that make flexibility a little more difficult. We, I think, have been addressing some of those issues, like the

Auditor General's recommendations around being very precise, careful and accountable for everything that's there. At the same time, though, I think on the ground and out in the field we are still very nimble, very flexible and very reactive to what we analyze as school boards needs.

Ms. M. Aileen Carroll: Thank you.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I found this fascinating. I should explain that Mary Jean and I have known each other in a lot of different ways over a lot of different years, but my theory of education innovation has always been that all pilots work because you have innovative, committed people who are really excited about something, and it's really the commitment, the excitement and the passion that make the pilot work. It's when you get to that implementation stage and try to make something work in every school where you don't necessarily have 100% passion, excitement and commitment that implementation and sustainability get much more difficult. You're much more eloquent than I am in reflecting on that.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: In fact, that's why while we talk about an OFIP program or a tutoring program—they really aren't programs. I mean, they're programs of the LNS and the ministry, but when you see them at a school level, they're really about increasing the capacity of teachers and principals on the ground in schools to be able to do those good things for kids that evidence and research tells us will make a difference, and sharing that information more accurately and more nimbly across the province. Once teachers understand that there's something that they can change in their practice that will make a difference in the outcomes for kids, you can't stop teachers from doing that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): Thank you very much. Let's move on to the Progressive Conservatives. Mr. Ouellette.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Thank you very much for your presentation. I always try to live by the premise that if you teach a student, you teach a singular; if you teach a teacher, you teach the many.

Just to follow up on this, a lot of the program-based information appears to be students' results-based information. Some of the programs that are taking place in some of the schools, at least in the Durham board, the local board—and that would be the example that I would necessarily need to use—are that students who are not necessarily making the grade are encouraged to participate in some of the programs that you mentioned here: the OFIP tutoring program, for example. But what we're finding is that it's the same individuals who are teaching the same things, just at a later date with additional funding, and the end result appears to be very much the same.

What I'm saying is that when you speak about increasing the ability for those teachers to perform for those kids, are there any programs that are going out there to assist those teachers to make sure that they can fulfill those areas that aren't being taken care of in the kids' needs?

Mr. Mary Jean Gallagher: Actually, there are a number of programs, and we have evidence that they are working. While we look at Ontario's results and the fact that we've improved the numbers of students at level 3 and 4 performance from 54% to 67% overall, buried underneath of those numbers are some really interesting results. For instance, if you looked at grade 6 writing, as an example, we track and look very carefully not only at who's making it to level 3 and 4, but across the province, how many students do we have who would still be exempted from the test? These would be students with very high levels of special needs for whom the test would not be appropriate and relevant. Who do we have among the students who don't even put enough down on the test to be able to make it to level 1? What proportion of students do we have at level 1, what proportion at level 2, and what's changing in those numbers over the years?

I raise that in response to your question because, as an example, in the grade 6 writing—and the others are similar—we've moved the number of exemptions on the tests over the last five or six years from about 5% of the province's population to 3%, which is probably about equivalent to the number of students who we know who legitimately should be exempted from doing the writing test.

The fascinating story is in the below level 1 and the level 1: We've gone from 5% of our students who could not even put enough on that test to be able to make it to level 1 to less than 1% of our student population in that category. Over the last six years, we've gone from 5% of our kids producing work at level 1 on those tests to less than 1% of our kids producing work at level 1. So those very students who I think you're speaking about, who are really the ones who struggle the most, we've had the greatest impact on them right across the province, and that includes that.

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We also, for instance, have a number of resources that we provide directly to teachers: things like our DVDs and our monographs on what works and a number of resources like Making the Grade, resources for teachers that help them focus on that.

The other interesting part of our story, by the way, is that now that we know we have the kids who we really need to reach, for the most part, in level 2 in their results, we've had a very clear focus this year on partnering with teachers. The Durham board's been involved in that program with us. There, we have a teacher working side by side in classrooms in several schools where we know we have a larger number of students producing work at level 2. We've been looking and working with those teachers to really clearly and precisely define what kind of tasks a teacher needs to give a student who's working at level 2 so that their work and understanding can progress to more reliably producing work that would be at the level 3 area. What kinds of feedback do teachers have to give students to be able to move them along? What is that student's work telling us? Then we take that information and share it with teachers across the way.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: You mentioned programs and evidence. Can you provide the committee with those programs, a listing, the evidence and where it's been utilized and in which boards, just so we have a working background of how we can obtain more details on it?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: We can identify the boards that are involved in particular programs.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: That's good.

You mentioned about the smaller and northern boards and the difficulty of numbers-based or program-based funding. I would have thought that, in a lot of those smaller classroom settings, there would have been a smaller demand for a lot of assistance simply because the teacher-to-student ratio would be that much less. Are you finding that potentially the case in some of these smaller communities?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Smaller pupil-teacher ratios make some difference, but the problems that we have in a number of those more isolated schools are that, first of all, teachers don't have other colleagues in the same numbers who may be teaching the same areas that they're teaching to work with as they make progress. You may be the only grade 3 or 4 teacher in the school, or whatever. As well, every school has a set of community needs around it—community factors, social factors and family factors—that affect a child's performance in school. So it's not quite that simple a relationship.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Okay. Again, on the chart, we've had this discussion in the past before this committee regarding the relationship or the comparison between the English-language schools and the French-language schools. We've had the discussion in the past where the curriculum is very different for the French-language schools. Can you just give a brief rundown as to why you're seeing such large differences between the two school boards and the results?

An example I can give you: In 2003-04, you had reading at 58% for the English board and 63% right up to 2007-08, where you had 66% for the English- and 75% for the French-language schools.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: There are a number of differences in terms of the ability of the English and the French schools to focus on improved outcomes for students. Just as I said earlier, it's almost impossible to say which factor has the particular impact.

I would first of all point out that the French school boards, for the most part, have had full-day learning in junior and senior kindergarten for a number of years. I believe that that has a significant impact, particularly on the grade 3 results and on building that foundation for learning that carries through into later years.

The French school systems are, as you well know, a lot smaller and distributed broadly across the province. They have historically worked much more closely together and in a much more collaborative way. They have, I would submit, much more effective knowledge mobilization capacity, in terms of being able to move good practices from one of their areas to the others much more quickly.

There's also a sense within the French school system that there's always been this really clear focus on saying, "We need to improve those outcomes for our kids because people have to make a conscious choice to send their kids to our schools." There's a little bit of, perhaps, competition there that aids the French school boards being able to address that.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: You mentioned all-day kindergarten and the possible impact on the French-language schools. There was a program that was announced quite a number of years ago called the Best Start program, which was essentially trying to possibly emulate that end result. Can you kind of give us a breakdown or outline of what has taken place with the Best Start program?

Mr. Kevin Costante: I think the Best Start program was a program of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. It was to provide more child care services across the province. It was part of the core of the child care program, as opposed to the early learning directed program that we are introducing for four- and five-year-olds. It was more child care than early learning.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Best Start was designed to provide child care programs within individual schools. The funding didn't materialize, subsequent to an electoral change, to the extent that it was originally supposed to, which made it a little more difficult, as well.

One of the pieces within the early years kindergarten programs in the French systems that we know makes a huge difference is that in the French schools, while they're all children who would be entitled to French-language education, they may, in fact, come from English-speaking homes with a French tradition and history. What happens there is, in the early years programs in the French school systems, there's a huge focus on oral language development. That is a really critical and important component to learning to read.

Just as a practical example of that, it's more difficult to teach a deaf child to read than it is to teach a blind child to read. Think about that. It's more difficult for a deaf child to learn to read than it is for a blind child to learn to read. That seems, on the surface, as if it would be counterintuitive, but think about what happens when you read a document: You hear the words in your head. Whenever you're reading a page, it's like you can hear the words in your head. If you've never had a hearing experience, if you've never heard those words, it's very difficult for you to learn to read.

When you translate that into the data that talk about children and their language and vocabulary when they arrive in kindergarten, a child arriving in kindergarten—and this is age 5—from a higher socio-economic background home actually comes with a vocabulary of about 1,100 words, and children coming from lower socio-economic background homes come with a more limited vocabulary of about 500 words. What happens is that those children don't have that precursor early language development, that vocabulary and oral language that

allow them to make the same progress when we're talking about teaching them to read.

The French boards, because they are not only teaching children to read, but in fact, for many of the children in their school, they're teaching them a new language, their early years program has had a huge emphasis on oral language development. It's why we've been working with a number of northern school boards on an oral language program with some international researchers in their schools to see if we can, in fact, make a change in that area.

The other thing I would point out is that the French school boards, in terms of their results—if you get behind the overall French results, there are 12 boards, and there is a significant number of those boards that are doing very well, but for instance, among many of the small French school boards in the North, their achievement is as much of a challenge as it is for our English boards in the north. They're just very small numbers.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I would have thought it would have been in French immersion where the teaching of the language would have been a larger focus, whereby going to the French schools, most of those individuals predominantly already learned or know the language of French. I would think, then, if this is the case, would not that premise be expanded upon to teach French in, say, English-running schools at earlier grades in order to stimulate that mind experience to make sure that those students can grow into that?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: The French first-language schools and the French boards across the province are designed for students who have French-language rights under the charter. Not all of those children, however, speak French in the home. In my own community, which is Windsor and Essex County, we have a number of families who would have French-language rights, but who, for whatever reason, have been in the community for several generations, and many of those families may have lost some of their French-language capacity.

The French-language boards, in fact, in their early years of kindergarten, do place a very high emphasis. A number of their kids come to them speaking French and from French-speaking homes, but others don't, and they accommodate that in their programs.

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The immersion question is interesting as well, in that generally the students in immersion schools, particularly by grade 6, do very well on the English EQAO tests when they take them. There is a focus on oral language within those schools. Individual boards have the right to decide when they're going to start their immersion programs, but there are programs right across the province in French immersion that start in early immersion or later. Interestingly enough, the research on French-language acquisition in those suggests that the kids are all at about par by the time they get to high school.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Still time?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): There's five more minutes for you.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Regarding programs for suspended and expelled students, how would they fall into play during the later years? Obviously, I don't think there's a lot of programs that are available. Those individuals who are expelled or suspended from schools are then put into other programs and directives those individuals fall to handle. Those individuals, are those marks separately calculated, or are they part of the school reporting that they've been suspended or expelled from?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: My experience as a director of education tells me that that may vary board by board, but I don't know that for sure.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Is there additional funding? As you stated regarding northern individuals, with the cultural backgrounds in communities and the difficulties in a lot of these remote and small communities in northern Ontario and other parts, a lot of these individuals end up being expelled because of the difficulties they have in school. It reflects in aggression, anger and other aspects that come out, for attention and other reasons. Are there additional funds that are allocated to assist these individuals to ensure that they can achieve a higher level?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Some of that is SALEP. Some of it is alternative education programs etc. School boards do receive funding to assist with SALEP and those excused pupils. A number of those pupils are often also accommodated in—they used to be called section 27 schools, but I think the section number may have changed in terms of the Education Act that allows them. There's a number of different funding mechanisms that provide support to alternative schools, alternative school programs and so on. I don't have the details of that at this point in time.

Mr. Jim McCarter: Maybe I can just jump in. It may be the school safety program that you were talking about yesterday. I think there's a fair chunk of money in the school safety program—Mrs. Sandals might be aware of that—that falls into the suspended and expelled.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yes, I can actually answer your question. The students who are long-term suspended or expelled continue to get base funding. Plus, there's additional funding that goes to the board to set up the alternative program.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I've met with individuals who've been charged with the programs, and they've given me some insight on the way they operate. There were just some concerns on the way the funding was allocated in some areas because, quite frankly, it was specifically stated to me that they were told that they had \$1 million that they needed to find some place to spend in this particular program. I was quite surprised. That's why I was leading to that question. I think at this time, that'll do.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): I'd like to exercise the prerogative of the Chair. Besides, our party has about three or four minutes left.

I've been very interested in the conversation that I've heard so far, and it is a conversation. What you're talking about is, in your words, a work in progress, and it's very

much a micro view of what you're trying to do. I want to try to introduce the macro view.

I'm looking at the auditor's recommendation number 3, and I'll read it into the record because I'd like to get a reaction from 30,000 feet:

“To ensure that student achievement initiatives are effective and that limited resources are used appropriately, the literacy and numeracy secretariat should:

—formally evaluate how well all its program initiatives contribute to improving student achievement, and modify or eliminate the less effective initiatives;

—ensure that its program funds are allocated to the areas of greatest need;

—ensure that program funds are being spent for the intended purpose;

—ensure that expenditures made by the council of directors of education are appropriately approved and supported; and

—reconsider pre-flowing funds to ‘banker’ school boards.”

You have touched on every single one of these in the initial presentation, Deputy Minister, but it seemed to me when I read this that this was about connecting the dots. In other words, if all of these work together well, my interpretation of what the auditor was saying is that you would improve the overall ability to do what it is you're trying to do, which is bring the scores up across the board, report properly to parents, account properly for the kind of money that's being allocated and allocate that money more appropriately by virtue of need, which has been discussed.

Can you talk to me from the 30,000-foot perspective and tell me whether or not you believe this is being achieved and what a realistic goal and time would be to be able to say, “We don't need that recommendation any more”?

Mr. Kevin Costante: First of all, I agree with what you've stated and the auditor's recommendation. I think it is important that we make sure that the money that we are spending here is used most effectively.

The auditor has recommended that we do reviews of our programs, and we are going to do that. We committed to, over a three-year period, review each of our programs to make sure that they are in the best direction possible. I think we also, frankly, have admitted that our documentation around how we spent our money in the past wasn't as good as it could be, and we are actively putting that in place so that we have proper contracts, so that we monitor those contracts, so that we follow up and so that we use evaluation to determine where the money isn't being effective or being used effectively and redirect that money to where it could be better used. I think from 30,000 feet, that's exactly the job we have to do.

I actually don't think you're ever done in that job. I think there has to be continuous review. I think circumstances are going to change. A program that might be working quite effectively, three or four years from now, the environment changes, the climate changes in

our school, and you have to change it. I think we have to be fleet of foot, which we've been trying to do, but we need to make sure that our documentation keeps up with the speed of our feet. I think that's what we're trying to do.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): Well, that's good, and I agree that that's what you have to do. But I guess the point I'm trying to make is that taking each of these bullet points individually and not putting them together so that you create the overall desired result would be the thing that I fear most.

Mr. Kevin Costante: Yes. I couldn't agree with you more. I think that comes at many levels. We need to make sure that the boards are transparent within their communities about what they're trying to achieve in terms of student achievement and report on that and be held accountable not only by the ministry but also by their parents and by their school community. We are doing that through board reports and director's reports that now are posted online. We are trying to do that by having province-wide testing that, again, for every school, we publish the results of. I think we need to make sure that we have all of the financial accountability mechanisms in place, and we are doing that.

The specific problem areas that the auditor pointed out regarding banker boards and the Council of Ontario Directors of Education, we subsequently went and followed up and put the documentation in place so that we knew where that money was, what it was being used for and how we would get reports back on its use. Again, if money is not being used, we will recoup it. If the money is not being used effectively, we will move it, when the contract expires, from one area to another area.

I think we are trying to make the linkages between what's happening on the ground in the classroom with an individual student right up to broad accountability of schools and boards and the ministry to our public.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): And may you succeed.

You had a point to add?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Just a supplementary to that: One of the other activities we've undertaken with the assistance of our internal ministry audit department is we're actually developing a logic model for our programs that will link strategic planning to the funding process and the outcomes. That may be that higher-level planning framework that you're looking for.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): Thank you very much. The NDP: Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Mr. Chairman—Mr. Neutral Chairman.

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The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): I do the best I can.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's right.

I'm going to follow up on that in a few moments, but I want to start with something else which was touched upon by Liz. The auditor's report, on page 188, says the following in one area:

"Secretariat program funding was not always allocated to school boards and schools with the greatest need. Funding for some of the secretariat improvement initiatives was based on average daily enrolment (rather than on relative needs); in other cases, the secretariat could not fully explain how the amount of funding that went to each school board was determined. For instance, we found that for one major program, the funding for the board with the greatest number of schools designated as low-performing was only \$17 per student, while several boards, with no schools designated as low-performing, received more than twice this amount per student."

In my mind I agree with many philosopher types who say that education is the great equalizer. If that is true, the statement I just read from the Auditor General—it doesn't do it; it does the opposite, in fact. While I understood the answer you gave to the question from Liz Sandals about some money going on the basis of need and some money going on the basis of wanting to train all teachers, and while it sounds logical, in my mind it doesn't make any sense if we want education to be the great equalizer, because we know where the problems are, and most of them are socio-economic. I don't believe there's any magic to that. I think most of us who have been in the educational system know that.

If that is true, how do we explain the fact that—and do you know or don't you know?—most of the money goes to the Ontario focused intervention partnership, which is \$92 million in total so far. This isn't a new program. Much of what has been reviewed is based on something that has been going on since 2004. I understand that it's a work in progress and that you're moving fast on your feet, but it is rather long in terms of how long we've been doing this and whether we're learning fast enough on our feet.

Do we know how much money is going on the basis of need versus general enrolment for the Ontario focused intervention partnership, which appears to be the largest component of where the money goes? Do we know? If we don't know, why not?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Yes, we do know.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay, so what are the figures for that one?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: I don't have the figures for the whole program here. I could supply them at a later point.

I do want to make the point, though, that, for example, in the example that was cited within the auditor's report of the \$17 per student and the other board, the board that they used as a comparator in that example was a northern board with a very large geographic footprint that had 1,357 students. It received a total of \$112,585 in funding over several programs, or \$83 a student, while a large board in the south with more than 240,000 students received more than \$4 million, or \$17 per student. So I would submit that the comparator that they were talking about of \$17 per student in a large urban board in the south, with 240,000 students—we all know that's this board right here around us, Toronto public—while one of

the boards in the north received \$83 per student—it's not just enrolment or the number of schools in need, but in fact some boards in the north had schools that were OFIP schools that did not appear in the public designation of OFIP schools because their data was suppressed. We know about those schools.

The other thing I would submit in that particular example is that the geography of the numbers in the north makes a huge difference too.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: All right. We only have 20 minutes.

Forget that example, because you seem to be focused on that example. The auditor may or may not have a comment on it, and it would be nice to deal with that example, but I believe money should be distributed on the basis of need. When you look at—and I'm going to go through the list—the Ontario focused intervention partnership, how much money is going on the basis of need?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: I would submit that all of the money is on the basis of need, because every board and every school has some students in need. Specifically, in 2006-07 to 2009-10, out of the \$25-million total, \$12.5 million was based on enrolment to assist—and I've just received this information from some folks here—but \$12.5 million, or 50% of that money, was funded on the—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: With that noise, it's hard for me to hear, actually, if you don't mind. Sorry, I'm getting older.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Right—\$12.5 million was based on enrolment, and that's because every board has some students in some schools that are lower achieving than others and need help. The other half of the funding from 2006-07 to 2009-10 was specifically designated to schools that had needs.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Would the Auditor General have a sense of the distribution of those dollars or was it just a guess?

Mr. Jim McCarter: The main point was that, when we asked, "How did you go about allocating these dollars?"—we're skeptical people. If you say it's based on need, then show us. There wasn't really any documentation or anything where someone could say, "Here's how we allocated it. We specifically looked at low-performing schools." So our first question was, we thought that there should have been some—our biggest issue was more documentation and how they went about it: "If you did allocate on the basis of need, do you have anything in writing or can you show us how you did it?" I might as well say, a year later, when we come in and do the follow up, that's probably the question that we'll be asking: "If you are doing it on the basis of need, let us have a look at how you're doing it." Basically, let's have a look at the low-performing schools and look at some of the averages. That's the question we'd be asking a year from now when we come in.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right, and so when they come in with that question, presumably we'll have a

better sense of the proportion that goes on the basis of schools where you have socio-economic factors that we clearly understand. I'm assuming you'll have a better breakdown then. Is that the case?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: We would have a better breakdown. We actually have very clear data about socio-economic challenges to schools and which schools those are etc.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: But we also match those to schools in terms of their overall results. One of the things I would point out with the OFIP program is that when we look at schools that are challenged by a number of circumstances and whose results are not where we would like them to be, we've moved the numbers of those schools from 19% of the population of schools some years ago to 6% or 7% now.

The other thing I would point out is that, in fact, our OFIP 1 and 2 program, because there are so few schools in that program, has been reduced to a school with less than 50%, and we are working directly with 137 schools across the province this year. We can identify exactly why those schools are in the program, as well as our schools in the middle.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I guess I'm going to be happy to wait for your next report, because I think I'll get more clarity in terms of what I'm looking for.

Mr. Jim McCarter: It did look to us, from what data we did have, that enrolment certainly played a significant part in how the money was allocated as opposed to need, but again, there wasn't a lot of documentation one way or the other. So next year when we go in, we would like to see the documentation.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That would be great. I'd much prefer to see that than where I'm going, because I'm not quite sure what I'm getting. I really don't, I have to admit. That's why you're an assistant deputy minister, in terms of giving the kinds of answers you're giving, because I'm not getting it.

I look at the big numbers here, in terms of capacity building: \$59 million. Capacity building, presumably, is training of teachers, and that happens all over the province, of course.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Support for improved teaching and learning, yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And that \$60 million goes all over, and whoever is organizing it, they get money. I'm not sure it's evenly spread, but it's capacity training all over, generally speaking, right?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: It is all across the province, yes, and it is—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In terms of resources, that's another \$51 million. And I'm going to ask the same question that they'll be following up on: Is it based on need or enrolment? Presumably, we'll have better figures by next year, because I really would like a breakdown of that.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: We have the figures. We will have better documentation.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And I'll be looking forward to those numbers, including tutors in the classroom, because I suspect, if I read the report correctly, tutors are based on need. Is that correct? That's probably the only one where there is clarity. Is that correct? So with tutors, it appears that it does go where the need is, and we have better data on that, or at least they're saying that there is, but with the others, it doesn't appear to be clear. In fact, it suggests that the majority of funding goes to general, average-based kind of funding.

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Mr. Kevin Costante: I think we agree with the auditor that what we need to have for each of these programs is to be very specific about our funding formula and the rationale behind that funding formula, so that if we provide some of the money on an across-the-board basis, why? And if some of the money is targeted, why? The auditor is correct: We didn't do our documentation as well as we should have, and we hope to satisfy him when he comes back.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Very good. And me too.

Mr. David Zimmer: Don't forget Rosario.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Don't forget me.

I'm going to follow up on what Mr. Shurman was getting at, because you see, I looked at the auditor's recommendations on recommendation 3—I don't want to reread them, but they were very specific: "Formally evaluate how ... program initiatives contribute to improving student achievement...." And the answer is that LNS has moved forward and refined its strategies and initiatives based on current research and assessment. That, to me, doesn't answer the question. The auditor is saying "formally evaluate," and you say that you moved forward to refine your strategies. The point was that what we have at the moment isn't clear and your refinement doesn't seem to get at what they were suggesting. So I was very nervous about that.

Mr. Kevin Costante: I think in our response, we said that we would formally evaluate our programs over a three-year period, and we will begin that this year. The ministry has just completed an RFP process so that we have vendors of records who can do formal evaluations. We'll be moving on to undertake contracts so that we can begin the formal evaluation of our programs. We can't do them all at once. It's a large number—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. Sorry, Deputy, where's that?

Mr. Kevin Costante: If you're on page 198, I think it says at the bottom of the very first—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was reading your response to those—

Mr. Kevin Costante: I'm reading the response. At the bottom of page 198 of the auditor's report, first paragraph: "The ministry will develop a schedule to review its current programs over a three-year period."

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. So in terms of formally evaluating how program initiatives contribute, you'll do that in three years—

Mr. Kevin Costante: If I can go to page 4 of six, then, of our—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Page 4 of six, right. It says specifically there that a review will take place on the following initiatives.

Mr. Kevin Costante: Right, in 2010-11. So in the first year—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So tutoring, OFIP, and then small northern boards, math and the school effectiveness framework.

Mr. Kevin Costante: Right.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So if I can ask the auditor, because the ministry's simply saying that in three years, they'll do what you're recommending—I'm assuming it's in part or in total, I'm not sure. They'll have a report in terms of a full evaluation on tutoring, OFIP, small northern boards, math and the school effectiveness framework. Is there something else they're missing?

Mr. Jim McCarter: Essentially, what they're doing is what looks like a mix of the big programs like OFIP and a few of the small ones the first year. Then the second year they're going to do a couple of other big ones and a small one. And in the third year, if I understand it right, it looks like they're going to be doing the last couple of big ones and a small one, if I am to interpret what is on here.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And you're okay with that? Is there something missing? Does that address what you were asking?

Mr. Jim McCarter: Yes. That's exactly what we'd like to see. Do an assessment: What bang are we getting for our buck, and if we have things that are really working well, let's make sure they're transportable across the system.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Can I ask you, does three years make sense? It takes time. I'm not asking to be political.

Mr. Jim McCarter: I think it would be difficult to do them all in one year. Whether you do it over two or three years—I think no longer than three years, I would hope.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. Can I ask you, banker boards used to get a 13% administration fee; in some cases, it was higher. Is that still going to happen in terms of the administration fee they charge, should you continue to choose some large board to administer those funds?

Mr. Kevin Costante: Part of our review will also be what admin fee we would pay to use banker boards or lead boards. So we're not wedded to a set percentage. If we continue to use them, we'll also be considering what's the best way to pay admin costs so that it's appropriate and relevant to the effort made.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And the 13%: Do you know what they do with that 13% of that fee, with that money?

Mr. Kevin Costante: That's the money for their overhead, for their people to do whatever organization we're asking them to do: to make phone calls, to organize things, to work with their other regional boards.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And does 13% seem excessive to you or a reasonable amount?

Mr. Kevin Costante: I think it would have to be part of the review.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So we're doing a review on that?

Mr. Kevin Costante: As a deputy who's always where there's not enough money, lower is always better.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And do CODE—the council of directors—charge an administrative fee?

Mr. Kevin Costante: Yes, they do.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes? The same amount—13%—or more? We don't know? We do?

Mr. Kevin Costante: I think it's varied from program to program, as I understand. We will also be reviewing that as well.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You did say that in your report, correct?

Mr. Kevin Costante: I believe we did.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Can I ask you, in reference to some of the research that the Auditor General was doing—there's a reference on page 189, under "Overall Ministry Response," that in "2008, a leading research company evaluated initiatives...." Who is that leading research company?

Mr. Kevin Costante: That was the CLLRNet report that I referred to in my remarks. Let me give you the formal name, if I can find it—just a second. It's the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Is there a name attached to the person who does this work, or is this just the—

Mr. Kevin Costante: There were several researchers.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Do they come out of OISE or somewhere else?

Mr. Kevin Costante: Sorry; I'll pull out the report and let you know.

Mr. Jim McCarter: I think there might have been eight or nine researchers involved, if it's the one I'm thinking about. There were a few professors, I think, but I think the deputy has it there.

Mr. Kevin Costante: I can either give you the report—there are eight or nine of them, and they're from—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: If you don't need that report I'll take it out of your hands.

Mr. Kevin Costante: We have copies.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And it's so heavy anyway. Thank you.

As well, on page 192, there is reference to "a consultant the ministry engaged to review school board improvement plans...." Is it the same group that did that? A different group?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: No, it's a different group. It's a gentlemen by the name of Douglas Reeves from—he was from Boston? Harvard?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He is a professor, I'm assuming?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: He's from the centre for leadership in Boston, at Harvard University.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And there's another one, on page 194: "In 2008, a global leader in enhancing student

achievement...." Is that a different person or company? That's page 194, under "Ministry Response," second paragraph, the bottom of the page: "In 2008, a global leader in enhancing student achievement and improvement planning was commissioned to perform a comprehensive review...."

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: That's the same study. That's Douglas Reeves.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Same study.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And on 195: "The programs the secretariat develops are also based on advice from educational advisors hired by the ministry...." Is that a general remark in terms of special advisors or educational advisors, or is there someone attached to who those people are? Is there a name or names?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: That would be Michael Fullan.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Mike Fullan? Is he a special advisor you hire every now and then to give you advice on these things?

Mr. Kevin Costante: Yes. He's on contract with the ministry part-time.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: On contract? So whenever you need—he gets paid a sum based on the work he does, or is that—

Mr. Kevin Costante: I believe it's a per diem.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The ministry responds, on page 198, at the top of the page, that "an external review by a leading Canadian research company was commissioned." Is that someone you already referenced, or is it different?

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Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: That's the CLLRNet report.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I had a few other questions. Move on; we'll come back.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): We'll move to the Liberals. Ms. Sandals.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I have a couple of questions and then I'll share my time with Mr. Zimmer. When we were chatting before, we were talking about accountability. Another aspect of accountability that the auditor raised was around school improvement plans and board improvement plans and just what degree of accountability and review and monitoring there was. I know that since the time the auditor did his work Bill 177 was passed, which has a much more formal requirement for a board's multi-year plans and for measurable targets and submission to the ministry. So I wonder if you could review that work, where it's at and how that will tie in with your work a little.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Yes. Like so much of the work of the secretariat, we work in partnership with school boards and schools to improve student outcomes. That partnership really becomes an iterative process. Back in about 2006, I think, the LNS started to say to school boards, "You need to have a specific plan to improve student achievement and it needs to have some

of these components,” and school boards produced their plans. It was on that basis that Douglas Reeves was engaged in 2008 to review school board plans.

As a school board director, I thought I was paying pretty good attention to improving student outcomes in my jurisdiction. I thought we had pretty good school improvement plans in place and a pretty good board improvement plan in place. I was proud of it; I was sharing it with people across the province. I got back from that exercise facilitated by the LNS a 27-page report in huge detail, as did all of my colleagues across the province. It was very specific about the things we were not doing and the ways in which we were not becoming nearly specific enough in what it was we were going to change, and in particular how we were going to monitor it, so that we could be assured that what we were doing actually were the things that would have an impact on the results. So we went back to the drawing board as a school board in 2008-09 in response to that.

This time around, the most recent cycle of improvement plans, the LNS asked school boards to submit their school improvement plans—last year, 2009, just as the audit was coming to a close—to us in June. We spent the summer reviewing those plans and developing those areas that we thought school boards needed more information on and what they needed to do differently. We gave each school board back, in regional meetings with them etc., feedback on their plan and on the overall board improvement plan in place.

From that, we developed a template that had a fair bit of detail about what a good plan should have in it. Quite honestly, if we had handed that to school boards a year or two earlier, there would have probably been a “We can’t possibly do that” reaction, but they had progressed to the point where, when we gave them the feedback in 2009, they said, “Oh, this is really helpful.”

We asked them to take that feedback in August, when they got their EQAO results, and update their plans and resubmit them to us in October. It was those resubmitted plans that then became the basis for our conversation with school boards throughout this past school year, and in particular the foundation for our discussion with them about accountability and how they were monitoring those changes etc. in January. In accordance with the auditor’s recommendations, we were very careful about providing better documentation of both that review in October and our meetings with school boards in January around that.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: But you’ve actually progressed now, then, to the point where you’ve given them some template of what the expectations are? Because my experience with school board plans or school improvement plans is that both have historically often been rather fuzzy in terms of the expectations, and trying to get people’s feet held to the fire so that they’re writing expectations that are actually indicators, that are actually measurable, has been, as my colleague said, like trying to turn the Queen Mary. So you’ve actually finally got to the point where there’s a template that says, “You need to have these sorts of expectations and indicators”?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Absolutely, and school boards are providing much more specific and measurable goals and targets, and plans to get there. They’re also including in there, which I think is one of the more important pieces, information for us about how they’re monitoring the activities, the results and the gains so that they will be able to more specifically report back to us what’s happening around those things.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: And—

Mr. Kevin Costante: Just on Bill 177, I think the overall tenor of the bill was to be clear with boards and with the broader public that it’s the responsibility of boards not only to be fiscally responsible but also that they have a core responsibility to concentrate on student achievement and student wellness. That’s what the bill lays out. It does call for multi-year plans. It also provides that we can introduce, for the first time, an internal audit process within boards to help them do their assessments, just like ministries do, about what’s working and what’s not working. The bill was really to be clear. I think many boards did take those responsibilities very seriously, but we wanted to be clear that those were their responsibilities and not somehow just delegated to the board administrative staff to look after, that the board itself had a duty to think about and hold their administrators responsible around student achievement.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: The other issue I wanted to raise was something that the auditor had mentioned, which is about measuring the gap between the lowest-performing and the highest-performing, and this is something that I’ve been actually quite interested in for a long time. I know that some of the international test data back in the late 1990s, some of the OECD data, were actually measuring socio-economic status against test scores internationally, and quite interestingly—and the members of the Conservative Party should maybe pat themselves on the head for this partly as well—even back in the late 1990s when you looked at Ontario versus other Canadian jurisdictions but also internationally, the gradient was actually quite shallow, in the sense that we had a much smaller gap based on socio-economic status in Ontario than in virtually all other jurisdictions around the world. I thought it interesting that the auditor raised this because I happen to personally think this is really important, so I’m glad you raised this. But I’m wondering what work we can do in the literacy and numeracy secretariat as a follow-up to the auditor’s suggestion around looking at this whole issue of measuring the gap.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: We do pay very close attention to gaps for a number of groups. First of all, you’re absolutely right: We are recognized internationally as having—the OECD has assessed Ontario as a jurisdiction of educational excellence and equity, and those two don’t always go together in their assessments of various nations’ and groups’ systems. What they say is that Ontario actually has about half the gap of many, many other countries in the norm. We measure internally gaps for some very specific groups already and track the results, and there’s some very good news in the last few

years in those areas. We know, for instance, that from 2002 to 2008-09, in grade 6 writing we have reduced the gap of the English-language learners' performance by half. That, to me, is a very, very good sign for the province of Ontario, given the number of students we have coming to us from all over the world, and that's something that the international groups recognize as well.

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Mrs. Liz Sandals: And I assume that's mainly because we've raised the bottom, as it were?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Oh, absolutely. Our overall performance has in fact improved, but the rate of performance of our English-language learners on that test has been twice that.

We have also significantly reduced the gap for students with special needs. We have a long way to go yet, but we have made some significant gains and maintained those gains over the last couple of years. Again, that's all about that precision of teaching, that we're starting to be able to take what a teacher's doing in a classroom that's actually working and identify that and turn it into a broader practice more quickly than we ever have before.

There are still some areas we need to work on, in particular the socio-economic gap; we've been paying increased attention to that lately. We know our OFIP program. In fact, the schools in OFIP 1 and 2 were much more likely to be those schools that had socio-economic challenges and ELL challenges and challenges of students with special needs.

Most recently, for instance, was our Schools on the Move publication, which generally identified schools across the province that were continuing to improve and could articulate what they were doing. This year's selection of schools that will be celebrated in June are in fact schools on the move in challenging circumstances; the socio-economic gap is one of those. What we've done there is identify, so that other schools can notice and pay more attention to the fact that there are a lot of schools out there that are regularly proving that demographics are not destiny. We need to take those practices and move them from school to school more rapidly.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Okay. I'm going to turn the time over to Mr. Zimmer.

Mr. David Zimmer: On Friday night, on the weekend, I was at the Collingwood conference, the so-called Thinkers' Conference, which might be characterized as elitist. But anyway, on Friday night there was a speaker—and I've run this question by my friends here—Malcolm Gladwell, a big social critic. The place is chock full of people; everybody's there on Friday night, and Malcolm Gladwell gives the keynote address. He's talking about a number of things, and he starts to talk about education and the importance of having a whole lot of smart and well-educated people in Ontario to carry through with the future.

He said that his solution, to use your expression, to the student outcomes problem was that—and he said that all the data that he had researched supported this. He said

that all of these various initiatives—reduction of class size and all the other technical initiatives—didn't matter a tinker's damn; that the only thing that really mattered was the quality of the teacher and the ability of the teacher to inspire and connect with a kid.

He then went on to say that his data showed that, at best, there might be a 5% effect on student outcomes if class sizes were significantly reduced. Then he went on to say, "How do we get these really good teachers?" In terms of class size, he said, "My colleagues—we could have a class of 35 or 40 kids, and if we've got a really bad teacher, you're going to get bad results, even if you reduce the class to 15. If you've got a class of 40 and you've got a really good teacher, the results will dramatically go up and the results will stay up for three years if you've had a good teacher in a good class for a year."

Then he went on to say, "How do you get these really good teachers?" The first thing he said he would do is shut down the teachers' college. There would be no formal teacher training. His solution was that he'd go around to the schools and the school boards and so on and ask around to identify the really good teachers. Then someone who wanted to be a teacher would be told, "Go and visit so-and-so"—who, by everybody's agreement, is a really first-class teacher—"and we want you to go and spend a couple of days with that person. They'll take you into the classroom; they'll try you out." You don't need any formal teacher training, but that really good teacher can quickly make a judgment call that this person has the ability to teach, this person has what it takes—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Should we do that for lawyers, too? What about doctors?

Interjection: Watch it.

Mr. David Zimmer: —and this person doesn't have what it takes, and then he would say to the person who doesn't have what it takes, in that expert judgment, "Look, get another career. Become a lawyer or a bricklayer. Do something else." The other person whom they identified intuitively with that teaching skill set, they would lavish training on them first and, if they had any money left over, then they'd turn it to class size and all these other initiatives that we've been talking about today. So what do you think of that?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So the question is, what do you think?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: I'm sorry, what was the last part of your question?

Mr. David Zimmer: So what do you think of that idea?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Oh, what do I think of that idea. Well—

Mr. David Zimmer: Were you at the conference?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: I wasn't at the conference.

Mr. David Zimmer: Did you read the pieces in the paper the following day?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: I've been reading some of the follow-up to it.

Mr. David Zimmer: So what do you think?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: First of all—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: With all due respect.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: With all due respect, yes. Malcolm Gladwell is, first of all, based outside of Canada. He's based originally in Europe. I would suggest that I've read the same kind of documents he's read about the intent of class sizes—

Mr. David Zimmer: He grew up and went to school in Elmira, Ontario, in a farm school.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Oh, did he?

Mr. David Zimmer: Yes.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Isn't that interesting. I didn't know that.

Mr. David Zimmer: And he went to the University of Toronto. He worked his way up from a farm to the U of T to where he is now.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: So that says something about Ontario's education system perhaps, but anyway, that's an aside. Pardon me.

One of the first comments I'd make is that the research around class size—first of all, let me deal with the class size issue—that Malcolm Gladwell was basing his comments upon is, I think, probably much of the same research that I've looked at. And the research around class size first of all makes it clear that if there is an impact to class size reduction on the quality of outcomes for student learning, it is more likely to be in the primary division than it is anywhere else. So there's that first piece of evidence that comes from the research around that.

Also, if you look at many of the large-scale attempts to reduce class sizes, whether it be in California or in some other jurisdictions internationally, the research will tell you they've actually, in some jurisdictions, resulted in a lowering of the quality of learning for kids. Here's what they say is the reason for that: When you, as California did, do a large reduction in class size, you bring a huge number of new teachers into the field. If you don't have a supply of highly qualified, professional teachers available to do that, you bring into your schools people who would not have otherwise been your choice to bring in—

Mr. David Zimmer: Well, of course. That's why he had part 2 of his thing, about how to identify a high-quality teacher.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: I'll come to that.

There are a couple of things I think Ontario did very differently from other jurisdictions around the class sizes. First of all, we did it in an environment in which we know we have some of the most highly qualified teachers, and lots of them available coming out of our teachers' colleges. I'll come back to the teachers' colleges. The other thing we know is that Ontario implemented its class size reductions over a three-year period of time, which from a school board director's point of view gave me the opportunity to be pretty picky about those extra teachers that I was hiring. So I would submit that we did not make the mistake that other jurisdictions made.

The other piece that I believe is absolutely critical is that no other jurisdiction in the world that I know of did this at a time in which they were investing hugely in teacher capacity building, the kind of resources and support, support, support that the LNS has been giving schools and boards and teachers, because we are in a very real way asking teachers to be very different in their approach to teaching and learning than they've often been able to be in the past. We're asking them to be much more precise, to be much more evidence- and data-based, so that when they're working with kids and they say, "All right, if I teach this particular way, I'm expecting my class to learn these skills. Let's not leave it to chance. Let's do an assessment pretty quickly about whether each of my kids has learned these skills and to which degree. Then if my evidence isn't supporting what I know, what do I as an adult have to change in order to have that happen"—

Mr. David Zimmer: So what do you think of the correlation between extensive teacher—and is it possible to be a really good teacher without mountains and mountains and mountains of teacher training?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: I think it's fascinating that in his comments Mr. Gladwell apparently said that we shouldn't send people to teachers' college but we should spend a lot of money training teachers. I thought there was a bit of a—

Mr. David Zimmer: Yes, but his way to train teachers was to attach them to—

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Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: I thought there was a bit of an oxymoron within that.

Anyway, so my reply to all of that is that teaching is increasingly becoming more precise and more demanding, and teachers need more support, not less, so I would very clearly disagree with Mr. Gladwell's premise that you—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): Thank you very much.

Mr. David Zimmer: Can I get one in?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): Do you want to get one in? Sure, go ahead.

Mr. David Zimmer: How many employees are in the secretariat? How many person-years are in the secretariat?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: Employees at the secretariat?

Mr. David Zimmer: That are running the secretariat.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: It's 102, the majority of whom are in the field with school boards.

Mr. David Zimmer: So a hundred and something in place. What's the budget?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: The budget is \$81 million.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): Thank you very much. Mr. Ouellette.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'm going to follow up on Mr. Zimmer. I don't know if you have any more comments and wish to share some of my time regarding this track of questioning. I'd be happy to share some of it, if

you'd like. Do you want to continue on? Okay, I'll continue on.

Interjection.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I said I'm giving you some time if you want it. Do you want to keep asking questions.

Mr. David Zimmer: No, you can pick up on it.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Okay. Very clearly, I can tell you that in my own experience—each and every one of us would—the impact that teachers have can be profound. I coach kids' rep hockey and it's the same thing. My own son had a bad coach and quit hockey completely. It's the same thing with teaching. The most qualified teacher I ever had was the worst teacher I ever had. Wrote books, doctorates, and on and on—and he couldn't relate to the kids in any way, shape or form. Now, probably the least qualified teacher that I ever had was probably the best individual in nurturing, caring.

What can we do, then, to ensure that this continues on to make sure that the right individuals are teaching, because they can have such huge effects over long-term periods? There are individuals who are going through the motions just to be there and really don't care. At our school, they were called the 3 o'clock dashers. At 3 o'clock they were gone and you'd never see them again. But then there are those individuals who are there early and stay late and do a really good job for a lot of the kids. So to follow along that track, how do you find that balance to make sure that it's there? It's great that we have a standard-of-teaching level, but is it the right level?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: The standard, I think, is the right level. I think that we also have clear evidence that over the last number of years we've actually been raising the quality of teaching across the province—and it was pretty good to start with. There are exceptions to that. There has also, over the last few years, been a process for teacher performance appraisal, and greater accountability around that performance appraisal process been brought to bear by the ministry as well. There's a whole different approach and a requirement that school boards take that on—quite honestly, again, from my experience as a school board director—more carefully, with more follow-up and more monitoring, as a result of that.

Mr. Kevin Costante: If I could add one thing as well just in terms of people going into teaching, in a job prior to this I was Deputy Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, so this is maybe five-year-old information, but at that point there were six applications for every spot available in teachers' college. So the colleges were able to choose from the best and the brightest.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Well, they've been choosing based on what criteria? Basically academic as opposed to teaching. So that's where there lies a problem. I have a friend of mine who's a program director at one of the local high schools and his comments and suggestions to me were that we need to change the standards for entrance because there are a phenomenal number of individuals who wish to get into teaching but aren't one of those one in six that are getting it. The end result is

we're getting individuals who have great academic standards, but the ability to transmit that information in an understanding way to kids is not there.

By the same token, we have short-term periods of time when we have the ability to influence and direct kids. Quite frankly, one of my own kids, speaking of our own examples, had one of the toughest teachers in the school. I told him that was great. I said, "You think it's tough in school? Get a real job. Find out what it's really like in the real world. The harder this teacher pushes you, the more likely you're going to succeed." The year before, he had no homework and thought the world was great and wonderful. The end result was, guess what? He just kind of did what he had to do and got by. The reason I'm mentioning this is that I was happy they got the hard teacher.

Do you think that the SCCs, then, should have some ability in influencing the decision-making process by which principals are chosen for their schools?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: By which principals are chosen for the schools? Yes, school councils do have input into that process. They don't have decision-making over it, but they are regularly involved across the province in developing for school boards their profile of the kind of principal that they think their school needs, which school boards—at least my school board and others, I know—pay very careful attention to when they were placing principals in schools and transferring them from place to place.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'm surprised at that. I didn't realize—

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: There's a requirement around the work for school councils that requires school boards—and it's a ministry requirement—to give them that input around that decision.

The other comment I might make about some of the background to what you had raised as a question, this notion about different teachers in different schools with very different expectations of students etc., a lot of our work, in fact, involves bringing teachers together to work together to look at what their expectations might be in the primary division or the junior division in a school etc. We ask teachers to bring student work to those meetings so that they can actually start to compare with each other what their assessments of student work and what their expectations of students might be. Part of that professional dialogue and that collaborative work in a school that is increasingly taking place is about bringing all the teachers to the table and saying, "How are you, in fact, placing those expectations upon students, and what kinds of tasks are we putting there?"

The data that I, as a director of education, had on my desk, compared to four years earlier, again through the ministry's investment in OnSIS—the student information system—I was actually able to get data pretty quickly that compared teacher marks etc. from classroom to classroom and that looked at school results and looked for consistencies and inconsistencies between those things.

I understand exactly the point you're making about your son's experience with very different teachers from

year to year. Teaching is a very personal act, and there will be differences in how teachers do it, but I think we're making real headway in having teachers work together to be much more consistent in their assessments, expectations and tasks that they give kids.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I need to make something clear: Teaching and teachers are a wonderful building block in everyone's life. Quite frankly, I can name every teacher, from Ms. Luke to Mrs. Ward to Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Olasyk, Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. Bagg, Mr. Pratt and every single teacher in every single class that I ever had. But as I say regularly in speeches, and this goes over well for a lot of my colleagues, I couldn't tell you who the MPP was of the day or the mayor or anything else. That just goes to show the influence that their peer groups and teachers have on kids, and we need to make sure that we have the right individuals there.

Any suggestions that you have that we can certainly move forward to implement to make sure those right choices are there, I'd be certainly happy to move them forward to try to do the best that we can, to try to make that the best environment for the province.

I think those are all of my questions at this time, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): Thank you very much, Mr. Ouellette. Let's go to the NDP. Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was finding the philosophical discussion very interesting. I'm not sure that Jim does that kind of review in his audits, but—

Mr. Jim McCarter: I'm furiously writing here, as we speak.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Right. It is an interesting debate. We have about 8,000 would-be teachers who come out of the faculties, and so there are approximately 5,000 we don't hire on a yearly basis. Presumably, they have a big pool of people to draw on because so many are unemployed at the end of it. I don't know why we accept close to 8,000 or 9,000 or 11,000 every year—I forget the number now—that we train in the faculties, and they all become unemployed. So one assumes there's a huge pool of good people, but that's a different discussion. I enjoy the philosophical discussion, because Gladwell raises some interesting points for debate, and I probably agree on some of it.

My daughter is a primary school teacher and we discuss often some of the things, Mary Jean, that you talk about. You make it seem so great, in terms of how well-prepared teachers are. I just don't know. It's a complicated job. Some training is helpful, no doubt about it. We do a day or two of training and we say, "We've done the training." Well, a day or two doesn't do much, except it's useful information, but whether it gives them all those fine tools that you speak of—it really is a very, very difficult job. I don't know how teachers do it, I really don't, because what they have to do is enormous. I don't know how you find all the skills that are required.

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My daughter and I talk about the different kids she has and the problems of trying to reach some of those kids.

How do we reach them? Those of us who have had children—or grandchildren, because I do; I have two—you realize they're so different. Quite frankly, I, as a former teacher, and my daughter, as a good teacher—I think she's better than I was as a teacher, except I was high school; she's elementary. I don't know where you find that knowledge to apply to the different approaches that are required to reach those kids. I don't know what it takes, I really don't, because we all learn differently and there are learning problems, there are social problems, there are economic problems. There are so many problems—mental illness. How do you reach them? I wish there were teachers who were that good.

Mr. David Zimmer: I can tell you my personal nightmare in school. It'll make your hair stand up.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And I'm sure a lot of people have them. But at some level, a good teacher who is just a good human being will have a much more powerful effect than someone who has pedagogically learned all the little tricks to be able to reach different types. So you need so many different skills. God bless, I don't know how you find them, but that's a philosophical discussion, and I want to try to get back to some of the auditor's comments that have been touched upon by Liz Sandals.

The auditor said, "Ontario does not ...report on how wide the gap is between the highest and lowest performers." The auditor believes that such a measure would be useful and "would help the ministry evaluate whether ...the gap is being reduced." I listened to the assistant deputy, and you touched on many things that we're touching on: socio-economic; we've got some math experiments here and there; we do some focused work on boys and how they're learning. You touched on everything except, I felt, not answering the question, which I think is a useful one: that Ontario does not report how wide the gap is between the highest and lowest. Why don't we do that? Why can't we do that?

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: What Ontario reports are the proportions of students who achieve at levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 on the EQAO tests. So in a sense, the gap between the highest and the lowest students is the difference between a student performing at level 4 and a student who's not yet reached level 1. I mean, those are the curriculum tests, the EQAO tests that Ontario puts in place.

For individual groups, we certainly do track and provide the differences in group performance—between English-language learning students, between students with special needs. The other part that was within that same recommendation by the auditor had to do with cohort tracking and being able to say, "What about these students who, when they were in grade 3, were successful, but are not successful in grade 6? What about the ones who were not successful in grade 3 and what proportions were successful in grade 6?" and that sort of thing. We do that now. EQAO does provide that data now. It required a few years of having the OnSIS process in place to be able to track specific students through that.

I think we are producing more data and better data about various groups. The nature of that level 1, 2, 3, 4 reporting in the Ontario tests, however, means that on an

individual basis, you can't really designate what was the gap in performance. We can identify what the gap in skills is between level 1 and level 4 etc.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So let me ask you: The auditor says that other jurisdictions are able to do that. In various schools every year you have this number of students producing here and this number here. Your point is, are we reducing that gap year after year? Some other jurisdictions measure how we reduce that—

Mr. Jim McCarter: Yes, we kind of had two points. We were suggesting increased cohort tracking and even maybe, perhaps, down to the individual student level.

The other thing we just threw out for the ministry to consider: What about consideration of possibly public reporting of some of this data? It would be what I would call a soft recommendation in the sense that we were kind of throwing it out and saying, "What do you think about some of this?" We were talking about whether the school boards should put on their website the school improvement plans, which I think some of the other jurisdictions, like Alberta and BC, do. So our comments were more along those lines.

Mr. Kevin Costante: If I could maybe help—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And in response to that?

Mr. Kevin Costante: Well, this is—and I'm happy to give you this one as well, no charge—the Ontario student achievement report put out by EQAO. This year, for the first time, they were able to do cohort tracking. It starts on page 4, and you'll see it throughout the document. That is, as Mary Jean said, we started collecting individual student data four years ago; to do cohort tracking between a grade 3 student and a grade 6 student, you need four years' data. For the first time, they were able to do that, so you'll see it in this year's report. It does, as Mary Jean said, also give you by level and by year—below level 1, and levels 1, 2, 3, 4. It's perhaps not as exact as some of the others, but you can see, by percentage—and I think we can provide this by board as well—the difference between how many people are achieving at each at level. So I'll give you this one as well.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You are so kind. You are here to serve today.

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: The Auditor General was correct in saying that that information is useful as it comes forward. A lot of our strategies, in fact, are based on the notion of what proportion of students we have left who are still at level 1 or below, as I was speaking about earlier, and what percentage of students we have at level 2 and level 3 and how we lift those kids up.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. On page 11, the auditor says, "Some boards do compare marks with the

scores, though this is at the discretion of school principals and teachers. After each of his school board visits, the auditor undertook his own comparison of report marks with scores. The results are listed in figure 4 below. The auditor noted several points, including the fact that for 4% of students, EQAO score bears no resemblance to report marks...." Can you explain that? What does that mean for you or to you?

Mr. Kevin Costante: Mary Jean can likely do a much finer job of this than I can, but I think there is a difference between EQAO, which is a test that occurs in the spring of the year, that's based on the curriculum, yes, that asks a set of questions, and that provides a standardized examination across the province of all students in that grade and in that subject; and report card marks, which are a summation in the judgment of the teacher over a period of time. I think, despite a standardized test, you can get—the student comes to school sick that day, maybe gets a bad mark. It may not be reflective of what the all-year work looks like. Maybe that's a bit of an unscientific—

Ms. Mary Jean Gallagher: No, I think you've articulated it well. The other comment I would make is that my experience as a teacher, as an educator, would lead me to the conclusion that the discrepancy is probably more likely to take place for those students who would have particular barriers to their learning. A teacher's assessment and a mark on a report card really reflects the student's work over time. For students with identified special needs, it reflects a student's work with the kinds of supports and accommodations in place throughout the year to assist that student. While the EQAO test takes place with some accommodation of special needs, it does not include the kind of broad accommodations that often take place in that student's work. It's why I think both the EQAO assessment and the report card marks are important assessments of where students are, and give boards, schools and teachers important information.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you. I happen to agree with that. Thanks very much. I don't have any more questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Peter Shurman): Thank you very much, Mr. Marchese. That concludes the questioning portion.

I want to thank you all for appearing here. I've got to say, on a personal level, and I think I speak for everybody, it was a much broader discussion than I expected to have and very enlightening. Have a great day, and I would ask all committee members to stay behind for a brief in camera discussion.

The committee continued in closed session at 1438.

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