excellence for all
THE ONTARIO LIBERAL PLAN FOR EDUCATION
Education has never been more important for young Ontarians and for our province’s prosperity. Yet our schools have never been more threatened and our students have never been more at risk.

Sadly, in our many visits to schools across the province, Gerard Kennedy, our education critic, and I have seen our students suffer from seven years of senseless cutting and failed reforms under the Harris-Eves government. We have seen the disastrous effects of favouring private schools over public schools.

Our kids are paying a terrible price.

The Ontario Liberals have a plan to make public education the best education. It is a practical plan that draws on the best approaches to education around the world – including some developed right here in Ontario. It is a plan that builds on the many strengths of our province. And it is a plan that puts the needs of our students first.

Here is what our Excellence for All Plan does:

• It sets ambitious achievement targets and supports them with smart investments.

• It helps young children get the best start in learning, before they enter school.
• It ensures that all our children get what they need to succeed in school, as well as later in life.

• It stops the fighting and gets government working together with parents, teachers, schools and boards to put our public schools back on track.

I ask you to be part of the education solution. Read our plan and join me in forming a government dedicated to excellence in public education for all our children. They deserve it. Our future depends on it.

Dalton McGuinty
Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party
Public education is the ladder of opportunity for all our children. Excellent public education helps our kids climb as high as they can and become the best they can be.

Our children need excellent schools to shape their minds and characters during their school years and sustain them during their working years. In our global economy, excellence in education is a necessity, not an option.

Public education has suffered under the Harris-Eves government. It’s time for a change.

We believe in excellent public education for all children. The Harris-Eves government believes in exclusive private schools for the few.

The Harris-Eves government broke and battered our public schools, allowing our students to fall behind. We will build a strong public education system that supports student success and raises student achievement.

The Harris-Eves government has abandoned the public schools that serve all our children, and favoured exclusive private schools instead. We will promote excellence in learning for all Ontario students and cancel tax breaks for exclusive private schools.

The Harris-Eves government created turmoil for our students by mismanaging their schools and showing disrespect for their teachers. We will bring peace and stability to our schools.
higher student achievement

**Our Student Achievement Guarantee**

Our Excellence for All Plan guarantees that within our first mandate 75% of our students meet or exceed the provincial standard on province-wide tests.

The Harris-Eves government has measured student failure. They have done nothing to promote student success or improve achievement.

We can do better. And we can help our children do better.

Substantial improvement will not come easily, or without costs. It will require cooperation between the government, educators, school boards and parents, real increases in funding support to schools, and innovative programs.

We will take responsibility for measurable improvement in education. That’s our promise, and we will keep it.

**The Dismal Tory Record on Student Achievement**

- **Next to no improvement in Grade 3 test results** – The percentage of Grade 3 students meeting the provincial standard in province-wide exams has barely budged in four years – from 46% to only 49% in reading and from 49% to only 51% in writing.
- **The same story for Grade 6** – Grade 6 test scores have been little better, nudging from 48% to 55% in reading and from 48% to 53% in writing.

**Smaller Classes for JK to Grade 3**

We will put in place a real cap of 20 students per class in the all-important early grades.

Students learn more and perform better in smaller classes. Students who begin their education in small classes are less likely to
drop out, more likely to graduate on time, and more likely to take challenging courses in high school.

The Eves classroom is like a lottery: a child may be in a kindergarten class of 22 one year and a Grade One class of 32 the next. Today, there are more than half a million kids in classes of 26 or more.

We do not believe government should gamble with our children’s education. We will ensure a maximum class size of 20 in junior kindergarten through Grade Three.

Daily Reading, Writing and Math

We will make reading, writing and math mandatory in each teaching day.

We recognize that our kids need strong reading, writing and math skills to achieve success when they are in school and after they graduate. Schools will be required to devote a set number of hours per day to reading, writing and math so that all Ontario students master the basics.
**Teacher Excellence** We will give teachers the tools and the training for excellence.

We believe high-performing teachers inspire high-performing students. To support our teachers as learners, we will assist them to continue to upgrade their skills and learn from one another.

We will put Teaching Mentors in schools to share their skills with other teachers and coach them. Teaching Mentors will have release time from their teaching responsibilities to provide strong support and guidance for other teachers.

**The Dismal Tory Record on Teachers**

- **Fewer teachers under the Tories** – The Harris-Eves government has left our schools with 15,000 fewer teachers than there would have been under the standards of ten years ago.
- **Firing instead of hiring teachers** – The Harris-Eves government spent $385 million of taxpayer dollars to fire teachers and other education workers – people who are desperately needed in our schools today.
- **Librarians and specialist teachers are hardest hit** – Since 1997, Ontario schools have lost 26% of teacher-librarians and 22% of physical education teachers.
- **Private tutors for public school students are on the rise** – There has been a 300% increase in private tutoring since 1995.
We will make high quality childcare and education available for our youngest learners.

Kids begin climbing the ladder of opportunity well before they start school. Brain development in the early years sets a child on a path for success or failure in life.

A child’s development is enhanced through good parenting and quality childcare. If we want our kids to aim higher, we have to give them strong support sooner.

Investments in our pre-school children are smart investments: they pay off with better learners, healthier children, more secure families and a more productive economy.

Our Best Start Plan is based on our vision of high-quality early years education and support as a seamless extension of our public education system. Public schools will become our community hubs, with full-day junior and senior kindergarten eventually available for all four and five-year-olds. Schools will also offer childcare and parenting programs, as well as supporting childcare providers in the community.

Building Best Start will take time, but we will transform our vision into reality. The first step, to be taken during our first term in government, will be to improve the quality and affordability of childcare available for our families.
Under our Best Start Plan:

- Fully 75% of all households with children under four will be eligible for assistance with their childcare costs. That works out to 330,000 children whose families will receive support — a 450% increase over today’s standard.

- Support levels will be based on income and determined on a sliding scale. A family earning $25,000 will be eligible for a daily childcare subsidy of $15, equal to half the cost of care for their child. Those with lower incomes who now receive full subsidies will retain them. A household with income of $75,000 would still be eligible for daily assistance of $5 per child.

Our Best Start Plan is the most ambitious early child development program ever undertaken in the province. This important investment in our future is long overdue.

Professional Childcare Standards

We will enhance the quality of childcare in Ontario by raising professional standards and ensuring that they are met.

Under Best Start, parents will be entitled to assistance with their childcare costs paid to caregivers who register with the government, undergo a background check and receive ongoing training. This will ensure a steady and significant improvement in the number and quality of childcare providers in the province.
The Dismal Tory Record on Early Childhood Education

Early childcare agenda abandoned

The Harris-Eves government received over $100M from the federal government for early childhood development. **Not a single penny was spent on childcare.** Instead...

- They slashed all grants for new childcare spaces.
- They eliminated mandatory junior kindergarten.
- They downloaded responsibility for childcare subsidies to municipalities – subsidies that were lost when some municipalities could not pay their share.
- They eliminated childcare bursaries for post-secondary students and cancelled childcare support for parents in job training programs.

We will establish a College of Early Childhood Educators that will set standards and help meet the training needs of childcare providers.

We will enhance Family Resource Centres and Early Years Centres to provide childcare and other early years support to both parents and care providers.
Helping Children with Special Needs

We will help the children who need the most help – those with special needs.

The Harris-Eves education cuts and mismanagement have hit kids with special needs the hardest. Right now, almost 40,000 children with learning difficulties are on waiting lists to be assessed and waiting for the help they need to succeed.

We will streamline the $50 million assessment process the Harris-Eves government created; it is bloated and inefficient. We will invest the savings in services for kids with special needs. We will let local school professionals, working directly with the parents and children affected, determine who needs special education support.

Special Education Students Ignored by the Harris-Eves Government

Ayslynn Booth-Sinden is a Grade 4 student in the Grand Erie District School Board. She has Down’s Syndrome.

Ayslynn has thrived the past two years with the help of a dedicated full-time Education Assistant. In June 2002, her family learned that she would lose her Assistant. The reason – government funding cutbacks.

After much pressure from her parents, Ayslynn is receiving half-time assistance for this school year. But this is not enough.

“While she is still in class,” says her mother, Sue Sinden, “she is being tolerated, not educated.”
Helping Struggling Students

We will create a meaningful high school diploma program that combines academic achievement and work preparation for students in danger of dropping out.

The Harris-Eves approach has abandoned students who are struggling. Students are falling behind or dropping out in high school because there is no curriculum in Grade 9 or Grade 10 for those who are not university or college bound.

The Dismal Tory Record on Curriculum

Curriculum casualties climbing
- Under the Harris-Eves ‘new’ curriculum, 55% of Grade 9 students in applied math failed.
- Over 25% of Grade 9 students failed at least one credit.

We will not allow the talents of our young people to be wasted or their contribution to be lost. We will provide support for struggling students through increased remedial programs and curriculum alternatives suited to the needs of different types of students.

Mandatory Learning to Age 18

We will make learning mandatory to age 18.

In a knowledge-based economy, it no longer makes sense for young people to be allowed to stop learning at the age of 16. Many young people leaving school early may be more engaged and better learners in other settings – whether it is in a training program, an apprenticeship or some other form of on-the-job learning.
We will require that all young people continue their education, either in school or in an approved out-of-school training experience, until they reach 18 years or until they graduate.

We will expand programs for co-op placement and apprenticeships. We will create a stronger, more integrated apprenticeship system that is more accessible to those entering the skilled trades and to prospective employers. And we will promote on-the-job learning in high-demand areas where there are chronic skill shortages.
better schools for better learning

**Safe Schools**

We will make sure our schools are safe so students can concentrate on learning.

The Harris-Eves government has talked tough on school safety, but they have done nothing to protect our kids. One in four children today will become a victim of bullying. Intruders in schools and other threats to school safety have become all too common in our schools.

Our kids have the right to learn in a safe school. Our Safe Schools Plan includes:

- **Anti-bullying programs** that will ensure that students, staff and the school community have the necessary training to implement effective anti-bullying measures. It is time to put an end to bullying in our schools.

- **A school safety hotline** for students, parents and concerned citizens to report threats to the safety of our kids and to become informed about school safety initiatives.

- **School surveillance cameras** that will allow schools with hard-to-see entrances and hallways to make sure students are safe from intruders.

**Character Education**

We will help our schools develop good citizens through character education.

Education is about more than reading, writing and creating good workers. We believe excellent public education should also develop good, well-rounded citizens.
Character education is about schools reinforcing values shared by the school community; values such as respect, honesty, responsibility and fairness. It is not about government imposing a set of moral standards. We will encourage and enable each school community – parents, educators, students – to make their values part of the curriculum.

Character Education: An Ontario Success Story

In 2000, the York Region District School Board set out to establish a Character Education program for all secondary schools. Community representatives, religious leaders, business, police, students and parents identified 10 key “character attributes” – respect, responsibility, honesty, empathy, fairness, initiative, perseverance, integrity, courage and optimism.

Teaching these attributes is integrated into the curriculum. Students speak and write about them. Awards are given for displaying them. Teachers take time to illustrate and reinforce these values and behaviours.

The results are very promising. The York Region program has been studied by schools and boards, locally and internationally, and is a model that many want to emulate.

Creating Well-Rounded Students

We believe that learning goes beyond the basics.

Education must challenge and inspire our kids. It must offer all students the opportunity to experience a full range of learning that includes music, art and drama, as well as sports and other extracurricular activities.

These are not frills. These are essential parts of a well-rounded education.
Lighthouse Program

We will create a Lighthouse Program so that successful school programs can be shared.

Many Ontario schools have developed innovative, excellent programs for their students. We want to help those schools share their successful ideas with other schools. Our Lighthouse Program will provide the resources to make success contagious.

A Lighthouse Program in the Making

St. James Catholic High School in Guelph has increased student participation in physical education courses from 20% of the student body to over 60% in just five years. Steve Freisen, head of phys-ed and athletics at the school, made this change happen by taking an innovative approach to educating students in healthy lifestyles.

The school now houses a fitness centre where all students, regardless of their athletic ability, can workout. Participation in intramural sports at lunchtime has jumped from 30 students to 300.

This is an example from which other schools can learn. Under our Lighthouse Program, they will.

Turnaround Teams

We will not allow any school to fail our kids.

We will monitor school performance to be sure they are making the grade. We will set fair and clear provincial standards for schools and inspect both schools and school boards to ensure these standards are being met. When schools are working, we will stay out of the way. If there are problems, we will intervene.
A “turnaround team” of experienced teachers and administrators will be sent to any school that is not measuring up, to help the school reach the standards of achievement and quality of education that students and their parents expect and deserve.

We will not punish our struggling schools. We will help them get back on track.

**Public School Choice**

We will offer public school choice so that parents can decide which public school is right for their children.

Unlike the Harris-Eves government, we do not believe in vouchers or charter schools or private school tax credits – anything that would drain much-needed resources and talent from the public school system.

But we do believe that parents should have the choice to send their children to any publicly funded school, even if it is not in their neighbourhood. Our plan for public school choice opens the door to greater innovation and a diversity of school programs.
Respect for Teachers

We will treat our teachers with the professional respect they deserve.

After parents, teachers are the most important influence in the lives of our children. We greatly value teachers and the vital role they play in helping our children grow up to become responsible, well-educated adults.

We believe our teachers are professionals and should be treated as professionals. We want them to be highly qualified, highly trained and highly valued.

The Harris-Eves government has shown nothing but contempt for teachers. Not surprisingly, teachers are demoralized and leaving the profession in record numbers.

We believe that making experienced teachers better at what they do, by providing professional support, makes far more sense than handing them a written test.

A Better College of Teachers

We will turn the Ontario College of Teachers into a professional body that sets the highest standards for the profession and earns the respect of teachers and parents.

The College will operate more like other professional organizations, such as the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Law Society of Upper Canada, and will be comprised mostly of working teachers.
The reformed College will ensure that our teachers meet ongoing training and professional development standards. Our government’s job will be to ensure that there are opportunities for professional development, including a mentorship program for new teachers so they can learn from their experienced colleagues.

The Dismal Tory Record on Learning Days Lost

* A record number of days lost
  - Our students have lost 24 million learning days over the seven years of Harris-Eves government.
  - There have been three times more school days lost under this government than under the last two governments combined.
  - 430,000 of our high school students have been deprived of an entire year of extracurricular activities.

Funding Schools for Success

We will not let schools fail because of a flawed funding formula. We will create a fair model to reflect the local needs of diverse communities.

The Harris-Eves government tries to run 5,000 schools from Queen’s Park. They take a one-size-fits-all education funding formula and impose it on every school in the province. It simply does not matter to them that remote northern schools have different needs than large downtown urban schools with a diverse immigrant population.
They fail to recognize that in urban areas, with the highest population of immigrants and new Canadians, there is a greater need for English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. They take no notice of the need for older schools to fix or install new equipment. And they ignore the fact that school boards in rural and northern regions need funding that reflects the transportation and other costs of far-flung regions.

We understand that schools in urban, rural, suburban and northern areas have different needs. The funding they receive should reflect the needs of those communities.

Through mismanagement and underfunding of our schools, the Harris-Eves government has set them up for failure. We will set them up for success.

We will make the necessary investment to achieve the ambitious goals set out in this Excellence for All Plan. We will fund our plan by making very different investment decisions than those of the Harris-Eves government.

We will cancel the private school tax credit and redirect up to $500 million annually to public schools. All funds saved from eliminating Grade 13 will remain in education.
We will use existing resources better, too. Money that has been wasted by the Harris-Eves government on self-promoting ads and inefficient assessment will be returned to the classroom, where it belongs. And we will cancel the $2.2 billion annual tax giveaway to large corporations and invest that money in essential services like public education.

Accountable School Boards

We will ensure that school boards provide strong local accountability and decision-making.

The main role of school boards is to adapt provincial standards to the needs of students in local communities. We will ensure that they have the resources and the flexibility in spending those resources to respond to local needs.
We will work with boards to support educational innovation in such areas as extra learning, school-based childcare, nutrition programs and school safety.

We will respect and enhance decision-making powers at the school level.

**Transparency in Education**

We will ensure that there is transparency in public education.

We will end the largest taxation without representation in North America. Taxpayers contribute over $7 billion to education property taxes, yet the Harris-Eves government determines in secret how that rate is set.

We will establish a Standing Committee on Education to hold public hearings every year on the effectiveness of provincial funding. We will place limits on in-camera school board meetings. We will also give all parents and members of the public the right to information on public education.

**Long-Term Funding**

An Ontario Liberal government will ensure that three-year funding can actually be achieved.

We will set up a fair mechanism to resolve financial disputes with boards without resorting to expensive and unproductive takeovers.
We will establish an independent Curriculum Council to plan and prepare for curriculum changes.

Under the Harris-Eves government, curriculum change has been badly planned and badly implemented. A study by the District School Board of Niagara in April 2002 summed it up best: “The new curriculum, while itself a necessary change, was hurriedly put together, poorly planned, implemented in an unworkable fashion and grossly under-funded. The results show... that students are frustrated beyond belief, parents have disengaged, teachers are overworked and continue to feel unappreciated, books are scarce and resources are few.”

Our independent Curriculum Council will be composed of parents, teachers, board representatives and education experts. This Council will have real decision-making authority to plan and implement intelligent curriculum changes.
you have a choice

A choice between five more years of Ernie Eves’ Tories tearing our schools down or Dalton McGuinty’s Liberals building them up.

Between having the best public education for all our kids or private education for those who can afford to pay.

Between schools that are doomed to fail or schools that are primed for success.

Choose opportunity. Choose excellence.

For more information visit www.ontarioliberal.com.

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