

MINISTER OF EDUCATION

the Honourable **Leona Dombrowsky**



The Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, minister of education cut her teeth in politics as a trustee with the Hastings Prince Edward Roman Catholic Separate School Board (now Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic DSB) from 1985-99. She also served as a director of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association. However, she stated that her best interaction with principals and vice-principals was as a mother of four, where she witnessed the excellent work that we do on a daily basis.

Literacy and numeracy rates, as well as graduation rates are on the rise. Her goal as minister of education is to stay focussed on doing what we are doing, because we are doing an excellent job. We need to continue dedicating our resources and energy on enabling students to be successful. When students are successful, they are more likely to graduate and go on to a post secondary education or training and jobs. These are the graduates, who will continue to keep our wonderful province going. However, there is still more to do. Now is not the time to rest on our laurels. We must continue to strive for excellence, because every young person who walks through our schools expects excellence. The Minister stated that excellence could be measured in many ways.

Supporting school leaders and fostering the leaders of tomorrow

The government has invested in the *Ontario Leadership Strategy* to foster leadership of the highest quality in schools and school boards across the province. They are committed to supporting student achievement and well being by attracting and developing system leaders.

Succession planning and talent development

Each board must have a plan in place by the end of this school year. The government has provided significant funding to ensure that these plans are developed, because they recognize the fundamental need for excellence in leadership. Minister Dombrowsky acknowledged that this ambitious agenda is driving success.

Mentoring for newly appointed school leaders

The Ministry continues to work with partners including CPCO on this initiative. In 2009-10 almost 4,000 principals and vice-principals participated in mentoring programs.

Providing accurate and reliable information about student achievement

EQAO test results are important markers of how our students are doing. They let the government know that students are learning, improving and mastering the basic skills needed to succeed in the

classroom and beyond. Although there are those who would advocate for a less strenuous testing regime, the government is committed to testing every student, in every school, every year. Tests have driven dollars to classrooms. They help the Ministry understand where strengths lie and where more support is required. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been directed to schools and school boards to better support teachers and students to drive the success agenda.

Achieving a higher graduation rate and graduates who have earned their credits

Through the Student Success Strategy, the Ministry is providing students with an expanded range of challenging and engaging learning opportunities that build on a student's strengths, interests and future aspirations. The credit recovery program has given students the opportunity to succeed at course material that previously posed difficulties.

Providing a safe and caring environment

Ontario is the first province in Canada that requires all school staff to report all serious school incidents (including bullying) to the principal. The Ministry will continue to work with boards to imbed these changes into practice and monitor compliance with the legislation. When students feel safe, they are in a better position to learn and to be successful.

Full-day learning

This is the next step to make Ontario's education system the best in the world. By 2015-16, all students will enjoy an enriched integrated full day of learning. Talks are underway to clearly define the principal's, teacher's and early childhood educator's roles and responsibilities in full-day learning.

Reducing Ontario's deficit and protecting programs and services

The Minister understands our concerns about the proposed pay freeze. The proposed legislation is very broad. Funding will not be reduced to school boards and any savings should be used by boards to meet key financial pressures. The government believes that the people of Ontario understand we all have a part to play in getting through this challenging financial time. They believe it is right and just to put restraints on our compensation as well. This is not the kind of government to cut back on public service.

In conclusion, the Minister thanked us for what we do every day in our schools with our children and families. She cannot think of a more rewarding job than the one we have.