



News Release

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STUDENT SUCCESS STRATEGY WORKING, BUT COULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE: AUDITOR GENERAL

(TORONTO) Ontario's Student Success Strategy has made steady progress toward its goal of an 85% high school graduation rate, but more could be done to ensure that students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to go on to post-secondary education or a job, Auditor General Jim McCarter says in his *2011 Annual Report*.

"On the whole, the initiatives in the Student Success Strategy have generally been effective," McCarter said today after the Report was released. "However, the Ministry of Education could further refine the program to produce even better results, and benefit even more students."

Under the Strategy, every school board in Ontario receives funding for providing supports to students at risk of not graduating. In the 2010/11 academic year, school boards received a total of almost \$130 million for student success initiatives.

The Ministry measures the high school graduation rate by calculating the percentage of Grade 9 students who graduate within five years (rather than the four-year span of high school). The Ontario high school graduation rate for 2009/10 was 81%, a marked improvement from 68% in 2003, when the Strategy was first implemented.

Following are some of the Auditor General's observations:

- The 2009/10 graduation rate would have been 72% if it had been based on graduation within the normal four-year span of high school, rather than the 81% over five years as reported by the Ministry. On the other hand, if graduation by age 25 was used, the rate would be 91%.
- Ontario school boards track risk factors such as gender, absenteeism, and course success to help identify at-risk students, and then provide them with supports. However, some other jurisdictions have improved graduation rates by targeting supports to specific groups of students based on such factors as ethnicity, disability, and economic status.
- Some work placements in the Cooperative Education Program did not appear to be adequate substitutes for the students' classroom curriculum requirements. For example, students earned credits in placements such as clothing stores, fast-food outlets, and coffee shops.

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