



**ONTARIO
AUTISM
COALITION**

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Parents Worried That Increased Special Education Funding Will Not Be Spent On What's Needed

The Ontario Autism Coalition welcomes the Ontario government's announcement of an increase to special education funding, but is concerned that it does not address the issue of providing meaningful Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) in classrooms.

For years now, special education funding has been distributed to school boards based on a statistical model, rather than the very real needs of students. There is nothing in today's announcement that indicates that this will change, nor is there any reason to believe that the Ministry of Education will do anything to ensure that funding is used consistently across the province.

"Until the funding formula is fixed, there's no reason to believe that this money will meet the need, no reason to believe that it will reach the kids who need it, and if it does, there's no reason to believe that it will be spent on what those kids need," said Bruce McIntosh, president of the OAC. "Hiring staff may be helpful, but if the staff don't have adequate training in ABA, neither staff nor students will have a successful school experience."

Concern about whether their children will be taught using ABA techniques was reflected in a survey of the OAC membership during 2017. 63% of respondents said that they did not feel that their children's teachers knew enough about autism to effectively support their learning, and 46% said the same about their children's Education Assistants (EAs). ABA is the best researched, most effective technique for teaching children with autism, and is used in schools throughout the U.S. and in other Canadian provinces. ABA can also benefit students with other behavioural issues. Last week, the Ontario government announced that it was extending a one-year pilot project that offers ABA training to EAs through the 2018-19 school year. Further delay in broadening the application of ABA is simply unacceptable, and justifies parents' concerns that funding intended for their children is not being used on the best available teaching techniques.

It's time for the Ontario ministry of education to show leadership and require school boards to train staff and deliver meaningful ABA in classrooms. Anything less is an irresponsible use of the funding announced yesterday.

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The Ontario Autism Coalition is a non-profit Ontario corporation dedicated to advocacy and political action on behalf of people with autism.
www.ontarioautismcoalition.com