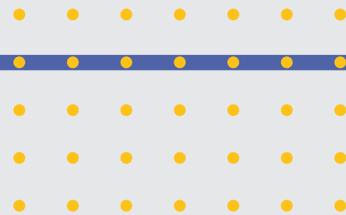
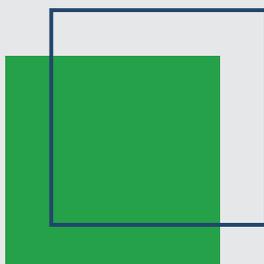


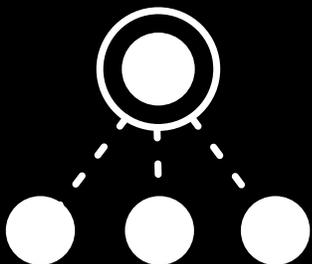
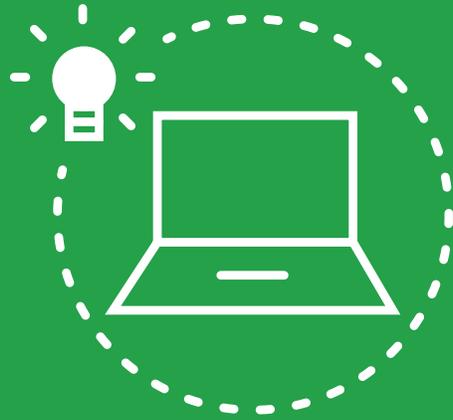
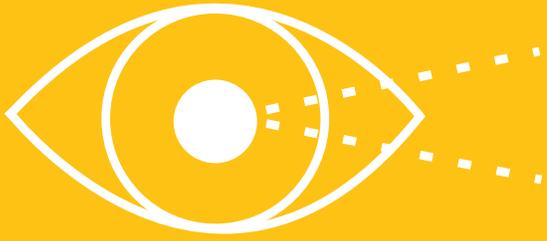
# Our Children's Success: **MANITOBA'S FUTURE**

Report of the Commission  
on K to12 Education



March 2020





# LETTER TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION

The Honourable Kelvin Goertzen  
Minister of Education  
Government of Manitoba  
168 Legislative Building  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 0V8

Dear Minister Goertzen:

We are pleased to submit to you the final report of the Commission on K to12 Education. We thank you for the opportunity to conduct this timely review by listening to the advice and good counsel of the widest possible cross-section of Manitobans. We thank all those who met with us, attended the public interactive workshops, provided submissions, presented briefs, and participated in discussions and online surveys. It was, indeed, a pleasant experience for us to see the passion and commitment of Manitobans who had one goal in common: to make the system even more effective, relevant, and engaging for all of Manitoba's students.

Our recommendations represent the consensus we have forged, and the conclusions reached after almost a year of hearings, research on successful practices in Canada and internationally, and careful and intense deliberations on what works to improve schools and to create a world-class education system.

This report represents a comprehensive review of the province's elementary and secondary education system – the first of its kind in decades. We sought input on key areas of focus including student learning, teaching, accountability for student learning, governance, and funding. In all, we received 62 briefs, 2,309 written submissions, 1,260 responses to the teacher survey and 8,891 to the public survey, as well as numerous phone calls, handwritten notes, and personal emails. It is clear that Manitobans are supportive of their school system. They appreciate its strengths and are also aware of the areas that require immediate attention. They want to have excellent schools wherever they choose to live in the province.

We took your invitation to help shape our education system quite seriously. We are counting on you to implement our recommendations and to further enable and build the capacity of those who teach, lead, and govern to continue to do their best work. We are counting on all staff within our divisions to persist in working co-operatively to provide the avenues, tools, and pathways to success for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or personal circumstances. We encourage you to continue to engage parents, community, business, labour, and industry to create partnerships that further cement their support for our schools.

Fortunately, the will to take the schools to higher levels of achievement exists across Manitoba.

Respectfully,



**Clayton Manness**  
Commission Co-Chair



**Dr. Janice MacKinnon**  
Commission Co-Chair



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Mark Frison – President of Assiniboine Community College  
J.D. Lees – Career Teacher  
Clayton Manness (Co-Chair) – President, Prairie Flour Mills and active farmer  
Dr. Janice MacKinnon (Co-Chair) – Professor of Public Policy, University of Saskatchewan  
and Executive Fellow, University of Calgary  
Linda Markus – Kelsey School Division & University College of the North (June 2019 to  
February 2020)  
Jill Quilty – Criminal, divorce, and family lawyer (January to May 2019)  
Laurel Repski – Vice-President, Human Resources (retired)  
Denis Robert – Retired Principal and Career Teacher  
Ian Wishart – Legislative Assistant to the Minister of Education

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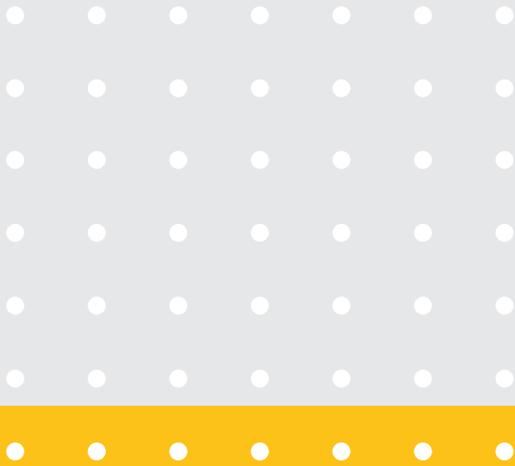
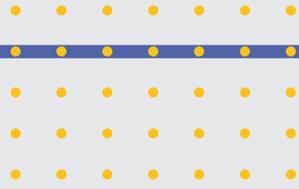
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2019, the Government of Manitoba reiterated its commitment to improve student outcomes by creating an education system that has high standards for educators, high expectations for student learning, relevant curriculum, excellence in governance, a sustainable fiscal framework, and enhanced public confidence in the education system. With the idea that Manitoba would become the most improved system in Canada, the government appointed a diverse team of commissioners to propose a renewed vision for K to 12 education, make bold recommendations to ignite change, and consider the continuum of early learning, post-secondary education, and labour market needs as part of an integrated lifelong learning system.

There is a clarion call across the world to reform education systems. Many elected officials, parents, community members, employers, and educators want to prepare Manitoba’s students to be global citizens with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for success today and in the future. The reality is that Manitoba’s children are not performing satisfactorily. Given the money being spent on education – one of the highest in Canada – we know we have to do much better. The Commission believes that this is the time to ensure that the province’s school system is the best it can possibly be – aligned with Manitoba’s priorities, values, beliefs, and realities and rooted in the best practices in education – yet nimble and flexible enough to innovate and evolve.

As outlined in the Commission’s terms of reference, the review would concentrate on six comprehensive areas of focus to examine: what the goals and purposes of K to12 education should be in a rapidly changing world; the conditions required to achieve excellence in student achievement and outcomes; how teachers and principals can become most effective; and what governance structures are needed for a coordinated and relevant system that provides equitable learning opportunities while maintaining financial sustainability.

## The Consultation Process

The Commissioners conducted an extensive public consultation process with organizations, groups, and individuals during the winter and spring of 2019. This process used a variety of tools including completion of online surveys, written submissions, participation in public meetings, and the submission of formal briefs. We also conducted numerous meetings with a broad spectrum of stakeholders including students, Indigenous<sup>1</sup> groups, newcomers and immigrant groups, chambers of commerce, teachers, principals, union leaders, parents, and business leaders. The Commissioners also made a point of visiting schools and talking with students and staff across the province.

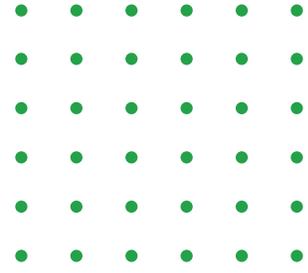
Examples of the extent of the public engagement include:

Written submissions	2,309
Formal briefs	62
Public survey responses	8,891
Teacher survey responses	1,260
Submissions of exemplary practices	159
Public workshops participants	1,690
Student workshop participants	137

Public workshops were held across the province and two student workshops were also held in Winnipeg.

The input from the public was invaluable in informing our perspectives and recommendations.

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this document, Indigenous means the same as Aboriginal and the terms are used interchangeably. Aboriginal is used when cited.



## From Areas of Focus to Imperatives for Improvement

Whereas the six areas of focus served us well during the consultation process, we decided to frame our report around 10 imperatives to emphasize the actions required to position Manitoba as a world-class education system – one that demonstrates continuous growth and improvement. The imperatives are intended to provide a clear focus on student learning and achievement, reflecting our intentionality of purpose and providing directions for action. They identify what remains to be done to bring about the improvement that Manitoba’s students deserve.

## Ten Imperatives to Improve Manitoba’s Education System with a Sense of Urgency

In the report, we have subsumed, under each imperative, a number of recommendations which, **taken as a whole**, constitute our vision for the future and what must be done to improve education in Manitoba.



## **IMPERATIVE #1:**

# **STRENGTHEN EDUCATOR CAPACITY TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Although our imperatives are not rank-ordered, we deliberately choose to begin with educators in recognition of and to express our appreciation for the pivotal role they play in our education system. The Commission wishes, through this review, to raise the status of the teaching profession and to support educators in their work with students.

The research in education states quite convincingly that teachers and principals are most influential in improving student outcomes. They are, in fact, preparing the next generation of leaders and solution finders. But we also acknowledge that this recognition comes with immense responsibilities and public cries for accountability in the profession. The creation of a College of Educators is one mechanism identified by the Commission to achieve this objective.

Because there is a common agreement among education experts that quality instruction represents the most important factor in improving student learning, we also emphasize the need to support teachers by providing high-quality, job-embedded professional learning with their input on their professional growth requirements. As in all professions, teachers are expected to seize opportunities to improve their craft and their ability to support a wide range of learners with varying abilities and needs. As we also heard, pre-service teachers must be better prepared to play an effective role in diverse settings, with opportunities to continue learning throughout the many stages of their careers.

In this regard, it is important to point out the key responsibility of faculties of education in preparing teachers for Manitoba's classrooms. Some have told us that they have made efforts to create a more diverse cadre of teachers who have practical experience in northern and urban settings. Other faculties have programs for preparing Indigenous teachers. Particularly in the north, there is a need for teacher pre-service training to respond to the growing diversity of the student demographics.

The willingness and commitment to continuous learning is a hallmark of professionalism.

Some of the recommendations under this imperative include: raising the status of the teaching profession; creating a college of educators; developing a framework for ongoing professional development; providing appropriate and timely resources and supports based on classroom composition; and increasing practical programs for pre-service teachers to respond to the complexities and diversity of any Manitoba student community.



## **IMPERATIVE #2:**

# **INCREASE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS**

Research in education converges on the notion that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on student learning. Rapid shifts that have taken place in society generally, and in education specifically, have created what one researcher refers to as “principal work intensification.” Manitobans registered their support for their principals and acknowledged the complexity of their role as they seek to reconcile the dual role of instructional leadership with managerial tasks. Some mentioned the importance of succession planning to attract and train aspiring and new administrators.

For us, these instructional and managerial functions are complementary and intertwined. For schools to be effective, principals must be proficient in performing effectively in both the leadership and management domains.

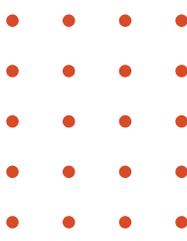
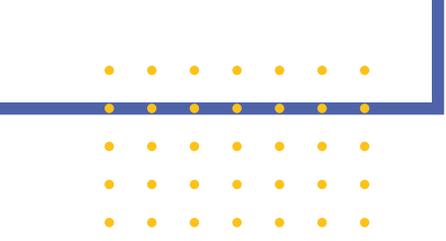
Today’s principals are expected to have high expectations for learning, be knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction, be able to monitor effectiveness of classroom instruction, build capacity, and develop talent. They have excellent public and media relations skills, and are engaged in student and parent outreach and engagement. They must have up-to-date knowledge of what good teaching looks like, the characteristics of effective schools, what accountability entails, and how to achieve both excellence and equity. As well, we do know that when social problems emerge, the public immediately looks to schools and the education system as the panacea to cure all that ails society. Principals are expected to fix problems related to achievement, student behaviour, attitudes, health and human rights concerns, to name a few. Their agility, flexibility, political acumen, strong people skills, and ability to engage their parents and communities make them stand out as leaders in today’s milieu.

Reducing the management workload of school administrators is needed to support principals in fulfilling their instructional leadership role and to improve academic performance and results.

We need a new model that establishes principals solidly in the management domain, removes the potential for conflict of interest that currently exists when management and employees are in the same union, thus creating the role clarity and accountability to perform the management and labour relations functions required of principals. This will resolve many issues related to hiring, work assignments, and performance management.

In order to build upon current successes and to increase effectiveness, a renewed focus on leadership development and capacity building is necessary to ensure that all current and future principals have the professional development that is necessary for them to be successful and confident in performing their roles – wherever they choose to work in the province. Improving student learning and achievement is a priority for this Commission. It is also the intention of the Commission that principals play a major role in the identification of their learning needs and in the development and implementation of this new model.

Some of the recommendations under this imperative include: reinforcing the centrality of the role of principals as instructional leaders; introducing a new model that removes principals and vice-principals from the Manitoba Teachers’ Society; and creating business manager positions to enable principals to focus primarily on the role of instructional leadership.



## **IMPERATIVE #3:**

# **IMPROVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND WELL-BEING**

The statement that students are the centre of the school system and the only reason for its existence is fully embraced by the Commission. This imperative represents our recognition of this primary purpose of schooling and highlights the importance of engagement and meaningful involvement as conditions for achievement and success. This is of paramount importance because we are not satisfied with the current achievement of students in Manitoba. We know that they can do much better. They did in the past. We must regain and enhance Manitoba's status nationally.

Regular attendance and paying attention to the issues that cause disengagement such as negative school climate, lack of adequate counselling, lack of relevant curriculum, inflexibility in meeting needs, and lack of support for students with disabilities all play a role. We decided, quite deliberately, to include the notion of well-being in this stand-alone imperative to signal that education is holistic and multi-dimensional. It addresses the academic, social, emotional, physical, ethical, and other dimensions of students' lives, including their goals, aspirations, and expectations. As well, discussions related to attendance and absenteeism must include a close examination of suspensions in an effort to minimize student absences from learning.

We do know that, in order to improve student engagement, schools must deliver programming that is relevant and engaging for learners. Students must feel safe in the school environment and educators must pay attention to their state of emotional well-being as they focus on academic achievement. Working effectively across the many departments and sectors that address different aspects of students' lives is a condition for success in achieving this goal.

Moving forward, we need to reflect on the question of whether student engagement is worth measuring. We measure what we value. Having student input in determining what the school or system is doing well and what needs to improve can contribute to our planning for future success.

The Commission proposes a number of actions for schools to ensure that students attend school regularly, monitor attendance closely, and create the conditions they control to ensure that students are motivated to attend school. We propose some recommendations that are guided by the work of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth.

Some of the recommendations under this imperative include: conducting student engagement and satisfaction surveys; emphasizing a holistic curriculum; providing access to the arts; and replacing the requirement for Grade 11 and 12 Physical Education/Health Education with more rigorous high school credits that include topics such as financial management, nutrition, entrepreneurialism, employability, parenting, and other life skills.

The recommendations under this imperative also include: increasing the capacity to collect, document, measure, assess, and respond to the underlying causes of absenteeism; and responding to the recommendations of Manitoba's Advocate for Children and Youth regarding suspensions and expulsions to limit, reduce, and phase out exclusionary practices.

Other recommendations include: clarifying the mandate of Healthy Child Manitoba to meet the holistic needs of children and youth; developing and implementing a comprehensive intersectoral mental health strategy; and implementing mental well-being initiatives and tools to support children affected by the impact of abuse, trauma, and challenging life events and circumstances.



## **IMPERATIVE #4:**

# **CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS STUDENTS**

During our consultations, some Manitobans stressed the fact that perhaps the most important issue facing Manitoba is the difference in achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and that there is a historical, moral and economic imperative to close this gap.

Statistics provided by Saskatchewan Superintendent, Gordon Martell, highlights these gaps:

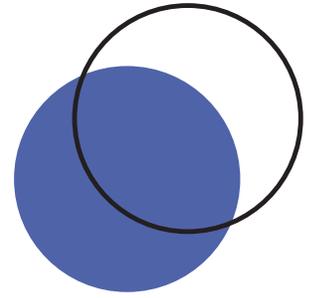
- “The average child poverty rate for all Indigenous children is... at 40%” (McDonald and Wilson, 2013, p.6).
- Significant gaps exist in Early Learning Indicators among Aboriginal Children (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).
- “High school graduation data ... for 2004-2009 identifies the rate of First Nation graduation at 36% for 2004-05, 30% for 2005-06, 32% for 2006-07, 34% for 2007-08 and 36% for 2008-09” (Assembly of First Nations, 2011, p. 5).
- “The 2010 graduation rate for self-declared Aboriginal students attending Saskatchewan provincial schools in 2010 was 32.7%” (Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan, 2012, p. 46).
- Alarming health outcomes exist for Aboriginal children (Lemstra & Neudorf, 2008).
- Lower rates of post-secondary education exist resulting in employment gaps and lower lifetime earnings (Howe, 2011).
- In provincial schools, learning outcomes for Indigenous students from low SES backgrounds are similar to those living on-reserve (Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan, 2012, p. 46).

The consultation paper also stated that the most important educational challenge facing Manitoba today is the persistent gap in achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Participants also noted that reconciliation issues must be addressed, and students, in particular, called for attention to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, recommending that Indigenous history should be a mandatory course for all students in all school divisions. They want us to ensure that Indigenous perspectives, intergenerational trauma, the legacy of residential schools, and cultural and linguistic issues are included in the curriculum.

Some of the recommendations under this imperative include: taking concrete actions to improve the achievement of Indigenous students; ensuring that Knowledge Keepers have an active role in building the capacity of school staffs; implementing high-impact, evidence-informed practices to close the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students; negotiating student data sharing agreements with First Nations to improve understanding of the pathways and transitions to further education and the labour market; and ensuring that the education actions that fall exclusively under provincial jurisdiction outlined in the TRC Calls to Action are implemented.



## IMPERATIVE #5: COMMIT TO EQUITABLE OUTCOMES AND IMPROVED ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL



Education today is about recognizing that one size does not fit all. Students have different skills and abilities and require different supports to achieve the necessary outcomes.

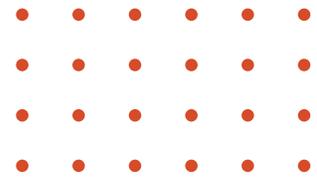
Manitoba's educational philosophy is about meeting the changing needs of students with the belief that a high-quality education will strengthen and provide a better foundation for **all**.

Certain basic premises inform one's beliefs about improving achievement. There is, first and foremost, a concern for the achievement of all students. There is a risk of focusing on one group and not on the needs of all students along the achievement spectrum. Often, students who fall in the middle or at the upper levels of the performance hierarchy may not be challenged to do their very best. There are many who can do better when challenged to reach higher. To reiterate, our system must emphasize improvement for all students.

This emphasis on **all** students still requires a disaggregation of the data to see who the students and groups are that are performing well, those that are in the middle, and those who are most in need of attention. There must be targeted interventions for those who are not achieving at their potential. A fundamental belief is that talent and ability exist across groups and that within all groups there are individuals who have the ability to excel. The call is for publicly funded education to remove barriers to success, ensuring that background factors do not determine a child's destiny. Education that is focused on improvement for all ensures that educational excellence is distributed across demographic lines.

Schools must therefore continue to provide appropriate educational programming for all learners. The number of newcomers, for example, has been growing steadily in Manitoba. As a result of immigration, the school population is becoming more culturally diverse and linguistically enriched. It would be helpful if the teaching cadre would also reflect this diversity to better respond to the needs of students. Having role models in the system with similar characteristics as students supports their need to identify with these role models. It improves motivation and a sense of belonging.

We challenge all those who work with children and youth to examine their own beliefs about learning as they focus on high expectations for achievement. The fact is that all children can learn and achieve given time, effective teaching, and proper supports.



Students who are gifted and talented also have special educational needs. It is not unusual for such students to become disengaged and even drop out of school. Our society needs those students. Giftedness should be celebrated as well and high achievement rewarded. When we talk about students reaching their potential, it should refer to **all** students.

Some of the recommendations under this imperative include: reaffirming the philosophy of inclusion with the necessary support for teachers working with diverse capabilities and learning needs; training, utilizing, and deploying educational assistants who are currently in the system; and reducing wait times for identifying and assessing students with special needs.

Recommendations also include: developing and implementing specific career development programming; discontinuing the use of “E” English as an Additional Language (EAL) credits in Grades 11 and 12, and providing more relevant education and upgrading opportunities for newcomers; addressing trauma-informed pedagogy training for educators; and removing barriers and supporting the certification of internationally trained teachers.

As well, recommendations include: supporting targeted early intervention programming for students who are at risk of underachievement; addressing the educational impacts of poverty; removing transportation barriers to improve access to programming; enhancing partnerships to expand nutrition and health-promoting meal programs; and addressing the needs of and improving the lowest performing schools.





## **IMPERATIVE #6:**

# **ENSURE QUALITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND SUPPORTS IN RURAL, REMOTE, AND NORTHERN COMMUNITIES**

Commissioners noted the resilience, creativity and inventiveness of individuals in many rural, remote, northern, and farming communities. Services and supports are often scarce or non-existent in some communities. Of concern are efforts to attract and retain clinicians, access to services, increased cost of travel (especially for professional development), support for students with behavioural challenges, a lack of math and science teachers, decreases in enrolment, and decline in the availability of administrators.

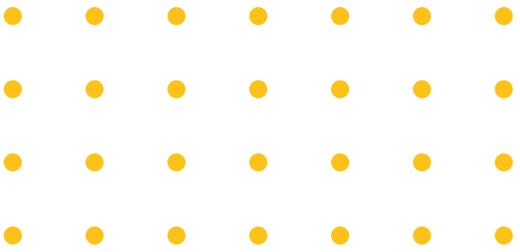
Recruitment and retention of support services and the ability to offer comparable programming given small student numbers were mentioned. These communities collaborate to provide the human resources and services that they need. We also encourage teachers and pre-service candidates to choose rural and northern communities as a career destination of choice.

Students in many rural, remote, and northern areas must have access to high-quality programming in a manner that is equivalent to education delivered in larger urban centres. Differences between rural and urban settings were noted as factors affecting learning outcomes.

We know that immigrants who settle in Manitoba, upwards of 20 per cent reside in rural settings in contrast to 4 to 6 per cent in rural pockets in most provinces and territories. Many communities benefit from local initiatives. For example, in one community, it was reported that a trained local chef works with students to learn how to fish, hunt, and cook in the wilderness.

Some of the recommendations under this imperative include addressing disparities and enhancing equity of access and educational opportunities for students in rural and northern regions and initiating negotiations among faculties of education, school divisions, First Nations, and other education stakeholders to implement internship and residency programs as a teacher recruitment strategy.





## **IMPERATIVE #7:**

# **STRENGTHEN THE DELIVERY OF FRENCH LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Government of Canada, n.d., Charter of Rights and Freedoms) guarantees minority educational rights to Français-speaking communities, including the right to governance for French as a First Language Schools. In 1994, French schools in Manitoba were brought under the control of the Francophone community when the Division-scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM) was established to govern French as a First Language Schools across the province.

Francophone culture and language in Manitoba predates Manitoba's entrance into the Federation of Canada in 1870. Almost half of the population of the region was Francophone when Manitoba first joined. Now, there are 3.4 per cent of Manitobans who report French as their first language spoken at home. There are more than 5,800 students who attend 23 DSFM schools spread throughout the province, with one adult learning centre in Winnipeg (DSFM, 2019, *Écoles de langue française au Manitoba*, para. 1).

*La francophonie* is an important component of the Manitoba fabric and is becoming increasingly inclusive and diversified as French-speaking immigrants arrive from other French-speaking countries. More than ever, it has become important to consolidate the achievements of the past, but also to fulfill the aspirations of this community for future generations. Leadership to strengthen the offering of both the Français program and the French Immersion Program is needed to enhance language learning for all students.

Some of the recommendations under this imperative include: developing a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to address the shortage of French language teachers; ensuring that French-language education remains a priority; and ensuring equity of access for students in the Français program to technical-vocational education and trades programming taught in French and delivered by the DSFM.

## **IMPERATIVE #8:**

# **EXPAND COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND STRENGTHEN PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT**

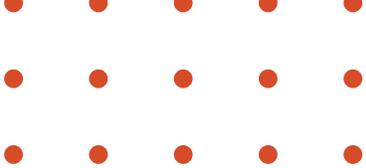
We believe that the philosophy of community education has immense potential for facilitating public outreach, engagement, and involvement. With its focus on building strong relationships with families, community members, employers and organizations, and with the development of a comprehensive range of services in support of students, community education must be located in and become centres within communities. The ability to strengthen these communities, assess and address student needs, and enable professionals and service providers to assemble and collaborate with others provides a solid rationale for a formal adoption and implementation of this concept.

First and foremost is the role of parents and guardians in their children's education. Forging alliances with parents bears many fruits, including improved academic achievements, higher motivation to learn, and increased commitment to schooling. Not all parents can be involved at the same level. Whereas many struggle to find time to participate, we do know that they want their children to succeed in school. Their actions and involvements must all be valued – whether they help their children to arrive at school ready to learn, whether they volunteer for lunchroom supervision, or whether they serve on parent advisory councils.

The education system by itself cannot address the diverse needs and expectations of students, parents, and communities in isolation. When the school system works collaboratively with other sectors it becomes more effective in addressing the needs of children in a holistic manner. The fact also is that there is a sense of reciprocity in this relationship as each school develops a strong relationship with its local community and the members of the community find ways to better support the role schools play in unifying and building community. It is by working together with other sectors of society that the school system is able to provide the best possible learning outcomes.

Community development must be at the heart of school improvement. A community education approach can help solidify efforts and embed schools as hubs of their communities.

Some of the recommendations under this imperative include: communicating and promoting public information and sharing the many policies, protocols, strategies, and resources; emphasizing diverse parent and community engagement; adopting a province-wide philosophy of community education; and leveraging the expertise of employers and organizations, post-secondary institutions, and government departments to address current labour market information and create seamless paths directly from school to the workplace, college or university.



## **IMPERATIVE #9:**

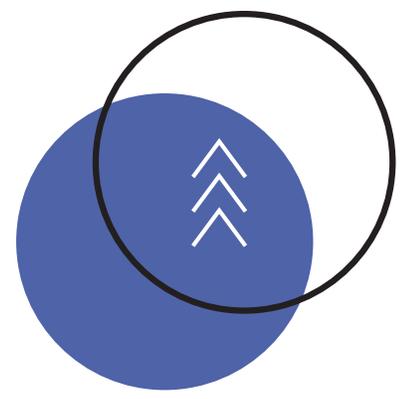
# **IMPROVE FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS IN MATHEMATICS, LITERACY, AND OTHER CURRICULAR AREAS**

A key message in this report is the need to focus on deep implementation of the curriculum as opposed to developing new curricula. The new pedagogical approaches being implemented have to be both visionary and practical, and geared towards the needs of the future generation who must be prepared to function effectively in an ever-changing world. At the same time, it is critically important to ensure that our young learners leave the K to 12 education system with a high level of mastery of the foundational skills and competencies that remain relevant in a society constantly influenced by the development of new technologies. Being able to comprehend and critically analyze this information requires higher levels of literacy and numeracy proficiency in today's world. Higher order thinking skills and interpersonal competencies are essential components of this mandate.

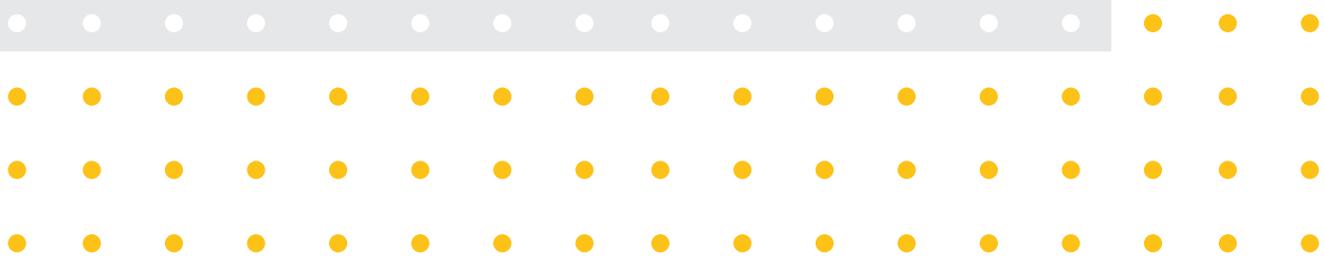
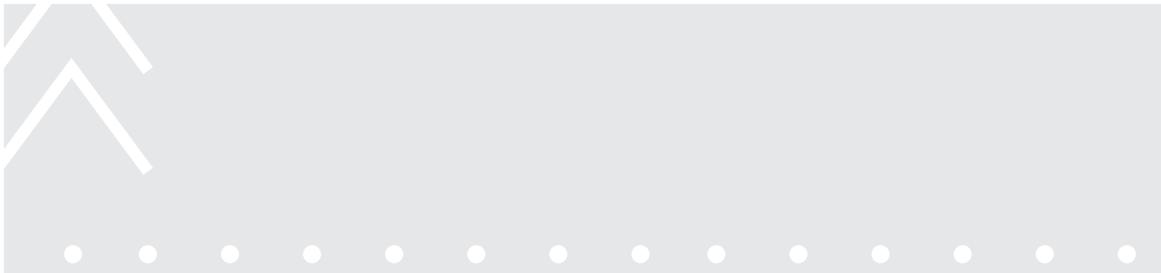
The Commission strongly believes that the education system must have clear expectations for all those having a direct role in education and be accountable to all taxpayers. Accordingly, it is the role of the Department of Education to set ambitious targets and to outline the role of school boards, administrators, and teachers in reaching these targets. It is the view of the Commission that the implementation of provincial summative curriculum-based tests in literacy and numeracy at Grades 3 or 4, 6 or 7, and 10 is part of the accountability mechanism required to determine the extent to which the system is effective at supporting and improving student learning. Manitobans need to be reassured that the education system is adequately nimble and flexible to respond effectively to a wide range of learning needs. The education system must have rigorous, world-class standards to ensure the vast majority of our students are graduating and are well-prepared for transitioning to either the workforce or post-secondary education, and also to be well-prepared for life in a changing global community. Foundational skills must be complemented by some of the global and life skills that are necessary for living and to ensure that we are educating hearts as well as minds. An emphasis on academic, social, emotional, physical and ethical skills, and decision-making abilities play a role in ensuring that education is comprehensive, rounded, and holistic.

While accountability is shared by many in education, we believe that schools have primary responsibility for student learning and achievement. Going forward, the Commission sees a need to better define the responsibilities of the key players so there is clarity around role expectations.

Some of the recommendations under this imperative include: reinforcing the implementation of the math and literacy curricula; emphasizing early and ongoing identification and intervention in reading, writing, and math; implementing provincial curriculum-based tests for mathematics and literacy; requiring future K to 8 teachers to complete a course specifically geared to teaching elementary mathematics prior to certification; working with the faculties of education to prepare mathematics specialists for the early and middle years, encouraging school divisions to explore how math specialists could be deployed or used in schools and in divisions to improve mathematics learning and performance; differentiating the certification of teachers to ensure that the teaching certificate issued clearly identifies the teacher preparation program completed – early, middle, and/or senior years; and ensure that school divisions make appropriate hiring and placement decisions based on the teacher preparation program completed.



Additional recommendations are: strengthening the processes through which schools and school divisions assess, monitor, and report on student achievement to parents and to the public; infusing career development across curricular areas; expanding Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) skills; working with Apprenticeship Manitoba of Manitoba Economic Development and Training and chambers of commerce to create partnerships, identify and provide funding for programs created in cooperation with industry, school divisions, post-secondary institutions, and colleges to expand apprenticeship programming especially in remote, rural, and northern communities.





## **IMPERATIVE #10:**

# **ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND FUNDING STRUCTURES**

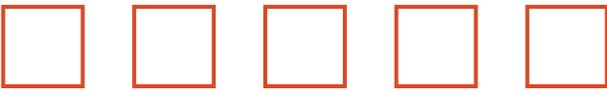
The Commission believes that there is a sense of urgency in improving student achievement in Manitoba schools. This can only be achieved if all educational partners are committed to work in a concerted manner towards improving learning. This must become the shared mission of all those involved in the education system.

The school governance system in Manitoba has not been changed for a number of years. Based on what we heard during the consultation process, there is an opportunity to implement new school governance structures to create a higher level of system coherence and a stronger focus on student learning. We know that change can disrupt a system as the tendency is for people to focus on the political aspects of change, including their new roles and responsibilities, rather than the primary focus of bringing about improvement for the benefit of students. It is our intention that throughout this process the needs and success of students remain at the centre of all decision-making.

Some of the recommendations under this imperative include: consolidating the existing school boards into six to eight regional school boards as well as requirements that there will be both appointed and elected trustees; defining clearly the roles and responsibilities of those responsible for the K to 12 education system; developing the criteria and competencies for school board members and delivering high-quality orientation, training, and ongoing development consistent with the expectations set out in this report; putting in place a new standardized K to 12 student information system; exploring emerging technologies and the advancement of artificial intelligence; re-deploying department and school division resources to support capacity building in policy; and conducting a review of the provincial funding formula.

This report represents a roadmap and plan for future success.

The Commission also recommends that a new position of Deputy Minister or Assistant Deputy Minister be created to champion, change, and mobilize the system and increase coordination toward improved student achievement. This senior leader will drive the agenda and forge a commitment for improvement among the newly consolidated school boards and their staff.



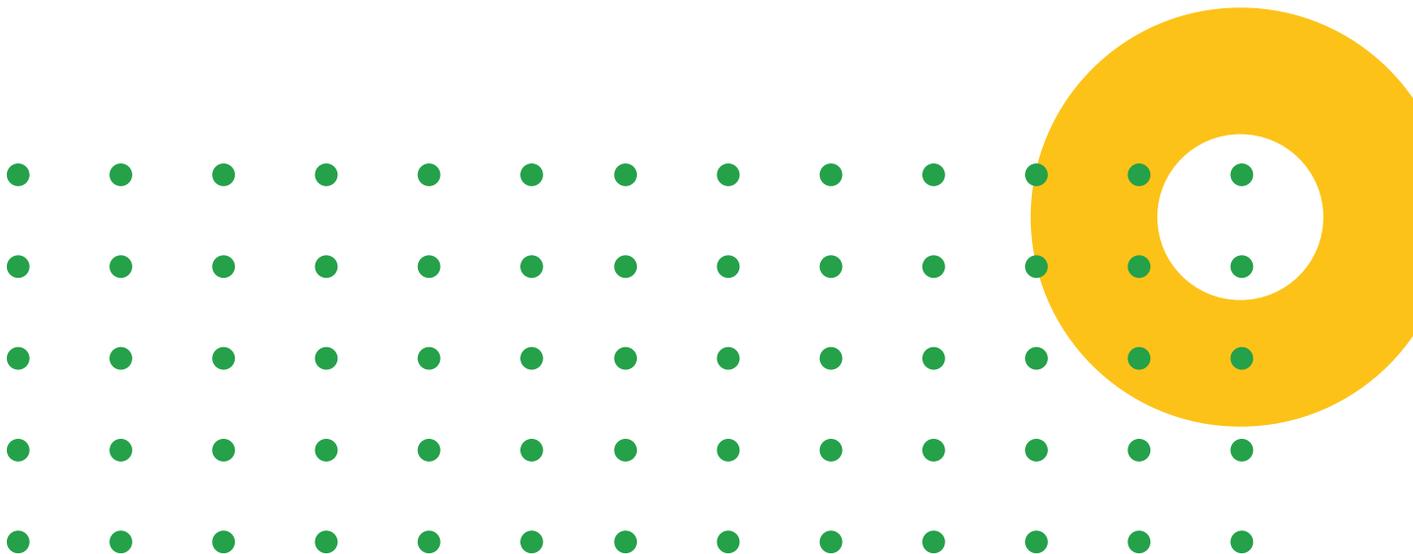
## Implementation is Key

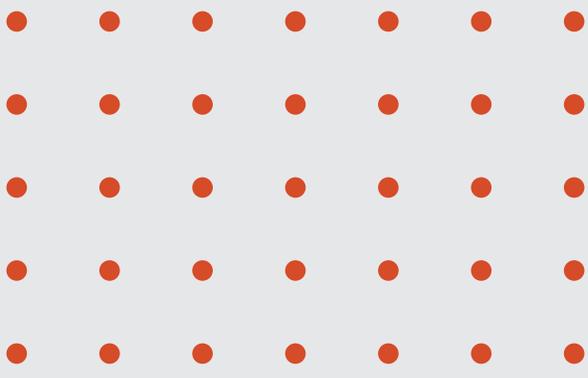
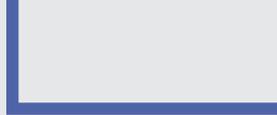
The sense of urgency referred to in this report requires the timely implementation of concrete actions. In order to achieve this goal, the Commission recommends that a well-coordinated plan be developed to guide the implementation of the recommendations. Successful implementation requires a champion for the initiative – a respected leader with senior management skills and experience and a proven record of change management. He or she must be in a position to remove organizational barriers and distractors, build consensus, and engage staff at all levels of the system. A strong leader with the ability to inspire educators towards improved performance and to implement the recommendations outlined by the Commission is needed. Going forward, Manitoba’s children must be better prepared to achieve their full potential.

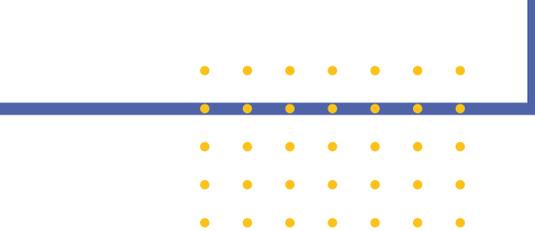
An implementation plan requires a clear definition of roles and responsibilities, a strategy to monitor implementation and progress, and a process to evaluate results and re-engage system partners.

Systematic implementation is key to the success of an improvement initiative. We encourage all Manitobans to work together with a renewed sense of mission and purpose to ensure that the recommendations included in this report become a reality in **every** school for **all** students.

Our children’s success is Manitoba’s future.







# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Commissions, by their very nature and scope, require extensive support if they are to be successful in their outreach and engagement of the public. For people to feel that they have been heard and that they had the opportunity to have their say requires intense planning and careful execution.

We are grateful to the Premier and the Minister of Education for their vision and recognition that, despite our progress as a system, we are not yet at the level that we should be given our expenditures on education. There is room for growth and improvement – something that must be done with a sense of urgency for the sake of our children. We thank the members of the Commission for their diligence and commitment to the task. They visited schools across the province and spent hours reading submissions and briefs, and listening to presenters.

We thank our educators who support our students each day. So many of them shared practical strategies and gave us the benefit of their experience. School divisions, school board members, superintendents, and school staffs deserve special encomiums. They prepared extensive submissions documenting successes and giving us first-hand insights into the practices that are being implemented. They opened their schools and classrooms for our visits and encouraged parents and community members to participate in the process. We appreciate the time taken by those who submitted briefs. The names of the groups and individuals are identified in Appendix 2.

What we must do now is to ensure that these promising practices are spread across Manitoba.

We thank Jean-Vianney Auclair, Secretariat Director, Rhonda Shaw, Senior Policy Analyst and Kim Topham, Administrative Assistant, for their support of the work of the Commission.

The Commissioners also thank Dr. Avis Glaze, a widely recognized leader in education who has worked in some 50 jurisdictions internationally and spent 40 years within the K to 12, college and university systems in both urban and rural settings.

We tried hard to keep a tight rein on the number of recommendations. To facilitate implementation, we recommend that a provincial leadership team rank order those that must be implemented immediately and those which should be implemented subsequently. The improvement of student achievement and capacity building within the system must be the key criteria for this rank ordering. Actions must be taken immediately to reverse the persistent trend of underachievement.

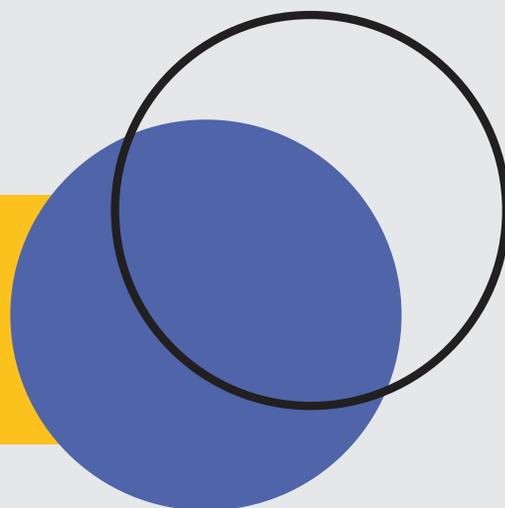
One outcome of this exercise is to provide support for schools so that they can fulfil their mandate to improve student learning, achievement, and well-being; close achievement gaps; and build confidence in the public education system.

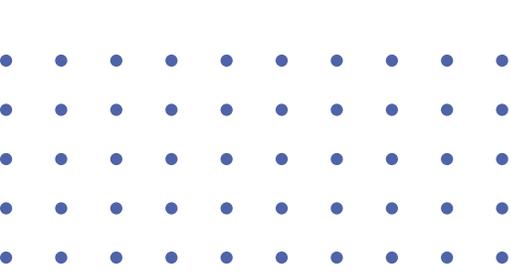
We ask for the support of all Manitobans to ensure that the recommendations of the report become a reality in all schools. This cannot be achieved without your continued vigilance and action. Improving the system continues to be a collective effort – one that represents teamwork at its best.





**Our Children's Success:**  
**MANITOBA'S FUTURE**





# INTRODUCTION

There is a clarion call across the globe to reform education systems. Many elected officials and parents are demanding that we improve student outcomes. Students want to be prepared to be global citizens with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, dispositions, and sensibilities necessary for success today and in the future. Teachers and principals<sup>2</sup> want to know that they are using evidence-based practices to improve student learning and achievement. What is also clear is that educators and all those who work in schools are committed to improving the system from within. As professionals, they believe in continuous improvement and they want to make a difference in the lives of children.

The stark reality for us as a Commission is that in too many cases, Manitoba's children are not achieving their full potential. Given the money being spent on education – one of the highest in Canada – we know we have to do much better.

**Table 1:** Per student spending in schools across Canada 2015-16

Province	Spending
Saskatchewan	15,314
Manitoba	<b>14,986</b>
New Brunswick	14,446
Newfoundland and Labrador	13,686
Nova Scotia	13,677
Alberta	13,430
Ontario	13,321
Prince Edward Island	12,531
British Columbia	11,656
Quebec	10,992
<b>Canada</b>	<b>12,791</b>

(Adapted from MacLeod & Emes, 2019)

Making recommendations to improve the system is at the core of this Commission's mandate. We believe that it is time to ensure that the province's school system is the best it can possibly be – aligned with the priorities, beliefs, and realities of the world of today and tomorrow, rooted in the best practices in education, yet nimble and flexible enough to innovate, experiment, and evolve. Many parents want higher standards for achievement and higher expectations for learning.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this report when we use the term principals it is intended to include vice-principals as well.



Another reality is that times are changing in relation to expectations towards education. The proverbial pendulum swing is noticeable. It is often difficult to find a solid consensus on issues. Some individuals want us to narrow the curriculum, others want us to add myriad content and skills that they believe students need today for life and career success. Others want to put an end to what they perceive as a “no fail” practice in schools. Still others want us to improve graduation rates and ensure that more students have the qualifications to enter the labour market, pursue post-secondary education, apprenticeship programs, and their selected career pathways. Some believe that charter schools are the answer to all that ails public schools. Others believe that public schools are the cornerstone of our society. Some professors express concerns about grade inflation and say that there are too many students entering colleges and universities without the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. Others feel that schools are doing a good job given the many mandates that they have to address. Many fear that we will lower standards to achieve these goals.

We must ask ourselves where do the answers lie and how do we address these seemingly opposing views and expectations if we want to improve the publicly funded education system. With our expenditures on public education, we need to demonstrate to parents and the public that we have a system that is capable of providing an education for students of all backgrounds to be successful. Improving student outcomes is the overarching reason for the establishment of the K to 12 education review. This Commission must offer recommendations to address this goal. A failure to do so will leave the public education system vulnerable to criticisms. As a Commission, we believe that Manitoba’s students can do better and that this review must provide the imperatives necessary to bring about improvement.

In announcing the establishment of a new commission to undertake a comprehensive, independent review of the Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system, Education Minister Kelvin Goertzen said:

This is a long-overdue opportunity to build on strengths and identify challenges to create a better education system with high standards for educators, high expectations for student achievement, relevant curriculum, governance excellence and a sustainable fiscal framework... Manitoba’s education system covers a vast geographical area and serves a wide range of communities, and we have selected a Commission that reflects that reality. (“Province announces,” 2019, para. 2)

With the announcement of Co-chairs Dr. Janice MacKinnon and Clayton Manness and seven Commissioners, the minister noted that the process would include extensive consultation across Manitoba and consider a new vision for education and a wide range of topics such as student learning, teaching, accountability for student learning, governance, and funding.

“The Commission will serve in the best educational interest of all students, regardless of their abilities, personal or family circumstances, or where they live,” said Dr. MacKinnon. “Our focus will be on student outcomes, long-term sustainability and enhanced public confidence, and we will consider the continuum of early learning, post-secondary education and labour market needs,” added Clayton Manness. (“Province announces,” 2019, para. 4)

The Commission was mandated to submit a report with key findings and recommendations in February 2020.

# THE MANDATE OF THE COMMISSION

The mandate of the Commission is wide-ranging and comprehensive. It includes public consultation and input from parents, educators, school boards, academics, Indigenous organizations, *la francophonie*, municipal councils, professional organizations, the business community, students, and all Manitobans.

Commissioners were instructed to examine all facets of Manitoba's education system, with invaluable input from the public consultations, interviews, and research on best practices globally. The input from the public was invaluable in informing our perspectives and recommendations.

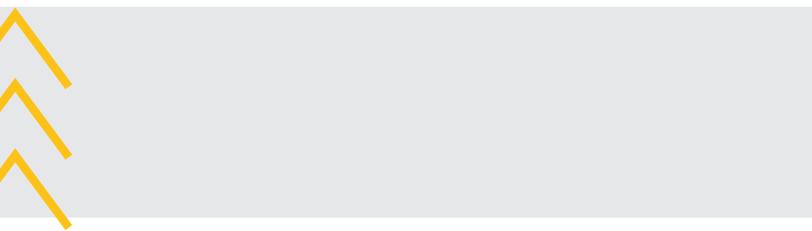
# ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This report includes research on specific topics such as the importance of instruction in improving student achievement, teaching, learning, leadership, and student engagement, to name a few. It also reflects what we heard throughout the consultation process. We wanted to produce a report that is rooted in Canadian and international practices, with examples of provinces that are already implementing promising approaches to address student outcomes.

We have organized our recommendations around ten imperatives to improve Manitoba education. They are designed to provide a clear focus for the required actions, to address the pivotal issues, and to inform practices in teaching, learning, and leading.

In order to maintain our focus, stay on track, and be true to our mandate, the reasons for the establishment of the Commission will always be held in sharp focus to serve as a reminder of the work that lies ahead to reverse the current status of the achievement results. The fact that Manitoba's students are not achieving their potential will guide the recommendations for improvement.

Throughout the report, we have included direct quotes from our consultation activities. To respect the privacy of respondents we have not identified individuals or organizations by name, except in cases where that input was otherwise made public, as was the case with the briefs for the public hearings, or where permission was otherwise granted.



# MANITOBA: A VISION FOR IMPROVEMENT

Manitoba, with a population of 1.352 million (Statistics Canada, 2018a), is described as “The Heart of North America” (Province of Manitoba, n.d-a., para. 1) and considers its land a strategic advantage. About 57 per cent of the population resides in the capital city of Winnipeg. The province has a broad and vibrant economic base. There is a wide range of diverse and cultural groups, including an Indigenous community, in both rural and urban areas, and a Franco-Manitoban community.

The province’s K to 12 education system is comprised of more than 210,000 students, of which 90 per cent attend public schools while the remaining 10 per cent select funded independent, non-funded independent, or home schooling education options.

At nearly 18 per cent of the population, Indigenous families and children account for the fastest growing segment of Manitoba’s population. Indigenous peoples are part of distinct nations, with distinct languages, customs, traditions, and land bases. French language and culture also have strong histories in our province. Today, there are more than 30,000 students in Français or French Immersion programs in Manitoba.

Newcomers, currently at about 18 per cent of the population, continue to be a significant force in Manitoba’s growth and success (Province of Manitoba, 2019a, p. 4).

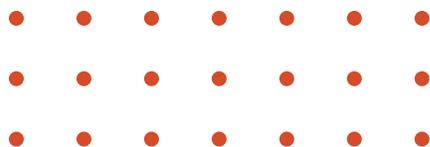
In the November 19, 2019, Speech from the Throne (Province of Manitoba, 2019b), government provided a vision for Manitoba’s future as a place where people from all over the world have come to build lives. Education plays an essential role in building a new Manitoba of entrepreneurs and risk takers – a place where strong and resilient citizens prosper.

Educators in general, and teachers in particular, are at the heart of the province’s vision. With the objective of becoming a world-class education system, commitment to the success of our students is vital for Manitoba’s future and the life chances of all children. Education is key to prosperity.

Manitoba’s Department of Education and the public are rooted in a firm belief that publicly funded education is the cornerstone of a democratic society. With plans to re-invigorate and re-focus the education system, they emphasize the need for quality programs to prepare learners for lifelong learning and citizenship in a socially just, harmonious, and productive society.

The department’s current vision is that every learner will complete a high school education with a sense of accomplishment, hope, and optimism. Putting a spotlight on education in terms of a system review at this time is one way of saying that the children cannot wait and that both effectiveness and efficiency matter. The time is now to take the province to new levels of achievement to realize the goal of becoming the most improved province in Canada.

A country’s best asset is its people. Excellence in education is one pathway to a better future.





# HOW ARE MANITOBA'S K to 12 STUDENTS DOING ACADEMICALLY?

When students enter Kindergarten, their physical, social, and cognitive well-being is assessed using the Early Development Instrument (EDI) to determine their readiness for school and identify areas requiring interventions. Overall, average results from EDI show relatively stable scores between 2005 and 2017 in physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and thinking skills, communication skills, and general knowledge. However, while overall average scores appear stable, gaps in school readiness are widening. Although an increasing number of students appear “very ready” for school, there has also been a related rise in the number of students “not ready” for school, particularly in areas like physical health and well-being and social competence. These early gaps in school readiness translate into achievement gaps that tend not to close over students’ academic careers.

In elementary and middle school, in addition to student report cards, students undergo formative assessments in literacy and numeracy in Grades 3/4 and Grades 7/8. In high school, Grades 9 to 12, student report cards are a measure of academic performance and credit attainment towards graduation. Grade 12 students also demonstrate their learning on provincially set summative assessments in language arts and mathematics.

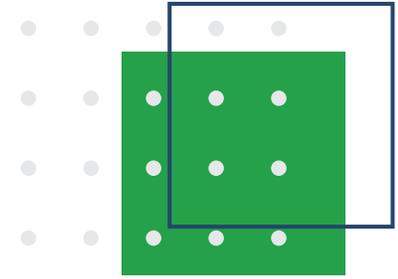
The data from Manitoba's provincial formative and summative assessments tell us that from early childhood to adolescence, Indigenous students, for example, consistently face challenges in academic performance compared to non-Indigenous students. As well, girls are outperforming boys, particularly in literacy. These performance gaps manifest themselves more acutely in the provincial high school graduation rates. Only half of Indigenous students graduate high school within the typical four-year timeframe compared to their non-Indigenous peers. This is important to highlight because high school graduation is predictive of students success and preparedness as they move into the world of work or onto further education.

The data also reveal differences and, more importantly, volatility over time in different school divisions and school contexts. Socio-economic status is also a factor in the performance of students across the province.

These overall provincial assessment results illustrate that the learning foundations established as early as Grade 3 in language arts and math yield similar levels of performance when students reach Grade 9. Similarly, Grade 9 outcomes are also strong predictors for on-time high school graduation.

Manitoba has shown steady improvement in its high school graduation rate. From 2013 to 2018 the four-year (“on-time”) graduation rate increased annually from 76.2% to 79.9%, but there is still room for improvement. (Province of Manitoba, 2019c).

The predictive power of these outcomes is considerably higher for Indigenous students who can expect their likelihood of graduating “on-time” to increase seven-fold if they pass Grade 9 mathematics and language arts in their first year of high school.



Other provinces have their own distinct programs to assess the performance of their students. Thus, very few indicators show the performance of Manitoba students relative to their peers across the country or the world. The most reliable and publicized of these are the results from two large-scale assessments of reading, math, and science. These are:

- Pan-Canadian Assessment Programme (PCAP) – a pan-Canadian assessment of Grade 8 students
- Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – an international assessment of 15-year-olds (generally Grade 10 students)

Average scores<sup>3</sup> along with the corresponding Canadian average scores are shown below for both PISA, which began in 2000, and PCAP, which began in 2007. The figures in **bold** indicate the years in which a subject was the **major domain**, tested in greater depth and constituting approximately half of the total testing time.

**Table 2: PISA Scores for Manitoba Students**

PISA	Reading		Mathematics		Science	
	Manitoba	Canada	Manitoba	Canada	Manitoba	Canada
2000	<b>529</b>	534	533	533	527	529
2003	520	528	<b>528</b>	532	512	519
2006	516	527	521	527	<b>523</b>	534
2009	<b>495</b>	524	501	527	506	529
2012	495	523	<b>492</b>	518	503	525
2015	498	527	489	516	<b>499</b>	528
2018	<b>494</b>	520	482	512	489	518

These scores are compiled from PISA reports from 2000 to 2018.

**Table 3: PCAP Scores for Manitoba Students**

PCAP	Reading		Mathematics		Science	
	Manitoba	Canada	Manitoba	Canada	Manitoba	Canada
2007	<b>472</b>	500	479	500	476	500
2010	478	500	<b>468</b>	500	486	500
2013	469	508	471	507	<b>465</b>	500
2016	<b>487</b>	507	479	511	491	508

These scores are compiled from PCAP reports from 2007 to 2016.

<sup>3</sup>For both PISA and PCAP, the average scores are based on arbitrary scales that were established in the first year a subject was the major domain. The scales are set such that two-thirds of student scores are expected to fall in the range between 400 and 600.

When the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) first began administering PISA in the year 2000, Manitoba students scored at the national average in math, placing them above their peers in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island. In reading, Manitoba students scored above their peers in Nova Scotia, PEI, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick (Bussiere, Cartwright, Crocker, Ma Odekirk & Shang, 2001).

The most recent PISA results should be cause for concern as Manitoba has fallen precipitously; between 2000 and 2018, it dropped 35 points in reading and sitting well below the Canadian average. Math scores fell by 51 points, placing Manitoba last in the country, and science scores fell 38 points in the same period (O’Grady, Deussing, Scerbina, Tao, Fung, Elez & Monk, 2019). It is worth noting that a decline of 30 points is equivalent to having a full year of formal education (OECD, 2016) (emphasis added).

For us as Commissioners, this is not the time for excuses or continued explanations about the performance of Manitoba’s students. We know they can do better. It is time to pay attention to the objective assessments that currently exist and to put in place the recommendations to bring about improvement.

The key observation when looking at student achievement is that better performance in earlier years, for **all** students, leads to better performance in later years. Early intervention is therefore important.





# EDUCATION SPENDING AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

Evidence from around the world has shown that increased education spending does not translate into improved student outcomes. According to Schleicher (2014) of the OECD:

There's surprisingly little relationship between the volume of spending and the outcomes. In fact, spending per student only explains about 20 per cent of the performance variation among countries. Rather, it's the nature of spending that is really driving outcomes and by implication, impact. (Intel Education, 2014)

In attempting to explain this relationship, Grubb (2009) argued that money can only buy “simple” resources. Simple resources are things like teacher salaries, smaller class sizes, curriculum materials, technological devices, buildings, and equipment. While simple resources often receive a lot of attention, they are insufficient on their own to improve student learning. The things that have a significant impact on student learning are what Grubb terms “complex” and “abstract” resources. These are things like effective pedagogical approaches, pedagogical consistency, curricular coherence, positive teacher-student relations, strong leadership, as well as trust and stability among students, teachers, administrators, and district leaders. These types of resources cannot be bought, and higher spending does not necessarily increase them. Rather, they are embedded in the many personal relationships of schooling and must be developed collaboratively over time. This means that for developed school systems such as those in Canada, the important question is how resources are used.

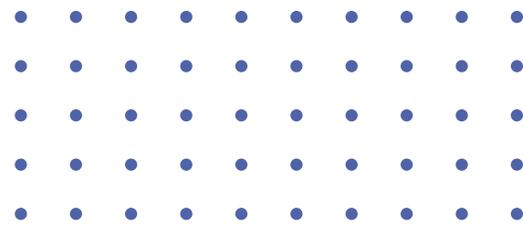
## Why is Manitoba's achievement low while spending is high?

There are many challenges inherent in delivering education in Manitoba. There are several factors that may contribute to Manitoba's combination of low student achievement and relatively high per pupil spending. Manitoba has many small schools located in isolated areas that are vital to the communities they serve, but can be costly to operate. Manitoba is a province with an increasingly diverse population, high child poverty, relatively low overall socio-economic status, and a large Indigenous population. It has a high number of children in care, a group that are at high risk of poor school performance. All these factors contribute to the education challenges faced by Manitoba (Fransoo, Roos, Martens, Heamens, Chateau & Levin, 2008).

However, while it is true that greater needs often justify greater spending, this does not mean that we should simply accept the current situation, or that we cannot do better. The recommendations in this report are aimed at doing just that. There are several examples in Canada and around the world of places that have improved student outcomes despite demographic and economic challenges.

The work of scholars like Hattie and Yates (2013) and Wiliam (2018) show that some kinds of spending are relatively unproductive while other kinds generate considerable benefits. For example, we have a great deal of evidence that large investments in information and communication technologies (ICT) in schools have not brought much return. We also have a lot of evidence that retaining students in a grade is an ineffective and expensive practice. Yet these practices have widespread support and are still used in many places. At the same time, there is considerable evidence that carefully designed professional learning for teachers, improvements in student assessment practices, and once again, engagement of parents, do pay dividends, yet these practices remain inconsistent across schools.

We simply cannot afford to have schools doing things that we know are ineffective, any more than we should be allowing doctors or hospitals to continue ineffective practices. The research evidence on effective use of resources must guide policy and practice in all Manitoba schools.



# MANITOBA COMMISSION ON KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 12 EDUCATION: THE FOCUS AREAS FOR THE REVIEW

## The K to 12 Education System Review

This review signals the government of Manitoba's commitment to improve student outcomes to create an education system that has high standards for educators, high expectations for student learning, relevant curriculum, excellence in governance, and a sustainable fiscal framework. A diverse team of commissioners was appointed from across the province to propose a renewed vision for education, make bold recommendations to ignite change, and consider the continuum of learning, post-secondary education, and labour market needs as part of an integrated lifelong learning system.

The Commission's terms of reference (**Appendix 1**) identified six comprehensive areas of focus, each contextualized with an open-ended question.

### **Focus Area #1: Long-term vision**

What should the goals and purposes of K to 12 education be in a rapidly changing world?

### **Focus Area #2: Student learning**

What are the conditions required to achieve excellence in student achievement and outcomes in Manitoba?

### **Focus Area #3: Teaching**

How can teachers and school leaders become most effective?

### **Focus Area #4: Accountability for student learning**

How can the education system develop a stronger sense of shared accountability for student learning?

### **Focus Area #5: Governance**

What type of governance structures are needed to create a coordinated and relevant education system?

### **Focus Area #6: Funding**

What actions are required to ensure that the education system is sustainable and provides equitable learning opportunities for all children and youth?





# PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS

A website was launched in January 2019 to provide background information about the review, the mandate of the Commission, and to keep the public informed about when and how to participate in the review. On April 12 a public consultation discussion paper provided contextual information regarding the six areas of focus for the review and dates and options for consultation and input.

Public and stakeholder consultations were conducted in both English and French throughout the spring and early summer of 2019. The Commission held public and student workshops across the province, meetings with a broad spectrum of stakeholder organizations, meetings with students, Indigenous groups, newcomers and immigrant groups, employers, parents, teachers, principals, union leaders, business leaders, and other groups. Public hearings were held and two online surveys were administered. The Commissioners also made a point of visiting and talking with students and staff in a number of schools across the province. A list of individuals and organizations we met with is included in Appendix 2.

Throughout these processes, Manitobans demonstrated their passion for their Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system.

In total we received:

- 2,309 written submissions
- 8,891 public survey responses
- 159 submissions of exemplary practices
- 62 formal briefs
- 1,260 teacher survey responses

## Public and student workshops

From April 24 to May 30, 2019, 11 public workshops were held across Manitoba – five in Winnipeg and one in each of Thompson, The Pas, Brandon, Dauphin, Carman, and Steinbach, with 1,690 participants in all. Two student workshops hosting a total of 137 students from across the province were also held in Winnipeg during this timeframe.

All of the public workshops saw large proportions of participants self-identify as working in the K to 12 education system in Manitoba (teachers, educational assistants, clinicians, administration, trustees, union). Student session participants were primarily those in Grades 10 to 12 who had been selected by their school divisions to participate.

Feedback and input were gathered using a variety of tools including participant-written small group discussion summaries, individual comment forms and exit forms, and a web-enabled in-session engagement tool, as well as notes captured by facilitators during the “reconvene” and sharing circle large group discussions.

Key themes emerging from most of the workshops centred around the following (in alphabetical order):

- Amalgamation
- Class size/composition
- Consultation process itself
- Early years education
- Education as an investment
- Inclusion
- Indigenous learners
- Local autonomy
- Mental health
- More and equitable funding
- One size does not fit all
- Poverty impacts on learning
- Professional development
- Reconciliation
- Retention and recruitment
- Standardized testing
- The environment
- Union membership



Additional information on the methodology and detailed results of the public and student workshops are available in *Manitoba's Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education: Public Consultation Summary Report, June 2019*, the “Blueprint Report.” The report is available on the Commission’s website at <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/educationreview/docs/blueprint/index.html>.

## Written submissions

Manitobans provided written submissions to the Commission between January 23 and May 31, 2019. Submissions were received in a wide range of formats that included form letters, emails, and position papers ranging from a few pages to a few hundred pages. An overview of the written submissions is available on the Commission’s website at <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/educationreview/docs/written-submissions/index.html>.

## Briefs and public hearings

The submission of structured written briefs was also an option for those who wished to make their submissions and recommendations to the Commission public. A total of 62 briefs were received and 31 of those who submitted briefs were invited to present to the Commission during public hearings held on June 17, 19, and 21, 2019. The briefs are available at <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/educationreview/briefs/index.html>.

## Online surveys

The Commission launched two online surveys – one for the public and one for teachers to offer their input on the education issues considered important to them. The surveys were open between April 17 and May 31, 2019. An overview of the public and teacher surveys is available on the Commission’s website at <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/educationreview/docs/surveys/index.html>.

## Exemplary practices

Teachers were also invited to share information about their exemplary practices which resulted in increasing student achievement. These practices focused on:

- Numeracy and literacy – evidence-based approaches generally undertaken at the school division level.
- Student engagement – highlighting the benefit of inquiry-based learning in a wide range of discipline areas, including woodworking, human ecology science, social studies, and mathematics. Several referenced cross-disciplinary approaches and team-teaching as conducive to creating effective and engaging learning environments for students.
- Data-focused professional learning – the use of assessment results, artifacts, and research-based evidence in professional learning communities to inform classroom level initiatives and practices.
- Mental health and wellness – through mindfulness practices to address anxiety and anger, the promotion of healthy lifestyles, and the development of strong community relationships.

The invitation to submit exemplars asked teachers to describe how their practices improved student achievement and outcomes. In many cases, the connection to improvement was not provided.

# IMPERATIVES FOR IMPROVEMENT

## From Areas of Focus to Imperatives for Action

Six areas of focus were identified by the Manitoba Government in the terms of reference for the K to 12 Education Review. They were the organizers throughout the consultation phase. This served the Commission well as we invited input from the public on future directions.

Why did we move from the areas of focus to 10 imperatives in our report?

It was our intent to provide a report with clear directions signalling what concrete actions should be taken. We wanted to leave as little room as possible for personal interpretation of what remains to be done. We therefore identified, with clear focus and intentionality of purpose, 10 imperatives for the future of education in Manitoba. We wanted clarity in the discussion of the path forward.

The identification of these 10 imperatives and our recommendations for specific actions are designed to signal the sense of urgency necessary to improve student learning and achievement and move Manitoba to the next stage in the improvement process.

Extensive and comprehensive review of the research and understanding what education systems look like when they are functioning at their best helped us to move theory into action as we formulated our recommendations.

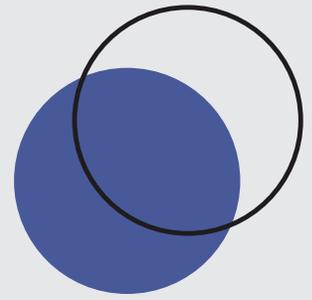
In short, the imperatives are intended to guide future action and to position Manitoba as a world-class education system – one that has demonstrated steady growth and improvement.

In the section that follows, we will identify the imperatives to improve the educational system, provide a research-into-practice focus, as well as recommendations for improvement.

## Ten Imperatives to Improve Teaching, Learning, Leadership, and Practices with a Sense of Urgency

The main purpose of these imperatives is to improve K to 12 education in all schools and classrooms across Manitoba.

<b>Imperative #1</b>	Strengthen Educator Capacity to Improve Teaching and Learning
<b>Imperative #2</b>	Increase School Leadership Effectiveness
<b>Imperative #3</b>	Improve Student Engagement and Well-being
<b>Imperative #4</b>	Close the Achievement Gap Between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Students
<b>Imperative #5</b>	Commit to Equitable Outcomes and Improved Achievement for All
<b>Imperative #6</b>	Ensure Quality Educational Programming and Supports in Rural, Remote, and Northern Communities
<b>Imperative #7</b>	Strengthen the Delivery of French Language Education
<b>Imperative #8</b>	Expand Community Education and Strengthen Public Outreach and Alliances
<b>Imperative #9</b>	Improve Foundational Skills in Mathematics and Literacy and Other Curricular Areas
<b>Imperative #10</b>	Enhance the Effectiveness of the Governance, Administrative and Funding Structures



# IMPERATIVE #1: STRENGTHEN EDUCATOR CAPACITY TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

## Teachers as Learners: Why Effective K to 12 Teacher Professional Learning is Key to Achieving Successful Student Outcomes

The role of schools and teachers has evolved in response to demographic shifts and public expectations. The impact of these effects is manifested in classrooms as teachers strive to meet the holistic needs of their students. Today's classrooms include students with a diverse range of needs and assets. For example, some live in poverty; others arrive from war-torn countries where they have experienced the horrors of war; others have lived in refugee camps and have significant gaps in their learning; and still others suffer from trauma and other psychological impacts of negative experiences. At the same time, many students bring a rich reservoir of skills including problem solving, resilience, and resourcefulness. Regardless of these background factors, students want to learn and be successful.

Teachers often talk about the countless roles they play in schools today. Many make sure they have snacks in their classrooms for students who have not had breakfast or who have no lunch. They offer guidance to children who have problems with relationships and those who have had to leave home for a host of reasons. They act as counsellors, social workers, and financial advisors. They help to bridge the generational and cultural divide as parents and grandparents navigate the values and realities of their adopted home with the challenges faced by children who are born in Canada. In short, today's teachers work valiantly to address the academic, social, and emotional needs of the children in their classes. They do so with professionalism and aplomb.

The fact is that our classrooms today reflect these realities. We expect our teachers to address these issues in their classes and at the same time, help all children reach their academic potential.

Some teachers have told us that they are feeling overwhelmed and unsupported. These individuals are consummate professionals who care deeply about their students and who want them to succeed. However, they are also saying to us that they need support.



## Teachers: Their Changing Role and Context

### What We Heard

One of the recurring themes from our consultations was the issue of class size as it relates to the diverse needs and the complexity of classrooms, and the supports teachers require to meet the varying needs of students. Teachers reported that there are inadequate supports to handle these challenges effectively, resulting in negative effects on students and adding considerable stress for teachers already feeling strapped for time as they balance non-teaching tasks to support students. Teachers also indicated a strong desire for ongoing and relevant professional learning.

*I have found that there has been an increase in the stresses of the job, and it is important to provide services to support teachers in the classroom. More access to resources is important to improve student learning.* (Teacher survey)

*Too many diverse needs in one class without appropriate supports. Near impossible for teacher to work with each group (by diverse groups, I mean, behavioural issues, with too-wide learning gaps, with different language needs). In the younger years where behavioural and learning gaps in students are not yet identified or mitigating strategies are not yet developed -- smaller class size should be mandatory to assist teachers.*

(Public survey)

We also heard that teachers are viewed as a strength in our education system, often being described as caring, passionate, dedicated, and amazing professionals. In addition to their appreciation of teachers, respondents often cited the dedication of school administration and support staff as a strength.

*Staff who really care about kids at all levels and volunteer in many capacities to help kids reach their potential; Opportunities for students to be exposed to extra curricular activities (sport, academic or vocational in focus); A school board whose members consider the needs of their schools as well as taking into consideration the communities they serve.*

(Public survey)

### Research Highlights

Research says that teachers and principals have a strong influence on student learning and achievement. Therefore, we must ensure that teachers are highly trained before they enter classrooms and that they have access to meaningful and ongoing professional learning throughout their teaching careers. This is particularly important to ensure these professionals are equipped to respond to and address the very real and increasingly complex needs of students in today's classrooms.

Lieberman and Miller (2000), in their article on the new realities of teaching, identify how rapidly society has changed as a result of the demands of the information and communication age within our global economy. Teachers and the teaching profession are being asked to rethink the way they see their profession and the way they do their work. Dramatic shifts are taking place in both theory and practice, which require certain changes. The researchers encourage educators to move from:

- Individualism to professional community
- Managed work to leadership
- Teaching at the centre to learning at the centre
- Classroom concerns to whole school concerns
- Technical work to inquiry
- A weak knowledge base to a stronger, broader one
- Control to accountability



In essence, they are encouraging teachers to enhance their professionalism and become the most current and effective teachers they can be within these changing contexts.

## Teacher Professional Learning

Within the last 20 years, discussions around teacher professional learning (TPL) have shifted dramatically from a reliance on traditional learning practices to envisioning new models of continuous professional growth. Case studies, research, and dialogue have contributed to a solid body of information accessible to increase their effectiveness. Several key questions must be considered for TPL to be truly impactful, including the types of activities that are not effective. These questions are:

- What types of professional learning are ineffective? In what ways do teachers feel unsupported?
- What obstacles contribute to keeping some teachers from accessing quality TPL?
- Are there proven tools and strategies that can enable teachers to experience positive outcomes in their classroom?
- In short, what must be made available to teachers for them to feel supported so they can succeed?

Change is difficult, particularly in long-established educational districts, in which many component sectors work in isolation, or which do not have the time or resources to effectively collaborate on strategies and needed improvements. But this disjointed structure is evolving, particularly in response to resounding feedback from teachers who are committed to their work, want to feel supported, and experience successful classroom outcomes. Many teachers know what they would like to learn or practise in order to succeed but sometimes feel that they lack the resources or training to do so. Investing in and supporting teachers is pivotal to the success of any educational reform effort.

### What We Heard

We heard from Manitobans that they want well-educated teachers and school leaders for their children. People expressed support for their teachers and principals and recognized the need for training to meet the increasingly diverse needs that exist in today's classrooms. Challenges in terms of access to and costs for professional development for teachers across the province were also noted. Some people questioned the quality and relevance of professional learning provided to teachers and school leaders, including the role that faculties of education play in preparing future teachers to meet the demands of their role. Others questioned the number of days designated for professional learning, as well as the effectiveness of single session or "one-off" workshops or conferences on classroom practice.

*I can't speak to the overall impression, but I can say that I have come into contact with several passionate and committed educators working in Manitoba.* (Public survey)

.....

*I think children have way too many in-service days. Could teacher's time off during school breaks not be used for professional development time?* (Public survey)

Teachers who responded to the online survey expressed a desire for more input into the options chosen for professional development and indicated preferences to practical or applied professional learning tailored to their specific teaching focus rather than theoretical or general options. They also consistently responded that they preferred autonomy or having choice about their learning opportunities, rather than having them standardized or mandated, and highly valued opportunities to collaborate and network with other teachers.

*My job is easiest when my administration and division supports me in what I do and in the professional development that I wish to pursue.* (Teacher survey)

### Research Highlights

The format of TPL is changing, but specific obstacles to successful professional learning must also be addressed. First, access to quality, continuous learning for teachers is not equitable across regions. Rural districts, in particular, often report that these activities are underfunded, teachers do not have up-to-date technological infrastructure, and that many teachers feel isolated (Pharis, Wu, Sullivan, & Moore, 2019). Other obstacles include lack of time available for collegial sharing between teachers or with administration. It is necessary that teachers are not isolated in their professional learning. They must be able to dialogue and collaborate over ongoing issues and strategies (De La Rosa, 2019). It is also helpful when they can visit other classrooms and watch their colleagues teach.

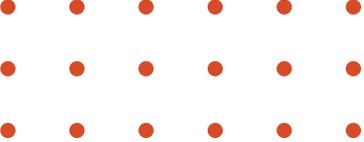
Finally, another problem that restricts teachers from engaging in constructive, impactful learning is when it is “cost-prohibitive” to the teacher (Berger, 2019), which again emphasizes the need for fiscal support and resources for teachers, rather than leaving them to finance personally all of their own growth as educators. Consider, for example, the idea that teachers should be supported to obtain masters or doctoral degrees. Many do not have the personal resources to obtain these degrees or attend conferences in a larger city centre.

The research indicates that proven methods of teacher professional learning can be broken down into five distinct categories:

- Collaborative Teacher Professional Learning
- Continuous Teacher Professional Learning
- Personalized/Contextually Relevant Teacher Professional Learning
- Experiential Teacher Professional Learning
- Real-time Coaching and Mentoring

These categories of methods of teacher professional learning are described in a paper in greater detail on the Commission’s website at <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/educationreview/docs/pls/index.html>.





## Faculties of Education

The Province of Manitoba has several long-established faculty of education programs, and in the past decade these institutes have attempted to address teacher shortages and specialization gaps. Among the various faculties of education in Manitoba, five institutes provide pre-service teacher training: Brandon University (BU), University of Manitoba (UM), University of Winnipeg (UW), Université de Saint-Boniface (USB), and University College of the North (UCN). Red River College provides training for Vocational Education Teachers. Red River College, Assiniboine College and Manitoba Institutes of Trades and Technology offer education-related programs such as Early Childhood Education or Teacher Assistant programs. The two largest faculties of education, UW and UM, report approximately 350 and 420 education graduates, respectively, each year (Province of Manitoba, 2014, pp. 23-24).

Likewise, and with evident intention, the University College of the North (UCN) demonstrated strong partnership ties to both northern and Indigenous and other stakeholders:

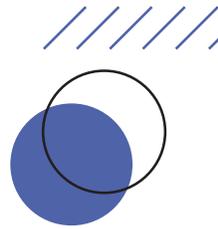
The Kenanow Bachelor of Education is a northern-based and Aboriginal-focused teacher education program. The program melds the wisdom and guidance provided by Elders in northern Manitoba...and the suggestions, opinions and knowledge shared by the stakeholders are reflected in the program content. The Kenanow program philosophy reflects the mission statement of UCN. The Seven Sacred Teachings – wisdom, respect, truth, humility, honesty, bravery and love – are embedded in the design and delivery of the program. (UCN, n.d., para. 2)

Due to increased recognition of gaps in student outcomes in some regions and among certain student groups, faculties of education are articulating a renewed vision to address the growing diversity and needs of Manitoba's student population. USB uses an innovative approach allowing students in their final year of training to spend an extended 25-week practicum in schools offering the Français and French immersion programs. The UW's Education Program requires education students to spend at least one placement at an inner-city school, while also requiring students to spend their practicums across various school districts, which broadens their experience of school environments. Similarly, the Faculty of Education at the UM offers practical experience in northern and inner-urban schools. The UM adopted a Diversity Admissions Policy in 2016 in favour of the creation of a more diverse teaching staff. BU implemented several years ago the Program for the Education of Native Teachers (PENT) where students obtain a degree while combining paraprofessional work and community schoolwork. While the framework exists to assist pre-service teachers to become adept at interacting with a diverse population, one of the briefs received by the Commission (Brief 10, Murray) suggested increased time in the classroom, in highly diversified settings, would enhance the knowledge and capacity of new university graduates and increase retention rates.

Programs at most faculties of education offer several routes to gradation and have different emphases.

According to the UW (n.d) Faculty of Education website, there are special demands in the industry for an increase in math, chemistry, physics, and French educators (para.6). As previously indicated, there has been a concurrent increase in French Immersion enrolment and university education students with a French-specific stream. Particularly in the north, there is a need for enhanced teacher pre-service training that responds to the needs of diverse student demographics, Indigenous, newcomers, 2SLGBTQ+<sup>4</sup>, poor, foster children, and students with special needs.

<sup>4</sup> 2SLGBTQ+ is used here as a reflection of a broad array of sexual and gender identities such as, but not limited to: two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. With ever-changing and evolving language, it is not possible to fully reflect all gender and sexually diverse communities within an acronym. Therefore, the '+' symbol is placed at the end of the acronym to be as inclusive as possible.



## What We Heard

In addition to meeting with The Council of Deans of Education in Manitoba (CODEM) we also received a number of written submissions from members of the faculties of education and were pleased to know that several of them attended public workshops. The input gathered from this sector touched upon a wide range of issues. Some of the key topics discussed included the role of the faculties of education, the teacher certification process, Indigenous education, inclusion and French language education. The need for the education system to work in synergy with other sectors when addressing multifaceted issues such as mental health and poverty was also a predominant theme.

When considering the preparation and development of teachers, we particularly appreciated the recognition of the complexity of the teaching profession. We heard that faculties of education play a fundamental role in supporting pre-service and in-service teachers and that the teaching approaches emphasized and promoted by the post-secondary institutions must be based on sound research evidence as opposed to being informed by “counterproductive bandwagons.”

*This involves recognizing the importance of the teaching profession and ensuring that people understand that teaching is far more complex than most people realize. In fact, in no other profession does society place so many conflicting expectations and in no other profession does it place so much trust.* (Written submission)

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*Teaching is a complex profession; therefore, dynamic models of teacher education are needed. Further, the requirements of the profession are changing significantly within the career span of a teacher. Therefore, the profession needs accountability policy that supports the continued professional development of teachers.* (Written submission)

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*Teacher education programs must continue to focus on the relationship of teaching and learning and the social contexts in which that relationship occurs, and in particular should attend to the effects of poverty on education.* (Written submission)

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*Policies and practices that ensure students have their basic needs met, and feel confident in exploring and expressing their cultural identity, are essential to support the work we are doing to prepare teachers in the Faculty of Education.* (Written submission)

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*As well, each teacher will have two subject specializations or “teachable” subjects. However, the certification process in Manitoba is not at all differentiated. The certificate that our graduates receive certifies them to teach from K-12. Although this provides superintendents and principals with much-needed flexibility when it comes to staffing, having teachers teach in areas outside their areas of preparation may not always serve students’ best interests. This may be an area that the Commission considers revisiting.* (Written submission)

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*Additionally, I believe that entry into teacher education programs could and should be made more rigorous and perhaps targeted to particular locations in the province.* (Written submission)



*We recommend a review of the provincial requirements of the Bachelor of Education degree to identify and address areas where teacher training may be strengthened in order to appropriately teach to all students.* (Written submission)

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*I have recommended that teacher education leaders consider revamping their programs to allow internships and residencies for teacher candidates, based on the rationale which follows. The greatest factor in children's educational achievement is the quality of teaching. Internships and residencies would increase the potential/likelihood for teacher retention. They would add to the complement of adults in schools who are working with children.*  
(Written submission)

## The Profession of Teaching and the “Professionalization” of Teachers

When professions come of age, they seek to govern themselves. Manitoba teachers are strategically positioned to create the parameters, structures and strategies necessary to enhance their profession, contribute to their “professionalization” and ensure they all consider themselves equal to other established professions.

### What We Heard

A number of those who provided input to us raised the issue of the professionalization of teachers. Written submissions and briefs on this topic recommended that the most effective way to recognize teachers as professionals who are accountable to the public is to establish a regulatory body to oversee the profession. One national organization noted that other Canadian jurisdictions have found regulatory bodies to be particularly effective in cases involving sexual misconduct.

*Creation of a College of Registered Teachers would not only bring teaching in line with other provinces, but it would bring Manitoba teachers to the levels of professionalism and self-regulation that other professions within Manitoba demand of themselves.* (Written submission)

Others suggested that establishing a college of teachers would not yield better outcomes for children and would create a risk of confusion and duplication of functions. For this reason, some recommended to focus on the collaborative development of teaching and leadership standards for the profession.

### Research Highlights

The research conducted on the characteristics of a profession and the stages in the development of a profession yielded the following conclusions:

The characteristics of a profession are:

- The performance of a unique and clearly defined service to the public
- The possession of a specialized body of knowledge and skills
- High standards of performance are established by members of the profession
- Clear definition of essential professional preparation
- The regulation of admission to its ranks and to practice

- The organization into professional groups with a well-established formal set of collegial or peer relationships
- Professional autonomy balanced by public accountability
- Members are seen as acting in the interest of their clients
- Members must accept responsibility for their judgments
- Members must be more concerned about service to society than about income, power and prestige
- Adherence to a code of ethics
- Members accept responsibility for professional growth and development (Adaptation of the work of Boy and Pine (1982) and Ohlsen (1970))

In addition to having defining characteristics, professions also go through various stages of evolution and development. This includes the fact that they provide a real service to the public. The notion of service is particularly instructive for educators whose profession is often described as one of the helping or the caring professions.

As professions progress through stages in their development, they establish standards for preparation and articulate clearly the continuous learning requirements. What is also important for teachers is that they have a clear sense of the ethical standards that they must uphold and are able to address the ethical issues as they arise.

Sensitivity to public expectations is essential. As they mature as a profession, individuals accept the fact that the public expects a high degree of quality in the services they offer, accountability to the public and those they serve, as well as continuous, professional learning and improvement.

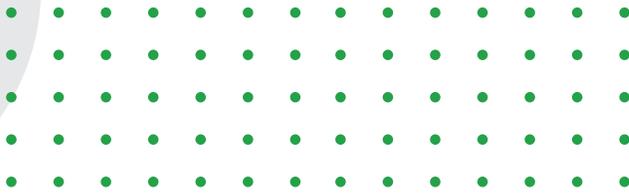
Public confidence in a profession is critical. To this end, professionals are expected to demonstrate adherence to their code of ethics and to monitor and ensure that their performance is consistent with the accepted standards throughout their careers.

We are reminded of the words of the legendary Albert Shanker (1985), internationally recognized and still quoted teacher union leader, who was known for his emphasis on accountability within the teaching profession. He said:

...we do not have the right to be called professionals and we will never convince the public that we are unless we are prepared honestly to decide what constitutes competence and incompetence in our profession and apply those definitions to ourselves and to our colleagues. (p. 97)

Mature professions take the characteristics and stages noted above seriously. They recognize their relationship with the public and what it takes to build public confidence in their profession. They are not demoralized by criticism; instead, they use it as a springboard for further improvement.

Professionals also seek to improve their practice by taking their professional learning needs seriously. Indeed, they become inveterate learners. We have similar expectations of our doctors, dentists, lawyers, physiotherapists, plumbers, electricians, and others. We want to be confident that they have up-to-date knowledge and that they will consult with specialists if they do not have the skills or information to address our concerns. The public expects no less of teachers and principals.



In an interview with Dr. Michael Salvatori, Registrar and CEO of the Ontario College of Teachers, we garnered understandings regarding the mandate, duties, and responsibilities of the College. He stated that “... the key objects are to protect the public interest by placing student well-being first and setting the standards for the teaching profession, certifying teachers, approving the programs of initial and ongoing education for teachers, and investigating and resolving complaints against members” (personal communication, February 27, 2019).

When asked to identify growing pains and challenges he mentioned the development of respectful and productive relationships with stakeholders, promoting public awareness, and building understanding and awareness among members.

According to Dr. Salvatori, successes include:

- Transparency, accountability, and efficiency in complaint resolution
- Development of standards of practice and ethical standards and the creation of a professional designation for teachers
- Changes to practice, bylaws, and legislation to keep children safe
- Development and refinement of the accreditation process
- Work with faculties of education in the historic implementation of an enhanced initial teacher education program
- Provision of a series of professional advisories over the years on relevant topics

We seized the opportunity to ask if there was any advice for jurisdictions that may wish to establish a college of educators. His advice was to ensure a strong governance model and a clear understanding of the public interest and its distinction from member interest.

Current trends in the development of colleges include the separation of the policy-making board from the cadre of individuals who would be charged with the responsibility of serving on adjudicative panels for registration appeals and investigations, among other functions. He stated that the trend to establish regulatory authorities around the world is growing.

The value of self-regulation is that council members, both professional and government-appointed, together govern to set the direction for the teaching profession and elevate public confidence through transparency and accountability.

Anchored in our ethical standards of Care, Respect, Trust and Integrity, and our standards of practice, members of the profession exemplify what it means to be Ontario Certified Teachers. It’s not surprising, then, that the teaching profession in Ontario is allowed to regulate itself. (Dr. M. Salvatori, personal communication, February 27, 2019)

Professional self-regulation is seen as a privilege in that it recognizes the specialized skills, knowledge, and experience that Ontario-licensed teachers possess, and the maturity of the profession to determine and abide by ethical standards and standards of practice.

## Teacher Professional Judgment

The issue of teacher professional judgment has been raised and requires our response. The Commission recognizes the competence and professionalism of Manitoba's teachers. The public also acknowledged these attributes in the feedback it provided.

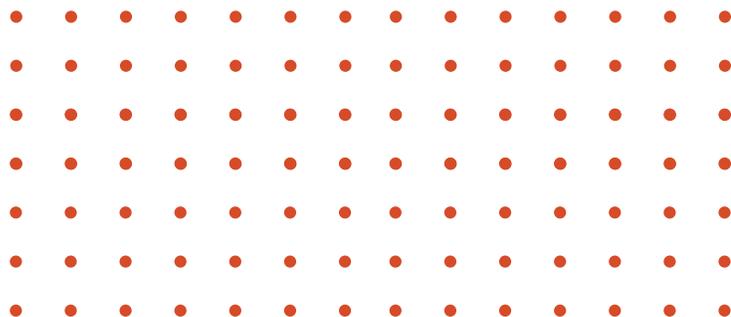
Secondly, this professionalism carries with it many responsibilities which are often stated in terms of standards of practice for a profession. One example of this professional attribute is the expectation that individuals will exercise and be responsible for their professional judgment.

This is easily understood when standards are clearly articulated.

Another standard of practice for a profession is the desire to learn with and from colleagues and to engage in continuous professional learning. This is best facilitated in a context of collegiality in which notions of professional autonomy are balanced with the need for collegial decision-making.

There is a recent surge in popularity in the development of professional learning communities (PLCs) in schools and divisions. This is a testimony to the fact that many educators learn best in context and with professional colleagues. Teaching by its very nature is collegial in practice. Many teachers want to learn about the effectiveness of the rich array of teaching strategies that exist within the literature. Many choose to learn through the research findings and others prefer to visit the classrooms of colleagues to learn about these practices. It is true that professionalism carries with it the desire to make decisions about the best practices that can be used within classrooms. However, professional communities require that we learn about these successful practices within a collegial atmosphere. Isolated autonomy is therefore the antithesis of professional learning communities. Educational expert Michael Fullan's (2008) book, *What's Worth Fighting For in the Principalship?*, stated categorically that there is no such thing as isolated autonomy in education.

The Commission has listened attentively and has considered carefully to what is needed to acknowledge the professionalism of Manitoba's teachers, to ensure that their status is fully recognized, and to elevate the profession. As stated previously, when professions come of age they regulate themselves. We believe it is time for Manitoba's teachers to put a stamp on who they are as professionals, to regulate themselves, and to forge new directions for the future of their profession.



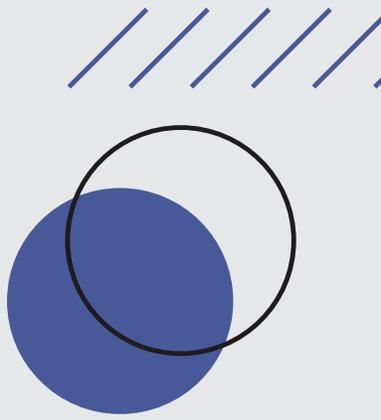


## Recommendations

1. Raise the status of the teaching profession, develop standards of practice for teaching and leadership, and affirm the pivotal role Manitoba educators play in improving student outcomes.
2. Create a Manitoba College of Educators for individuals with teaching certificates, while also providing for an “Associate Member” status, with clearly defined terms and conditions available to individuals working in education who do not hold teaching certificates, and transfer relevant resources from the Department of Education.

The College will, among other duties and responsibilities:

- Strengthen public interest and confidence in the teaching profession
  - Address training and certification of teachers
  - Provide transparency and accountability
  - Promote quality, excellence, and professionalism
  - Maintain high standards for educators
  - Provide accreditation of faculties of education
3. Establish a College governing council comprised of a broad cross-section of members of the profession (teachers, principals, consultants, union representatives), and members of the public-at-large (members of other regulated professions, parents, business professionals) to enhance public confidence in the work of the College and appoint a registrar/CEO.
  4. Develop a provincial framework for the ongoing professional development and evaluation of teachers and school administrators, including observation of teachers by administrators with a requirement for the development of action plans for improvement.
  5. Provide appropriate and timely resources and supports based on classroom composition to maintain an effective learning environment.
  6. Review and increase onsite practical programs for pre-service teachers so they may be sufficiently equipped to address and respond to the demands and complexities of any Manitoba student community.
  7. Create concrete, actionable strategies to make teacher placement and distribution equitable across the province, perhaps with incentives upon graduation.
  8. Encourage school divisions to explore innovative options regarding the organization of the school day and the school year.
  9. Work with faculties of education to continue to support teachers in the early stages of their career to ensure instructional effectiveness and to address the varied professional learning needs of teachers at different stages in their careers.



## **IMPERATIVE #2:** **INCREASE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS**

Manitoba has many leaders who are responsible for the effectiveness of the K to 12 system. In this document, we have decided to focus on the role of the principal as they play such a key role in school effectiveness. The term principal is also used to include vice-principals, who in many cases are being mentored to assume the role of principal in the future.



## Instructional Leadership

Principals and vice-principals work in a variety of settings, types of schools, and communities. One thing they have in common is a deep commitment to meeting the needs of the students they serve. Their optimism and steadfastness in the face of the challenges they experience are reflective of their professionalism and service ethic.

Various shifts have occurred in recent decades that have greatly impacted the role of school leaders. With the rapid evolution of technology in the classroom, the utilization and all-encompassing nature of communications, and the changing demographics of classrooms reflecting greater diversity, principals experience more requirements on their time than ever. The work has become more complex.

### What We Heard

As indicated through our consultation process, schools have increasingly become more involved with growing concerns over poverty, inequity, lack of supports for Indigenous, immigrant and refugee students, and other human rights issues.

A number of organizations commented on the important role school principals play in setting the culture of the school that supports student achievement. Others noted challenges in reconciling the dual responsibilities of principals as instructional leaders with a broad range of managerial tasks. Some cited the importance of succession planning and the development of future school leaders, recommending the adoption of mentorship programs to support the professional growth and skills development of aspiring and new school administrators.

*School leadership significantly influences student learning. Principals are viewed as champions of change and innovation and as leaders of teaching and learning, rather than solely administrators or managers.* (Written submission)

*Principals/vice-principals need to be able to be educational leaders in their buildings, rather than managers.* (Public survey)

*In the current system, school leaders function as managers and instructional leaders. At times managerial tasks can put considerable pressure on the school leader, resulting in instructional leadership falling to the side. We need to work to support school leaders in ensuring they engage in ongoing learning and have the supports to gain and maintain the skills required to be an effective instructional leader.* (Written submission)

### Research Highlights

The centrality of the role of principals has been studied and written about by researchers like Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) who explained that “Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.” (p. 5) As educational leaders, they shape the direction of their schools, influence the lives of students, and equip them with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and sensibilities necessary for citizens in the 21st century. They create safe, caring, and effective schools and support teachers in doing their best work. They have a strong commitment to community outreach and engagement, constantly building alliances to support learning. They are conscious of the diverse communities in their school’s surroundings. They use this knowledge as a base for building strong relationships with community leaders.

Today’s principals are expected to have high expectations for learning – for themselves, their staff, and students. Their role requires them to forge consensus on the matters that are negotiable and to be decisive on the matters that are not negotiable. They make tough decisions when necessary.



Many studies indicate that principals, who are at the frontline of all that happens in schools, are among the most respected and trusted professionals in their communities. A key quality of effective principals is that as instructional leaders they take responsibility for student learning. They are focused on improving student learning, achievement, and well-being and are committed to continuous improvement. They are:

- Knowledgeable about effective curriculum and instructional practices
- Aware of current research on best practices
- Focused on achieving equity of outcomes for all students
- Committed to monitoring the effectiveness of classroom instruction
- Instrumental in developing effective professional learning communities and collaborative cultures
- Proficient in using data to determine priorities and inform practice
- Effective in removing the distractions and barriers to improvement
- Focused on capacity building and talent development
- Excellent in public and media relations and are engaged in parent and community outreach
- Committed to developing accountability systems in relation to results

This list reflects some of the realities of the role of principals in the 21st century.

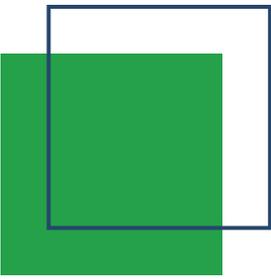
One way to better support principals is to relieve them of some of the administrative and non-educational aspects of their role. This includes having to oversee maintenance and capital improvements, accounting, and financial issues. The role of principals should be re-envisioned so that they can focus more of their attention on improving teaching and learning in their schools.

## **Principals and Vice-Principals as Members of the Manitoba Teachers' Society**

One of the questions raised during the consultations that Commissioners must address is whether teachers and principals should be in the same union. In considering this question, we first acknowledge the key role that unions play regarding negotiating the working conditions, salaries, and benefits of their members.

### **What We Heard**

The important role that school administrators play in supporting teachers was acknowledged during our consultations and in submissions. Divergent views were expressed on the topic of principals and teachers being members of the same union. Some voiced concerns that separating teachers and principals from being members of the same union would be detrimental to maintaining and developing collaborative and professional relationships. Participants at the public workshops advocated to keep teachers, principals, and clinicians within the same union to mitigate the risks of developing an “us vs. them” culture.



*...collaborative and cooperative relationships are the cornerstone for many of the most effective teaching and interventions that happen in schools at this time (keep principals and vice-principals as part of MTS). (Written submission)*

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*There are rumblings that there might be a separation between teachers and administrators in regard to the union. It is important to note that administrators are teachers and to have them pulled out of the MTS union would create a divide that would not be healthy for student education. At this time teachers and administrators work together to develop programs that will best serve students within the school. This collaboration between teachers and administrators is vital to the success of education for students in Manitoba. Administrators want to work with teachers and being part of the same union fosters trust to support collaborative efforts. (Written submission)*

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*While some may view the placement of school leaders in the same union as teachers as an inherent conflict of interest, [...] has found this to be a productive and collaborative model that best serves the needs of all stakeholders. While it is true that principals are responsible for managing the school, their primary role is in keeping with the historic roots of the title—the principal teacher. In [...], teachers and principals work together to examine practices, analyze student performance data, create collaborative cultures and inspire innovation. (Written submission)*

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*In Canadian jurisdictions where this partnership does not exist, school leaders have less time to be the principal teacher or support improvements in teaching and learning in their schools. “Principals in British Columbia devote far more of their time to warding off and adjudicating labor-management disputes than is the case in other provinces. This deprives them of precious time that could be used to focus on improving instruction.” (Canadian Association of Principals & Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2015, p.83). In Manitoba, and especially in [...], a strong partnership continues to thrive between principals and teachers that allows both groups to maximize their focus on student learning. (Written submission)*

Some stated concerns that the same union in Manitoba represents teachers and principals. They suggested that this puts the school administrators in a conflict of interest situation, limits their capacity to conduct effective performance appraisals, and complicates their human resources decision-making functions.

*With the system unionized as it is, how do we hold teachers accountable to get the students up to today’s standards? Also, why is the Principal, who is supposed to be the manager of the teachers and staff, allowed to be in the same union?? Clear conflict of interest there that only makes the problem worse. (Public survey)*

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*Principals and vice-principals should be unionized, but should NOT be in the same bargaining units as the teachers that they supervise. (Public survey)*

*I also think that principals should not be under the teacher union because I believe it clouds judgement because of repercussion with Union members. (Public survey)*

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*The union for teachers and admin has made it so difficult for anyone to say anything about teachers or Admin, that most parents and teachers do not have the courage to do it. Everything they say will be told to the teacher or Admin with whom they have a concern about. That makes things very awkward for them. Certainly doesn't encourage discussions. (Public survey)*

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*Have School Principals/V.P. as part of their own union. Presently Principals cannot properly evaluate weak teachers. (Public survey)*

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*Educator evaluation, discipline and retraining needs to be done by personnel outside of the teacher's union. (Public survey)*

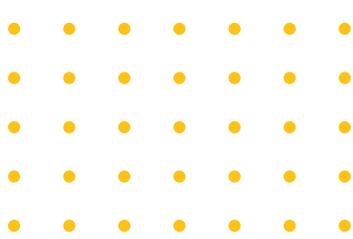
### **Research Highlights**

In an article by Zwaagstra (2008) published by the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, the important role that unions have played is recognized. He stated that:

- Principals perform a management role in schools. It is an inherent conflict of interest for a union to represent the interest of both managers and employees.
- In circumstances where the principal initiates disciplinary action against a teacher, the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS) represents the interest of the teacher rather than those of the principal.
- Principals have found that the Manitoba Teachers' Society has been an active opponent of any attempt to exercise their management prerogatives in areas such as work assignments for employees.

The arguments raised include the fact that the primary role of MTS is to defend the rights of teachers, that there are policy positions which, if implemented, would curtail the ability of management to manage their school and make operational decisions, concluding that there is substantial difference between MTS and other professional organizations.

A new model is needed that establishes principals as management and removes the potential for conflict of interest that currently exists when management and employees are in the same union. This will improve the role clarity and accountability to perform the management and labour relations functions required of principals. This will resolve many issues related to hiring, work assignments, and performance management.

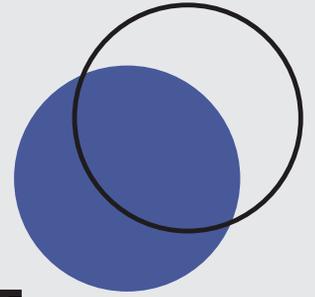


The Commission also believes that it is in the interest of both teachers and administrators not to be represented by the same union. This recommendation is consistent with best practices in labour relations and human resource management. The Commission does not think this change would be an impediment to constructive and positive professional relationships between teachers and school administrators. We further suggest that this approach would not represent a barrier to reinforce the role of principals as instructional leaders. As a matter of fact, the Commission recommends that the workload of school administrators be reduced to enhance their capacity to focus on instructional leadership.

## Recommendations

10. Reinforce the centrality of the role of principals as instructional leaders in improving student learning and achievement, and work with them to devise ways to facilitate their ongoing professional learning needs.
11. Create a new principals' association, potentially associated with the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), remove principals and vice-principals from the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS), while protecting their seniority, pension, benefits, and other entitlements, and include an option for those administrators who wish to return to classroom teaching and the MTS.
12. Reorganize administrative staff to create business manager positions for schools or families of schools to assume some of the maintenance, operations, accounting, and financial roles of principals to enable them to focus on school leadership, teaching, learning, parent and community engagement, school management, and school effectiveness.





## **IMPERATIVE #3:** **IMPROVE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND WELL-BEING**

As Commissioners, we take seriously the statement that students are the centre of the school system and the only reason for its existence. Listening to students, the focus and beneficiaries of our school system, was one of the most enjoyable aspects of the review for many of us. We were impressed with the insights and skills of the students who participated. Many of those we consulted expressed interest in being engaged in education decision-making and in contributing to the discourse as a result of their experiences.



## Student Engagement

In considering the purpose of schools and our primary responsibility to students, the issue of student success and well-being is prominent on that list. A corollary of this is the need to engage students fully in the learning process if they are to be motivated to succeed in school. The issue of engagement is therefore an important purpose of education and must be addressed systematically and intentionally to improve education in Manitoba. The performance results, which were discussed earlier, show that our students are not reaching their potential.

We also know that in order to improve student achievement, a few conditions must be in place. These include:

- Meaningful relationships
- Relevant curriculum options
- Encouragement and recognition of interest, aptitudes, and abilities
- High expectations for learning
- Use of research-informed strategies to improve student outcomes

Early school leaving or “dropping out of school” is often related to the issue of disengagement. In addition to addressing these factors, a recognition of the non-school factors related to gender, developmental challenges, racial issues, and poverty also come into play.

At its best, engagement would be described as students and adults working together on issues that are mutually important. There is mutual respect, caring, and sharing, and each builds upon the strengths of those in the group. Each approaches the task in a spirit of genuine inquiry and the work thrives in a solution-focused atmosphere. There is a tolerance for ambiguity both in content and creative processes; failure is not an option, and mistakes are sources of learning. Each does his or her share of the work on time and with diligence.

Elected officials, superintendents, principals, and teachers can have a significant impact on student engagement through the policies and programs that they implement to facilitate this process. High standards and expectations, and programming, such as outdoor education and career development, facilitate student engagement.

### What We Heard

Manitobans shared a variety of views related to student engagement. Some expressed that teacher workloads affected their ability to create optimal conditions to foster student engagement. Others highlighted teaching practices such as inquiry-based learning, hands-on activities, land-based and outdoor education, and the use of new technologies as highly conducive to engaging students. Still others pointed to the need for flexible curriculum to allow teachers to use a wide range of teaching approaches to engage students. Some spoke to the factors outside the school that have an effect on student engagement.

*With the goal of increasing student engagement and success I feel that more specialty programs, professional development and classroom support should be given to teachers to best meet the needs of their classrooms and communities.* (Public survey)



***Student learning and success couldn't be possible without student engagement, and the supports of all team members around them.*** (Teacher survey)

***Our school is great at connecting with the kids on multiple levels and providing hands-on learning that helps the kids really understand the concepts instead of just reading or seeing or hearing them. They do a lot of activities and their student engagement is really high.*** (Public survey)

***Technology has enhanced my instruction, allowing for a different way to present information, which is good for student engagement.*** (Teacher survey)

.....

***Student engagement/learning is impacted by factors outside the classroom such as family environment, poverty and mental health. These factors are not always known to the school/teacher as students/parents are reluctant to share this information.*** (Teacher survey)

***Today more than ever before, student engagement depends on linking school experience to the 'real world'. Students have unlimited access to the world through the internet and in many cases are learning well beyond the adults in their lives. Our current Manitoba curriculum does not reflect a global classroom. Manitoba students need a 'living' curriculum, a skills-based curriculum, curriculum that is not built in silos but is interdisciplinary.*** (Written submission)

There was a plea from students for increased engagement. They identified many issues regarding the challenges in maintaining motivation, which decreased as they progressed through the grades. They described resulting behaviours such as “slacking off,” skipping school and leaving class early. They talked about the importance of supportive and trustworthy teachers and other adults in their lives who bolstered their feelings of safety and security. They also said:

***Someone to believe in you no matter..., someone that goes the extra distance.***

.....

***Support and encouragement are two of the most important things for a student to achieve success... It builds up my confidence which makes me push harder into my schooling knowing I have people behind me who want to see me succeed.***

.....

***Most helpful thing in achieving success is having teachers who actually care.***

.....

***Positive relationships with teachers are key.***

.....

***The most helpful thing that helped me to become a successful student was an afterschool program that I went to. They helped me out with a bus pass, tutoring and also had true***



*human interactions and they really cared about you. Also moving to a smaller school helped. In all friendly relations helped me though my school life. I also really never really had many people or teachers to relate to at the big school I went to.*

.....

*One of the biggest challenges I've faced throughout school in order to achieve success would be staying motivated to do my work.*

.....

*The biggest challenge was going through my transition as a transgender person.*

### **Research Highlights**

Three positive outcomes of engagement are described as the *social*, *academic*, and *intellectual* engagement mentioned earlier (Willms, Friesen, & Milton, 2009):

- Social engagement produces a sense of belonging and participation in school culture
- Academic engagement indicates participation in school work
- Intellectual engagement reflects a serious emotional and cognitive investment in learning, using higher order thinking skills (such as analysis and evaluation) to increase understanding, solve complex problems, or construct new knowledge

In considering issues related to engagement, it is also important to contemplate its opposite – namely, student disengagement. Ferguson et al. (2005) suggested that there are five reasons for disengagement:

- Negative school climate
- Lack of adequate counselling
- Lack of relevant curriculum
- Lack of flexibility to meet unique needs
- Lack of support for students with disabilities

One might ask whether engagement is worth measuring. We must measure what we value. In education, having information on engagement is critical in planning for success. Invitations for student input is one way to seek answers to what is being done well and what needs improvement. “What we get to hear depends on what we dare to ask, and so far, we haven’t been asking nearly enough about students’ engagement in learning” (Dunleavy, 2008, p. 23). In part, teacher investment in student engagement begins with respect for individual learners and their needs.



## Recommendations

13. Require all schools and divisions to conduct student engagement and satisfaction surveys at specific intervals with input from students, parents, teachers, and the community-at-large and prepare an action plan to address the findings.
14. Enhance the implementation of curriculum, emphasize the holistic nature of curriculum, and infuse competencies such as student leadership development, environmental stewardship, character, and citizenship development and life skills across all curricular areas.
15. Provide access to the arts in all schools, including music, visual arts, dance, drama, and other value-added community activities, to make it possible for all children, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances, to broaden their exploration of career-related and employment-ready experiences.
16. Replace the current requirement for Grade 11 and 12 Physical Education/Health Education with new and more rigorous required high school credits (for marks) that address the concept of a healthy mind, body and lifestyle, the practical knowledge and skills that young people need for adult living including financial management, nutrition, entrepreneurialism, employability, and parenting skills.

## Attendance, Absenteeism, Suspensions, and Student Outcomes: Issues, Concerns, and Actions

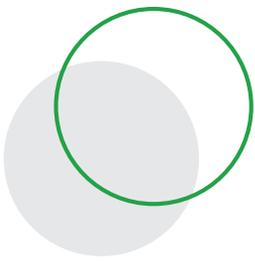
While many students miss occasional days due to the common cold or dentist appointment, those students dealing with chronic absenteeism have the highest risk of lower graduation rates or weakened educational outcomes. Correlations between chronic absenteeism and students living in vulnerable circumstances, such as poverty, are strong.

Learning and student-to-teacher and student-to-student interaction require regular attendance. Students learn to debate with one another, ask questions, listen to their classmates, and offer solutions to problems posed within their subject areas. Student evaluation can also be compromised as many courses require that students participate and contribute to the learning of their peers. Participation, achievement, and attendance are intertwined. As well, most jurisdictions have regulations and guidelines in place to address attendance, one being the requirement to report to attendance counsellors the absence of students of compulsory school age.

There are clearly many strategies that can be considered and promoted to combat absenteeism and support students that are at risk of failure and unacceptable outcomes, generally. Because poor attendance is linked directly to lowered success in school, it is not unreasonable to conclude that there are negative effects on a child's future life chances and success if these issues are not addressed in a timely and effective manner.

### What We Heard

Issues related to attendance, absenteeism, suspensions, and student outcomes were raised by a number of participants throughout the province but perhaps more acutely during the consultation meetings held in northern and remote areas as well in the meeting held in central Winnipeg. Attendance was identified as a significant challenge, particularly in the early grades. Many have associated the issue of attendance with housing, health, and other life barriers often linked to poverty.



*If we want our children to have healthy productive lives, if we want our society to benefit from the contribution many of these absent children could make to our society if they had an education, then Manitoba must figure out how to have more of our children attending school regularly.* (Brief 8, Burrows)

*That poverty plays a role across most other indicators of student learning also holds: whether in terms of graduation rates, attendance rates, or provincial assessment results, the factor of poverty transcends all categories.* (Written submission)

*The biggest struggle I faced when beginning my school journey was in high school. I went to a school that only saw you when you stood out with achievements from the school itself. It was too big to see you as a normal individual. That bummed me out hard. I was used to having that human interaction back at my old middle school. I didn't really start to notice this until grade 10 and this got me down. I felt like I needed to be the best all the time and that got to me when I started to get lower marks. I got depressed I started not going to school I started to stay cooped up in my room.* (Student comment)

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*The biggest challenge I've faced in achieving success in school is actually being there. I know I can do the work and listen to instructions but it's hard to be here sometimes.* (Student comment)

In order to better understand and appreciate the issues related to attendance, absenteeism, and suspensions, the Commission met with the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth. On that note, we thank the Minister of Education, the Honourable Kelvin Goertzen, in his April 2019 letter to the Commission, for highlighting the special report from Manitoba's Advocate for Children and Youth, *A Place Where it Feels Like Home: The Story of Tina Fontaine*, asking us to consider the Advocate's recommendations as part of our review.

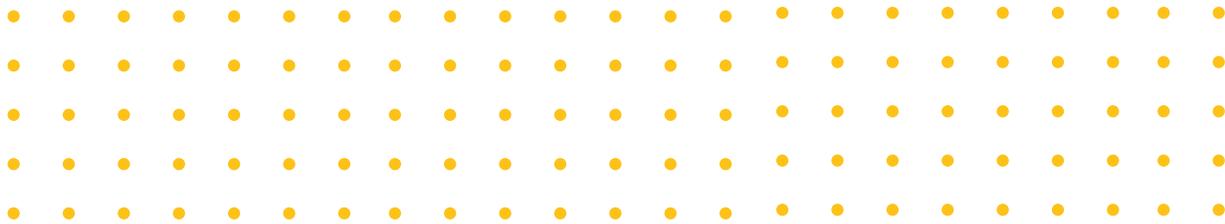
The information gathered from the written submission and the meeting held with the Advocate, helped the Commission gain important research insights that are examined in greater detail in the following research section.

### **Research Highlights**

There is conclusive evidence to support the fact that attendance is key to student achievement. Statistics correlate absenteeism with lower student performance, even from Kindergarten, with an increase of absenteeism of these same students once in high school (Bauer, Liu, Schanzenbach, & Shambaugh, 2018).

School absenteeism is the legitimate or illegitimate absence of a student from school or class. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% of the school year and when absenteeism exceeds 20%, it is designated as severe chronic absenteeism (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2018). Chronic absenteeism has been recognized as a serious public health issue (Dube & Orpinas, 2009).

Absenteeism is an early warning sign that a student requires supports. The reasons for chronic absenteeism are varied but can include poor health, poor mental health, family and work responsibilities, transportation, bullying, homelessness, undiagnosed cognitive vulnerabilities, or, in the case of Tina Fontaine, the death of a parent (Rafa, 2017).



Students may skip individual classes, or days of school, for a variety of reasons. Difficult home circumstances, poor relationships at school, substance abuse, and mental health problems are among the risk factors associated with chronic skipping of school. It makes intuitive sense that this type of absence would have a relationship to student achievement, and, indeed, the correlation is well established in large-scale achievement research (O’Grady, Fung, Brochu, Servage & Tao, 2016, p.136).

Analysis of how schools confront this obstacle is important, both in terms of an overview of additional contributing factors and in terms of identifying strategies schools and districts can adopt to reduce absenteeism and influence student outcomes positively.

Experts such as Sawyer (2018) agreed that we should consider, in these discussions, both excused and unexcused absences. With both categories in mind, many underlying factors contribute to poor attendance – and some of these factors commonly intersect with poverty:

- Economic factors such as single-parent families, a parent that works multiple jobs, or lack of transportation
- Harassment or bullying, a vulnerable or unstable home life, the need to work, encounters with the justice system, illness, or lack of an attentive adult caregiver
- Social issues, such as poor mental health, illness, or behavioural problems
- A lack of caring and supportive teachers or under-resourced schools

Various proven methods to confront poor attendance include those at the school and district level, and those which engage with parents and families (Bauer, Liu, Schanzenbach, & Shambaugh, 2018):

- Prevention of absenteeism can be realized with the full-time employment of a school nurse or other professional to decrease the likelihood of children leaving school early; free or low-cost lunches; and instruction on sanitary practices to promote health
- Administration of consistent data collection on attendance, and the implementation of accountability systems are key; these are most effective including when there is transparency, engagement, and visibility on the part of all stakeholders
- The implementation of accountability measures must not be a superficial act, but must accurately reflect data to be effective
- Coaches, mentors, and teachers can assist in identifying underlying factors involved (such as transportation, illness, financial insecurity, suspensions, household issues)
- Connections between schools and parents or families are also extremely valuable: strategies such as text messages to parents to communicate when their child is absent, to provide reminders about field trips or events, and to create opportunities to connect parents and teachers

The submission received from the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (June 20, 2019) included rich research information on the effects of irregular attendance, including:

- School absenteeism can have serious consequences for the child. In the short-term, lack of attendance leads to challenges in learning and achievement (Carroll, 2010; Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007, as cited in Maynard, McCrea, Pigott, & Kelly, 2013).
- Over time, school absenteeism is known to increase the risk of dropout by 35% (Cabus & De Witte, 2014).
- Absenteeism can also increase the risk for violence, injury, substance misuse, psychiatric disorders, and economic deprivation due to loss of earning potential (Dube & Orpinas, 2009; Attwood & Croll, 2006).
- Addressing chronic absenteeism is essential for the fulfillment of the right to education, which is enshrined by Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- Out-of-school suspensions have a detrimental effect on academic achievement and school outcomes (Noltemeyer, Ward, & Mcloughlin, 2015; Lacoé & Steinberg, 2018).
- Suspensions increase the risk that students will fail the curriculum and double the risk that students will repeat a grade (Hemphill et al., 2006; Fabelo et al., 2011).
- More suspensions are associated with worse achievement, even after controlling for differences between students (Hwang, 2018).
- Ultimately, suspensions are associated with an increased risk of dropping out of school; one study found that suspended students are 68% more likely to drop out (Noltemeyer, Ward, & Mcloughlin, 2015; Suh, Suh & Houston, 2007).
- The effects of suspensions extend beyond the classroom. Being suspended was found to increase the likelihood of criminal victimization, criminal involvement, and incarceration in adulthood (Wolf & Kupchik, 2016).
- Suspension is often the first step in a chain of events leading to short- and long-term consequences, including academic disengagement, academic failure, dropout, and delinquency. (Skiba, Arredondo, & Rausch, 2014, p.2) (Quoted by the Advocate on p. 8).
- Researchers theorize that suspensions increase unsupervised time for students that are at high risk of further detrimental behaviour while simultaneously reducing access to supportive services (Valdebenito, Eisner, Farrington, Ttofi & Sutherland, 2018).
- There is some evidence to support this theory. A large study of adolescents found that being suspended from school increased the likelihood of arrest *in the same month that the suspension took place*; this effect is stronger for youth without a history of delinquent behaviours (Monahan, VanDerhei, Bechtold, & Cauffman, 2014, emphasis added).



The circumstances surrounding the tragic death of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine is a striking example of the implications of lack of diligence, monitoring, and action on student attendance.

Unfortunately, this trend was not immediately obvious to the school given the lack of digitalization and automation of school records. Although the school eventually responded in the form of a social work assessment – once Tina’s absenteeism and behaviour escalated – it was nearly two years after her attendance first began to falter. The lack of adequate measurement of attendance rates and lack of early responses presented a missed opportunity for early identification and intervention, allowing Tina Fontaine to fall through the cracks of the education system. (Written submission, Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth, p.5)

The recommendations pertaining to student attendance include and build upon the advice and insights of the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth and other passionate community advocates.

## Recommendations

17. Increase public awareness of the right to education and communicate with students, parents, guardians, and all those who have a stake in student achievement, around addressing absenteeism and the expectations, policies, and impact of attendance on student outcomes.
18. Increase the capacity to collect, measure, assess, and respond to the underlying causes of absenteeism to inform policies, appropriate interventions, and outreach to mitigate the negative impacts of non-attendance and provide transparent information to the public on suspensions and expulsions, and ensure that absences are reported to the province and to parents in a timely manner.
19. Develop a plan to identify underlying factors for non-attendance and address chronic absenteeism in Manitoba to measure, identify, assess, and respond to school absenteeism to ensure that the best interests of children are paramount and that actions respect the right to education for children and youth.
20. Review *Manitoba’s Provincial Code of Conduct: Appropriate Interventions and Disciplinary Consequences* (2017) in light of recommendations of Manitoba’s Advocate for Children and Youth and, regarding suspensions and expulsions, develop a province-wide strategy to limit, reduce, and phase-out exclusionary practices except in situations of imminent safety risk to students and staff, balancing appropriately the need for at-risk students to receive an education and ensuring that all students have a safe and orderly learning environment.
21. Develop and implement a province-wide protocol that clearly defines responsibilities of all those involved in the education of students and their families regarding the documentation of attendance and staged actions to be taken when students are absent, with suggestions on how to build upon and sustain relationships with students who are experiencing absenteeism.

## Mental Health and Well-being

Throughout the consultation, the Commission heard about the prevalence of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety in the school system.

### What We Heard

Students' mental health as well as overall well-being were identified as critical factors that affect student learning. While mental health issues are applicable to all segments of society, newcomers, 2SLGBTQ+ students, and students living in poverty were often singled out as requiring special attention. A number of organizations have suggested that focused professional learning opportunities in this area is required. Others alluded to the need for implementation of new models favouring a comprehensive and coordinated approach in support of well-being and well-becoming. Many referred to the need for a strong intersectoral approach to maximize the effectiveness of the actions undertaken to address this multifaceted issue.

Participants at the public workshops and survey respondents clearly signalled the need for a provincial strategy and more support and direction in the area of mental health service delivery. At the same time, people acknowledged that "education cannot do it all." Manitobans called for greater coordinated support beyond the traditional walls of the school. Mental health was also a recurring topic among written submissions, noting its effects on student attendance and ultimately student achievement and outcomes.

*A more holistic approach needs to happen in regards to the mental health of many students.*  
(Teacher survey)

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*Support for students, families and schools that need support outside of the education system (poverty, mental health).* (Teacher survey)

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*We need a holistic approach to mental health and family services, right now they are all separated.* (Public survey)

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*If you are concerned about test scores in math and reading, the physiological and emotional conditions of children must be addressed as children need to be emotionally ready before they can begin to develop academically.* (Public survey)

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*There are many more children with learning difficulties and mental health issues— I don't know that the school is funded and/or equipped to properly manage or cope with this!?*  
(Public survey)

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*We cannot afford to think about our education system as being divorced from the mental health and well-being of our children and our communities. Schools do not exist solely to impart content knowledge and develop problem solving and critical thinking skills; they must also create holistic approaches to fostering well-being in schools, offer robust and relevant learning opportunities in a safe environment, and strengthen relationships with parents and the community.* (Written submission)

As a Commission, we had the privilege of hearing directly from students about their own mental health challenges. Many of them indicated that they want increased access to mental health and social supports in the schools. Students expressed a desire to learn about coping mechanisms and tools to offer peer support when needed. They also noted that teachers do not seem to get the support they need to help students with mental health needs. A call for increased access to mental health resources came up frequently in student sessions.

***I never had a lot of mental health support or support in general to this day, I still haven't gotten a lot of help. I've developed more mental health issues because of it. Worrying about this kind of stuff has always made it hard to focus in school but I always keep trying because having an education seems like the only option right now. I still don't feel achieved in what I've done, I don't think I'll feel like that until I become a teacher.*** (Student comment)

Effective, sustainable progress in school-based mental health promotion depends on a common vision, shared responsibilities and harmonized actions among health, education and other sectors. The challenge is to coordinate these efforts so that partners pool resources and develop action plans with, and in support of schools (MASS, 2012, A Comprehensive Response, para. 2).

...A significant amount of work is required to implement a comprehensive, collaborative and reliable framework based on the social determinants of health that crosses the private and public sectors and links jurisdictions (MASS, A Comprehensive Response, para. 7).

The Province of Manitoba's (2019a) report, Literacy and Numeracy in Manitoba: Setting the Context stated:

Governance and system structures both enable and constrain action. Change is needed to enable multiple systems to work together more effectively and to facilitate a web of relationships that can support learners and their families. Collaborative approaches need to be tailored to unique geographic and community contexts (p. 7).

Given the regularity with which mental health was raised during our consultations we thought that we should address it in a more in-depth manner than we are addressing other issues.

We recognize that mental health issues can affect student learning, achievement, and well-being. Hence, it warrants a deeper understanding and analysis so that parents, teachers, and all those who work with students on a daily basis have common understandings and strategies to address these issues effectively in schools.

It is certainly not necessary to reinvent the wheel, as the statement goes. Only recently, the Ontario College of Teachers (2018) issued a professional advisory document to teachers to educate them about supporting students' mental health. We asked for their permission to include a link to the article in our report so that other teachers and parents can have the benefit of these insights. The full article is available on the Ontario College of Teachers website at [https://www.oct.ca/-/media/pdfs/Mental%20Health%20Professional%20Advisory/2018%20rofessionalAdvisorySupportingstudentsmentalhealth\\_ENweb.pdf](https://www.oct.ca/-/media/pdfs/Mental%20Health%20Professional%20Advisory/2018%20rofessionalAdvisorySupportingstudentsmentalhealth_ENweb.pdf).

## Research Highlights

### *Supporting Students' Mental Health: A Guide for Educators*

The Public Health Agency of Canada defines positive mental health as “the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face” (as cited in Ontario College of Teachers, 2018, Introduction, para. 2). Mental health encapsulates one’s ability to manage thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, making it possible to set and achieve goals, create and keep relationships, adapt to and cope with stress and sadness, and feel happiness.

There are established criteria internationally for the diagnosis of mental illness. These relate to brain functioning and other reactions and behaviours, which affect an individual’s ability to do daily tasks and engage in daily living requirements. This often goes much deeper and requires the attention of individuals with specialized training in both diagnosis and treatment. It also means that while we should be aware of issues like mood swings and other out-of-character behaviours of our students, we should not jump to conclusions about their mental health without seeking the opinion of those with the training to assess and treat these issues.

The World Health Organization (WHO) stated that mental health disorders will be the world’s leading cause of disability by 2030. “Current predictions indicate that by 2030 depression will be the leading cause of disease burden globally” (para. 2). “In any given year, one in five people in Canada experiences a mental health problem or illness and it affects almost everyone in some way” (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013, p. 1). “In 2011, an estimated 1.04 million young people aged 9-19 were living with a mental illness. This represents 23.4 per cent or nearly one in four young people” (Mental Health Commission, p. 11). “Seventy per cent of mental health problems have their onset during childhood or adolescence” (Children’s Mental Health Ontario, 2019). “An estimated 1.2 million children and youth are affected by mental illness, yet less than 20 per cent receive appropriate treatment” (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013). Further, “suicide accounts for 24 per cent of all deaths among 15-24-year-olds in Canada” and is the second leading cause of death among teens (Canadian Mental Health Association, n.d., How common is it? para. 4). Nearly one-quarter (23.4 per cent) of First Nations youth reported psychological distress scores which suggested that they were likely to have a moderate to severe mental disorder (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2018a, p.70). “The lifetime prevalence of suicide ideation and attempts among First Nations youth was 16 per cent and 10.3 per cent respectively” (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2018b, p. 134).

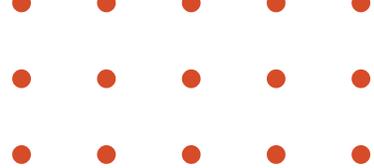
### *The Role of Educators*

Signs of mental health challenges can become evident in the early grades and if not addressed, may peak in the middle and secondary years. By the very nature of the teacher-student relationship, teachers are often the first to see changes in student behaviour that may signal the need for intervention.

In order for teachers to fulfill their role to identify children at risk, seek help, support them on the path to care, and create a learning environment that supports recovery and wellness, they need ready access to trained mental health professionals to take action.

### *Characteristics of Some Mental Health Conditions*

The impact of mental illness on student learning, emotional health, behaviours, and relationships manifests in ways beyond struggling to meet learning expectations. Students may abuse substances, drop out of school, struggle to make and keep friends or to develop appropriate relationships with adults.



Children and youth, however, often demonstrate different moods, thoughts and behaviours as part of normal childhood development. Teachers should pay particular attention to intense behaviours that persist over long periods, are inappropriate for the student's age, or that appear to interfere with their lives. Excessive or unusual moods might indicate a mental health issue that requires consultation and intervention. "One might think about children's mental health as on a continuum ranging from developmentally normal, through problems that may be addressed in the everyday life of the classroom and the school, to problems that require expert assessment and intensive clinical interventions" (Levinson, 2014, Actions Observed, para. 1).

The Canadian Mental Health Association (n.d., Signs of a mental illness, para. 1) has identified several signs for possible concern that may include:

- Significant drops in school marks
- Changes to sleeping or eating habits
- Avoiding friends and family
- Frequent, angry outbursts
- Drinking a lot and/or using drugs
- Not doing things they usually like to do
- Worrying constantly
- Frequent mood swings
- Obsession or lack of concern about weight and appearance
- Lacking energy or motivation
- Feeling down
- Risky behaviours

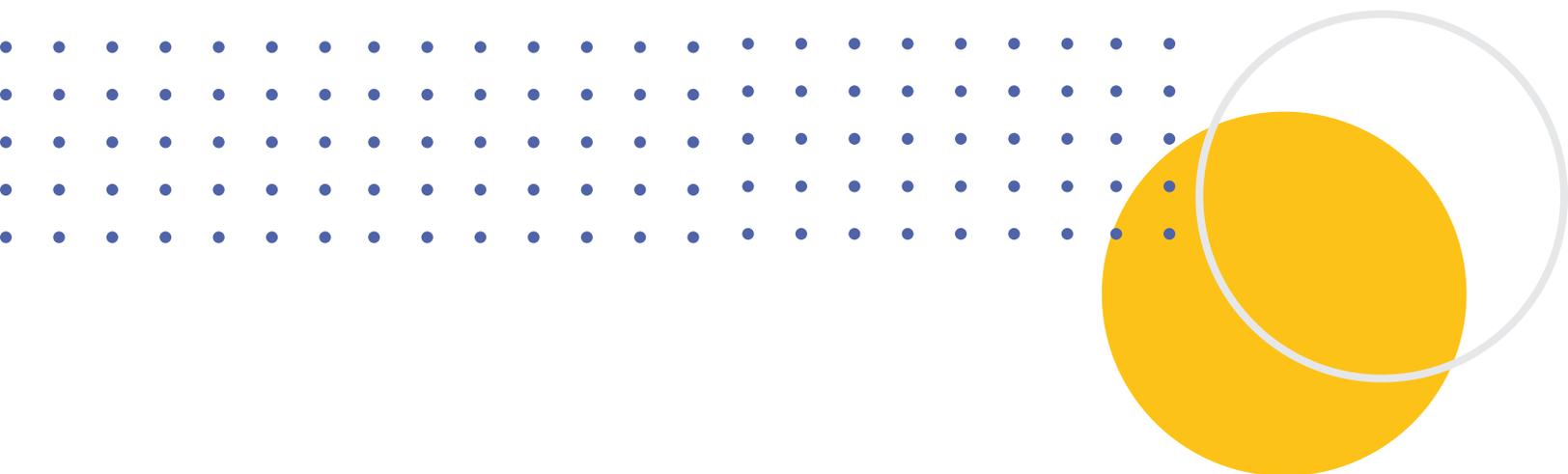
As educators seek to improve their effectiveness in working with children who are experiencing mental health issues there is a need for them to:

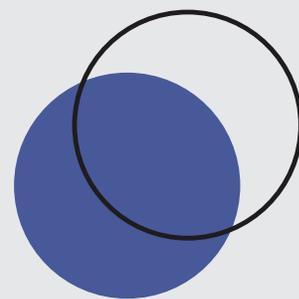
- Create a supportive learning environment
- Learn to recognize behaviours of concern
- Intervene appropriately
- Be sensitive and reflective
- Maintain high professional standards
- Seek out and make referrals for professional assistance



## Recommendations

22. Work with government to clarify the mandate of Healthy Child Manitoba, to work across departments and with communities, to facilitate the development of coordinated policies, programs, and services that promote the best possible outcomes for children, given that no single department or area is currently structured to meet the holistic needs of children and youth as they mature and develop.
23. Develop and implement a comprehensive intersectoral mental health strategy that specifically addresses the professional learning requirements of educators, to recognize and address the mental health needs of students.
24. Implement mental well-being initiatives to address student anxiety and to develop positive coping strategies and tools to support students in dealing with emotions associated with the impact of abuse, trauma and challenging life events and circumstances.





## **IMPERATIVE #4:**

# **CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS STUDENTS**

There is no doubt that the performance of Indigenous students in Canada needs specific attention and commitments if they are to achieve their full potential. Statistics Canada states that they are the fastest growing group in Canada. This highlights the need for focused attention and targeted interventions to address the educational needs and disrupt the pattern of underachievement that persists between non-Indigenous and Indigenous students.

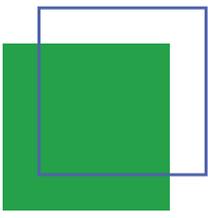
Current statistics and assessments worldwide and in Canada indicate a persistent and distinct educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, with the former at a gross disadvantage in terms of outcomes. Indigenous peoples as a whole suffer from extensive inequities and historically based traumas.

Teachers can be most effective if they are provided with a formal education experience that values Indigenous cultures, diversity, excellence, and truth and reconciliation beginning in their elementary and secondary education and their undergraduate and graduate studies in education programs. As leaders and coaches they can best link their students' learning to the past, present, and future. Creating cultural safety in classrooms and schools will go a long way in changing current outcomes for Indigenous students. Teachers knowledgeable about career development and life planning can play an important role in supporting students to develop aspirations that inform their career decision-making and future life-planning goals and needs.

It is important to enhance student outcomes through comprehensive integration of Indigenous perspectives in all K to 12 subject areas to develop critical thinkers, resilient individuals, and empathetic leaders who are competent to address reconciliation issues in the context of this country's history and contemporary realities.

For teachers to develop cultural knowledge and awareness at all levels within the education system, ongoing professional learning is essential to further enhance desired student achievement outcomes. Elders, Knowledge Keepers and Spiritual Advisors are essential in this process. Their involvement can play a major role in facilitating success.

A significant number of adults in Manitoba could benefit from Adult Foundational Learning-related services and programming to bring them closer to the labour market or improve employment outcomes. The data show that Manitoba is one of two provinces having the highest proportion of students without a high school credential. Manitoba also has the lowest level of post-secondary education attainment in Canada for the 25 to 44 age group. The data also underscored a significant gap between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations (Statistics Canada, n.d.).



## What We Heard

Participants noted that Indigenous learners have unique needs to be met throughout the Kindergarten to Grade 12 journey. Indigenous perspectives, culture, and languages were identified as components that could be included in all curricula at every stage.

There are unique challenges related to intergenerational trauma as a result of the history and the legacy of residential schools that Indigenous students deal with. These impact many aspects of their learning.

Participants at the public workshops noted that reconciliation relies on understanding that the reasons for the gap in education outcomes between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students in Manitoba is directly tied to the legacy of residential schools and the resulting generational impacts. They also emphasized a critical need for equitable resources and supports for Indigenous languages and cultural practices if improvements are to be realized.

Many students called our attention to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) Calls to Action and recommended that Indigenous history should be a mandatory course for all students in all school divisions.

Some of those who presented to the Commission reported measurable improvements in student outcomes and well-being resulting from the implementation of holistic community and family-centred programming and curriculum. Some school divisions reported positive impacts on Indigenous graduation rates following the implementation of initiatives in response to recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC).

Participants at the public workshops spoke out about the importance of infusing Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum and ensuring that supports are in place for ongoing teacher training and development.

***We need to support teachers to better teach Indigenous history and provide a framework for reconciliation through education. Manitoba teachers are the key to creating a community free from racism and the deeply held prejudices against First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Teachers need curriculum supports to better meet these needs. We need to improve graduation rates for Indigenous youth, who are the fastest growing population in our province.*** (Public survey)

***Teachers need more opportunities to learn from Indigenous elders, colleagues and knowledge keepers to better inform and prepare them to support the teaching of Indigenous perspectives and issues.*** (Teacher survey)

***Many pre-service teachers have expressed dismay at their own lack of understanding of Indigenous peoples and cultural knowledges, and as such, feel ill-equipped to become leaders in their own classrooms in this regard. When pre-service teachers identify themselves as agents of change who can think systemically, they can address the social realities of their students from a position of strength. That position requires grounding in discipline content and an understanding of socio-economic contexts.*** (Written submission)



*The achievement gap is widening for Indigenous students and that is concerning given a K-12 student body in Manitoba that comprises 18% Indigenous students; that per centage is poised to rise given 2016 census data that indicate while Indigenous people in total represent 18 per cent of Manitoba's population, 29.6 per cent of children aged four or younger are Indigenous. An emphasis on gaps in achievement itself clouds the complex interactions between issues and underlying structural factors. The focus should be on why the gap exists and how it can be closed. The Manitoba K-12 Education system needs to concentrate on the continuing importance of Reconciliation and invest in strategies that genuinely empower Indigenous students. For this to occur, Indigenous students need to see themselves as belonging in schools and supported by Indigenous teachers.* (Written submission)

*Systemic development of Indigenization in K-12 education is a priority that can be addressed through provincial leadership in holistic planning and implementation with Indigenous communities and educators that will result in cyclical long-term visioning, student achievement, teaching, accountability, governance, and appropriate funding.* (Written submission)

Indigenous leaders and program leaders highlighted province-wide measures that would greatly enhance Indigenous health, well-being, and educational success, including:

- The need for cultural safety in both classrooms and throughout the school system.
- Fully implemented curriculum that reflects Indigenous perspectives, values, and history.
- An increase in the numbers of Indigenous teachers: currently about 9% of teachers self-identify as Indigenous, while over 17% of students self-identify as the same. Also, only 35 of the educators that graduate each year are Indigenous, which falls short of the numbers needed.
- Purposeful outreach to parents, and the building of trust relationships (a distinctive re-envisioning of school relationships with Aboriginal families).
- Indigenous leaders must be given equitable opportunities to have a voice at the level of governance, mandated if needed. The antiquated top-down framework of government directives does not work. (Brief 38, Johnston, Bartlett, & Prevost-Derbecker)

One brief submitted by a parent and teacher implores the education system to be more culturally responsive and empathetic in response to the TRC Calls to Action (Brief 20, Sacher). Another respondent indicated that the diversity of languages and cultures in Manitoba — diversity even amongst Indigenous cultures — ought to be reflected in the staffing of schools and in the enhancement of curriculum that is imbedded with Indigenous culture and values (Brief 21, O'Leary). Many briefs speak to a genuine hope that implementation of new strategies and procedures will make the TRC's Calls to Action into a reality.

### **Research Highlights**

Gordon Martell, Saskatchewan Superintendent, often highlights the following statistics:

- "The average child poverty rate for all Indigenous children is ... at 40%" (McDonald and Wilson, 2013, p.6).
- Significant gaps exist in Early Learning Indicators among Aboriginal Children (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).



- “High school graduation data ... for 2004-2009 identifies the rate of First Nation graduation at 36% for 2004-05, 30% for 2005-06, 32% for 2006-07, 34% for 2007-08 and 36% for 2008-09” (Assembly of First Nations, 2011, p. 5).
- “...the 2010 graduation rate for self-declared Aboriginal students attending Saskatchewan provincial schools in 2010 was 32.7%” (Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan, 2012, p. 46).
- Alarming health outcomes exist for Aboriginal children (Lemstra & Neudorf, 2008).
- Lower rates of post-secondary education exist resulting in employment gaps and lower lifetime earnings (Howe, 2011).
- In provincial schools, learning outcomes for Indigenous students from low SES backgrounds are similar to those living on-reserve (Provincial Auditor Saskatchewan, 2012, p. 46).

As well, Brownell et al. (2015) stated: “There is an over-representation of Indigenous children in care (First Nations, Métis, Inuit); they compose approximately 26% of the child population in Manitoba, yet they accounted for close to 90% of children in care on March 31, 2014. This over-representation reflects historical social and health inequities and injustices experienced by Indigenous communities” (p. xi).

Manitoba was one of six Canadian jurisdictions, along with New Zealand and Queensland (Australia) to participate in the OECD study (2017), *Promising Practices in Supporting Success for Indigenous Students*, which identified six priorities for accelerating change to improve success for Indigenous students – student well-being, participation rates, student engagement, early learning, supporting teachers and leaders, and engaging families.

Through the examination of data and promising practices across the eight participating jurisdictions, the study found that in schools where most, if not all, of the following policies and practices were in place over a sustained period of time, that progress is being made on improving achievement for Indigenous students:

- High-quality early learning, through working with families and the provision of tailored early childhood education
- Leadership in schools that is actively focused on student outcomes, responsive to student needs and resourceful in putting in place the necessary educational provision
- High-quality teaching, including high expectations for all students, respectful relationships with students and relevant and responsive curriculum delivery
- Provision of tailored support in needed areas, in addition to (not instead of) regular classroom instruction
- Enlisting the active involvement of families in helping their children to learn
- Regular monitoring of each child’s progress and timely actions in response to this information. (p.117)

The study also emphasizes the importance of high-quality and timely data in the hands on decision-makers as key to achieving progress at a system level.



There are so many contributions of Indigenous peoples that are not known by Canadians. It is important for students in schools today to learn about these contributions.

As Commissioners, we believe that any discussion of the contributions of Indigenous peoples to Canada should include, for a variety of reasons, the work of Murray Sinclair, Independent Senator and Retired Judge. Many of these reasons were documented in the *Globe and Mail*, December 24, 2019, article, in which Geoffrey York profiles this “jurist turned politician,” titled “The senator determined to make Canadians confront colonialism.”

According to Geoffrey York, Murray Sinclair was born in Selkirk, north of Winnipeg in an area once known as St. Peter’s Indian Reserve until 1907 when many of the Ojibway and Cree people were illegally forced to relocate 170 miles to the northwest to what is now the Peguis First Nation.

At Selkirk Collegiate, he was a star athlete and class valedictorian and studied for two years at the University of Manitoba and worked at the Selkirk Friendship Centre as leader of the Manitoba Métis Federation. Three years later he entered law school and graduated in 1979. He was Associate Chief Justice serving as Manitoba’s first Indigenous judge and only the second in Canada. As Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission from 2005-2015, he documented the existence of what he described as cultural genocide in Canada’s residential schools. He provided his definitions of some of the words such as genocide and apartheid that he chose to use for their shock value.

As leader of justice and policing investigations in Manitoba and Thunder Bay, he exposed those he thought were willfully ignoring racism. He believes in the value of using evocative words to attract people’s attention so that they get out of their comfortable spaces and listen, learn, and take action. He wants to influence Canadians towards “Canada’s understanding of itself.” He seeks to “expose the barriers that hold back Indigenous people” – and to find solutions. His goal has been to reach Canadians who are open to learning about the country’s history – to give them the sense that now they can talk about it too.

York indicates that as a lawyer in Winnipeg, Senator Sinclair experienced racism in the courts when judges would sometimes assume that he was the defendant because he was Indigenous.

In his report for the Ontario Civilian Police Commission, Senator Sinclair used the term “willful blindness” when referring to racism on the force. This report, described as a “ground-breaker” according to York, sent shock waves across the province and prompted important actions, including a statement from the Thunder Bay Police Service acknowledging that systemic racism existed in the force. Another concrete action arising from this was the review of the force’s investigations into the deaths of nine Indigenous people, going back more than a decade.

Geoffrey York states that while Senator Murray has had tremendous impact on Canada’s justice and social systems, his biggest passion is education in which his primary quest is to ensure that Canadians know both the truth and legacy of their own history. Under the leadership of the TRC, Senator Sinclair heard testimony from 6,500 witnesses in public hearings over four years and his report is cited widely in scholarly articles, including almost 200 cases in the Supreme Court of Canada.

Not surprisingly, Senator Sinclair has lived through major backlash and hate messages on social media and emails. He has not been deterred in his resolve to champion efforts to get the truth into provincial curricula, to shatter myths, educate Canadians about the past, and influence the thinking about the role, contributions, and legacy of Indigenous peoples in the history of Canada.



How many Canadians know, for example, about the contributions of Indigenous peoples to the Canadian military and that Aboriginal peoples have been fighting for this country on the front lines for every major battle, going as far back as 1812? They served, for example, in the First World War, the Second World War, and the Korean War.

We learned as well in our research that this tradition of military service continued into the 20th century. Although figures are hard to pinpoint, it is estimated that more than 7,000 First Nations people served in the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War and an unknown number of Inuit, Métis, and other native peoples also participated.

Many veterans of the Second World War, and some new recruits, served in the Korean War. While some served in infantry, many joined the Canadian Army Special Forces for Korean Service. It was a brigade group, raised by voluntary enlistment and specially trained as part of the regular army. It is estimated that several hundred brigade members were indeed native peoples. It is unknown exactly how many of them were killed or died in Korea, but about 500 Canadians lost their lives in the war, according to Veterans Affairs Canada.

Many provinces have made concerted efforts and are achieving success in the improvement of outcomes for Indigenous students. A case in point is the Province of Saskatchewan that has set specific targets in their Strategic Plan to address the success of students of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) descent. This strategy states that by June 2020, collaboration between FNMI and non-FNMI will result in significant student engagement and the reduction of the achievement gap by 50 per cent. Saskatchewan has a specific action plan to reverse this trend and they are already seeing results. Between 2013 and 2018, Saskatchewan realized an 11 per centage point increase in the five-year graduation rate of self-declared Indigenous students. (Ministry of Education Saskatchewan, 2019, p. 19).

Many of the issues facing Indigenous peoples center around poverty and the many resultant effects and compounding issues. This evidence “should prompt a sense of urgency among those responsible for aboriginal education. Low education outcomes are condemning the next generation to poverty” (Richards, 2013).

Canada aspires to being “caring compassionate, just, inclusive and equal...when we tap into the energy and commitment that’s been expressed in connection to reconciliation, we can affect some real transformative change that can allow our country to live up to its aspirations. (From, “Making reconciliation part of day-to-day-life” November 29, 2019 in *The Globe and Mail Commitment to Reconciliation sponsor content feature produced by RandallAnthony Communications*).

“Starting now, we all have an opportunity to show leadership, courage and conviction in helping heal the wounds of the past as we make a path towards a more just, more fair, and more loving country.” (para. 2).

Justice Murray Sinclair,  
Truth and Reconciliation  
Commission of Canada

The 2018 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) symposium on Indigenizing Teacher Education programs was important, not only in building capacity for all teachers, but to create learning environments that are more welcoming to Indigenous students. It can also facilitate “reconciliation through education” by incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and being in all classrooms.

Martell (2018) outlines actionable steps which can be taken by government to partner with Indigenous peoples to improve student outcomes:

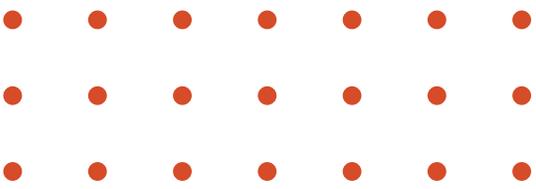
- 1. Induce Change:** Generate critical dialogue, confront systemic complacency, inequities and injustices, clarify commitments for concrete change.
- 2. Enhance Student Engagement:** The promotion of student success will benefit the community as a whole; address injustices and value Indigenous perspectives.
- 3. Spark Student Investment:** Embed Indigenous learning with Indigenous perspectives by embedding “epistemological roots through language and culture,” and drawing parents and families into school engagement.
- 4. Improve Student Learning and Success:** Invest in initiatives to improve graduation rates through early learning intervention, generate individual learning plans, incorporate and create awareness of additional programs and measures to enhance student health, well-being and educational opportunities.

As previously indicated, one subset of Indigenous students who are most vulnerable and least likely to succeed academically are those in foster care. It is not surprising, considering the statistics, that numbers one and two of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 2015) refer to:

- a) the disproportionate numbers of Indigenous children within government care; and
- b) the need to immediately address the vast educational gap between non-Indigenous and Indigenous children.

Education must not be addressed in isolation, but must continuously be viewed through a broader lens of intersecting factors: poverty, unemployment, lack of basic infrastructure, insecure housing, insecure access to food, chronic and acute stressors (such as domestic violence or substance abuse), and mental health issues. This is not an exhaustive list, but many of these factors contribute to an inordinate number of Indigenous children being taken into foster care. What is less measurable, though not less pervasive, are ingrained discriminatory practices and assumptions about Indigenous peoples and their capacity to care for their own children. While this particularly systemic problem is being addressed (or until it has adequately been eradicated from bureaucracies and policies), Indigenous empowerment and self-determination need to dominate care of those children in foster care. Accountability and care of Indigenous students must be rooted in foundational Indigenous principles, values, and leadership. Those children who are periodically or permanently placed in care must have substantial and adequate Indigenous-led and -delivered services.

Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS), as one example, is illustrative of a successful standard of care for Indigenous children in foster care. They employ two key pillars, “Inclusive Foster Care Policy” and “Restorative Practice,” each of which endeavours to maintain and affirm kinship ties between children, their families, and communities. The goal of VACFSS is to restore families and embed social programs and a child’s care with indigeneity and awareness of cultural values and traditions. According to the 2018 Annual Report, those youth who have aged out of care through VACFSS have graduated at about 88% — statistically comparable to the non-Indigenous, non-fostered graduates across Canada.



Since the TRC concluded in 2015 and the establishment of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, countries such as Canada have taken steps towards reconciliation and accountability regarding the health and well-being of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Each province must respond with specific collaborative measures to bolster Indigenous children's chances of success, with much work to be done. Manitoba is strategically placed to make powerful, lasting change for future generations, and for the health and well-being of the province in its entirety.

### **Indigenous Language and Culture**

The lengthy history of trauma and abuse suffered by Indigenous peoples across Canada cannot be minimized or resolved with mere verbal maxims and apologies. Since the ratification of the *Canadian Constitution in 1982* (Government of Canada, 2019a) and the inclusion of Section 35, (Government of Canada, 2019b) there has been an ever-evolving response by all levels of government, and Crown, to address the judicial and fiduciary responsibilities toward Indigenous peoples to affirm and uphold the sovereignty and rights of the First Peoples. Accelerated by the United Nations (UN) *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007* (UN, 2008), and by several key court rulings in Canada, Indigenous (including Métis) peoples and their rights have become a kind of societal barometer of the health or dysfunction of a given region. Echoed by the many responses regarding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015) in the briefs submitted to this review, it is paramount that actions be taken that are culturally appropriate and grounded in these Calls to Action to provide high-quality education for Indigenous children and youth:

- Section 10 (iii) and (iv) respectively state that Indigenous peoples must have access to education that is rooted in culturally appropriate curricula, and that Aboriginal language is affirmed and offered for credit at the post-secondary level. (TRC, 2015)
- Section 14 and subsections clarify that under the direction and authority of Indigenous leaders, culture, language and values be revitalized and preserved, the success of which is explicitly dependent upon allocation of sufficient funds and support. Not only should Aboriginal language and culture be affirmed and adequately funded, but it must be recognized as a fundamental component of Canadian culture and society. (TRC, 2015)

Historically caught in “jurisdictional limbo” (Canadian Geographic, n.d., “Daniels work.” Para. 3), in terms of their status, the Métis people lived on the ambiguous margins of judicial practices until 1982 with the ratification of the Constitution Act; yet the rights of the Métis were still vaguely defined and ill-supported up until April of 2014 when the Federal Supreme Court upheld an earlier ruling that maintained “that the Métis and Non-Status Indians are ‘Indians’ for the purposes of Section 91(24)” (“Métis and the Constitution”). As a distinct and unique culture, the Métis in Manitoba are due a similar revitalization and recognition as other Indigenous peoples (Canadian Geographic, Daniels Ruling, 2013, 2016).

Many schools and districts in Manitoba are highly diverse in their populations, and Indigenous children must see themselves and their culture genuinely reflected, valued, and celebrated in the curriculum. In addition, educators must learn about the explicit practices and important values or cultural structures of Indigenous students so they can interact knowledgeably and meaningfully through particular or factual understandings of a culture (Gay, 2013).

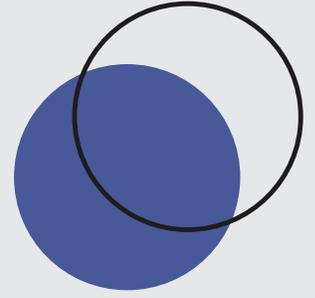


Though government acts, such as Bill C-91, *An Act respecting Indigenous languages 2019*, Parliament of Canada, 2019) speak to the revitalization and restoration of Indigenous language and cultures, the realization of this act must concretely take place in provincial and municipal governments, on school boards, in staff rooms, by associated stakeholders, by individuals, and within a school culture. With enhanced, culturally appropriate curriculum and increased diversity of educators that reflect Indigenous culture and language, Indigenous student outcomes and achievement can be supported and improved.

In 2015, the Manitoba Aboriginal Languages Strategy (MALS) was initiated. MALS is a partnership among numerous Aboriginal organizations, school divisions, First Nations, and post-secondary institutions to revitalize, retain, and promote the seven Aboriginal Languages of Manitoba. MALS is committed to sharing, developing, and promoting Aboriginal language resources throughout the province.

## Recommendations

25. Ensure that every principal in every school takes concrete actions to improve the achievement of Indigenous students and identifies improvement in Indigenous education as a priority in their annual school plans.
  26. Ensure that Knowledge Keepers have an active role in building the capacity of school staffs to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students.
  27. Implement high-impact, evidence-informed practices to close the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, to remove barriers and maximize curriculum implementation, teaching effectiveness, family outreach, student engagement, and mentoring supports.
  28. Negotiate student data sharing agreements with First Nations to improve understanding of the pathways, transitions and mobility between federal and provincial education systems to inform policy, planning, and decision-making, and to target interventions for improvement of Indigenous student achievement.
  29. Provide accurate information on the historical contributions of Indigenous peoples and put in place programming, supports, and services to assist Indigenous communities and highlight their contributions and successes within public education.
  30. Enhance access to adult education to bridge the gap between early high school leaving and successful completion of a high school diploma for Indigenous students in preparation for transitions to further education and the labour market.
  31. Ensure that the education actions that fall exclusively under provincial jurisdiction outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action are implemented in Manitoba.
  32. Call upon the Province of Manitoba to undertake federal-provincial negotiations to have the Government of Canada adequately fund the building of technology education/technical vocation facilities in First Nations communities.
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## IMPERATIVE #5: COMMIT TO EQUITABLE OUTCOMES AND IMPROVED ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL

Equity in education must be viewed from the perspectives of fairness, inclusion, and the achievement of outcomes.

A quality education for all students is a key expectation of public education. One of the many benefits that accrues is that this practice fosters social cohesion and inclusive societies where respect for diversity is the hallmark. In these contexts, equity and excellence go hand in hand.

A commitment to equity requires a great degree of self-awareness. This often begins with reflection and analysis of personal feelings, attitudes and beliefs. Those committed to equity recognize their own conditioning throughout their lives. The books we read, the television programs we watch, and the interactions we have had over the years influence us all consciously or unconsciously. When reflecting on the issue of equity, it is important to begin by asking ourselves some tough questions about our beliefs, biases, and expectations. For example:

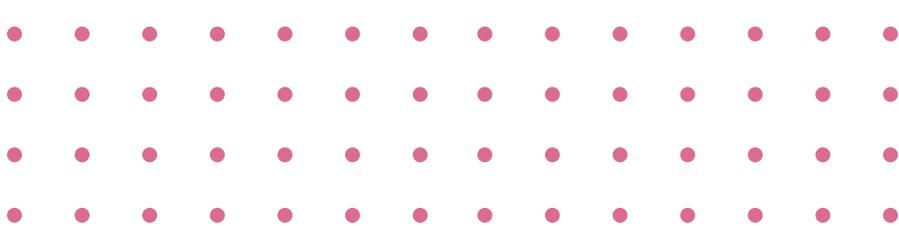
- Do I have high expectations for learning for all children?
- Do I believe that all children can learn and succeed given time and proper supports?
- Do I believe that children from low socio-economic backgrounds can achieve what their middle- and upper-class counterparts do?
- Do I believe that schools control the conditions for success?
- Do I believe that ability and talent exist in all groups?

Certain basic premises inform our beliefs about equity. Public education must be focused on achieving an equitable distribution of educational excellence across demographic lines. In a truly equitable system, the same proportions of each community will excel, do satisfactorily and do poorly, as the total student population.

Educational equity has several imperatives. There are moral, economic, and historical imperatives to educate all children successfully with the recognition that background factors should not determine a child's destiny. In truly equitable systems, student background, gender, socio-economic status, or race, should not truncate students' life chances nor prevent them from achieving ambitious outcomes. There should be no limitations placed on students because of who they are. There must be a focus within the educational system on both excellence and equity as these are not polar opposites, but are two sides of the same coin.

Equity in education indicates all students have access to a high-quality education, regardless of where they live, who their parents are or what school they attend. In this sense, equity in schooling ensures that differences in educational outcomes are not the result of differences in wealth, income, power or possessions (Sahlberg, 2012).

At the heart of equity there must be a belief in fairness and justice for all people, a belief in the moral imperative of schools to educate all children successfully, a recognition of the uniqueness of individuals, their characteristics and situations, and that one size does not fit all. Therefore, certain groups of students and students living in particular circumstances require our focus and special attention to achieve equity of opportunity and outcomes.



## Students with Special Needs

Manitoba Education has a clearly outlined philosophy of inclusion, which highlights several foundational principles for providing equitable, accessible, and inclusive education for students of all backgrounds and needs.

### Appropriate Educational Programming

*The Public Schools Amendment Act 2004 (Appropriate Educational Programming)* provided the regulation to guide policy and programming for all students, particularly those with special learning needs, in receiving the appropriate educational programming they require. The regulations confirm in legislation that all students in Manitoba are entitled to receive appropriate educational programming that fosters student participation in both the academic and social life of the school. The legislation supports Manitoba's Philosophy of Inclusion (Manitoba Education, n.d.-a, para 1).

### Manitoba Education's Philosophy of Inclusion

Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship. In Manitoba, we embrace inclusion as a means of enhancing the well-being of every member of the community. By working together, we strengthen our capacity to provide the foundation for a richer future for all of us. (Manitoba Education, n.d.-b, para 1).

These are excellent parameters through which to conceptualize education for students with special learning needs. As evidenced by the input gathered, however, there is still a way to go to achieve inclusion successfully in all Manitoba school divisions and for all children.

As previously noted, Manitoba Education has a firmly established philosophy of inclusion. However, we have heard loud and clear that a strong philosophical commitment to inclusion is not enough and that far too often classroom teachers are struggling to meet the breadth of student needs in their care. This motivates calling for solutions grounded in smaller classes and considerations around class composition. Going forward, teachers want us to recognize the importance of both class size and composition in education in Manitoba.

Manitoba Education does not articulate guidelines about when it may be beneficial to place a student outside of their classroom, but rather the opposite – there are regulations about ensuring that all students have access to appropriate education programming and are included as much as possible.

Manitoba's Standards for Student Services document (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006) stated that school division policies must comply with *The Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms 1982* (Government of Canada, n.d.) and *The Human Rights Code 2018* (The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2018), and thus cannot discriminate on the basis of physical or mental disability or any other protected characteristics.

The paramount consideration in the placement of all students is the right to attend their neighbourhood catchment school, in a regular classroom of peers or in a program designated by the school board if the school does not provide it. If a school team and parents agree that some of a student's needs may be best met outside of the classroom, such as life skills or work experience programming in high school, that programming can be put in place. However, it is a local school team's decision to make along with the parents. This is not intended to be a one-sided decision.

### What Are Special Learning Needs?

Special learning needs range across various spectrums: physical, cognitive/intellectual, communicative, behavioural, social/emotional, or health. Sometimes multiple special needs intersect for an individual, increasing chances of obstacles and challenges to their educational achievement. Not only do these individuals potentially experience developmental delays, but they are often subjected to isolation, misunderstanding, or distancing from peers or staff, due to fear or lack of respect.

A concerned parent wrote,

*[[It is vitally important for our society that kids like [my son] are included in their schools and treated with dignity. Kids who see this happening grow into adults who have never questioned that all people have value to contribute. Unfortunately, it has been our experience that this is not the case.]* (Brief 7, Goff)

According to this particular parent of a child who has a rare genetic disorder, staff have not always modelled respect or appropriate behaviour towards her child.

In the brief submitted by members of the Parent-Educator Partnership for Literary Achievement in Manitoba, they suggest that in some school divisions, dyslexia is neither recognized nor tangibly supported. Not only does this lack of recognition negatively impact student outcomes, but families who have dyslexic children are often left to source out, at their own expense, educational supports for their children so they may have the chance to succeed alongside their peers. (Brief 46, Watson et al.)

*Significantly, one in five children experience some variation from the average in terms of their physical or mental capabilities.* (Brief 42, Forbes)

.....

*In Canada, 28% of children in Grade One experience some form of cognitive or behavior challenges, and consequently a subsequent delay in literacy.* (Brief 46, Watson et al.)

.....

*While these statistics individually are compelling justifications for inclusive learning, additionally, inclusion is encompassed within a broader conception of human rights standards. As indicated by various authorities on human rights issues, from the United Nations to community advocates and organizations, persons with special needs are as deserving of an equitable education as any other member of society, “fully included with their peers in regular education, with appropriate supports from early childhood through to post-secondary and adult lifelong learning.”* (Brief 42, Forbes)

### What We Heard

Through all facets of our consultations, people expressed concerns about insufficient support for teachers and students, especially as it pertained to supporting students who require extra time and attention due to challenges related to special learning needs, mental health, or behavioural issues. Calls for support included time (for preparation and planning), funding, specialized learning resources, and additional training to better equip teachers to teach all students. Many also identified more educational assistants (EAs) as a key support needed.

**Teachers cannot possibly give their students the attention they need; especially when they are expected to teach/reach/help kids with special needs and no funding is available for additional help.** (Written submission)

**More PD for teachers and school leaders. Better university programming to prepare student teachers to plan for and assess a real classroom of students, and more practical experience with things like guided reading and math groups. More EA support for classrooms.** (Public survey)

**I truly believe that teachers and school leaders already work to the best of their potential but need to be allowed to be trained, have professional development to deal with all the special needs students, mental health issues that so many students face these days, we need to provide them with the tools to deal with all of the needs that they face each day.”** (Public survey)

The theme of support was closely tied to the issue of class sizes and class composition in responses to the teacher survey. Many teachers reported that expectations to meet the demands of increasingly large and complex classes with inadequate support is resulting in poor outcomes for all. They noted that attending to the diversity and special needs of students in their classrooms requires increasing amounts of time, leaving insufficient time to prepare, plan and teach the overall class effectively or to spend one-on-one time to develop meaningful relationships with all students.

Many teachers indicated they feel supported when they are valued by their senior administration and when the necessary personnel such as educational assistants, social workers, psychologists, and other clinicians are available to help them meet students’ needs.

**....Smaller class sizes, more supportive administrators, full time EA support without moving educational assistants around as often, more opportunities for professional development.** (Teacher survey)

**I feel class size and make-up really make or break it for a teacher. One child can really affect the emotional health and academic learning potential of an entire classroom. It is time to look at what is best for everyone! When you put an emotionally unstable or physically or verbally violent student in a classroom (even with an assistant) and add in several other needs such as a child with autism, a couple with emotional issues and another couple [of] hyperactive students what is the cost? All the other students that come to school wanting to learn get put on the back burner because your time and energy gets used up with the loud, attention-seeking students. This is far too often becoming the norm. Class composition needs to be a priority or teachers will burn out and students’ learning will continue to suffer.”** (Teacher survey)

**The province should also consider looking at the teacher training program. The present model does not adequately prepare teacher candidates to meet the demands of the job. Faculty advisors are filled with individuals who are looking to make an extra dollar. I would suggest that the practicum teaching experience reflect more of an apprentice type program and do away with the present 4 and 6 week teaching block.** (Teacher survey)



## Research Highlights

Experts in the field of special needs learners support inclusion practices beyond physical integration, and a complete redefining of pedagogical practices and strategies to facilitate inclusive learning. This shift impacts not only students with special learning needs, but also students who fall within the traditional (and increasingly narrow) paradigm of what is often considered “normal.” According to one expert and advocate of inclusive learning, the idea of teaching to a supposed “norm” is flawed in and of itself; instead, educators should be “teaching to diversity” and “to the difference” since classrooms are “no longer homogenous” in their make-up (Moore, 2019). Within this model, not only will students thrive as individuals, but they will interact as members of a supportive community which does not categorize people according to “norms.”

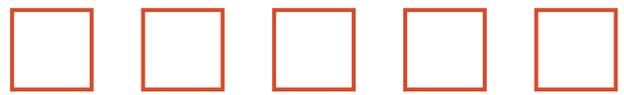
As illustrated by the recent successful shift in Finland’s educational model, which prioritizes equitable and inclusive learning, students with special learning needs are by default included in mainstream classrooms, and when necessary, spend time in smaller learning groups or in specialized classes. Finland utilizes a three-tier system to support students: general, special, and intensive. General support is offered to all students, while special support (such as personalized educational plans), and intensive support (such as remedial learning, assistants, part-time special education) are available to students with special learning needs. Though a small country, Finland has one of the most cost-effective, highly successful educational models in the world. Part of this success is based upon the premise that all students are worth investing in, and all students are to be treated with dignity and the offer of adequate, appropriate support that they may require to succeed. (Sahlberg, 2012)

There are many examples in Manitoba education that already reflect values and practices based on the philosophy of inclusion. Measurable steps should be taken to spread these practices across the system.

As principals work with their school staffs to design and organize the classes in their schools, they should carefully consider the special needs of students when determining the composition and size of classes.

## Recommendations

33. Reaffirm the philosophy of inclusion as a fundamental principle of the education system in Manitoba and change the name of the Special Education Certificate granted by Manitoba Education to *Inclusion Education Certificate* to emphasize this direction, also reaffirming that a truly inclusive system seeks to put students in the learning environment that is most appropriate to their needs.
34. Ensure that teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional learning reflect the provincial philosophy of inclusion and develop all teachers in practices to support students with diverse capabilities and learning needs.
35. Enhance collaboration among teachers, student services professionals, and parents to facilitate early and ongoing identification of learning needs and appropriate supports for children and youth with special needs, including the most effective use and deployment of educational assistants who are currently in the system.
36. Strengthen requirements for and training of educational assistants and of student services staff to address, to the greatest extent possible, the learning and behavioural needs of students and to provide overall classroom support for teachers.
37. Commit to reducing wait times for identifying and assessing students with special needs so that they receive early intervention and the necessary supports in all areas of the province.
38. Implement a standardized reporting mechanism, aligned with the provincial report card, to ensure that parents of students with special needs are well-informed about their child’s progress in both academic and non-academic domains and collect these data at a provincial level.



## Addressing the Needs of Immigrant, Newcomer, and Refugee Students

“In 2006, over 6 million immigrants resided in Canada representing 19.8 per cent of the total population, with over 200,000 new immigrants admitted annually since the 1990s” (King, 2009, p. 1). According to the most current data from immigration department officials, between 2015 and 2018, 61,600 newcomers landed in Manitoba. School-aged children and youth (ages 5-18) represent approximately 20 per cent of all newcomers. Of these more than 12,000 potential students, approximately 20 per cent have arrived in Canada as refugees. Classrooms have become richer in culture, language, and world experience, a significant contribution and added benefit to student bodies and society in general.

Manitoba continues to benefit and grow through immigration. Immigration provided 88 per cent of Manitoba’s labour force growth between 2014 and 2018 (Statistics Canada, 2020); however, growth and demand in schools with static or limited increases in resources, continue to pose challenges for many schools. The diversity of educational and behavioural needs within classrooms is significant, including students with disrupted schooling, traumatic experiences, or those from conflict-affected countries. The needs and supports required for school-aged children and youth, and their families, can be significant and must continue to be addressed. According to the most current data from Manitoba Education, Manitoba schools have reported approximately 12,000 newly registered newcomer students since 2014. It is important for the success and well-being of students and their families to continue to improve how we deliver education in the classroom and engage parents in the education process.

Students who are newcomers can excel and can be successful in schools when provided with adequate supports and resources. Some experience significant difficulties when attempting to adjust to a new school environment. Moving to a new country comes with a number of challenges for newcomers as they have to surmount socio-psychological barriers related to language learning, cultural adaptation, and social integration.

In Canada, between 2015 and 2017 alone, there were 84,000 refugees who sought asylum, nearly half of which were of school age. Manitoba was third highest in numbers of refugees who settled during this time (Ratkovi et al., 2017). Many of these refugee families originated from conflict-affected zones such as Syria, Afghanistan, Congo, Eritrea, and others. The needs and supports required for school-aged children and youth, and their families, are many and must continue to be addressed as important for the well-being of individuals and families, and to prepare them to become economically viable and secure in Canada.

The many obstacles faced by newcomers to Canada — cultural adjustment, language barriers, history of trauma, threat of poverty, instability of a physical home — each compound to threaten the viability of immigrants and refugees’ success in the educational system, the workforce, and indeed, the community.

Fortunately, collaboration with and among community groups is making a difference. Many newcomers are highly educated, skilled immigrants with great pride, confidence, and resolve. Their values and contributions will serve Manitoba and Canada well.

The Commission commends the Manitoba government for its assets-based and aggressive actions in support of the orientation and integration of newcomers. Manitoba has responded well to the increase of newcomers in recent years, and has developed research-specific educational supports for immigrants and refugees.



## What We Heard

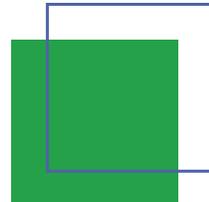
Teachers told us that they often feel ill-equipped to respond to the wide range of needs of students who are new to Canada. Several respondents to the teacher survey expressed the need for additional support to serve this group of learners better. In their joint Brief (34), the Newcomer Education Coalition and Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations advocated for actions such as hiring teachers that reflect cultural diversity in schools and providing teachers with appropriate training related to trauma-informed care and cultural understanding.

Survey results and written submissions noted that many newcomers who arrive in Manitoba at high school age struggle to attain their high school diploma. The obstacles are acute for students from refugee backgrounds and those who have experienced interrupted schooling. Many of these young men and women, aged 16 to 24, face challenges when attempting to succeed in schools, including mental health issues, low literacy in their home language, and gaps in their academic knowledge.

We heard concerns about Manitoba's E-designated high school courses, designed for students who are learning English or French while also attaining background academic knowledge. Students attain E-credits only to find that post-secondary institutions do not generally recognize them for admissions purposes. This can be disheartening for learners and their families when their anticipation of a smooth transition after high school is interrupted.

*The system fails many older newcomer youth with interrupted schooling and/or refugee backgrounds. Due to their circumstances, many of them are significantly lacking in literacy and numeracy in English and in their home language. In addition, they do not have a vision of graduating and going onto post-secondary education. Our high schools have EAL programs and E-credits courses but unfortunately, the amount of language instruction, academic education, and preparation for post-secondary schooling or meaningful employment can not be accomplished with most of these programs. What these students need is some type of program that will help them bridge their high school education and training with post-secondary.* (Public survey)

The Newcomer Education Coalition (NEC), one of many agencies and organizations working to support newcomers, stressed that actions need to be taken to promote equitable, culturally competent, and safe educational environments to ensure that newcomer students are on equitable footing with their Canadian-born peers.



## Research Highlights

Education systems across Canada are welcoming an increasingly diverse student population. The effective inclusion of different cultural groups in the system varies significantly from one region to another. Some school districts have implemented exemplary programs favouring social empathy, inclusion, and intercultural understanding for making schools more relevant for immigrant learners. These best practices, however, are not as widely available and implemented as they could be (Stewart, 2017).

When considering the needs of refugee students, Ratkovic et al. (2017) have identified four specific areas requiring attention:

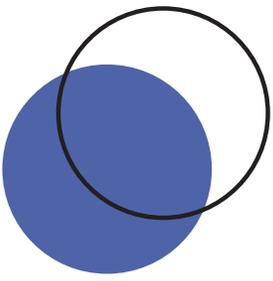
- Educators and policy makers often lack cross-cultural competencies required for working effectively with these students
- Implementation of collaborative and cross-sectoral strategies based on trust, community, and mutuality can be effective
- Asset-based policies targeting distinctively immigrants and refugees are more relevant
- Overall, Canadian refugee education represents a gap in research literature and in jurisdictional policies

Stewart (2014) asserted that school counsellors are well positioned to play a meaningful role in school environments that are culturally responsive to the needs of refugee and immigrant students. According to this scholar, “Supporting war-affected children in Canadian schools requires dedication of school counselors who have knowledge, awareness, skills and commitment to addressing issues of social justice” (p. 265). Stewart and Martin (2018) further suggested that the delivery of culturally responsive career guidance programming can have a significant impact on the future career trajectories of immigrant learners.

As in other sections of this report, there is a call for a multidisciplinary and better coordinated approach for designing and supporting the wraparound systems of support needed for newcomers (Stewart & Taniguchi, 2019).

## Recommendations

39. Develop and implement specific career development programming to support academic achievement and successful graduation of immigrant, newcomer, and refugee children who transition into, through, and out of Manitoba’s K to 12 education system.
40. Discontinue the use of “E” English as an Additional Language (EAL) credits in Grades 11 and 12 and provide more relevant educational opportunities for older newcomer youth with interrupted learning and provide the academic upgrading support they need to be successful at the next level.
41. Require pre-service, in-service, and ongoing professional learning to address human rights and EAL issues and trauma-informed pedagogy training for educators to equip them with competencies for educating immigrant, newcomer, and refugee students successfully.
42. Remove barriers and support the certification of internationally trained teachers to increase the number of newcomer teachers working in Manitoba classrooms and to reflect the diversity of schools and classrooms.



## Educational Issues Related to Poverty

The effects of poverty and the large body of research correlating the socio-economic status of families and educational outcomes were strongly voiced to the Commission as an important consideration in formulating recommendations to improve educational outcomes in the province.

Admittedly, some advances have been made in reducing the proportion of children living in poverty in Manitoba, from 16.4 per cent in 2015 to 9.5 per cent in 2017 (Statistics Canada, n.d). Efforts must continue to reduce the ramifications of poverty on student well-being, learning, and success in schools across the province.

As Commissioners, we are convinced that those who work in Manitoba's schools believe that all students must be taught effectively and treated as individuals worthy of respect and the highest standards of care. The most vulnerable population — children from poor or disadvantaged homes — must have support systems embedded in all classrooms and schools. The opportunity to assist these students to achieve their full potential is important for their success. In fact, our theme, *Our Children's Success, Manitoba's Future*, should inspire us to reaffirm our commitment to achieve higher outcomes for children who live in poverty. We challenge all Manitobans to redouble their efforts to ensure that poverty does not determine a child's destiny.

There are also a number of recent trends suggesting that Manitoba is in the early stage of a promising trajectory for reducing poverty. Based on the Market Basket Measure (MBM), Canada's official poverty line, Manitoba is no longer considered the child poverty capital of Canada (Province of Manitoba, 2019e). As noted above, the per centage of children living in low-income households has decreased. There were 6,000 fewer Manitoba children living in poverty in 2017 compared to 2016 (Statistics Canada, n.d.). Manitoba is also making progress in reducing the number of children in care, which is often correlated with families experiencing poverty (Province of Manitoba, 2019e).

These poverty reduction initiatives should continue.

### What We Heard

As a Commission, we heard the emotion, the pain, and the frustration that people in every facet of education and related human services sectors expressed around this problem. We also know that the solution will require the rallying and deployment of existing resources. That said, we are confident that a strong and equitable education strategy can and should play a central role in reducing the inequities that children experience, because of poverty, when they arrive in their classrooms. There are numerous examples of school divisions in Manitoba that are putting measures in place to reverse the underachievement trend.

During our public consultations, we heard many stories of schools and divisions that are working hard to address these concerns. It was not unusual for schools to have snacks for students who may be hungry and peer leadership to ensure that these students are aware of these resources. Neither was it unusual for principals to have a special fund to help students who cannot afford the money for field trips and other extra-curricular activities.

The central argument of this submission is that the issue is less “what is wrong with our educational system,” than “why do we allow such very high levels of poverty to persist,” when the evidence is so absolutely clear that poverty produces poor educational outcomes. (Brief 9, Silver)



## Research Highlights

There are several examples in Canada and around the world of places that have improved student outcomes despite demographic and economic challenges. By providing mentoring and supports, the Pathways to Education program helped to dramatically increase the success rates of students in one of Canada's poorest neighbourhoods (Regent Park, Toronto) – home to the country's oldest and largest public housing project.

An evaluation of the first five cohorts of students in the Pathways program found that it increased high school graduation and post-secondary participation rates above both the school board and provincial average (Boston, Consulting Group, 2011). The most recent evaluation, which compared enrolled students to similar non-enrolled students, found that the program increased the proportion of high school graduates by 35 per cent and increased enrolment in post-secondary education by more than 60 per cent (Oreopoulos, Brown & Lavecchia, 2019).

In the United States (U.S), Reeves (2004) has described the phenomenon of “90/90/90” schools where at least 90 per cent of students are from poor families, 90 per cent or more of students are from ethnic minority groups, yet 90 per cent or more of students achieve at or above state academic standards. Subsequent studies have documented schools that have met this or similar criteria in Texas (Kearney, Herrington, & Aguilar (2012), Indiana (Waters, 2015), Virginia (Nichols, 2015), Arkansas (Davis, 2018), and California (Schmid, 2018).

Broader international evidence comes from, Andreas Schleicher, head of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). When analyzing the relationship between socio-economic status and achievement, Schleicher has found that the poorest students in some countries like Singapore, South Korea, Vietnam, Estonia, Netherlands, Switzerland, and Canada, outperform wealthier students in countries like the United Kingdom (UK) and United States. According to Schleicher, this “debunks the myth that poverty is destiny” (as cited in Coughlan, 2014).

Research on the impacts of a student's socio-economic background on academic achievement illustrates the various, seemingly insurmountable, challenges these children face in securing a good education. Jensen (2009) provided a breakdown of four key factors affecting the educational potential – and in fact the very make-up of their brains – of students from low socio-economic households, with mitigating steps that are worth considering and implementing. We mention these findings not to reinforce stereotypes, but to elucidate the finding of solutions.

Factors affecting the education of children in poverty include:

- **Emotional and social challenges** – Students from poor homes often experience less attachment and security than those from financially secure families. Other factors such as connections between poverty and addictions, mental health issues, teenage pregnancy, and neglect all compound to adversely affect a child's capacity for healthy emotional and social relationships in school.

Action can be taken to support students who experience emotional and social difficulties. Jensen suggests that teachers embody respect for every student, facilitate a community or family atmosphere at school, and assist students with positive relationships and conflict resolution.



- **Chronic and acute stressors** – There is a correlation between chronic and acute stressors and income level; children from poorer homes are more likely to suffer abuse, violence, and instability such as moving often. The release of cortisol in the brain is caused by stress and has been found to inhibit the brain’s ability to process, absorb, and retain new information. Stressors also increase a student’s likelihood of “acting out” or engaging in impulsive behaviours. Though intervention in a student’s home life can be difficult, steps can be taken by teachers and support workers in schools by creating a safe and inclusive school environment and teach coping skills, stress-reduction strategies, and restitutive conflict resolution.
- **Cognitive lags** – Underdeveloped brains, often a result of the many factors involved in low socio-economic conditions, lack the foundation of core skills: memory, attention and concentration, processing, and problem-solving skills. Concrete actions can be taken to build core skills into underdeveloped brains. In fact, new pathways can be created and detailed analysis of what is causing a child’s challenges in a specific area, including lack of prior learning experiences.
- **Health and safety issues** – Students from low socio-economic backgrounds are often victims of untreated illness. Schools can provide a full-time nurse and/or visits from a pediatrician to perform check-ups and assist with illnesses and teach classes about self-care.

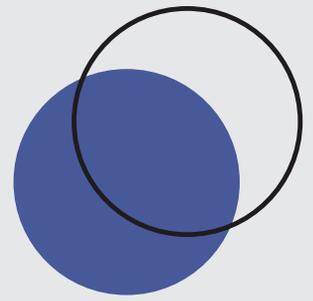
**Early Intervention is Critical**

When intervention is delayed, it takes four times as long to intervene in fourth grade as it does in late kindergarten because of brain development and because of the increase in content for students to learn as they grow older (Wanzek, Wexler, Vaughn, & Ciullo, (2010), National Institute of Child Health and Human Development).

**Recommendations**

43. Support targeted early childhood interventions and strategies for children with learning gaps and challenges who are at risk of falling behind to address their learning needs and improve their educational outcomes.
44. Establish a working group composed of representatives from Manitoba Education, school divisions (school boards, senior administration and teachers), parents, and students, to enhance current response to the impact of poverty in the school context to supporting alignment with the provincial poverty reduction strategy.
45. Improve access to nutritious food for Manitoba students and expand health-promoting meal programs in Manitoba schools through enhanced partnerships and coordination among organizations such as the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba, the Manitoba Teachers’ Society, and governments, school divisions, communities, businesses, and industry to leverage local and provincial resources.
46. Work with the City of Winnipeg, other municipal governments in the province, and any other interested parties to remove transportation barriers (e.g., public transit fees) for students, including legislative provisions, to attend school and participate in after-school extracurricular activities.
47. Require school divisions to develop improvement plans to specifically address the needs of their lowest performing schools that are most affected by poverty.





## **IMPERATIVE #6:** **ENSURE QUALITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING IN RURAL, REMOTE, AND NORTHERN COMMUNITIES**

For many of Canada's rural, remote and northern communities, services and supports for education need attention. Various factors affect many northern, rural, and Indigenous communities, as well as some farming communities in Manitoba. Some of these factors intersect and compound to further marginalize communities that are vulnerable and in need of interventions. The good news is, in spite of the challenges these communities face, they are resilient and creative, offering uniquely powerful attributes and solutions that position them well to succeed. This success, however, does not become a reality without overcoming significant challenges.

One news report indicates that in the Frontier School Division, pervasive teacher and administrative shortages persist; often EAs must step in as teachers, or someone who is wholly unqualified (Caruk, 2018). The Shamattawa First Nations has only half of the teachers needed; setbacks abound, such as basic infrastructure that is inadequate, including frozen water lines in the winter, or the prevalence of the effects of poverty, such as arson of teacher residences or schools (Caruk, 2018).



## What We Heard

We made a determined effort to connect with communities in rural and northern communities across the province. Survey respondents expressed pride and passion about their communities, including the pivotal community role that schools play in their small communities. They shared perspectives on the benefits of delivering education in small communities and about the challenges as well.

The issue of school attendance, often linked to poverty, surfaced as a major challenge faced by northern school divisions, as was the recruitment of teachers and other education professionals, including clinicians.

*Efforts to increase and retain clinicians who both work and live and work in the Northern region should be a priority. Increase the funding available for clinicians in the North to a level that considers the additional travel expenses for clinicians to access professional development opportunities that are not available locally/regionally.* (Written submission)

Surveys and written submissions highlighted the diversity and richness of Manitoba's regional and economic landscape as a theme to be considered in establishing a long-term vision for Manitoba's education system. Many expressed concerns specific to Manitoba's rural and northern regional geographic differences relating to issues of access, equity of services, and increased costs for travel. In particular, providing professional development opportunities for teachers in northern communities was identified as a high priority, along with the need to attract and recruit teachers well-prepared to serve in these rural and northern communities.

Issues of access, equity of services, and increased costs for travel, especially regarding participation in professional development, were common in terms of the feedback received from those in northern communities. A number of references were made regarding work undertaken by the Manitoba Rural Learning Consortium (mRLC) to support professional learning to rural school divisions.

*Currently, the Manitoba Rural Learning Consortium provides the high-quality professional learning model that best supports teachers' needs. The Consortium consults with school divisions who determine professional learning needs based on student data and professional input, and then the mRLC responds and plans accordingly.* (Written submission, school division)

*The opportunity to work with a Critical Friend from the Manitoba Rural Learning Consortium (mRLC) has been key in moving our school forward, as we worked to adopt Learning Sprints into our PLC, and increase academic performance in the area of writing. The Numeracy Action Research Project through the mRLC has been super PD to increase our student's academic performance in the area of Math, and incorporates the work we are doing in the area of learning sprints. All of the mRLC sessions consist of high-quality PD, and they are really appreciated. They have done a magnificent job of organizing this PD [...] and many of our teachers look forward to this PD.* (Teacher survey)

Several pleas for urgent attention to poverty and to rural community health in particular are also present in the written feedback shared with us, including:

- The need for equitable learning resources and specialized professionals
- Family and parent supports to enhance student success, such as the FAST program (Family And Schools Together) to be implemented throughout rural Manitoba
- Pre-K and full day Kindergarten to support early intervention of child development

- The need for smaller class sizes, social and emotional behavioural support, and behaviour plans
- Alternative strategies for rural districts and utilization of proven virtual learning/distance education methods
- Differences between rural and urban settings were noted as factors affecting learning outcomes. Sometimes the urban/rural issue is about local context. At other times it is about the challenges of recruitment and retention of other support services and the ability to offer comparable programming given small student numbers

*That the Commission recommend to the Manitoba Government that they develop, in partnership with remote and northern school divisions, a teacher recruitment strategy, and consider within that strategy offering incentives (such as reduced student loans) to encourage teachers to work in small, non-urban communities.* (Written submission)

*Wraparound Services: Public schools are the hub of the community in rural Manitoba and classrooms are the equalizer so true wraparound services are vital. Our rural communities need equitable access to health services including Speech Language, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, mental health, counselling, family supports through CFS, RCMP, etc. Quick access to necessary supports is often road blocked by staff turnover, red tape and lack of funding because each of these supports work in silos. [...] and neighboring school divisions have improved efficiency of services to our pre-school children through our partnership with our local RHA....* (Written submission)

Overall inequities in programming and supports in rural and urban settings versus urban centres were viewed as significantly affecting learning outcomes. Thus, calls for equity were strong and a high importance was placed on ensuring that rural and local voices are heard as change is contemplated.

### Research Highlights

Research, particularly that of Wallin and Reimer (2008), indicates that outcomes in rural settings fall behind those celebrated in more urban settings as a result of:

- Isolation and limited access to specialized services, such as adequate numbers of EAs, mental health professionals, assessment, and ongoing support for students with behavioural challenges or specialized needs
- Under-resourced teachers, which may include lack of adequate professional learning tools and opportunities, or access to university services
- A lack of math and science teachers in particular
- Decreases in both enrolment and funding
- Decline in availability of administrators and gaps in specialization and expertise which often results in underqualified instructors (p. 593)



“In fact, while most provinces have 4-6% of new Canadians settling in rural areas, Manitoba attracts over 20% of new arrivals in rural areas” (as cited in Ashton, LaBelle, Mealy, & Wuttunee, 2015, p. 33). The Manitoba School Boards Association (2019) and others assert that more ongoing supports are needed in schools to support this influx of immigrant and refugee population to promote integration and inclusion.

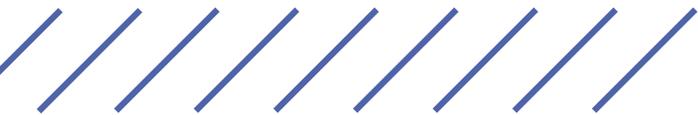
Each of these challenges, especially common in rural and northern communities, is exacerbated by higher incidences of poverty, particularly in Indigenous communities, stemming largely from the impacts of colonization and intergenerational trauma. Indigenous communities, particularly those in more isolated regions, are experiencing many challenges that are affecting students’ outcomes negatively.

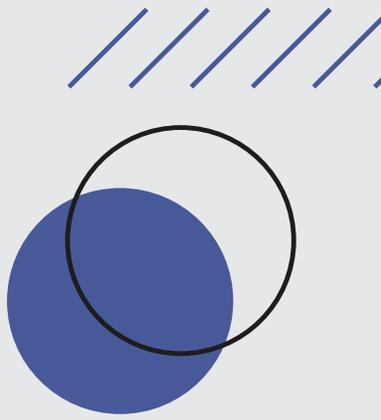
Finally, though rural communities require the support of and collaboration with governmental agencies and other organizations, communities also benefit from local initiatives. These may include mentorship programs, adult learning opportunities, or joint efforts between neighbouring school boards. In one First Nations community, a trained chef works with students to learn how to fish, hunt and cook in the wilderness. This promotes food security (Ashton, LaBelle, Mealy, & Wuttunee, 2015).

Ultimately, rural and northern communities must be the beneficiaries of equitable funds and resources that do not put further stress on local people. Communities desire to engage in decision-making that reflects the specificity of their locale, that values even the most marginalized voice in the community, and which respects the sense of place inherent in each region (Wallin & Reimer, 2008).

## Recommendations

48. Address disparities and enhance equity of access and educational opportunities for students in rural and northern regions, including subject area specialists, student services staff, career counsellors, and school principals and vice-principals.
49. Initiate negotiations among faculties of education, school divisions, First Nations, and other education stakeholders to implement internship and residency programs as a teacher recruitment strategy in rural, northern, and First Nations communities.





## IMPERATIVE #7: STRENGTHEN THE DELIVERY OF FRENCH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Francophone culture in Manitoba predates Manitoba's entrance into the Federation of Canada in 1870. About half of the population of the region was Francophone when Manitoba first joined. French language education occupies an important place in Manitoba's educational landscape and must be protected and promoted.

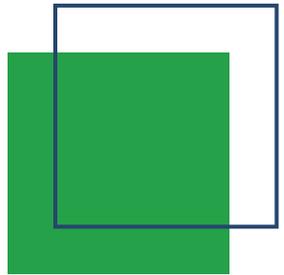
From 1870 to 1890, Manitoba guaranteed the rights and fiscal support of French education and institutions, but subsequently reneged on this commitment in 1890 when English became the official language of the province. While some French language education was tolerated during this time, the Manitoba provincial government adopted a law in 1916, *The Thornton Act* (Manitoba Schools Question, Manitoba Legislation on Schools, 1890 to 1916, 2006, para. 9), making English the only language of education. This legislation did not, however, stop the illicit delivery of French language education. In 1967, the government authorized the use of French as a language of instruction and in 1970, French and English both became a language of instruction on equal footing (Manitoba Schools Question, 2006).

Both the Français program offered by the *Division scolaire franco-manitobaine* (DSFM) and the French Immersion Program are recognized by the province as official school programs. Student enrolment in both programs has increased significantly in recent years. While not mandated, many students enrolled in the English program also have the option to learn French as a second language.

Section 23 of *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) guarantees minority educational rights to Français-speaking communities and the right of school governance to Francophone communities. It was in 1994 that the French schools in Manitoba were brought under the control of the Francophone community when the DSFM was established to govern French as a First Language schools across the province. In 2016, the provincial government adopted the *Francophone Community and Enhancement Support Act* (The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2016), which supports revitalization of the community. While Manitoba is much more culturally and linguistically diverse than in 1870, the claims and rights to a Francophone education remain undeniable.

In 2016, 3.2 per cent of Manitobans reported French as their first language spoken at home. From 2001 to 2016, the number of Manitobans reporting being able to hold a conversation in French, either exclusively or along with another language, increased by 5.6 per cent (Paez Silvo, 2019). Based on 2019 provincial enrolment data, more than 5,800 students attend 23 DSFM schools spread throughout the province, with one adult learning centre located in Winnipeg.

In 1973, *École Sacré Cœur* became the first school offering French Immersion programming. There are currently more than 100 schools offering the program in 23 school divisions. Current enrolment estimates show that 27,234 students are enrolled in French Immersion in Manitoba.



## What We Heard

A number of briefs specifically referenced French language education. A few of them highlighted the rights of the Francophone community with regards to school governance:

*We believe that protecting the constitutional right of Manitoba's Franco-Manitobaine community to exercise autonomy over programs and services must remain an important guiding principle of education into the future.* (Brief 43, Manitoba School Boards Association)

Language and culture are the core of identity, especially for those sectors of society that have been neglected or marginalized throughout lengthy periods of their history in Canada. As a vibrant, distinct, and deeply rooted demographic of this increasingly diverse province, the Francophone people look forward to ongoing revitalization – reaffirmed in *The Francophone and Community Enhancement and Support Act* of 2016.

Other submissions underscored the critical role the DSFM schools play in maintaining strong community vitality and pride:

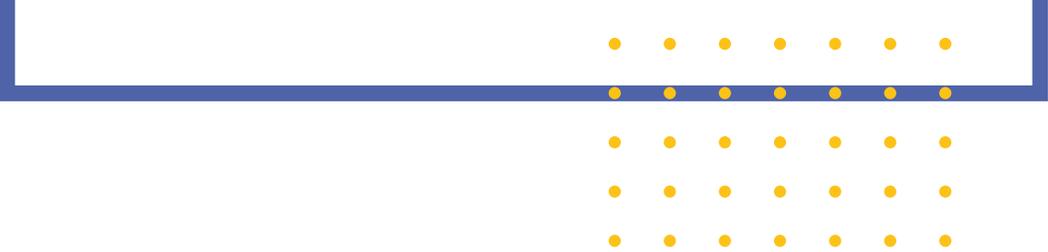
*Given the predominance of the academic environment in their lives, we firmly believe that the school experience has a powerful impact on this identity-building process in youth. Think about it. School is where young people spend most of their days. School is where many youth assert themselves for the first time by adopting certain trends or daring to defy authority. School is also where they experience a number of other “firsts”: first friends and best friends, first successes and failures... School is where young people experience many things – both positive and negative – that will mark them for the rest of their lives. In reforming the education system, it is therefore critical for the Manitoba government to consider the fact that school is not just a hub of knowledge; it is also a place where students' identities are shaped.* (Written submission)

Several respondents to the public and teacher surveys commented on the leadership role the Bureau de l'éducation française (BEF) needs to play in support of French language education. As noted in the Blueprint report (<https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/educationreview/docs/blueprint/index.html>), a number of participants suggested that the BEF needs strengthening to support schools offering the Français Program and the French Immersion Program. Some participants articulated that the education system is not broken and extraordinary things are being done. One example given is the highly successful French Immersion Program in Manitoba.

While the French Immersion Program does not fall within the mandate of the DSFM, with its constant growth, the program plays a critical role in enriching the vitality of *la francophonie*. As suggested in one written submission, this shared interest for the French language and culture creates a relevant context for bringing youth closer together:

*Now more than ever, the [...] seeks to connect with the broadest target group possible, consisting of French-speaking youth, including those with French as their first language, French Immersion students, young English speakers who like French, and immigrant youth, from both urban and rural areas.* (Written submission)

As noted above, an increasing number of young persons of Anglophone background are studying *en français*, embracing bilingualism and *la francophonie*.



*La francophonie* is to be recognized for its tenacity, perseverance, and strong advocacy over the years to ensure it receives the education and services to which it is entitled. The Commission is united in its resolve to ensure that the recommendations below become entrenched in Manitoba Education regardless of the political party in power. It is important that French language education and the entitlements of Francophone parents transcend political lines. This means that the Department of Education can assure Francophones that the *Bureau de l'éducation française* (BEF) will remain a distinct entity, with a mandate to support and promote French language education within the province.

## Research Highlights

### *Français*

When examining the results of francophone students in the pan-Canadian assessment administered by CMEC, Landry and Allard (2002) noted that Francophone students were not performing as well as their counterparts particularly in subject areas requiring an extensive use of language such as reading, writing, and science. According to Rocque and Landry (2018), this trend remained valid in the 2013 PCAP assessment. The scholars assert that lower performance results are affected to a significant extent by a number of contextual factors, namely the influence of the socio-linguistic context (*le vécu langagier des élèves*) linked to the predominance of the English language and culture. This suggests that helping students develop a positive relationship with language acquisition (*rapport positif avec la langue*) and to construct a strong sense of identity is critically important. Gérin-Lajoie (2011) further posits that developing a sense of belonging within *la francophonie* is fundamental. Accordingly, French language schools require a pedagogy that is designed to address the unique circumstances of the French language minority setting.

In order to successfully achieve their mandate, Francophone schools benefit from setting a close partnership with families and the community to counteract the pervasive erosion of the vitality of Francophone communities (CMEC, 2003; Rocque & Landry, 2019). The *Fédération nationale des conseils scolaire francophones* (2012), the organization representing the French language school boards outside Québec, promotes the concept of Civic Community School (*École communautaire et citoyenne*) as a way of redefining and reinforcing the school-community relationship.

### *French Immersion*

An extensive literature review on the impact of Second-Language Learning carried-out by Arnott, Masson, Lapkin, and Knouzi (2017) found that a majority of recent research studies focused on French immersion programs with attention to French language form and literacy. Key findings of the review related to early prediction of student success in reading and writing and to the identification of teaching practices that can lead to greater student engagement and linguistic accuracy. The study further identified a number of benefits in learning a second language: (O'Brien, 2017)

- Second-language learning has a positive impact on memory
- Children who learn a second language show either comparable or enhanced first-language literacy
- Learning a second language enhances creative ability by promoting unique problem solving, flexibility, and creative thinking
- Second-language learners tend to be active and engaged global citizens
- Language learning leads to an enhanced critical awareness of self and others
- Second-language skills allow for greater mobility in local and international markets

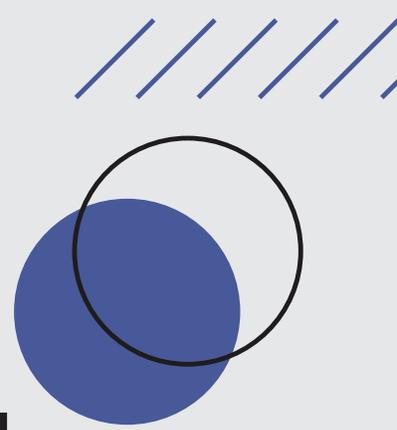
In its 2017 “State of French Second Language Education in Canada” report, Canadian Parents for French (2017) identified the following emerging areas which require attention:

- A call for the explicit teaching of French-language form in French Immersion classes to improve linguistic accuracy
- The endorsement of peer collaboration as a valid learning tool
- A focus on form within a literacy development approach (p. 4)

## Recommendations

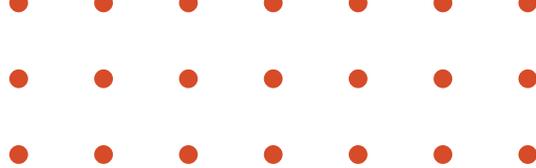
50. Develop a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to address the shortage of French language teachers that includes emphasis on career development to encourage Français and French immersion students to become teachers, and streamline credentials and prior learning recognition for internationally educated teachers.
51. Ensure that French-language education remains a priority and that the Français and French immersion curricula are not simply translated, but rather use a distinct and parallel format to address the unique cultural learning needs of students within each of the programs and their pivotal role as purveyors of culture.
52. Ensure equity of access for students in the Français program to technical vocational education and trades programming taught in French and delivered by the DSFM.





## **IMPERATIVE #8:** **EXPAND COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND STRENGTHEN PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ALLIANCES**

Schools cannot succeed without the cooperation of community members. They must build upon the goodwill that exists within many communities, consolidate initiatives, and facilitate further outreach and engagement to establish the coalitions, partnerships, and alliances to support student learning and success. This process also requires the engagement of unions, faculties of education, colleges, universities, and other institutions to realize improvement goals.



## What We Heard

The contributions of engaged parents and communities in supporting student learning were highlighted throughout our consultations. A number of references to the well-known African proverb, “*It takes a village to raise a child,*” supported an education system in which schools are viewed as community service hubs. In these hubs, service providers come together to coordinate integrated and wraparound services for students and their families to address barriers that impede learning and to proactively promote improved achievement.

*In some places, success is just getting the kids into the school each day. The whole community, the teachers, principals, parents, children, the board and the government all need to work together.* (Public survey)

*As an itinerant clinician it is critical to have connections to the communities we work in in order to have parent involvement and to be able to be a part of the school and community.* (Teacher survey)

*All this is part of what the [...] considers to be one of the keys to the success of a school community: the citizen community school/école communautaire citoyenne. This model involves inclusive and outward looking schools and communities working together. The community school, through complementarity, helps students and citizens to grow and learn from each other. Tomorrow’s minority school must be committed to the identity building of all its students, in an inclusive and experiential environment that stimulates their five senses.* (Brief 6, Laberge)

.....

*It has become more important than ever that the learning environment provides for the intrinsic needs of our children to keep them engaged by finding ways to spark the innate sense of curiosity, by creating more opportunities for community engagement and to highlight the importance of being a well-rounded human even over academic performance.* (Brief 41, Narth)

.....

*Family Centres in all elementary schools that connect families with their neighbourhood school to create a community learning hub that provides welcoming, inclusive, play-based learning environments and programs for toddlers and their parents to thrive and develop strong beginnings for school holistic approaches that include Indigenous perspectives such as the Circle of Courage framework.* (Brief 55, Michalik)

*Community organizations should be a part of the school community not separate from. Schools should be a hub for the community.* (Public survey)

*The Welcome to Kindergarten program is a unique parent engagement strategy that brings together parents, children, schools and community service agencies to achieve the goal of giving parents/caregivers the strategies, resources and all the support necessary to make early learning activity and play a priority in the home – to prepare the child for a fun and successful first year in school.* (Written submission)

## Research Highlights

Research tells us that children who begin school ready to learn will have future successes in learning throughout their lives. Children are more likely to succeed in school when parents or guardians are informed about and involved in their education. Some parents and families need support to get them ready for learning and to thrive in school. It is important for parents and guardians to know what their children are learning, how they are assessed, how student progress will be communicated, and how parents can support their learning throughout their education.

### *Parents and Communities*

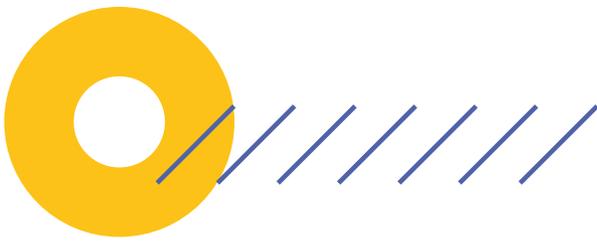
Forging alliances with parents and community members as essential to the success of their children is well established in educational research. Positive effects of parental involvement in schools include:

- ✓ Better long-term academic achievement
- ✓ Higher marks
- ✓ Higher test scores
- ✓ Higher motivation
- ✓ More positive attitudes
- ✓ Increased commitment to schooling
- ✓ Fewer retentions in a grade
- ✓ Decreased placement in special education
- ✓ Fewer behavioural problems
- ✓ Improved average daily attendance
- ✓ Fewer school drop-outs
- ✓ Lower suspension rates
- ✓ More successful programs
- ✓ More effective schools

(Ross, n.d., personal communication, Submission to the Royal Commission on Learning).

There are also examples of parents who have taken action in their communities to improve student learning, achievement, and the quality of their schools. In one community (Epstein et al., 2002), parents got together to develop their own action statements to guide their involvement. It was their idea that they had to take some responsibility for how their children progressed in school. They got together and forged consensus on some “I will statements” to express their resolve, determination, and the steps they were prepared to take to support their children’s learning and achievement. The following are examples of these parental values and actions:

- ✓ I will establish high expectations for my child
- ✓ I will not accept minimum effort or indifference to quality work
- ✓ I will know what is expected in each of my child’s classes
- ✓ I will insist on good attendance
- ✓ I will provide a quiet place and time in my home for study
- ✓ I will encourage my child to become actively involved in the co-curricular program of the school
- ✓ I will be actively involved in the school and be supportive of its work
- ✓ I will express my appreciation to the staff members who go above and beyond the call of duty
- ✓ I will model the importance of lifelong learning



We believe in the importance of parent and community involvement. All parents want their children to succeed. Most parents will continue to find ways to participate in their children’s education. Some struggle with their own life roles and, despite their wishes and good intentions, are just not able to be involved.

We therefore believe that any discussion of parental outreach, engagement, and involvement must take into consideration Epstein’s et al. (2002) research on six types of involvement, which includes specific tasks related to parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and communicating with community. All actions and involvements by parents are valued – whether they help to support their children in arriving at school ready to learn, assist with health, nutrition or other services, serve on parent organizations and other advocacy groups, engage in political action, or coordinate resources within the community to support their schools.

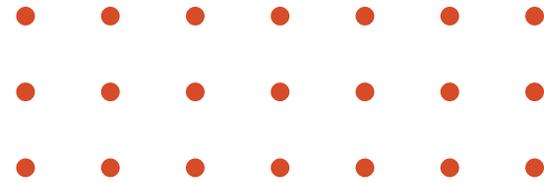
### *Support Services*

In addressing the issue of support services, it is important for us to think of the school as the hub of the community with the professional resources necessary to promote the holistic development and well-being of Manitoba’s children and youth. It is a place to engage a community, where services can be concentrated and harmonized to address the needs of students. It serves as a “meeting place” for parents, business and community members. It offers familiar ground to build coalitions to support learning, student success, and well-being. There is an expectation that the academic, physical, social, and emotional needs of children will be served. This builds upon the broadly accepted understanding that *it takes a village to raise a child*.

Services that support student learning are delivered by a vast array of individuals and organizations, including:

- Mental Health
- Child and Family Services
- Community-based organizations
- Newcomer, immigration, and refugee groups
- Food banks
- Health and professional services – including optometrists, audiologists, speech-language pathologists, occupational, and physiotherapists
- Libraries
- Law enforcement
- Faith organizations
- Elders and Knowledge Keepers
- Advocacy groups

***There are so many groups in communities that are already voicing their concerns. The need to address poverty-related issues is already of concern to community members and agencies. Food Bank Canada’s (2019) most recent Hunger Count 2018 reported over 68,000 individuals accessed food banks in Manitoba in March 2018. Of these reported visits, 42.6% were serving children. They state that poor nutrition equals struggling students and recommend universal food plans for all students, at no cost. They also recommend collaboration between various stakeholders to facilitate improved access to nutrition for Manitoba students.*** (Written submission)



Bale-Nick, Megan and Jennifer Wojcik, Dietitians of Canada, told us that Type 2 diabetes among children is rampant in Manitoba – 12 times higher than any other province. Comprehensive School Health (CSH) is globally recognized to improve student health and educational outcomes through four pillars: teaching and learning; improved physical and social environments; health-focused school policies; partnerships and support services. The desire for food programs to enhance nutrition, health, well-being, and academic outcomes is supported. They provide assistance for food skills programs and food literacy in the classroom, involvement of dietitians to collaborate to create nutrition-related curriculum, the utilization of CSH services, and teacher learning around nutrition curriculum in the classroom. (Brief 37, Bale-Nick and Wojcik)

## Employers and the Business Community

Employers and business leaders play a key role in supporting their schools. The Manitoba Chambers of Commerce as well as labour and industry sectors have a key role to play in enhancing collaboration on issues related to labour market trends, needs, expectations, and career development and preparation of students.

### What We Heard

As other stakeholders, employers have high expectations with respect to the role of the education system in preparing a well-educated and trained workforce that is contributing positively to the economy of the province. In order to achieve this goal, this sector told us that students must graduate with strong literacy and numeracy foundation skills. We have also heard that science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) are of special interest to future employers.

*The [...] believes that to change the lack of girls moving on into STEM, there should be an enhanced focus on girls in middle and high school to support them in this area and that systems should be in place to track success.* (Written submission)

.....

*Business and industry expect literacy and numeracy to be a part of what their new employees bring to the workplace, and they play a critical role in continuing to support learning on the job.* (Written submission)

.....

*As a [...], our organization cares deeply about building additional entrepreneurial capacity in our province and preparing the workforce of tomorrow for the opportunities that will exist as technologies like artificial intelligence and automation reach wide-scale adoption.* (Written submission)

As Commissioners, we were also pleased to note that employers recognize that they have a role to play in making the education system more effective and relevant for students.

*Partnerships between education and industry can support learners to develop competencies such as critical thinking, self-sufficiency, responsibility, communication and teamwork, by connecting classroom learning to career opportunities. Building relationships and identifying mutual priorities are essential to generate new opportunities that optimize the use of limited resources and maximize learning outcomes.* (Written submission)



Consistent with and in supporting the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce recommendations, we encourage government to partner with these organizations to:

- Provide current, up-to-date Labour Market Information (LMI)
- Establish a national committee to improve coordination and collaboration
- Target students, newcomers, immigrants, and refugee groups to develop the skills and attitudes and the “market-ready individuals” that businesses say they wish to employ
- Create an interprovincial committee to provide solutions to business’ challenges to hire skilled workers, especially in areas such as manufacturing, management, and manual labour
- Develop guidelines, expectations, and ways to improve co-operative education programs and services
- Solicit business input into the creation of systematic and intentional K to 12 career development programs
- Develop a plan to provide young people with “a seamless path directly from school through to the workplace”

Career development is essential for students to be able to see the relationship between learning and earning, and to realize how important it is for them to engage in career planning that is flexible and open to new self-knowledge, employment trends, and workplace expectations. We cannot stress enough the importance of students having opportunities to “try out” occupations to assist them with their career decision-making.

The development of simple day-to-day practical and life skills can also have a profound impact on the career trajectory of a student. For example, earning a driver’s license can be critically important when transitioning from high school to the labour market. It is always disheartening when we ask teenagers what their career aspirations are and they say that they have no idea. Career indecision can cause inordinate stress for young people when they have to make decisions related what they will do after school.

## Research Highlights

In a recent report published by the Public Policy Forum, Asselin and Speer (2019) assert that human capital development underpins the global competitiveness and innovation agenda. Adequately preparing students to enter the workforce or to pursue post-secondary education opportunities is critically important for economic prosperity.

In its submission to the Minister of Finance for the 2018-19 budget consultation, the Business Council of Manitoba (2018) delineated its vision for the provincial education system. This vision signals that employers share a high level of interest for both the K to 12 system and for higher learning. For the Council, providing quality education and training opportunities to students is critical to the success of the Manitoba business sector.

The Council's vision (2018) identified three broad functions required for a robust educational system:

- Providing equal opportunities for all to achieve a basic education and the opportunity to seek further training and studies
- Meeting the needs of business, and the broad public and private sectors, with skilled and competent Manitobans
- Contributing to a growing economy (p. 9)

For the Council, a number of actions must be undertaken to help construct a robust education system. This includes the implementation of quality Early Childhood Development programming to ensure that children are well-prepared to enter the formal education system. With respect to K to 12, improving the provincial graduation rate and exceeding the Canadian average is considered important. Access to post-secondary education is seen as a promising pathway for achieving high levels of employment, for improving earnings, and for contribution to society.

Education is an important driver of our economy, educating, training and supplying people with skills to succeed. Innovation and growth depend on our education system. In the future in a growing economy labour force demand will outstrip the supply of skilled graduates. While we continue to require skilled immigrants and the Provincial Nominee Program we must graduate more. (p.9)

In its more recent submission to the Minister of Finance the Council (2019) reiterated, “the private sector will not have the capacity to generate wealth and employment opportunities without a highly performing educational system” (p. 11).

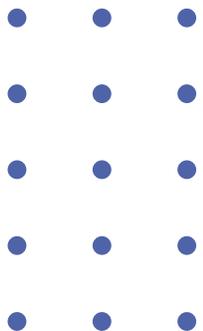
Skilled labour shortage and inability to attract qualified candidates were often identified as issues requiring attention in the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce (2018) Business Outlook Summary.

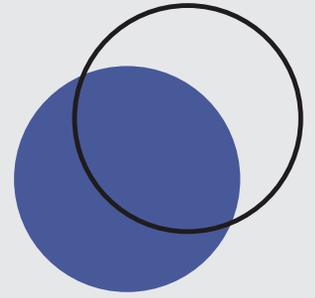
In a McKinsey & Company report (2015) examining education-employment transition, the authors assert that, as a general rule, the education system in Canada is producing a sufficient number of graduates, but that the quality of graduates skills is in question. Based on the findings of this report, educators tend to believe that students are well-prepared to enter the workforce while employers assert that it is not the case and that there is much room for improvement.



## Recommendations

53. Communicate and promote public information and share the many policies, protocols, strategies, and resources that currently exist within the system, but may not be widely known, such as *Safe and Caring Schools*, school entry readiness skills, grade level curriculum expectations, and performance data, to increase public confidence in the system.
54. Renew the emphasis on engaging parents and communities so that they are reflective of the diversity of schools, redefining their roles in supporting improved student learning, achievement, and career development.
55. Adopt a philosophy of Community Education across the province – rural, urban, and northern – to make schools the hubs of their communities and:
  - a) Build strong relationships with families, community members, and organizations
  - b) Develop a comprehensive range of services to assess and address student needs in a holistic and timely manner
  - c) Enable professionals and service providers to assemble and collaborate with each other on the needs of students and the schools
  - d) Strengthen the communities in which schools are located to improve student and community outcomes
56. Solicit the expertise of employers, post-secondary institutions, and appropriate government departments to develop an action plan that provides young people with current labour market information and seamless paths from school to the workplace, college or university, based on their aspirations, expectations, and career planning preferences.





# **IMPERATIVE #9:** **IMPROVE FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS IN MATHEMATICS, LITERACY, AND OTHER CURRICULAR AREAS**

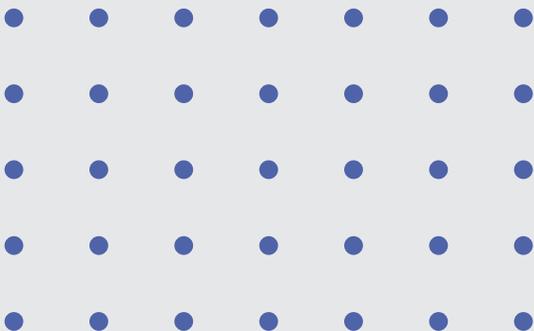
Manitoba Education describes numeracy and literacy as fundamental to all learning, from early childhood to adulthood, enabling students to understand, interpret, create, communicate, and interact with ideas, other people, and the world around them. As complex and dynamic processes, numeracy and literacy involve building on prior knowledge, language, culture, and experiences to develop new knowledge and deeper understandings.

Numeracy and literacy involve more than reading and writing words, numbers, or symbols on a page, or knowing grammar and math facts. They include the capacity to understand and use language, signs, numbers, symbols, and images for learning, communicating, and creating. They are embedded in learning experiences across all subject areas, and in learning and life outside of school.

Literacy and numeracy are among the essential skills adults need to succeed in the workplace and to be active citizens and lifelong learners (Province of Manitoba, 2019a).

Parents want to be assured that students are achieving the necessary curriculum expectations before they are moved on to the next grade or level. They are concerned about lack of achievement of key learning goals, especially in the formative years where knowledge is cumulative, requiring systematic building upon prior learning. Parents do not want their children to fail, nor do they want them to advance without the understanding and learning necessary to progress to the next level.

When assessing and reporting student progress, it is incumbent upon school systems to ensure they have processes for early identification, timely intervention, remediation, and honest and clear communication to parents to ensure that gaps in learning are addressed in an appropriate and timely manner.



# REGARDING THE NO FAIL ISSUE

## Policy and Legislation

Concerning the “no fail,” “no zero” and “grade inflation” concerns, there are no provincial policies that require such practices. As well, Manitoba’s *Public Schools Act*<sup>5</sup> prohibits school boards from enacting policies that require school principals to pass students whether or not they have successfully met learning outcomes. It also states clearly that school boards must not adopt a policy that requires a principal to promote a student regardless who has not achieved the expected learning outcomes.

Provincial policy states that decisions about grade promotion in K to 8, and the granting of high school credits in Grades 9 to 12 rests with school principals, who consult with teachers, parents, and other skilled specialists as appropriate. School divisions are expected to comply with the principles of the provincial policy and are required to adopt local policies that are fully aligned with this direction. (Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, 2015).

## Research Highlights

There is a significant body of research that suggests that retaining students in a grade is not an effective approach to improve student learning and that not promoting students has a negative effect on student achievement in a variety of subject areas, including reading and mathematics (Hattie, 2009). For example, the literature shows a significant association between grade retention and lower levels of long-term student achievement (Byrd & Weitzman, 1994; Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Holmes, 1989; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999). Years after repeating a grade, students who are retained have significantly lower achievement than similar students who were not retained. Most of these students never catch up to socially promoted peers with similarly low grades.

There is also a strong correlation between grade retention and the probability of dropping out of school. Even after controlling for previous achievement, compared to similarly low achieving students who are socially promoted, students who are retained are significantly more likely to drop out of school. (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 2003; Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2003; Ensminger & Slusarick, 1992; Grissom & Shepard, 1989; Jimerson, 1999; Roderick, 1994; Temple, Reynolds & Miedel, 2000).

<sup>5</sup>The Public Schools Act, 55.1(3)



## What We Heard

Many responses about student success and learning outcomes focused on ensuring students had a solid foundation in “the basics” – the traditional academic subjects of math, reading, and writing. Others indicated a preference for a more contemporary approach, including a focus on the arts, languages, and non-traditional forms of education.

Respondents often mentioned the need for students to graduate with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that prepare them for “real life.” In addition to the basics, input indicated that the school system should help equip students with attributes and skills that help them succeed in everyday life including, problem solving, critical thinking, employability, and personal finances.

*I think a weakness of our education system in Manitoba is that we are no longer focusing on educating our students with basic life skills, such as reading and writing.* (Public survey)

.....

*As a small business employer, we hire after school help and we have been shocked to find Grade 10-12 students who can not do basic mental math. Writing skills, including spelling and grammar, are at about a Gr. 2-3 level. How are these students graduating?* (Public survey)

.....

*Essential skills for workplace success are not taught effectively. Many students are graduating from high school with an inability to function in basic math skills such as percentages, fractions, ruler sense and measurement.* (Public survey)

.....

*Get back to the basics of reading, writing and math. Don't care so much about the fluff. A student cannot think, problem solve if they cannot read and do mental math.* (Public survey)

Whereas we acknowledge the pervasiveness of concerns about “no fail” practices, we would like to emphasize that there are no provincial policies in Manitoba that require these practices.

Learning is for life. The emphasis on “skill” development was common, especially in the early years. This covered a broad range of topics and was mentioned often. In addition to math and critical thinking skills, responses were framed as life skills, basic skills, or employment skills. These comments highlighted the need for students to be well-prepared to function in everyday life, including at work, in teamwork, solving problems, running a household, and so on.

*Teach them life skills they will need in the real world such as balancing a cheque book and budgeting, running a household, more teamwork skills, communication skills etc.* (Public survey)

.....

*I think high schools need to put an emphasis on readiness for life. Learn how to budget and do taxes, proper mannerisms for (the) workplace.* (Public survey)



***The modern world is quickly changing, and it is not information, but rather life skills which will help our students and children succeed in the future.*** (Public survey)

Parents and others expressed concerns during our consultations that “no fail,” “no zero,” and “grade inflation” practices are prevalent in the province. They were also troubled that students were promoted through the system without achieving grade-related expectations.

Provincial report cards were also identified as an issue. Many felt that report cards are difficult to comprehend and that better communication is needed to help parents understand what teachers are communicating in these reports.

Still another concern was that “Modified” or “M” course designations, intended only for those students with special needs who have significant cognitive disabilities, are sometimes used as a “work around” to facilitate grade promotion and credit acquisition for students who are not meeting curricular goals and outcomes.

***The “no fail” position set forth by administration has undermined the once high standards of this province.*** (Public survey)

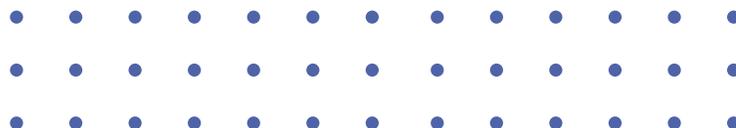
***I believe accountability for learning is vital. I have heard that in the public schools there are no failing grades given. I feel this will bring our strength as well educated citizens to a halt. Those that excel in learning want to see the grade given to them they deserve. Those that struggle to reach marks feel a sense of accomplishment when they pass. But to not grade at all or hold the students accountable for work done is a dangerous road to travel I believe. We have standards we set in our home and the student doesn’t move on until they have reached that standard!*** (Brief 5, Murphy)

.....

***“No fail” policies impede student readiness for success. In post-secondary education and in subsequent employment, there are real-world academic consequences to poor performance and poor attendance; students need to manage priorities, manage time, meet deadlines, and confront penalties for late or missing work.*** (Written submission)

.....

***Variability in these student performance expectations across schools and regions undermines shared expectations of student preparedness for post-secondary education by giving uneven or unreasonable feedback to parents and students about readiness, and appropriate expectations.*** (Written submission)





## Research Highlights - Building Capacity in Mathematics

### *Declining Math Performance*

As has been previously noted, Manitoba's math performance in international and Canadian assessments has declined dramatically in recent years. From an equity perspective, these poor results should be of utmost concern as research indicates that students who live in poverty and those of linguistic and ethnic minority groups are disadvantaged the most by a lack of proper math education (Clements, Fuson, & Sarama, 2017). Addressing the decline in Manitoba's mathematics performance will require a multi-pronged approach.

Given the results from the most recent PISA 2018 (OECD, 2019) assessment across Canada, Manitoba had the greatest percentage of students performing below Level 2, the baseline level required to participate fully in modern society.

There are three specific areas that should be a focus of reform efforts to improve the teaching and learning of math in Manitoba schools: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Teacher Training.

### *Curriculum and Pedagogy in Mathematics*

Mathematics knowledge is largely cumulative in nature, which makes an early understanding of fundamental concepts critically important for future achievement (National Mathematics Advisory Panel, 2008; National Research Council, 2000).

For several decades there have been heated debates about how best to teach mathematics. This has often been described in the Canadian media as a "math war" (Rodney, Rouleau, & Sinclair, 2016). In this metaphor, on one side of the battlefield are those that favour direct, teacher-driven math instruction that is focused on practice and repetition. On the other side are advocates of a reform math that is inquiry-based and student-centred. While the metaphor of a war is useful in capturing public attention, as has been pointed out by Davis and Mighton (2018), this is largely a false dichotomy. They wrote,

It may appear that one side asserts that schools should focus on teaching technical skills in math while the other believes they should focus on teaching for deep understanding. However, the sides really aren't that far apart on this issue. Few traditionalists would now say that learning math is just a matter of memorizing facts and rules, just as most reformists now recognize that mastery of basic facts and rules is necessary for higher-order thinking. (p. 9)

Good teaching in mathematics thus allows for structured learning and ample practice that is embedded in complex situations which students find relevant and meaningful. Successfully achieving this goal will involve a collaborative partnership among classroom teachers, mathematicians, educational researchers, administrators, and resource developers.

This debate surfaced during the course of our consultations. Dr. Anna Stokke and Dr. Craigen (Brief 29) advocated for a revision of the mathematics curriculum with a strong emphasis on conceptual understanding of mathematics and on the earlier introduction of concepts and more rigour in mathematics teaching and learning. They provided the example that student success with fraction arithmetic correlates with later success in algebra, which is the gateway to learning higher-level math. Dr. Koch (Brief 49) suggested working with the existing curriculum and focus on "mathematics knowledge for teaching" (MKT) and on building teacher capacity. She also recommended the use of the eight research-based mathematics-teaching practices detailed in National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (2014) as the basis for supporting educators to implement the mathematics curriculum in all school divisions. Dr. Koch proposed a shift in the discourse to disrupt beliefs about who is mathematically capable and lessen the mathematics anxiety linked to reduced student achievement. The debate persists.



### *Mathematics Teaching*

Knowledge of mathematics is a prerequisite to teach mathematics well (Greenberg & Walsh, 2008). Indeed, comparative research has shown that aspiring teachers in high-achieving countries are required to possess deep knowledge of the subjects that they wish to teach (Jensen, Roberts-Hull, Magee, & Ginnivan, 2016). However, knowledge of math content alone is often not enough to handle the problems and questions that arise when teaching math to young children (Borko et al., 1992; Thompson & Thompson, 1994).

### **Promising Practices from Other Jurisdictions**

#### *Lessons from Prince Edward Island (PEI)*

Prince Edward Island has gone against the downward spiral of declining mathematics achievement experienced by other jurisdictions. From 2010 to 2016, PEI's mean score for mathematics in the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) increased from 460 to 503 (+43 points) (CMEC, 2018). For the first time, PEI students performed at the Canadian average. PEI focused on how to improve math scores which led to the development and implementation of a balanced assessment program using information from national, provincial, and formative assessments. During these sessions, teachers worked with other teachers to develop a set of three parallel formative assessments that were aligned to key curriculum outcomes.

According to Dr. Elizabeth Costa, former Director of Instructional Development and Achievement (personal communication August 23, 2019), during professional development (PD) sessions, teachers examined samples of student work, shared best practices, and honed effective teaching strategies. Assessment information was used to determine whether further instruction was required to the whole class, or whether targeted small group or individual instruction was needed to move learning forward. These PD days were facilitated by math experts from the school boards and the Department of Education.

The work of Manitoba's Rural Learning Consortium in mathematics has been informed by the work in PEI.

#### *Lessons from Ontario*

On March 15, 2019, the Ontario government unveiled a new four-year math strategy to ensure students have a strong understanding of math fundamentals and how to apply them. This strategy focuses on fundamental math concepts and skills, ensures teachers are confident and capable in teaching math, and supports parent engagement in their child's math learning. ("First year investment," 2019, para. 1).

Improving student math performance is recognized as a complex issue that requires a comprehensive approach. The math strategy components include:

- Math curriculum revision
- Online math resources
- Supports to school boards
- Teacher supports
- Summer learning

Ontario's math strategy will feature fundamental math concepts, financial literacy, and computational thinking. It will also emphasize basic concepts and skills and their application, contributing to students' future success.

To modernize access to Ontario's curriculum, a new digital platform will be phased in. This new digital space will help educators, parents, and students access curriculum and learning resources in a user- and mobile-friendly manner and will become increasingly interactive over time.



In 2019-20, school boards will receive \$40.5 million to support the implementation of the math strategy (“First year investment,” 2019, para.3). This will provide funding to all schools as well as additional funding for targeted schools with the greatest need in mathematics. Boards will receive funding to hire a board-based math learning lead to coordinate board improvement efforts in mathematics and support the preparation for the implementation of the math curriculum over the next four years. Some boards will also receive funding to hire school-based math learning facilitators to support targeted elementary and secondary schools. Facilitators will provide training and coaching to math teachers in targeted elementary and secondary schools. In addition, release time is provided for educators to engage in training, coaching, and professional learning opportunities and specific online tools.

Summer learning programs will provide learning supports to Indigenous students in rural, remote, and isolated communities. This includes a virtual learning resource called Math at Home with a collection of online math resources to support student learning and ensure parents are aware of opportunities to help prepare their child for success as they transition to the next grade.

The government has passed legislation that will require new teachers to pass a math proficiency test that will offer a consistent measure of teacher understanding of math content knowledge, and an opportunity to increase teacher confidence in their ability to teach mathematics.

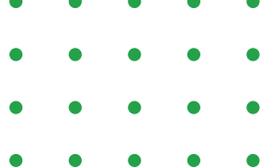
### **Research Highlights – Building Capacity in Literacy**

Foundations for language and literacy skills begin in the early years and continue to develop when children enter school and throughout the lifespan. Partnerships among parents, educators, and communities are critical to lifelong literacy development. Regardless of where students are along the literacy learning continuum schools can and should enrich and inspire a love of learning. Reading and writing are absolutely foundational to all literacies; they are a starting point from which all other literacies grow.

It was not until the early 19th century that literacy gained momentum worldwide – in 1820, in fact, only about 12 per cent of people in the world could read and write. Today only about 12 per cent do not read and write (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2013). Proficient literacy has, until the 21st century, referred to reading and written text, and writing about information in a legible manner. While this capability is no less important, the definition of literacy – or literacies – is dramatically shifting to include a broad range of knowledge and skills.

Competence in a broad spectrum of literacies is an undeniable imperative of an education that will equip students for future careers rooted in a diverse range of new literacies, particularly science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) fields.

Within the microcosm of individual schools, in Manitoba and elsewhere, there is increasing diversity and the need for students to learn to engage with their peers collaboratively, meaningfully, and often across mediums. The less isolated students are in their study habits and in the projects in which they are engaged, the more they must consider another’s perspective. Because 21st century skills in the classroom result in collaboration, so too does the development of “social and cultural awareness... [whereby] students understand, appreciate, and respect diversity, teamwork, collaboration, and communication” (Hummell, 2016). Fading into the margins, increasingly, are top-down, mandate-directed organizational models worldwide. Instead, many jobs demand employees who can navigate within a group with shared objectives and resulting in shared collective skills.



Increasingly, employers are favouring internships in which students at the college level must practise and perform “effective written and verbal communication, teamwork skills, and the ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources” (Denda & Hunter, 2016). These multiple sources are in the forms of social networks, internet searches, and other multimedia resources, which interact one with the other at a rapid pace. Students must learn to be more than tech savvy; they must learn to be savvy interpreters of information gleaned through technology.

As education pedagogy shifts from teacher-led to peer-collaboration, with the guidance of dedicated teachers, the need for many 21st century literacies – some of which are contingent upon technological adeptness – is unavoidable, and indeed detrimental if not addressed. It is evident that learners who are mentored in 21st century skills and interpersonal qualities become more confident, self-determined, and thoughtful citizens in their communities and the world at large. When students are required to merely reiterate known information and statistics, they do not need to think critically or apply them in a useful context; alternately, when students are given the tools to search out knowledge and apply it on their own, the teacher “is no longer the sage on the stage and no longer the only expert in the classroom... the shift is to being a facilitator, coach and learning partner”. When students are empowered to be the makers of their own learning, with the correct tools at the ready and the knowledge to use these tools effectively, they can engage in “meta-learning.” They become cognizant of their own capabilities, “a process by which learners become aware of and [are] increasingly in control of their habits of perception, inquiry, learning, and growth” (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2018).

Literacy is the baseline for a good grounding in education. As Manitoba reflects the growing interconnectedness of diverse people and ideas, students will need to become literate on varying levels, with the adaptability to apply their knowledge in many contexts. The learner of the future will be reliant upon their adaptability and on their ability to adopt, navigate, interpret, and build upon prior knowledge.

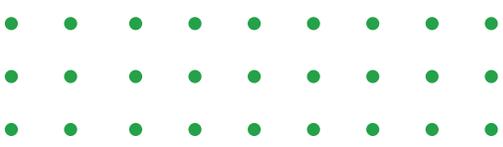
Manitoba’s trends in literacy performance, in both English and French, drawn from large scale assessments, namely PCAP and PISA, are consistently below the Canadian average. It is time to reverse this trend and take action to change the direction of this trajectory for Manitoba’s students.

### **Literacy – The Manitoba Context**

In October 2019, Manitoba Education released a new curriculum framework for English Language Arts (ELA) (Province of Manitoba, 2019), which applies as well to the *Français* program and the French Immersion Program.

The Framework describes the relationship between ELA and literacy as follows:

In all school subjects and in all facets of life, students are engaged in literate behaviours. Current understandings of literacy suggest that learners participate in multiple literacy communities and that each community has particular ways of thinking, doing, and using and creating text. Learners need to be flexible in their literacy learning in order to be active participants in a variety of communities both in school and in other places in their life. In all disciplines or fields of study, students should be engaged in literacy learning specific to each discipline. In science, for example, students learn about the texts that are authentic to that discipline and the particular ways of thinking about those texts. Reading for historical accuracy requires different processes than reading scientific data in order to make a judgment. Similarly, ELA has particular texts and particular ways of considering language and the world. English language arts recognizes that the particular discipline of ELA has both its own way of thinking and the responsibility to support the literacy learning that transfers through and between other disciplines. Literacy practices from all fields as well as those that are particular to ELA offer multiple ways for learners to engage with, connect with, and respond to their world.



The ELA Curriculum Framework (2019) is designed to support educators in constructing rich and relevant learning experiences that begin with the students and the communities in which they live. By using the Framework, educators are able to respond to different learners and contexts while working toward high expectations for learning. The purposes of the ELA Framework are to:

- Set out the underpinnings and common learning expectations for English language arts
- Present the four ELA *practices* and ways learners enact the *practices* through *elements* and *grade band descriptors*
- Describe multiple ways that students engage in practices at various points in learning
- Provide direction for designing, assessing, and reflecting on learning
- Support equity and inclusion by emphasizing relevant and meaningful learning contexts and deep flexible thinking for all learners
- Embed professional learning to align curriculum and professional practice (Province of Manitoba, 2019, d)

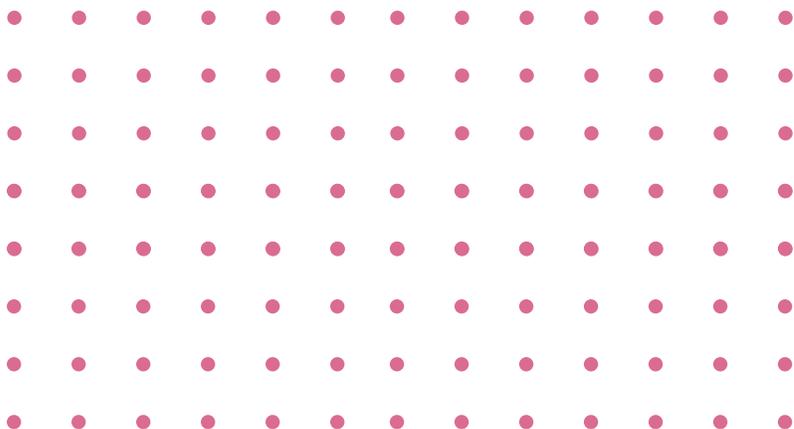
The ELA Curriculum Framework allows for responsive ongoing development based on the work of classroom teachers, current research, and reviews of curricula. This ongoing development involves consultations and contributions from teachers, students, consultants, administrators, academics, and community members.

For the Commission, increasing literacy outcomes through this new language arts approach will require focused attention to the development of foundational skills in reading and writing. It also requires the measuring and monitoring of achievement and an implementation strategy to reflect the sense of urgency necessary to improve student achievement in Manitoba's schools.



## Recommendations

57. Reinforce the need for systematic implementation of Manitoba's Math curriculum that was revised to emphasize the importance of conceptual understanding, procedural thinking, and problem solving, and to clarify grade-level expectations, standardized algorithms, and recall of facts among other skills.
58. Implement a comprehensive approach to early and ongoing identification and intervention in reading, writing, and math to solidify the foundational skills necessary for future learning.
59. Increase accountability and transparency through the implementation of provincial curriculum-based tests for mathematics and literacy (with a reading and writing focus) at Grades 3 or 4, 6 or 7, and 10, with school-level scores made available to the public. Some of the content for the questions used on the tests should be based on the science and social studies curriculum for those years.
60. Work with the faculties of education to prepare mathematics specialists for the early and middle years and encourage school divisions to explore how math specialists could be deployed or used in schools and in divisions to improve mathematics learning and performance.
61. Reconfigure current resources to ensure long-term, sustained professional development around and implementation of the Kindergarten to Grade 8 Mathematics and the new K to 12 English Language Arts curricula.
62. Differentiate the certification of teachers to ensure that the teaching certificate issued clearly identifies the teacher preparation program completed – early, middle and or senior years and ensure that school divisions make appropriate hiring and placement decisions based on the teacher preparation program completed.



## Technology Education Program/Technical Vocational Education

Students today want to understand the rationale behind what they are learning in school and to see its relevance to their future life. While they are in school, they crave experiences that demonstrate the relationship between learning and earning. They also want firsthand learning that simulates what it is like to be in the workplace.

It was not surprising to us when we visited some schools, teachers and principals expressed that they had challenges with regular student attendance. Absenteeism was very high. At the same time, we visited schools with options such as land-based learning, technical-vocational education programming and forms of experiential learning. Where these opportunities existed, students told us that they would not want to miss a day of school.

**The Seven Oaks School Division's Met School Program** is a high school program that combines challenging academic work and real-world learning and internships. The Met Schools work with community partners, businesses, professionals, and organizations to provide opportunities for students to explore their interests and career goals directly with mentors in the real world.

The Met School Program follows the Big Picture Learning Network's "One Student at a Time" philosophy based on the premise that students learn best when they are doing something they are passionate about, in the real world, and actively participate in their own education.

The Seven Oaks School Division opened its first Met School in 2009 and now has two Met School campuses – the Seven Oaks Met School at 640 Jefferson Avenue and the Maples Met School at 1330 Jefferson Avenue – with over 240 students in 15 advisory classrooms.

### Real World Learning

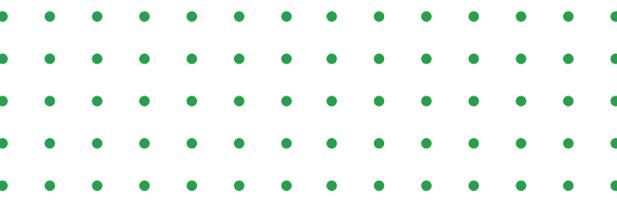
The unique feature of the Met School program is that students spend two days each week conducting informational interviews, attending shadow days, and interning with mentors to learn from people who are passionate about what they do.

Met School students gain valuable workplace experience, learn first-hand in the real world, and get a more realistic view of what to expect if they pursue a career in a particular field.

Met school students also work on inquiry-based research projects throughout the year that they present to their parents and communities. They select their projects based on their own interests and conduct research through workshops, independent study, field trips, informational interviews, and their internship experiences. (Seven Oaks School Division, n.d.)

Fortunately, many options are popular with students, which can be delivered as part of the curriculum in all disciplines. They serve as excellent avenues for career exploration. They often include job shadowing and job twinning programs and work-based and experiential programs.

In Manitoba, the Technology Education program is one of the four officially recognized school programs. Technical-vocational education (TVE) is located within this program. The goal of TVE is to provide students with the skills and competencies that will allow them to transition successfully into the workplace, apprenticeship opportunities, post-secondary education, and their daily lives.



*Currently too many students become disengaged from their school programs, particularly as they move into high school, mainly because too many courses fail to show any relevance to what the school system likes to refer to as “the real world”. (By-the-way, school is part of the “real world”.) Many subjects, such as physics and math, are taught in isolation and their relevance to daily functioning remains obscure. Now more than ever, careers in the trades require communication and computational skills, along with an understanding of things such as physics, if one wants to explore a career in, say, automotive mechanics or aircraft industry.* (Brief 44, Narth)

We saw evidence of excellent technological education programming in Manitoba schools. This programming provides students with opportunities to solve problems, create designs, and address current trends and issues in technology education. Students use and create practical solutions to problems – individually or in groups – to develop technical skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them for the world of work. Technological education enables students to explore their ideas, gain practical experiences, and work through thinking processes. These technology courses include subject areas such as industrial arts, human ecology, business, and marketing education. These, in turn, contribute to entrepreneurialism. The Commissioners are very supportive of apprenticeship programs and the role they play in building a highly skilled labour force to address Manitoba’s needs.

#### *The High School Apprenticeship Program*

Apprenticeship Manitoba, within the Department of Economic Development and Training, administers apprenticeship training. It entails a training relationship between a trainee (apprentice), an employer, and Apprenticeship Manitoba. An employer hires an apprentice to meet an existing or projected need. A contractual agreement is established among the employer, the apprentice, and the Apprenticeship Branch. The High School Apprenticeship Program is an extension or enhancement of regular apprenticeship training. It is an integration of institutional education and the workplace and provides students with credits that can be used towards continued apprenticeship training after graduation.

#### **What We Heard**

During our consultations, we heard from Manitobans that there is a need to renew, update, and expand access to a broader spectrum of options so students have more flexibility to explore their future careers alongside new pathways and to accelerate transitions to career and higher education pathways.

Manitobans reached out to us about the value and importance of technical and vocational programming emphasizing that no matter where in the province students live, they should have equitable access and program offerings. Some also highlighted the need, in some fields, to facilitate better coordination with post-secondary institutions.

*While there is a justified emphasis placed on academics, there are a great deal of students who are losing access to practical application life skills due to the higher cost of running vocational-type courses. This is mostly seen in middle/senior years access to home economics, and trades (construction, metal, cosmetology, auto mechanics, etc.) outside of the larger centers.* (Teacher survey)

*While the importance of advanced education for career success and prosperity has long been recognized, and the role of education pathways in fostering social mobility is amply documented, we are still a long way from providing the kind of pathways needed to address the needs and opportunities of Indigenous Manitobans – and other groups who remain underrepresented in our provincial workforce.* (Written submission)



*While there is a role for vocational education in the K-12 system, specifically for developing individual career awareness and even in promoting retention and graduation objectives for some students, this orientation training is insufficient for effective preparation for today's workforce needs. Post-secondary institutions are the most effective providers of specialized professional, career, and vocational education. Employers increasingly require more extensive development of employability skills than the K-12 system can reasonably accommodate, nor is job training consistent with its primary purpose.* (Written submission)

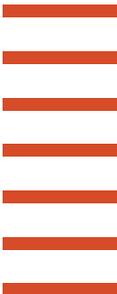
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*Establish a provincial Strategic Education Council (with voluntary membership) to facilitate coordination between Manitoba K-12 and Post-Secondary Institutions. The establishment of more effective pathways would be a key focus; other specific concerns are teacher education and the integration of Adult Learning Centres within either branch of the system.* (Written submission)

### **Research Highlights**

To excel in the 21<sup>st</sup> century environment students require educational and training opportunities that are current, engaging, and responsive to labour market needs and that meet entrance requirements of post-secondary education. In a workshop conducted by the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) (2018), student participants stated that earning a university degree is not always the best option to achieve a successful and rewarding career. For some students, the best way to fully engage with the school system is by gaining practical skills specific to certain work environments. Research suggests that the Canadian economy will be disrupted by various technological changes within the next decade. More specifically, research conducted by the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) (2018), asserts that the Canadian skill-based economy will add over 2 million jobs in the next few years. The report further suggests that Canadian education systems and training programs are not designed to help students navigate, with confidence, the new skills-based economy and that they are perceived as being fragmented, linear, and not nimble enough to prepare students for the ongoing learning, training, and upgrading demands of a changing world.

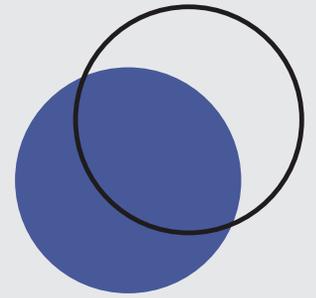
According to the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC, 2019), providing work-integrated learning opportunities to interact directly with employers in workplaces is an effective and important approach to help students transition effectively from education to career pathways. Some of the most common barriers identified by students as preventing access to technology education programming and work-integrated learning include lack of information available, stigma, as well as peer and parental perceptions (CAF, 2018).



## Recommendations

63. Strengthen the processes through which schools and school divisions assess, monitor, and report on student achievement to parents and to the public, including setting ambitious targets for continuous improvement and identifying ways to measure and report on progress toward those targets.
64. Develop a provincial strategy to ensure that career development is infused throughout all K to 12 curricular areas.
65. Work with employers to determine needs and to expand Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) skills, and work-based technical-vocational learning experiences, consistent with workforce needs and career preferences of students.
66. Work with Apprenticeship Manitoba of Manitoba Economic Development and Training and chambers of commerce to create partnerships, identify and provide funding for programs created in cooperation with industry, school divisions, post-secondary institutions, and colleges to expand apprenticeship programs especially in remote, rural, and northern communities.
67. Find solutions and actionable steps to address the following issues:
  - (a) Curriculum rigour and standards
  - (b) The perceived “no fail” policy
  - (c) Identification, promotion, and placement of students





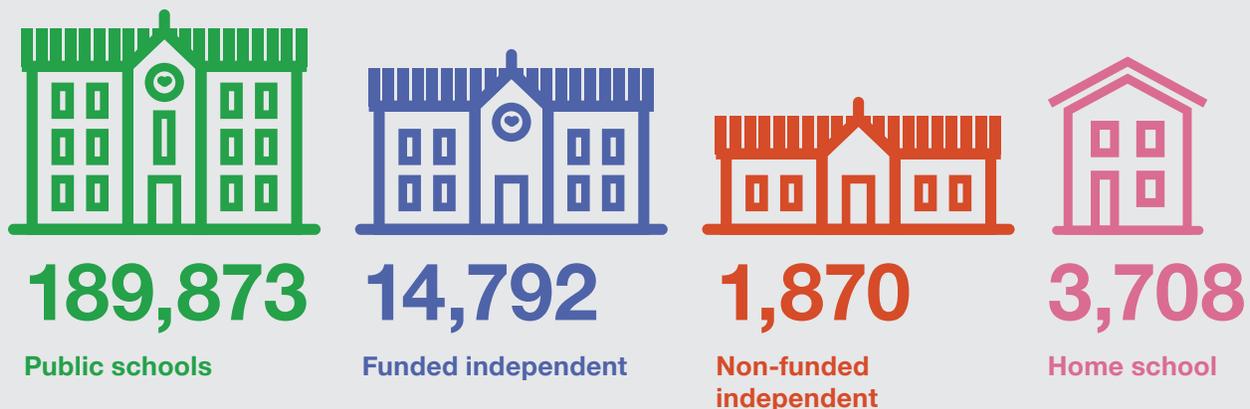
## **IMPERATIVE #10:** **ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND FUNDING STRUCTURES**

The most recent enrolment data indicates that school boards in Manitoba serve a total of 189,873 students, including the DSFM that is responsible for all francophone schools in the province. Educational services are also delivered by independent schools and by families choosing home schooling as a preferred option.

Manitoba's nearly 700 public schools are administered by 37 distinct school divisions, each of which is governed by its own elected board of trustees. A recent review of trustee election results tells us that there are nearly 300 school board trustees across the province. Manitoba Education enrolment data, as of October 2019, highlights massive variations across divisions, ranging from 211 in the Whiteshell Special Revenue District and 733 in Turtle River School Division to 32,818 in Winnipeg School Division. In addition, 14 of the 37 divisions serve fewer than 2,000 students.

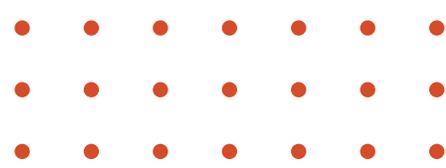
While funded and non-funded independent schools, currently numbering 64 and 50 respectively, govern themselves, it should be noted that funded independent schools are required to comply with provincial regulations and policies.

In terms of senior administration, school boards employ approximately 110 superintendents, assistant superintendents, and directors across the province.



Total:

# 210,243



## Education Governance in Canada

Many jurisdictions are rethinking education governance. In Canada, a few provinces have taken steps to reduce or eliminate the number of school boards and trustees. Among the provinces retaining elected school boards, the number of boards range from as few as two in Newfoundland and Labrador (one English, one French) to 72 in Ontario.

The other key pan-Canadian change is the adoption of central funding and the cancellation of taxation authority over decentralized models. During the fall 2019 election campaign, and more recently in the November 2019 Speech from the Throne, the Premier of Manitoba announced plans to remove the education portion of property taxes. The phase-out is scheduled to begin the first year after the budget is balanced and be completed over a maximum of 10 years (Province of Manitoba, 2019, Speech from the Throne).

Historically in Manitoba, the role of school boards has been to provide, through elected trustees, local voice and decision-making within the provincial education system. The responsibilities of school boards – hiring of staff, maintenance of infrastructure, and transportation of students, along with their dual accountability to the Minister of Education and the communities that elected them – are laid out in *The Public Schools Act* (The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2019a). This means that no trustee holds power as an individual; their power rests in collective decision-making. Overall control of the education system belongs to the Minister as stipulated in *The Education Administration Act* (The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2019b).

### *The Accountability Relationship between the Minister and Boards of Education in Manitoba*

The relationship between elected school boards and the Minister of Education is defined in *The Public Schools Act (PSA)* and *The Education Administration Act (EAA)*, as it has been for generations. The PSA describes the duties and powers of the board, while the EAA considers the powers of the Minister within the system. Various statutes related to the powers and duties of the Minister are also distributed throughout the PSA.

Given that school board members are elected, they are, in essence, accountable to the electorate. They are expected to comply with directions from the Minister, thus creating a horizontal accountability relationship between the board and the Minister.

While school boards and the Minister are accountable to voters to carry out the duties in the education system, the Minister may utilize certain mechanisms to influence the education system and decisions of school boards, including:

- Power to amend the statutes through the regular legislative process
- Capacity to exercise a significant influence on the education system through, for example, the governmental “power of the purse” and the ministerial control of the Manitoba Diploma and the underlying criteria that must be satisfied to offer the Diploma
- Ministerial general power to provide directives to school boards

### *The Accountability Relationship between the Superintendents, Secretary Treasurers, and School Boards in Manitoba*

School boards may employ a superintendent who reports directly to the board. Superintendents are responsible for the overall administration and operations of the school division. Generally viewed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the organization, they act on behalf of the board. As the senior operational manager, they play a major educational leadership role in the school division.



The system relies on them to set direction and utilize resources to ensure that students achieve their full potential. Supporting their needs for high-quality, self-directed professional learning is essential to the improvement of the education system.

Secretary treasurers, also hired by the school boards, are generally considered the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and in most cases report directly to the superintendent. In a few school divisions, a dual model is in place where the Secretary Treasurer reports directly to the school boards. (MASS, MASBO & MSBA, 2015)

In a small number of school divisions the superintendent is both the CEO and the CFO.

#### *School-Level Educational Governance in Manitoba*

Parents must play a central role in the education of their children. Parent voice is enhanced when they engage more directly with the schools. As outlined in the Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (2005) document, *School Partnerships: A Guide for Parents, Schools, and Communities*, in Manitoba, several mechanisms are available to parents who wish to play an active role in schools. These include Advisory Councils on School Leadership (ACSL), Parent Advisory Councils (PACS), Home and School Associations (HSA), and School Committees (SC).

The roles and responsibilities of these groups vary from advising the school board about the process of hiring and assigning school principals to coordinating local events such as lunch programs and fundraising activities. The ACSL is the most formal among those listed, as its role is defined by Regulation (The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 1996). The Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC) is the province's official umbrella parent organization with the majority of its membership consisting of PACs and HSAs.

The Division scolaire franco-manitobaine has its own parent participation model through its *comités scolaires*.

#### **What We Heard**

Through all phases of our consultations, Manitobans expressed a need for input from community, parents, and teachers on decision-making about schools and education.

Education governance and local voice were areas of keen interest during the course of our consultations. At the public workshops, discussion groups consistently formed to share passion-filled perspectives about speculation on school board amalgamations, offering opposing viewpoints regarding the relevance of boards and the roles and qualifications of the trustees that comprise them. Written submissions and online survey responses yielded similar input.

Those opposed to school division amalgamation expressed support for maintaining elected trustees, asserting that they contributed the necessary local voice to local decision-making – in particular as it pertained to locally generated tax resources and partnerships that support local programming priorities. In total, we received more than 1,800 form letters supporting the role of local school boards to maintain local voice and ensure that local needs are met.

***Local voice is important to the school communities. School boards ensure that the needs, wants and desires of the people are what are focused on for the division with the students best interests in mind.*** (Public survey)



Those who favoured a reduction in the number of school divisions through some form of amalgamation tended to question the relevance of boards – often citing high numbers of acclamations and low voter turn-out for trustee elections. Feedback supporting amalgamations expressed ideas that present governance and administrative structures as top-heavy and laden with operational redundancies. Reducing the number of school divisions was also seen as an opportunity to review roles and board composition requirements and to increase accountability and transparency in decision-making.

***Some school trustees are voted in by acclamation, and have no education and are making major decisions about our schools and children and may not have any background or education in order to be making those decisions. I think people with proper education/experience should be on school boards, not necessarily voted in by the public. They are basically running a multi-million dollar business, and don't necessarily have the knowledge to do that successfully.***

(Public survey)

In our experience, many school board trustees are voted in by acclamation and voter turn-out tends to be very low. Members of the public felt that a total public school enrolment of 188,744 simply does not warrant 37 distinct school divisions and boards. There was no shortage of creative solutions sent forward for our consideration. Some favoured assessing the current system and making purposeful decisions about change. Others were more prescriptive, favouring the elimination of school boards altogether, the amalgamation of smaller boards, breaking up larger boards, and a handful of options that fell somewhere in between.

***In Alberta, for example, the City of Edmonton School District has 102,000 students and has only 9 elected school trustees. In the City of Winnipeg, we have approximately 98,000 students with 60+ school trustees. Alberta provincially has 727,000 students in comparison to our 228,000 students and manages with 61 school boards. We spend more dollars on a per student basis than Alberta, and yet, our student performance ranks lower. My recommendation is to combine the current 37 school boards into 4 regional advisory boards: 2 Southern Manitoba Boards, 1 Central Manitoba Board and 1 Northern Manitoba Board. These boards would assume operational responsibilities for all schools within their area.*** (Written submission)

.....

***Effective and meaningful education governance means that the current number of school boards ought to be consolidated to perhaps 6. Research shows that those members of the division that interact with the public most meaningfully are the local administrations, including the Superintendents' offices, not the school trustees.*** (Brief 17, Reimer)

At the end of the day, we heard that Manitobans want an education governance system that is accountable and one that clearly articulates the roles of all those who have responsibility for educating students successfully. This also includes those in the Department of Education. People want to know that those who are making important decisions within the education system, including elected trustees, are well qualified with knowledge and experience necessary to fulfill those responsibilities.

#### *Amalgamation of School Divisions*

In fall of 2001, the government of Manitoba announced plans to reduce the number of school divisions in the province from 54 to the current 37. The Minister of Education at the time stated, “By reducing the number of school divisions, we have an opportunity to reduce administrative duplication and costs at the school division level and to focus those resources into the classroom for the benefit of our children (“Province Moves,” 2001, para. 3). By June 2002 new boundaries were established and new interim boards were in place.



The Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA) submission to the Commission stated that:

*... based on this province's most recent experience reducing boards and the contemporary experience of our Canadian peers, we would posit that bigger is not better and, in terms of efficiencies, neither are there any savings to be found through larger governance units. Manitoba has lived through this experience before and it has done so very recently. We have learned many valuable lessons from this experience. Given current consideration for improving student learning and achievement, Manitoba must reflect very carefully upon whether it wishes to relive its recent past.* (p. 146)

In 2018, the Minister of Education signalled his intention to move to a streamlined single provincial bargaining table for public school teachers. As a Commission, we fully support this direction. Manitoba is the only province where teacher collective bargaining is conducted exclusively at the local level and negotiated separately between each school board and its local teachers' association. In fall 2019, the government also announced its intention to phase out education taxes as applied to property over the next few years. As a Commission, we also support this policy change while maintaining our focus on improving student learning and achievement.

## Education Governance: Principles and Key Considerations

Improving learning and achievement for all students continues to be our primary goal and one of the major reasons for the establishment of this Commission. This goal cannot be achieved without a structure that facilitates systemic improvement and provincial coherence. The existing governance structure is no longer adequate to achieve this goal.

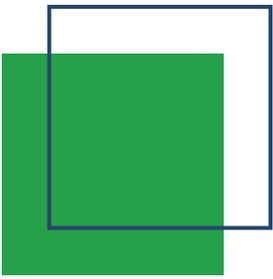
Expanded mandates, new skill sets, enhanced and clearly defined roles and accountabilities are essential for improvement. Creating a more coherent and highly effective system, strengthening communication, and spreading successful practices will be necessary to increase public confidence in Manitoba's education system.

Within our proposed changes, the role of trustees continues to be important. When trustees are performing at their best, and are focused on student outcomes, they play an important role in the governance of school districts. What is important to us as a Commission is that their primary focus must be on the improvement of student outcomes and the closing of the achievement gaps among groups.

### Elected and Appointed Boards of Trustees

In examining the research, we have discovered that there is no panacea regarding board structures and that there are advantages and disadvantages inherent in all models. Geography, context, culture, and desired outcomes vary from one jurisdiction to another. It is therefore necessary to design the model that best suits the provincial objectives and desired outcomes. We recognize that there are positive and negative rationales for these approaches. We must therefore consider the implications of these in our decision-making.

Electing trustees provides an opportunity to demonstrate democracy in action. However, this approach comes with challenges that include high levels of acclamations, lack of competition, and low voter turn out. Having single interests, purposes or intentions, as well as jurisdictional silos, can limit the effectiveness of elected boards. The importance of having trustees with the skill sets necessary for governance and decision-making cannot be overemphasized.



Appointing trustees provides an opportunity to be strategic and to identify desired skills sets and a wider range of candidates who may not typically run for office. It also enables diversity in the appointments. At the same time, this approach is susceptible to partisan influence and allegiance, and appointments can be rescinded with or without cause.

Based on the above discussion, the Commission proposes a restructuring of the educational governance in Manitoba.

We have decided that the status quo is not optimizing the potential that exists within the system and if things remain the same, improvements expected by the public will be too slow if not impossible to achieve. Change is needed to propel and position the system towards improved student learning and attainment.

When situations are of critical importance – such as the success of Manitoba's children – bold and purposeful steps are required to improve outcomes. As we have previously stated, business as usual will not suffice.

A carefully chosen group of individuals who understand the urgency of the situation and who have experience in positioning organizations to achieve their mission is needed at this juncture in Manitoba's journey towards realizing its full potential for educational improvement. Hence, our decision to favour, at this time, and under these circumstances, a majority of individuals who are appointed with a specific mandate is uppermost on our minds.

This is certainly not the time for failure; we cannot afford to miss the mark. Our children's success and the effectiveness of the education system cannot be left to chance. There are no second chances or margins for errors when the future of our children is at stake.

Admittedly, the future may call for different choices and strategies. However, at this time we need to put a team in place with the knowledge, experience, skills, and will to effect the changes and improvements that are required to secure the success and well-being of our school system.

Given that the provincial government has already communicated its intention to phase out education taxes and to take the full responsibility of funding K to 12 education, as well as to move toward central bargaining, the Commission recommends some consolidation of school divisions, changes to the configuration of boards, and new requirements regarding trustees.

## Recommendation

68. Consolidate the province's public school boards<sup>6</sup> into six to eight regional boards with boards consisting of five to seven trustees, the majority of whom would be appointed and the others elected.

This approach recognizes the value of local democracy, appropriate representation, and the required skill sets to tackle the tasks at hand – to improve the achievement of Manitoba's children. The specific number of trustees will depend on geography and the total enrolment in the region. Consideration should also be given to diversity and demographics.

Each school board would be responsible for hiring a Superintendent/CEO. Superintendents would have dual accountability – to the school board and to the Minister of Education. Similarly, the school board would have dual accountability – to the public and to the Minister of Education.

<sup>6</sup>Note: This does not apply to the DSFM



A new position at Deputy or Assistant Deputy Minister level would be created. This senior education system leader would be responsible for championing and mobilizing the system and increasing coordination toward improved student achievement. It is necessary for this leader, who will liaise with the new school boards to coordinate and drive the agenda for the province, to reside within the Department of Education.

The role of the regional boards would include:

- Driving the accountability agenda for student learning and achievement
- Ensuring alignment with the strategic directions set by the Department of Education
- Setting policy directions
- Providing governance, oversight, and financial accountability
- Hiring and evaluating school division superintendents
- Facilitating parent and community outreach and engagement
- Promoting community education to enhance advocacy for children and community
- Leveraging system efficiencies to reduce duplication
- Delivering and coordinating transportation, maintaining facilities, and providing other services
- Reporting to the Minister of Education and to the public

### **The Manitoba Department of Education**

The mandate of the department is to provide direction and allocate resources in support of youth programming and Kindergarten to Grade 12 education in public and funded independent schools. Their mission is to ensure that all Manitoba’s children and youth have access to educational programming and opportunities to achieve required outcomes. This will ensure that every learner experiences success through relevant, engaging, and high-quality education that prepares them for lifelong learning and citizenship in a democratic, socially just, and sustainable society. Their vision – that every learner will complete a high school education with a profound sense of accomplishment, hope, and optimism must be reviewed and updated in light of current performance of Manitoba’s children. (Manitoba Education, n.d.).

The existing K to 12 priority areas of the Department of Education include:

- High levels of achievement
- Equity and inclusion
- Citizenship, sustainability, and well-being
- Public engagement

These four priorities have been in existence for some time. They must also be reviewed in light of the imperatives outlined in the report. The Department of Education has considerable expertise among its staff. We are relying on them to redouble their efforts to utilize their skills to improve Manitoba education.

The department currently uses the *Kindergarten to Grade 12 Framework for Continuous Improvement*, developed collaboratively with school divisions to increase system coherence, capacity building, data-informed decision-making, and shared responsibility for student achievement. The framework must be constantly updated to ensure currency and relevance.





The Department of Education also needs a rigorous process to assess its effectiveness in delivery of its mandate.

### **What We Heard**

In general, respondents to the public survey indicated that the Department of Education plays an important leadership role in supporting student learning. Some went as far as suggesting that the department is fundamentally responsible and accountable for children's success in schools. The department will be expected to fulfill its mandate in light of the imperatives outlined in this report. To reiterate, business as usual in the Department of Education will not suffice given the performance of Manitoba students.

*Overall, the teachers, administration, the school boards and the department of education are there to provide the money, services, and the resources that are needed to ensure that the kids succeed in K-12.* (Public survey)

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*The choices that Manitoba Education makes with regards to our education system impacts all other partners in student learning. The Department of Education and Training creates the situation in which learning will take place, and thus they are ultimately responsible for student success.* (Public survey)

Not all comments about the department were favourable. Some respondents stated that the department was overly bureaucratic and ineffective. Most suggested the department needed to work more closely with the divisions, schools, and teachers.

*Those in the Department of Education and Training need to be more connected to schools – perhaps fewer permanent positions and more seconded positions could help to achieve this. Becoming a bureaucrat who needs to please the minister is a danger in government.* (Public survey)

Others suggested that the department should play a stronger leading role in bringing about a higher level of consistency across the province and the Commission agrees with this sentiment. Others suggested a more tailored approach.

*In Manitoba, the Department of Education and Training wields far less power than local school boards or MTS. Curriculum is considered to be little more than a departmental suggestion by many Manitoban teachers, principals, and leaders. Even some within the Department see curricular outcomes as simply a guideline for interpretation by individual teachers. The Minister of Education himself has no ability to hire, fire, or discipline teachers or principals who defy departmental expectations or mandates. Department influence could not be lower.* (Written submission)

## Funding

We do recognize that proposing a new funding model is not within the mandate of the Commission. On the question of education funding of Manitoba schools, The Public Consultation Discussion (2019) document clearly stated that:

This review will not delve into technical details on topics such as funding models, local taxation, teacher compensation, teacher pensions and benefits. However, what the K-12 education system should look like in the future cannot be de-coupled from how it is funded and paid for. While the review primarily focuses on improving educational outcomes, financial accountability and sustainability will undoubtedly be part of the conversation. (p. 15)

We would be negligent if we did not point out that this is an issue of perceived unfairness – one that cannot be de-coupled from how the system is funded and paid for. While the main purpose driving the review is improving educational outcomes, financial accountability and sustainability are essential to system improvement. These issues were certainly a part of the conversations during our consultation process. We therefore wish to make a few recommendations and reiterate some of the questions raised during the consultation process with the key question: What actions are required to ensure that the education system is sustainable and provides learning outcomes for **all** children and youth?

Consistent with our mandate, we emphasized the fact that Manitobans deserve a high-quality K to 12 education system at a reasonable cost to taxpayers. They expect that the financial resources invested in education are strategically allocated to provide the best possible learning outcomes for all children and youth. It was important for us to state a self-evident truth about Manitoba's education system that is of concern to the Commissioners and many members of the public. It is the fact that, despite regular increases in funding, the overall system is not yielding desired levels of student achievement and outcomes. The most recent PISA 2018 result supports this observation.

*This is reflective of the fact that in some other provinces, movement towards funding of education operating using only general revenues has shifted the collection authorities for school property taxes from local school boards to provincial governments. Manitoba remains, alongside of Quebec, the only two provinces where local educational entities continue to exercise tax collection authority. In other provinces, property taxes are collected by the provincial government. [...] property tax continues to be collected in seven of Canada's ten provinces is an enduring reality of education finance nationally. Greater centralization of tax collection authority does not lessen reliance on property taxation for funding education.*

(Written submission)

## What We Heard

On the question of funding, a number of stakeholders from the business sector asserted that the province's education system should at least reduce or eliminate its reliance on property taxes and consider setting a single provincial mill rate if required. These suggestions were echoed by many public survey respondents. Others have suggested that a provincial taxation review should be conducted by an independent commission.

*That the Government of Manitoba establish a comprehensive tax commission to study taxation in general in our province, inclusive of representation from school boards, municipal government, and other public interest representatives.* (Written submission)



## Recommendations

69. Define clearly the roles and responsibilities of those responsible for the K to 12 education system, including the following individuals, in terms of the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability required to improve student learning and achievement:

- School board members
- Superintendents
- Secretary/treasurers
- Principals
- Teachers
- Student services administrators/ coordinators and clinicians
- Educational assistants

70. Develop the criteria and competencies for school board members and deliver orientation, training, and ongoing development consistent with the expectations set out in this report.

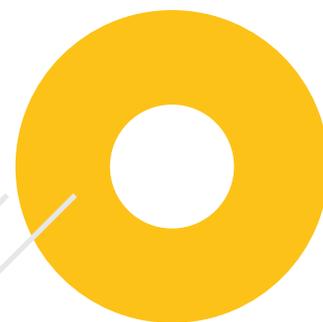
71. Put in place a new standardized K to 12 student information system and adopt a common lifelong student identification number to increase the capacity for data collection, analysis, policy development, and evaluation across the education system.

72. Explore how emerging technologies and the advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) may be used to create efficiencies within the K to 12 system.

73. Re-deploy department and school division staff and resources to support capacity building in policy, teaching strategies and curriculum implementation and institute a regional model to provide coordinated, relevant, high-quality professional learning that aligns with provincial priorities.

74. Conduct a provincial review of the provincial funding formula to ensure an equitable distribution of education funding across the province.

75. Develop a comprehensive strategy to assess the effectiveness of the Department of Education against its stated mandate including stakeholders as part of this evaluation process.



# CONCLUDING REMARKS: OUR PATH FORWARD

In January 2019, the Honourable Kelvin Goertzen, Minister of Education, charged the Commission on K to 12 Education with the responsibility to consult with Manitobans and provided some key questions.

Our terms of reference mandated the Commission to carry out an independent review of the K to 12 system to improve outcomes for students, ensure long-term sustainability, and enhance public confidence.

We were given six areas of focus and questions to consider. Following our consultations, examination of the research and education literature, as well as actions in other jurisdictions, we offer our responses to these questions.

## **1. Long-term vision – What should the goals and purposes of K to 12 education be in a rapidly changing world?**

Reflecting on what we have heard, read, and researched during our review, we have concluded that Manitobans want and need a K to 12 education system that responds to the diverse abilities, needs, and interests of all children and youth. A system, in which all children, regardless of where they live or what their background is, are challenged, supported, and inspired to learn and become active citizens who value diversity and respect democracy. They also require a system where parents and communities play an integral role in supporting student learning and achievement and where communities work together to ensure all children achieve their potential.

Manitobans are demanding a system characterized by rigour, relevance, high expectations, and a focus on instructional and leadership effectiveness.

## **2. Student Learning – What are the conditions required to achieve excellence in student achievement and outcomes in Manitoba?**

In a world where change is constant and unavoidable, a static system with impenetrable silos is neither sustainable nor effective. Achieving excellence in today's world and for today's learners requires ongoing efforts to strike the right balance between foundational knowledge and skills and keeping pace with globalization, exponential advancements in technologies, and requirements regarding higher levels of global competencies. Literacy and numeracy are more important now than at any time in the past and there is an urgent need to create solid foundations early in the learning trajectory of students in our schools.

For those students with diverse learning needs it is essential that systems do a better job. All partners must work together to maximize expertise and resources to ensure early identification of learning needs and early interventions to address those needs. Closing achievement gaps for individual students and for groups of students is key to our success in the future.

Today's students need to understand more than the theoretical relevance of their education. They need to understand the practical application of what they learn in order to be fully engaged in learning. To this end, a stronger emphasis on career development is needed to help them make the links between learning and earning and to see how they will apply their knowledge and skills to life beyond the classroom.

### 3. Teaching – How can teachers and school leaders become most effective?

Research confirms that high-quality classroom instruction is a major influence on student achievement. This means that Manitoba has a responsibility to ensure its educators continuously improve their knowledge and their practice and adapt to the changing contexts in their classrooms.

Similar to physicians who are expected to treat all patients in their waiting rooms, teachers have a professional obligation to teach and meet the diverse learning needs of all students in their classrooms. Teachers in Manitoba's public schools do not choose the students they are expected to teach. New teachers need to be thoroughly and comprehensively trained for this role. Veteran teachers need to be supported once they are in their classrooms and all must be held to high standards of professionalism and ethics. Faculties of education must prepare teachers for the realities of today's classrooms and help them build upon their skills throughout the stages of their career.

Expectations of today's teachers have been mounting and their role in meeting student needs have become more complex. Becoming the most effective teacher or principal in today's world means reaching out beyond the walls of the classroom and leveraging the array of skills and resources that families and communities have to offer to meet the academic, social, emotional, physical, and career development needs of students.

To this end, we are recommending that some roles and responsibilities in the system be redefined and strengthened and in other cases, new roles created.

We have to focus on teaching and leadership effectiveness, gather data, monitor progress, and embed a mindset of the need for continuous learning and improvement.

### 4. Accountability for student learning: How can the education system develop a stronger sense of shared accountability for student learning?

Manitobans want a cradle to career approach. They want to know that their education system is improving and that students are completing their K to 12 journey well-prepared to transition to employment and/or further education.

When we talk about accountability in the context of K to 12 education, the question really being asked is who is responsible for ensuring that students achieve? If greater accountability for student learning is the expectation, then clear targets for improvement are needed and greater system rigour, relevance, and data transparency must be in place. Individuals must know what they are responsible for and to whom they are accountable.

Among the array of partners in K to 12 education – students, parents, teachers, communities, administrators, trustees, and government – there are varying levels of authority and influence. We have heard it said, “if everyone is accountable, then no-one is accountable.”

Provincial legislation and policy fall short of clearly articulating the important and distinct roles and responsibilities of all those listed above. The Minister does have the authority to set the provincial education agenda, so he or she must take the lead and establish the conditions for a highly functioning education system in which roles, responsibilities, and lines of accountability are clearly understood and shared by all.

**5. Governance – What type of governance structures are needed to create a coordinated and relevant education system?**

The school governance system in Manitoba has remained relatively stable for a number of years. The Manitoba government signaled in 2018 its intention to move towards a higher level of centralization with the bargaining process for teachers. More recently, the government also committed to phasing out property taxation over a number of years.

Strong leadership across all levels of education governance is needed to realize system improvement. Whether at the school level or at the board level, governing bodies must be aligned in their work with provincial priorities and an overall plan for system improvement. It is critical that those in decision-making roles have, and continuously develop, the skills and knowledge needed to harness, build, strengthen, and coordinate efforts across the education sector and related systems.

New structures must create a higher level of system coherence, increase alignment, focus on student achievement, monitor effectiveness, and strengthen the focus on student learning. A combination of appointed and elected trustees will be a part of this model.

**6. Funding – What actions are required to ensure that the education system is sustainable and provides equitable learning opportunities for all children and youth?**

Overall, Manitoba's education system is well-funded. Government has made commitments to balance the provincial budget and to phase out education tax. These are clear signals that achieving equity in education funding is not simply about investing more money in the education system; it is rather about making better use of the resources we have.

Funding will need to be targeted to those with the highest needs, flexible to allow for innovation, and able to leverage external resources whenever possible. Sustainable and equitable funding of education is not simply about investing more; it is about investing wisely and judiciously to maximize the use of existing resources in more systematic and coordinated ways.





## Constructing our Path Forward

In conclusion, it is true that commissions and reports come and go with their usual list of recommendations. This time we must ask ourselves why will this report be any different. The recently re-elected government has reiterated its strong commitment to this work. Manitobans invested their time and energy in presenting briefs; responding to online surveys and an open call for submissions; attending public sessions; organizing special consultations with students, newcomers and refugee groups; and answering the call for the submission of exemplary practices. They are expecting to see a strong commitment from all sides to forge a new way forward.

As we construct the path to achieve our goals, let's think of the ways we can take what we already have within the system to scale – to move from pockets of excellence to having lasting and enduring systemic impact – a road that reformers and leaders must take. As Reeves (2006) stated:

This transformation rarely occurs, because we accept assertions that effective change takes five to seven years as a justification for impotence and an argument against initiative. Transformation will happen only when we become dissatisfied with islands of excellence as the start and end of school reform. (p. 159)

Manitoba's pockets of excellence must become commonplace realities. Every school in Manitoba has the potential to be an excellent school – one that we would like our children and grandchildren to attend. Effective schools must become the norm as we reject the notion of failure believing instead that all children can learn and achieve given the instruction and supports they need.

As we move forward, our parents and guardians must feel that they are welcomed in our schools and must be encouraged to contribute in any way they see fit. Newcomers, immigrants, and refugees bring excellent skills to this province and also want to do their part.

The saying that students are the centre of the school system and the only reason for its existence appears, at times, to be pedestrian. But it must become a mantra across the province, working in tandem with the belief that equity and excellence are not diametrically opposing concepts. Instead they work in tandem, complementing and reinforcing each other. This expectation must be evident in all schools not only because of its inherent value but as a testimony to the cause of our increasing diversity, our beliefs about equity, and our visions and dreams of what Manitoba is capable of becoming.

We believe that the will of Manitobans exists to seize the moment, take the recommendations seriously, and act with a sense of urgency. Manitoba's children deserve our confidence that, with targeted, timely, and appropriate interventions, they can do better, achieve their potential, and take their rightful place in society. After all, they are global learners and global citizens who are acquiring the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and sensibilities that will equip them to be productive and engaged citizens anywhere in the world.

## Coherence Matters

Achieving coherence is an essential component of a transformation plan. Our areas of focus and imperatives for change must unite and fit together as an integrated whole. Insights from Hargreaves and Shirley (2008) elucidate this point. They offer wise counsel on what coherence means and looks like in practice. This is particularly helpful as we think of how we will maximize our impact and influence future directions through deep and thorough implementation.

Coherence does not mean cloning or aligning everything so it looks the same in all schools. It means bringing diverse people together to work skillfully and effectively for a common cause that lifts them up and moves them in the same direction. (p. 60)

Hargreaves and Shirley described four “catalysts of coherence” (p.60) noting that the most challenging of any plan for transformation is how to make it spread. These catalysts are sustainable leadership, networks of mutual learning, responsibility before accountability, and building from the bottom, steering from the top. Whereas they reject the “let a thousand flowers bloom” philosophy, they also believe that we should not micromanage everything. Their perspective is that an inspired sense of direction with a focus on community development and professional responsibility will stimulate positive change.

## Deep and Thorough Implementation of the Recommendations

We have organized our recommendations around 10 imperatives to improve education in Manitoba. Our vision for the future of education is reflected in the imperatives we have identified. They are designed to provide a clear focus for the actions required to address the pivotal issues, inform methods in teaching, learning, and leadership, and support practices in all classrooms for all students.

Ensuring deep and ongoing implementation is essential for improvement. The best made plans will remain on the shelves if implementation is not thought out with specific plans and processes to ensure that the recommendations resulting from this review are embedded within the system. Education experts tell us that many good ideas remain at the theoretical level because of shallow and inadequate implementation. In a recent conversation with International Education Leader, Michael Fullan, on the topics of change and implementation, his advice is instructive: “Good ideas with no ideas on how to implement them are wasted ideas...Change doesn’t just happen, it must be led...and deftly” (personal communication, August 10, 2019).

Effective implementation requires thorough and careful planning, precision, and sustained execution. Most important of all, it requires capacity building to ensure that those who are expected to do the work have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to effect change and achieve success. This certainly requires a confluence of will, skill, persistence, and tenacity.

It is also necessary to reconfigure, realign, and re-distribute the human, financial, and material resources that exist currently within the system to support implementation. Data collection must be a priority if progress is to be monitored and measured closely, regularly, and purposefully. All such processes must allow for mid-course corrections and refocusing whenever necessary.

Staying the course is essential. Too often, initiatives are abandoned too early without giving them time to work. A multi-year commitment is required, but improvement on many fronts must be seen early. The children cannot wait. A sense of urgency and optimism about the process, and belief that collaboration is making a difference, can contribute to the motivation of those engaged in this improvement initiative. The actions we take must have an impact on student learning and achievement.



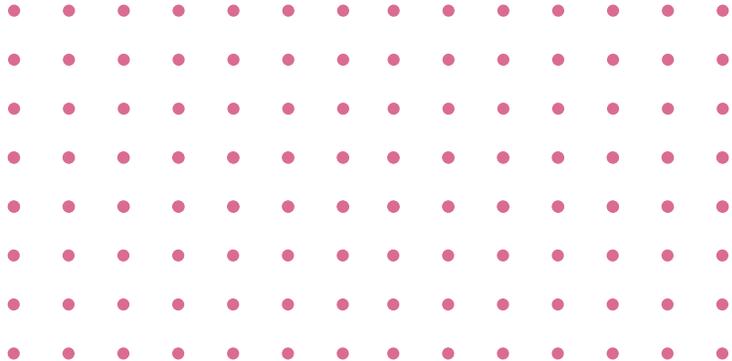
## Where Do We Go From Here?

This report is now in the hands of Manitobans. Leadership is needed from those who are in a position to remove organizational, legislative, and other barriers that can thwart our best efforts. This requires the concerted and deliberate efforts of all those who have a vested interest in the success and future of Manitoba's children and youth.

In closing, as we seize this opportunity to build upon current successes, we call on all those who work in schools to reaffirm their commitment to the improvement agenda. Our teachers, custodians, clinicians, secretaries, attendance officers, social workers, educational assistants, bus drivers, crossing guards, superintendents, and principals – all those who support our students daily – deserve our gratitude for their professionalism, sense of goodwill, and willingness to break down barriers that get in the way of progress.

As we determine our path forward, we hope that you share our optimism for improvement in student achievement and for the future of education in this province.

Our children's success is Manitoba's future.



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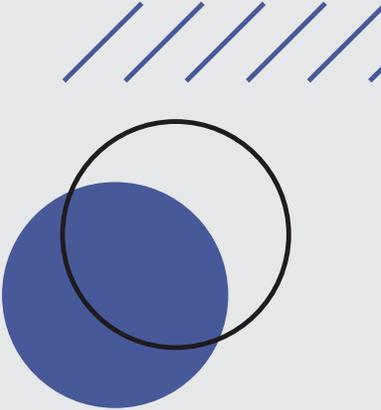
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# LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS



## Imperative #1: Strengthen Educator Capacity to Improve Teaching and Learning

1. Raise the status of the teaching profession, develop standards of practice for teaching and leadership, and affirm the pivotal role Manitoba educators play in improving student outcomes.
2. Create a Manitoba College of Educators for individuals with teaching certificates, while also providing for an “Associate Member” status, with clearly defined terms and conditions available to individuals working in education who do not hold teaching certificates, and transfer relevant resources from the Department of Education.

The College will, among other duties and responsibilities:

- Strengthen public interest and confidence in the teaching profession
  - Promote quality, excellence, and professionalism
  - Address training and certification of teachers
  - Maintain high standards for educators
  - Provide transparency and accountability
  - Provide accreditation of faculties of education
3. Establish a College governing council comprised of a broad cross-section of members of the profession (teachers, principals, consultants, union representatives), and members of the public-at-large (members of other regulated professions, parents, business professionals) to enhance public confidence in the work of the College and appoint a registrar/CEO.
  4. Develop a provincial framework for the ongoing professional development and evaluation of teachers and school administrators, including observation of teachers by administrators with a requirement for the development of action plans for improvement.
  5. Provide appropriate and timely resources and supports based on classroom composition to maintain an effective learning environment.
  6. Review and increase onsite practical programs for pre-service teachers so they may be sufficiently equipped to address and respond to the demands and complexities of any Manitoba student community.
  7. Create concrete, actionable strategies to make teacher placement and distribution equitable across the province, perhaps with incentives upon graduation.
  8. Encourage school divisions to explore innovative options regarding the organization of the school day and the school year.
  9. Work with faculties of education to continue to support teachers in the early stages of their career to ensure instructional effectiveness and to address the varied professional learning needs of teachers at different stages in their careers.

## **Imperative #2: Increase School Leadership Effectiveness**

10. Reinforce the centrality of the role of principals as instructional leaders in improving student learning and achievement, and work with them to devise ways to facilitate their ongoing professional learning needs.
11. Create a new principals' association, potentially associated with the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), remove principals and vice-principals from the Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS), while protecting their seniority, pension, benefits, and other entitlements, and include an option for those administrators who wish to return to classroom teaching and the MTS.
12. Reorganize administrative staff to create business manager positions for schools or families of schools to assume some of the maintenance, operations, accounting, and financial roles of principals to enable them to focus on school leadership, teaching, learning, parent and community engagement, school management, and school effectiveness.

## **Imperative #3: Improve Student Engagement and Well-being**

13. Require all schools and divisions to conduct student engagement and satisfaction surveys at specific intervals with input from students, parents, teachers, and the community-at-large and prepare an action plan to address the findings.
14. Enhance the implementation of curriculum, emphasize the holistic nature of curriculum, and infuse competencies such as student leadership development, environmental stewardship, character and citizenship development, and life skills across all curricular areas.
15. Provide access to the arts in all schools, including music, visual arts, dance, drama, and other value-added community activities, to make it possible for all children, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances, to broaden their exploration of career-related and employment-ready experiences.
16. Replace the current requirement for Grade 11 and 12 Physical Education/Health Education with new and more rigorous required high school credits (for marks) that addresses the concept of a healthy mind, body and lifestyle, the practical knowledge and skills that young people need for adult living including financial management, nutrition, entrepreneurialism, employability, and parenting skills.
17. Increase public awareness of the right to education and communicate with students, parents, guardians, and all those who have a stake in student achievement around addressing absenteeism and the expectations, policies, and impact of attendance on student outcomes.
18. Increase the capacity to collect, measure, assess, and respond to the underlying causes of absenteeism to inform policies, appropriate interventions, and outreach to mitigate the negative impacts of non-attendance and provide transparent information to the public on suspensions and expulsions, and ensure that absences are reported to the province and to parents in a timely manner.
19. Develop a plan to identify underlying factors for non-attendance and address chronic absenteeism in Manitoba to measure, identify, assess, and respond to school absenteeism to ensure that the best interests of children are paramount and that actions respect the right to education for children and youth.

20. Review Manitoba's Provincial Code of Conduct: Appropriate Interventions and Disciplinary Consequences (2017) in light of recommendations of Manitoba's Advocate for Children and Youth and, regarding suspensions and expulsions, develop a province-wide strategy to limit, reduce, and phase-out exclusionary practices except in situations of imminent safety risk to students and staff, balancing appropriately the need for at-risk students to receive an education and ensuring that all students have a safe and orderly learning environment.
21. Develop and implement a province-wide protocol that clearly defines responsibilities of all those involved in the education of students and their families regarding the documentation of attendance, staged actions to be taken when students are absent, with suggestions on how to build upon and sustain relationships with students who are experiencing absenteeism.
22. Work with government to clarify the mandate of Healthy Child Manitoba, to work across departments and with communities, to facilitate the development of coordinated policies, programs, and services that promote the best possible outcomes for children, given that no single department or area is currently structured to meet the holistic needs of children and youth as they mature and develop.
23. Develop and implement a comprehensive intersectoral mental health strategy that specifically addresses the professional learning requirements of educators, to recognize and address the mental health needs of students.
24. Implement mental well-being initiatives to address student anxiety and to develop positive coping strategies and tools to support students in dealing with emotions associated with the impact of abuse, trauma, and challenging life events and circumstances.

## **Imperative #4: Close the Achievement Gap between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Students**

25. Ensure that every principal in every school takes concrete actions to improve the achievement of Indigenous students and identifies improvement in Indigenous education as a priority in their annual school plans.
26. Ensure that Knowledge Keepers have an active role in building the capacity of school staffs to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students.
27. Implement high-impact, evidence-informed practices to close the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, to remove barriers, and maximize curriculum implementation, teaching effectiveness, family outreach, student engagement, and mentoring supports.
28. Negotiate student data sharing agreements with First Nations to improve understanding of the pathways, transitions, and mobility between federal and provincial education systems to inform policy, planning, and decision-making, and to target interventions for improvement of Indigenous student achievement.
29. Provide accurate information on the historical contributions of Indigenous peoples and put in place programming, supports, and services to assist Indigenous communities and highlight their contributions and successes within public education.

30. Enhance access to adult education to bridge the gap between early high school leaving and successful completion of a high school diploma for Indigenous students in preparation for transitions to further education and the labour market.
31. Ensure that the education actions that fall exclusively under provincial jurisdiction outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action are implemented in Manitoba.
32. Call upon the province of Manitoba to undertake federal-provincial negotiations to have the Government of Canada adequately fund the building of technology education/technical vocation facilities in First Nations communities.

### **Imperative #5: Commit to Equitable Outcomes and Improved Achievement for All**

33. Reaffirm the philosophy of inclusion as a fundamental principle of the education system in Manitoba and change the name of the Special Education Certificate granted by Manitoba Education to Inclusion Education Certificate to emphasize this direction, also reaffirming that a truly inclusive system seeks to put students in the learning environment that is most appropriate to their needs.
34. Ensure that teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional learning reflect the provincial philosophy of inclusion and develop all teachers in practices to support students with diverse capabilities and learning needs.
35. Enhance collaboration among teachers, student services professionals, and parents to facilitate early and ongoing identification of learning needs and appropriate supports for children and youth with special needs, including the most effective use and deployment of educational assistants who are currently in the system.
36. Strengthen requirements for and training of educational assistants and of student services staff to address, to the greatest extent possible, the learning and behavioural needs of students and to provide overall classroom support for teachers.
37. Commit to reducing wait times for identifying and assessing students with special needs so that they receive early intervention and the necessary supports in all areas of the province.
38. Implement a standardized reporting mechanism, aligned with the provincial report card, to ensure that parents of students with special needs are well-informed about their child's progress in both academic and non-academic domains and collect these data at a provincial level.
39. Develop and implement specific career development programming to support academic achievement and successful graduation of immigrant, newcomer, and refugee children who transition into, through and out of Manitoba's K to 12 education system.

40. Discontinue the use of “E” English as an Additional Language (EAL) credits in Grades 11 and 12 and provide more relevant educational opportunities for older newcomer youth with interrupted learning and provide the academic upgrading support they need to be successful at the next level.
41. Require pre-service, in-service, and ongoing professional learning to address human rights and EAL issues and trauma-informed pedagogy training for educators to equip them with competencies for educating immigrant, newcomer, and refugee students successfully.
42. Remove barriers and support the certification of internationally trained teachers to increase the number of newcomer teachers working in Manitoba classrooms and to reflect the diversity of schools and classrooms.
43. Support targeted early childhood interventions and strategies for children with learning gaps and challenges who are at risk of falling behind to address their learning needs and improve their educational outcomes.
44. Establish a working group composed of representatives from Manitoba Education, school divisions (school boards, senior administration, and teachers), parents, and students, to enhance current response to the impact of poverty in the school context to supporting alignment with the provincial poverty reduction strategy.
45. Improve access to nutritious food for Manitoba students and expand health-promoting meal programs in Manitoba schools through enhanced partnerships and coordination among organizations such as the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba, the Manitoba Teachers’ Society, and governments, school divisions, communities, businesses, and industry to leverage local and provincial resources.
46. Work with the City of Winnipeg, other municipal governments in the province, and any other interested parties to remove transportation barriers (e.g., public transit fees) for students, including legislative provisions, to attend school and participate in after-school extracurricular activities.
47. Require school divisions to develop improvement plans to specifically address the needs of their lowest performing schools that are most affected by poverty.

## **Imperative #6: Ensure Quality Educational Programming in Rural, Remote, and Northern Communities**

48. Address disparities and enhance equity of access and educational opportunities for students in rural and northern regions, including subject area specialists, student services staff, career counsellors, and school principals and vice-principals.
49. Initiate negotiations among faculties of education, school divisions, First Nations, and other education stakeholders to implement internship and residency programs as a teacher recruitment strategy in rural, northern, and First Nations communities.

## **Imperative #7: Strengthen the Delivery of French Language Education**

50. Develop a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to address the shortage of French language teachers that includes emphasis on career development to encourage Français and French immersion students to become teachers and streamline credentials and prior learning recognition for internationally educated teachers.
51. Ensure that French-language education remains a priority and that the Français and French immersion curricula are not simply translated, but rather use a distinct and parallel format to address the unique cultural learning needs of students within each of the programs and their pivotal role as purveyors of culture.
52. Ensure equity of access for students in the Français program to technical vocational education and trades programming taught in French and delivered by the DSFM.

## **Imperative #8: Expand Community Education and Strengthen Public Outreach and Alliances**

53. Communicate and promote public information and share the many policies, protocols, strategies, and resources that currently exist within the system, but may not be widely known, such as Safe and Caring Schools, school entry readiness skills, grade level curriculum expectations, and performance data, to increase public confidence in the system.
54. Renew the emphasis on engaging parents and communities so that they are reflective of the diversity of schools, redefining their roles in supporting improved student learning, achievement, and career development.
55. Adopt a philosophy of Community Education across the province – rural, urban, and northern to make schools the hubs of their communities and:
  - a) Build strong relationships with families, community members and organizations
  - b) Develop a comprehensive range of services to assess and address student needs in a holistic and timely manner
  - c) Enable professionals and service providers to assemble and collaborate with each other on the needs of students and the schools
  - d) Strengthen the communities in which schools are located to improve student and community outcomes
56. Solicit the expertise of employers, post-secondary institutions, and appropriate government departments to develop an action plan that provides young people with current labour market information and seamless paths from school to the workplace, college, or university, based on their aspirations, expectations, and career planning preferences.

## **Imperative #9: Improve Foundational Skills in Mathematics, Literacy, and other Curricular Areas**

57. Reinforce the need for systematic implementation of Manitoba's Math curriculum that was revised to emphasize the importance of conceptual understanding, procedural thinking, and problem solving, and to clarify grade-level expectations, standardized algorithms, and recall of facts among other skills.
58. Implement a comprehensive approach to early and ongoing identification and intervention in reading, writing, and math to solidify the foundational skills necessary for future learning.
59. Increase accountability and transparency through the implementation of provincial curriculum-based tests for mathematics and literacy (with a reading and writing focus) at Grades 3 or 4, 6 or 7, and 10, with school-level scores made available to the public. Some of the content for the questions used on the tests should be based on the science and social studies curriculum for those years.
60. Work with the faculties of education to prepare mathematics specialists for the early and middle years and encourage school divisions to explore how math specialists could be deployed or used in schools and in divisions to improve mathematics learning and performance.
61. Reconfigure current resources to ensure long-term, sustained professional development around and implementation of the Kindergarten to Grade 8 Mathematics and the new K to 12 English Language Arts curricula.
62. Differentiate the certification of teachers to ensure that the teaching certificate issued clearly identifies the teacher preparation program completed – early, middle and or senior years and ensure that school divisions make appropriate hiring and placement decisions based on the teacher preparation program completed.
63. Strengthen the processes through which schools and school divisions assess, monitor, and report on student achievement to parents and to the public, including setting ambitious targets for continuous improvement and identifying ways to measure and report on progress toward those targets.
64. Develop a provincial strategy to ensure that career development is infused throughout all K to 12 curricular areas.
65. Work with employers to determine needs and to expand Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) skills, and work-based technical-vocational learning experiences consistent with workforce needs and career preferences of students.
66. Work with Apprenticeship Manitoba of Manitoba Economic Development and Training and chambers of commerce to create partnerships, identify and provide funding for programs created in cooperation with industry, school divisions, post-secondary institutions, and colleges to expand apprenticeship programs especially in remote, rural, and northern communities.
67. Find solutions and actionable steps to address the following issues:
  - (a) Curriculum rigour and standards
  - (b) The perceived “no fail” policy
  - (c) Identification, promotion, and placement of students

## **Imperative #10: Enhance the Effectiveness of Governance, Administrative, and Funding Structures**

68. Consolidate the province's public school boards<sup>7</sup> into six to eight regional boards with boards consisting of five to seven trustees, the majority of whom would be appointed and the others elected.
69. Define clearly the roles and responsibilities of those responsible for the K to 12 education system, including the following individuals, in terms of the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability required to improve student learning and achievement:
  - School board members
  - Superintendents
  - Secretary/treasurers
  - Principals
  - Teachers
  - Student services administrators/ coordinators and clinicians
  - Educational assistants
70. Develop the criteria and competencies for school board members and deliver orientation, training, and ongoing development consistent with the expectations set out in this report.
71. Put in place a new standardized K to 12 student information system and adopt a common lifelong student identification number to increase the capacity for data collection, analysis, policy development, and evaluation across the education system.
72. Explore how emerging technologies and the advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) may be used to create efficiencies within the K to 12 system.
73. Re-deploy department and school division staff and resources to support capacity building in policy, teaching strategies, and curriculum implementation, and institute a regional model to provide coordinated, relevant, high-quality professional learning that aligns with provincial priorities.
74. Conduct a provincial review of the provincial funding formula to ensure an equitable distribution of education funding across the province.
75. Develop a comprehensive strategy to assess the effectiveness of the Department of Education against its stated mandate including stakeholders as part of this evaluation process.

<sup>7</sup> Note: This does not apply to the DSFM



# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

### Context

- The education system in Manitoba covers a vast geographical area and serves a wide range of communities that are linguistically and culturally rich and diverse: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities; Francophone and other linguistic/ethnic communities; newcomers from across the globe.
- Public education is a fundamental element of a democratic society and is integral to the fabric and character of Canadian society. Its purpose is to serve the best educational interest of all students, regardless of their abilities, personal or family circumstances, or where they live.
- The Government of Manitoba is committed to improving student outcomes by creating an education system that has high standards for educators, high expectations for student learning, relevant curriculum, excellence in governance, and a sustainable fiscal framework.
- Students and excellence in student outcomes must be the central focus.
- Establishing a Commission to undertake a comprehensive review of Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K to 12) education represents a long overdue opportunity to build on strengths but also to identify the changes needed in creating a system that can achieve better outcomes for students and reflects the economic and societal needs of Manitobans.

### Mandate

The Commission will carry out an independent review of the K to 12 education system to improve outcomes for students, ensure long-term sustainability and enhance public confidence. The Commission will:

- Propose a renewed vision for K to 12 education.
- Make bold recommendations to ignite change within existing systems, structures, and programs which inspire excellence in teaching and learning.
- Consider the continuum of early learning, post-secondary education, and labour market needs as part of an integrated lifelong learning approach.

The review will be informed through extensive and transparent public consultations, supported by research and best practices. The Commission will seek the input of students, parents, educators, school boards, academics, Indigenous organizations, la francophonie, municipal councils, professional organizations, the business community, and members of the public.

## Areas of Focus

1. **Long-term vision** – What should the goals and purpose of K-12 education be in a rapidly changing world?
2. **Student learning** – What are the conditions required to achieve excellence in student achievement and outcomes in Manitoba?
3. **Teaching** – How can teachers and school leaders become most effective?
4. **Accountability for student learning** – How can the education system develop a stronger sense of shared accountability for student learning?
5. **Governance** – What type of governance structures are needed to create a coordinated and relevant education system?
6. **Funding** – What actions are required to ensure that the education system is sustainable and provides equitable learning opportunities for all children and youth?

## Guiding Principles

The work of the Commission will be guided by the following principles:

- **Student centred** – As a key focus of this review is to improve student achievement and student outcomes, the work of the Commission is to be centred on children and youth and on the conditions necessary to support their educational success.
- **Culturally responsive** – Respecting diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, la francophonie, and newcomers, valuing the critical relationships between language and culture.
- **Building on success** – The work of the Commission will build on the strengths of the existing system and will identify the areas requiring attention, improvement, and change.
- **Open, engaging, and accessible** – All sectors of society will be encouraged to participate and provided with opportunities to have their voices heard.
- **Evidence-informed** – In addition to the voices and perspectives of Manitobans, the Commission will ground its recommendations in research and evidence of successful educational reform initiatives in other jurisdictions.
- **Excellence** – Recommendations will be developed with the intention of achieving a high-quality education system and opportunities for all to aspire to excellence.

## Appendix 2: Participants in the Consultations: Individuals and Organizations

School Divisions		
April 25:	Mystery Lake School Division	Don MacDonald, Chair Michelle Tomashewski, Trustee Lindsay Anderson, Trustee Lorie Henderson, Superintendent Angele Bartlett, Superintendent
May 6:	Kelsey School Division	Vaughn Wadelius, Chair Sharain Jones, Trustee Trevor Yahnke, Trustee Jennifer Olinyk, Trustee
May 9:	Turtle Mountain School Division	Garth Nichol, Trustee Shirley Highfield, Trustee Rodney Hintz, Trustee Tim De Ruyck, Superintendent
May 9:	Park West School Division	Dana Barteaux, Trustee Jennifer Andrew, Trustee Dorelle Fulton, Secretary-Treasurer Jon Zilkey, Assistant Superintendent Lyndsay Kyle, Teaching Principal
May 10:	Brandon School Division	Dr. Linda Ross, Chair Sherilyn Bambridge, Vice-Chair Denis Labossiere, Secretary-Treasurer Dr. Marc Casavant, Superintendent/CEO Mathew Gustafson, Assistant Superintendent
May 10:	Swan Valley School Division	Kelli Riehl, Trustee Brent Rausch, Secretary-Treasurer Cam Mateika, Vice-Principal Lynda Parsons, President, Canadian Parents for French Swan River Chapter Steve Henson, Sergeant, RCMP, Liaison Officer to Swan Valley School Division
May 10:	Mountain View School Division	Leifa Misko, Chair Floyd Martens, Trustee Charlene Gulak, Trustee Gabe Mercier, Trustee

School Divisions		
May 13:	Winnipeg School Division	Chris Broughton, Chair Lisa Naylor, Vice-Chair Pauline Clarke, Chief Superintendent/CEO
May 13:	Frontier School Division	Linda Ballantyne, Chair Marion Pearson, Vice-Chair Hilbert Mosiondz, Trustee Tanya Friesen, Trustee Gerald Cattani, CFO/Secretary-Treasurer
May 14:	Flin Flon School Division	Amy Sapergia-Green, Vice-Chair Constance Mcleese, Superintendent
May 22:	Louis Riel School Division	Sandy Nemeth, Chair Neil Vadeboncoeur, Trustee Marna Kenny, Secretary-Treasurer Christian Michalik, Superintendent
May 22:	Fort La Bosse School Division	Garry Draper, Chair Craig Russell, Vice-Chair Kent Reid, Secretary-Treasurer Barry Pitz, Superintendent
May 30:	Prairie Rose School Division	Marilyn North, Trustee Elaine Owen, Trustee Natalie Bargaen, Trustee Jack Foote, Trustee Terry Osiowy, Superintendent/CEO
May 30:	Seine River School Division	Wendy Bloomfield, Chair Greg Reid, Vice-Chair Gary Nelson, Trustee Paul Ilchena, Secretary-Treasurer Michael Borgfjord, Superintendent

## Education Stakeholders

May 8:	Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA)	Alan Campbell, President Sandy Nemeth, Vice President Floyd Martens, Vice President Yolande beDupuis, Past President Josh Watt, Executive Director
May 8:	Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS)	Cyndy Kutzner, President Pauline Clarke, Vice-President Krista Curry, Treasurer Donna Davidson, Past-President Barb Isaak, Executive Director
May 8:	The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS)	Norm Gould, President Roland Stankevicius, General Secretary Danielle Fullan Kolton, Assistant General Secretary Samantha Turenne, Public Affairs Facilitator
May 8:	Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools (MFIS)	Robert Praznik, Chair Jason Brennan, Vice-Chair Lawrence Hamm, Past Chair and Chair, Liaison Committee Mark den Hollander, Immanuel Christian School Teresita Chiarella, Executive Director
May 8:	Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC)	Brenda Brazeau, Interim Executive Director Arlene Reid, Director Khalid Mahmood, Director
May 8:	Manitoba Association of School Business Officials (MASBO)	Kathy Siatecki, Past President Terry Penner, President Elect Marna Kenny, Provincial Director Tom Bobby, Executive Director
May 8:	Council of Deans of Education Manitoba (CODEM)	David Mandzuk, Ph.D., Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba Stefan Delaquis, Ph.D., Doyen, Faculté d'éducation et des études professionnelles, Université de Saint-Boniface Heather Duncan, Ph.D., Dean and Professor, Faculty of Education and Associate Vice-President (Research) Brandon University Kerri Caldwell-Korabelnikov, Dean, School of Education, Arts and Sciences, Red River College

## Other Stakeholders

May 10:	Town of Swan River	Lance Jacobson, Mayor Duane Whyte, Councillor David Moriaux, Councillor
May 13:	Association of Manitoba Municipalities	Ralph Groening, President Joe Masi, Executive Director Denys Volkov, Director of Advocacy & Communications Nick Krawetz, Senior Policy Analyst
May 15:	Manitoba Chambers of Commerce	Chuck Davidson, President and CEO Karen Viveiros, Director, Communications & Policy
May 24:	Newcomer stakeholders	<p>Co-hosts</p> <p>Abdikheir Ahmed – Immigration Partnership Winnipeg (IPW) &amp; Somali community Noelle DePape – Immigration Partnership Winnipeg (IPW) Bequie Lake - Manitoba Association for Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO)</p> <p>Participants</p> <p>Don Boddy - Manitoba Association for Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO) – representing Rural groups Perla Javate – Ethno-cultural Council of Manitoba Co-Chair and Filipino community Surafel Kuchem – Newcomer Education Coalition (NEC), High School Teacher, TEAL Manitoba and Ethiopian community Daniel Swaka – Executive Director of Peaceful Village and South Sudanese Community Jennifer Chen – Ethno-cultural Council of Manitoba, Chinese Community and School Board Trustee Kathleen Vyrauen – Newcomer Education Coalition (NEC), NEEDS Centre Shereen Denetto – Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM) Paul Kambaja – Newcomer Youth Education Social Services (NYESS), Congo Canada, High School Teacher Ah'lam Yasim – Canadian Muslim Women's Institute and Iraqi community Steve Reynolds – Regional Connections, Winkler</p>
May 30:	Manitoba Real Estate Association	Lorne Weiss, Chair Manitoba Political Action Committee Michael Juce, Director of Public Policy

### Indigenous Stakeholders

June 18:	Manitoba Metis Federation	David Beaudin, MMF Associate Minister of Education Sharon Parenteau, Louis Riel Institute Executive Director Georgina Liberty, MMF Director of Tripartite Self-Government-Negotiations Matthew Robertson, MMF Strategist
June 18:	Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba	Loretta Ross, Treaty Commissioner Amanda Simard, Education Manager
June 18:	Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg Neeginan College Winnipeg Indigenous Executive Education Committee	Marileen Bartlett Sonia Prevost-Derbecker
June 26:	Southern Chiefs' Organization	Coty Zachariah Joanna White

### Student Voice

April 25:	Burntwood School	Students from the division
May 3:	Provincial Student Consultation	Students throughout the province
May 24:	Children of the Earth School	Elder Myra Laramée Brad Davidson, Principal Kristin Insull, Organizational Development Officer Rob Riel, Acting Superintendent for Indigenous Education
May 30:	DSFM students	
July 23:	Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth Office	Youth ambassadors

## School Visits

April 25:	Burntwood Elementary School Mystery Lake School Division	Students from the division Wanda Einarson, Principal
April 25:	Wapanohk Community School Mystery Lake School Division	Kathleen Kelson, Principal
April 25:	École la voie du Nord (DSFM)	Daniel Couture, Principal Antonio Simard, Trustee
April 26:	R.D. Parker Collegiate Mystery Lake School Division	Rob Fisher, Principal
May 6:	Margaret Barbour Collegiate Kelsey School Division	Kathi McConnell-Hore, Principal
May 7:	Mary Duncan School Kelsey Learning Centre Kelsey School Division	Louise Loewen, Principal Tara Manych, Principal
May 7:	Oscar Lathlin Collegiate, Opasqwayak Educational Authority	Bev Fontaine, Director of Education Ron Constant, Principal Oscar Lathlin Collegiate
May 10:	Dauphin Regional Comprehensive Secondary School Mountain View School Division	Vice-Principal
May 23:	River Bend Community School (K to 5), Seven Oaks School Division	Brian O'Leary, Superintendent Lim Fortunato, Principal Jennifer Lameroux, Vice-Principal
May 23:	Amber Trails Community School (K to 8), Seven Oaks School Division	Brian O'Leary, Superintendent Lorelei Bunkowsky, Principal
May 23:	Maples MET School (9 to 12), Seven Oaks School Division	Brian O'Leary, Superintendent Ben Carr, Principal
May 23:	Elwick School (K-8), Seven Oaks School Division	Brian O'Leary, Superintendent Bobbi-Lynn Haegeman, Principal

## School Visits

May 29:	École Précieux Sang, DSFM	M Alain Laberge, directeur général, DSFM M René Déquier, directeur général adjoint, DSFM M Bernard Lesage, président, CSFM M Antonio Simard, commissaire, CSFM M Robert Daigneault, directeur, École Précieux Sang, DSFM
May 31:	École Île des Chênes Elementary, Seine River School Division	Mr. Mike Borgfjord, Superintendent Mrs. Elizabeth Hammond, Principal Mrs. Kelly Burtnyk, Counsellor Mrs. Kathryn Reuter, Early years teacher Mrs. Chantale Lecocq, Middle years teacher
May 31:	École St. Norbert High School, Seine River School Division	Mr. Mike Bjorgfjord, Superintendent, srsd Mr. Chris Szun, Principal, csnc Mr. Raffaele Borelli, Vice-Principal, csnc Mme Carole Hébert, directrice-adjointe, csnc
May 31:	Gordon Bell Winnipeg School Division	Vinh Huynh, Principal
June 4:	Woodlawn School, Hanover School Division	Randy Dueck, Superintendent-CEO Karen Fraser, Principal
June 4:	Landmark Collegiate (7 to 12), Hanover School Division	Randy Dueck, Superintendent-CEO Greg Saw'atzky, Principal
June 4:	Murdoch MacKay Collegiate Institute, River East Transcona School Division	Karen Boyd, Assistant Superintendent Jason Drysdale, Assistant Superintendent
June 4:	Bernie Wolf Community School, River East Transcona School Division	Karen Boyd, Assistant Superintendent Jason Drysdale, Assistant Superintendent

## School Visits

June 4:	Tec Voc Winnipeg School Division	Dennis Mogg, Principal Michelle Sacco, Vice-Principal
June 5:	Robert H Smith Winnipeg School Division	Andrea Powell, Principal Matt Couture, Vice-Principal
June 6:	Robertson School Winnipeg School Division	Tony Marcione, Principal Nadia DeLuca, Acting Vice-Principal
June 10:	Parc La Salle School, Seine River School Division	Mr. Mike Bjorgfjord, Superintendent Mrs. Teresa Hampton, Principal Mrs. Amy McGregor, Teacher Grade 1/2 Mrs. Angela Marquart, Resource Mr. Dale Howard, EA
June 17:	Betty Gibson School (K to 8), Brandon School Division	Met with diverse teachers
June 17:	Kircaldy School (K to 8), Brandon School Division	Met with diverse teachers
June 28:	Fort la Reine School Portage la Prairie School Division	Todd Cuddington, Superintendent
June 28:	North Memorial School Portage la Prairie School Division	Todd Cuddington, Superintendent Val Smith, Principal

## Government

May 14:	Meeting with Department of Families	Brian O’Leary, Superintendent Ben Carr, Principal
June 13:	Meeting with staff from the Department of Education and Training	Approximately 25 participants attended from diverse areas of the Department.
June 20:	Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth Office	Ms. Penrose, Manitoba Advocate Ainsley Krone, Deputy Advocate Sherry Gott, Deputy Advocate Maria Godoy, Special Investigator, Special Reports

## Post-Secondary Institutions

April 26:	University College of the North (UCN)	Doug Lauvstad David Williamson Dan Smith
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**Presentations by Selected Individuals and Groups at the Public Hearings, Legacy Centre, Louis Riel School Division – June 17, 19 and 21, 2019**

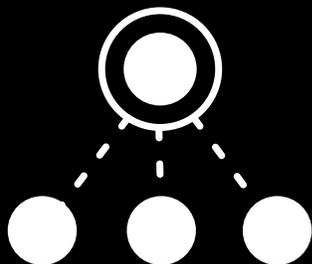
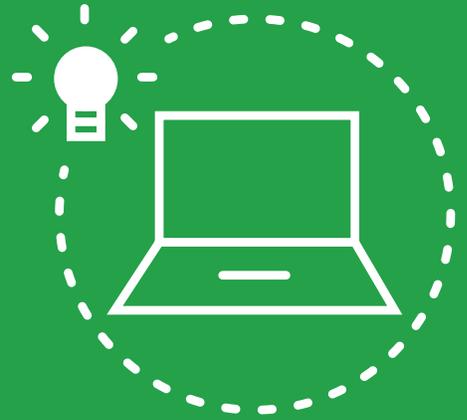
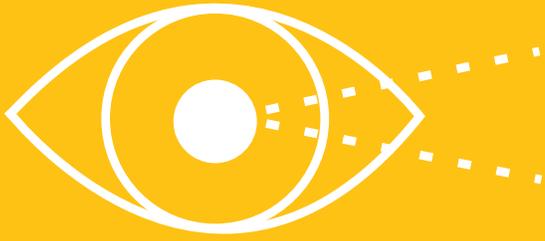
Brief #	Name/Organization	Presenters
1	Michael Zwaagstra	Michael Zwaagstra
6	Commission scolaire franco-manitobaine	Bernard Lesage et Alain Laberge
8	Sel Burrows	Sel Burrows
13	River East Transcona School Division	Vince Mariani, Colleen Carswell and Jerry Sodomlak
14	Lord Selkirk School Division	Lena Kublick, Michele Polinuk and Jack Bogaski
17	Dr. Laura Reimer	Dr. Laura Reimer
18	Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba	Wendy Bloomfield, Viola Prowse and Maxine Meadows
19	Garden Valley School Division	Todd Monster, Laurie Dyck and Tash Olfert
21	Seven Oaks School Division	Brian O’Leary, Greg McFarlane and Ed Ploszay
23	Manitoba Network for School Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists	Jennifer Fisher, Heidi Garcia and Jackie Ogloza
24	John R.Wiens	John R.Wiens
25	Prairie Spirit School Division	Keith Murray, Jan McIntyre and Keith Wytinck
29	Western Initiative for Strengthening Education in Math	Anna Stokke and Robert Craigen
31	St. James-Assiniboia School Division	Brett Lough, Mike Friesen and Mike Wake
32	Community Education Development Association	Tom Simms and Jordan Bighorn
35	Diane Duma	Diane Duma
39	Craig Johnson	Craig Johnson
40	Manitoba Association of School Psychologists	Eric Alper and Dawn Hanson
41	Tracy Thibodeau	Tracy Thibodeau
44	Peter Narth	Peter Narth
46	Parent-Educator Partnership for Literacy Achievement	Janice Watson, Karla Gutierrez and Kelly Fawcett-Neufeld
49	Dr. Martha J. Koch	Dr. Martha J. Koch ( <i>video conference call</i> )
50	Michelle McHale	Michelle McHale
51	Rehabilitation Centre for Children	Marlene Waldron and Cheryl Susinski
53	Canadian Centre for Child Protection	Monique St. Germain and Debra Danco
54	Société de la francophonie manitobaine	Daniel Boucher and Christian Monnin
58	Sonya Braun	Sonya Braun
59	Pembina Trails School Division	Ted Franson and Jaime Glenat
61	John C. Long	John C. Long

## Appendix 3: Web Links to Consultation Summary Documents

- **The Blueprint Report** – <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/educationreview/docs/blueprint/index.html>
- **Analysis of Written Submissions to Manitoba’s Commission on K to 12 Education** – <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/educationreview/docs/written-submissions/index.html>
- **Analysis of Online Teacher and Public Surveys Conducted by Manitoba’s Commission on K to 12 Education** – <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/educationreview/docs/surveys/index.html>









**Manitoba's Commission on  
Kindergarten to Grade 12  
Education Secretariat**

[manitoba.ca/educationreview](http://manitoba.ca/educationreview)

**Commission manitobaine sur  
l'éducation de la maternelle  
à la 12e année Secrétariat**

[manitoba.ca/revueeducation](http://manitoba.ca/revueeducation)