Findings and Recommendations from the
Independent Review of Assessment and Reporting

Ontario: A Learning Province

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Education Advisors to the Premier of Ontario
and the Minister of Education

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Ontario

I think we need to cater the assessments towards each student more. Not [every] student learns the same and can express what they have learned the same way.

– Student, Online Survey

Table of Contents

Letter to Premier Wynne and Minister Naidoo-Harris 2
Executive Summary 4
Introduction 16
A Changing Ontario in a Changing World: Students' Learning, Equity, Well-Being and the Future of Assessment 18
Current Assessment Policies and Practices in Ontario 22
The Scope and Conduct of the Independent Review of Student Assessment 24
Assessment Review Findings: Areas for Improvement 27
- A K-12 System of Student Assessment 27
- Classroom Assessments 35
- Large-scale Assessments 41
- Pan-Canadian and International Assessments 61

From Review to Action 63
Assessment Review: Recommendations 64
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students and Assessments 64
- K-12 System of Student Assessment 65
- Classroom Assessments 66
- Large-scale Assessments 66
- Pan-Canadian and International Assessment 71
- Implementation Support 71

Conclusions 71

Appendix A: Biographies of the Education Advisors to the Premier and Minister of Education 73
Appendix B: Terms of Reference 76
Appendix C: Transformation Steering Committee 80
Appendix D: Summary from EQAO Outlining Ongoing Modernization Initiative to Better Support Student Learning 82
Appendix E: Ontario Population and Demographic Information 84
Appendix F: Engagement Documents 86
Appendix G: Engagement Statistics 88
Appendix H: List of Groups that Informed the Review 89
Appendix I: Summary of Online Survey Responses 91
Appendix J: Open Data and Freedom of Information 94
Glossary 95
References 102



Letter to Premier Wynne and Minister Naidoo-Harris

March 9, 2018

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario
The Honourable Indira Naidoo-Harris, Minister of Education
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Wynne and Minister Naidoo-Harris:

I am pleased to submit, on behalf of your Education Advisors, our report from the Independent Review of Assessment and Reporting.

Thank you for the opportunity to lead a public consultation and evidence-informed review to determine how best to update assessment and reporting practices at the classroom, school, board and provincial levels, with an emphasis on large-scale provincial assessments. We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed their voices, experiences and suggestions to inform our report to you. We wish also to acknowledge our appreciation to the government for establishing an Education Assessment Secretariat that has provided invaluable assistance in the conduct of this Review.

It has been over twenty years since the start of large-scale provincial assessments and reporting; we began this Review thinking that it was timely to reconsider what assessments and reporting are needed to support all of Ontario's students in these times of economic, social, cultural, technological and environmental changes. Through the past six months of public and stakeholder meetings, of engaging with thousands of Ontarians in person and online, of considering advice from assessment experts and of reviewing research evidence, it has become clear to us that improvements to enhance classroom assessments and a transformation of large-scale provincial assessments are vital.

Assessment matters. When done well, assessment and reporting support student learning and can make a real difference in the trajectory of students' progress in school and their lives post-secondary school. Our vision is that students' experiences – their needs, learning, progress and well-being – are at the centre of decisions about future assessment design and use. We propose a system of assessment that prioritizes classroom assessments to support each student's learning and development, engage parents/guardians meaningfully in knowing about their child's achievements and progress, and enable educators to develop and share their professional practices.

We propose large-scale provincial assessments that provide public information about the performance of Ontario's education system overall and to inform future improvements to benefit all students to succeed, including identifying inequities in outcomes for groups of students whose diverse experiences and needs require further attention.

To be effective, transformation of assessment and reporting must be considered and integrated as the curriculum is refreshed and throughout the continuing developments in teaching, learning, leadership, equity and well-being; these combined improvements are essential to ensure that Ontario's students thrive in school and in their post-secondary school destinations, are capable, caring and contributing citizens of Canada, and are knowledgeable and skilled stewards for the world.

To achieve this vision, we offer 18 recommendations which can collectively transform the culture of assessment and related practices. These changes are essential to achieve our shared goals for excellence, equity, well-being and public confidence in Ontario's publicly funded education system and to ensure that Ontario continues to be a leader in education nationally and internationally. We are unanimous in our support for these recommendations. We ask you also to support the proposed recommendations and for the government to proceed with implementation in partnership with the education sector, relevant stakeholders and organizations, students, parents/guardians and the public. The Review has created a momentum to realize collaboratively improvements in the assessments that Ontario's students experience. The time for change is now.



Dr. Carol Campbell

Education Advisor and Chair, Independent Review of Assessment and Reporting

And on behalf of:
Dr. Jean Clinton, Dr. Michael Fullan, Dr. Andy Hargreaves, Dr. Carl James and Kahontakwas Diane Longboat

Executive Summary

Introduction

On September 6, 2017, the Premier and Minister of Education announced an Independent Review of Assessment and Reporting. As Education Advisors to the Premier and the Minister of Education, we were asked to undertake the Review, including a public consultation, stakeholder engagement and examination of local, national and international evidence, concerning classroom assessments, large-scale assessments, including the work of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), and participation in pan-Canadian and international assessments. Our remit was to provide evidence-informed and implementable recommendations for improvements in assessment. Prior to this Review, EQAO had already initiated a process of modernization of their large-scale assessments, reports, research, engagement with Ontarians and internal business practices; our Review provides further evidence to support the importance of improvements in assessments. Our review of assessment is part of a larger plan to refresh Ontario's curriculum, over the next five years, led by a Transformation Steering Committee involving key stakeholder organizations.

We began the Review with our vision that students' experiences – their needs, learning, progress and well-being – are at the centre of decisions about future assessment design and use. We have held firm to that vision to guide our decisions. We are proposing a change in the culture of the system of assessment and learning so that it is underpinned by co-learning – among educators, with and among students and their parents/guardians, as well as with all others connected to the education system. It is our unanimous view and conclusion that it is time to make the continuous improvement of effective classroom assessments and the feedback provided for students with educators and parents/guardians the central feature of assessment in Ontario. This is beneficial to students as they will be able to engage in a range of high quality assessment practices with ongoing feedback to support their learning, development and progress throughout their schooling. It is also time to focus and transform the role of large-scale provincial assessments to provide a snapshot of student achievement, development and equitable outcomes. This will inform the public, government and education professionals of the overall performance of the Ontario education system. Going forward, large-scale assessment data should not be used for individual student diagnostic or evaluative purposes and students should not be subject to excessive test preparation for a summative system-level snapshot. The use of large-scale assessment data to improve policies and practices to address weaknesses in the education system, and to advance inclusivity and equity for sub-groups of students identified as needing additional support, will benefit the overall student population. It is time for Ontario to build on its reputation and success as a world-class education system and as a national and international leader in designing and using assessments that are appropriate to the diverse needs, experiences and aspirations of students.

The K-12 System of Student Assessment we propose, in combination with the curriculum refresh, and continuing improvements in teaching, learning, leadership, equity and well-being, is vital for supporting Ontario's students to learn and demonstrate their knowledge and skills, to be competent, capable and caring citizens, and to thrive and contribute in a rapidly changing world.

Current Assessment Policies and Practices in Ontario

The overarching policy for assessment in Ontario is *Growing Success* (2010) which sets out fundamental principles for assessment, evaluation and reporting practices. The scope of the Review included ongoing classroom assessment, and EQAO, which undertakes large-scale, census testing annually of reading, writing and mathematics in Grades 3 and 6 and in academic, applied mathematics in Grade 9 and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in Grade 10. The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is also a large-scale, full census gathering of data on developmental readiness collected by Kindergarten teachers. Ontario participates in various national and international assessments: Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP), Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).

Conduct of the Assessment Review

Our goal was to engage as many Ontarians as possible in a province-wide conversation. We issued a discussion guide titled *A Learning Province: Public Engagement on Education Assessment in Ontario* and launched a website (OntarioALearningProvince.com). Between November 22nd and December 15th 2017, we held afternoon stakeholder meetings and evening public meetings in seven regional locations across Ontario (plus two live-streamed options), two webinars, an online survey, and a Twitter campaign (#OntEDAssessment and #OntEvaluationEdu). Over 5,000 people participated in the public engagement. In addition, we held meetings with over twenty different education sector stakeholder organizations and with relevant government Ministries and Directorates. We received 44 written submissions. We benefited from advice from an Educator Panel, of teachers and an early childhood educator, established for the Review. We held two 'think tank' sessions with leading experts in the field of assessment. We also commissioned a review of assessment research, including a scan of assessment practices in Canada and internationally.

A parallel process was recommended for First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners, consistent with government commitments. Through initial conversations with the Minister's Advisory Council on the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework Working Group and some members of the Central Policy and Planning Circle of the First Nations Lifelong Learning Table, it became clear that the time frame of this Review would not allow for meaningful engagement with First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators and community members in a manner that is respectful of their established processes. There is a need for a longer process of engagement and consultation with First Nations and Métis peoples and Inuit about assessment policies and practices.

Assessment Review Findings: Areas for Improvement

The focus of this Review was to identify areas of assessment requiring improvement. We have identified 13 areas for improvement and made 18 related recommendations.

A K-12 System of Student Assessment

Our conclusion is that there is a need to develop further a culture of assessment with a coherent strategy, updated policies, supports for implementation, and continuous review. We identify four key areas for improvement:

Developing a clear and coherent K-12 System of Student Assessment
The purposes of classroom assessments, EQAO assessments, national and international assessments need to be made much more clear for students, educators, trustees, parents/guardians and the broader public.

Updating and re-launching the provincial assessment policy with implementation support
The policy, *Growing Success* (2010), is well-regarded by professionals in education but could be improved to support commitments to equity and current developments in assessment.

Reviewing appropriate approaches for evaluating criterion-referenced assessments (assessments that measure student performance against a set of criteria).
Current practices of moving from the use of levels for assessment and reporting to the conversion to percentage grades for evaluation and reporting were questioned by students, educators and assessment experts.

Establishing a process of continuous review and independent evaluation of the implementation and impact of assessment practices
The process of public and stakeholder engagement through the Review has generated interest in continuing opportunities for province-wide dialogue on the future of assessments in Ontario and highlighted the need for ongoing evaluation to support continuous improvement.

Classroom Assessments

Classroom assessments are vital to students' learning, educators' teaching, and informing parents/guardians of their child's progress. Our conclusion is the need to focus on the importance of prioritizing, valuing and improving classroom assessments and feedback. We identify three key areas for improvement:

Providing professional learning and development to support implementation and understanding of a repertoire of differentiated, equitable, culturally relevant, and inclusive assessment practices
There is a need to develop classroom assessments further so that they recognize the culture and experiences of each student and ensure equity, a strong desire for continued and increased trust in teachers' professional judgement, and an interest in more consistency in understanding of assessment practices across classrooms, schools and school boards.

Making available quality assured, curriculum-linked assessment tools and resources
To implement the principles of effective assessment in practice, teachers need access to examples of assessment strategies, materials and resources that they could select to use as part of their professional judgement and practice.

Strengthening the use of descriptive feedback and communication of students' learning by and for students, teachers and parents/guardians
There was overwhelming support for providing students and parents/guardians with a broader range of qualitative feedback. Student, parent and teacher conferences were highlighted as the most useful form of reporting and there was strong interest in ongoing informal communication with parents/guardians.

Large-scale Assessments

The topic of large-scale assessment, specifically EQAO assessments, generated high interest and contention throughout the Review. The EQAO itself has already recognized, and is acting on, the need to modernize its operations and assessments. Our conclusion is that it is time to clarify the purposes and transform the use of large-scale assessments in Ontario. We identify five areas for improving large-scale assessments:

Strengthening the effective use of the EDI
The EDI can help schools and communities understand the physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, communication skills and general knowledge of their youngest learners and should be integrated within the revised *Growing Success*.

Clarifying and renewing the role of the EQAO agency
While EQAO has a national and international reputation for world-class assessment expertise; within Ontario, it has a very mixed perception publicly and among students, parents/guardians and educators. Views ranged from calls to abolish EQAO through to support for maintaining, but transforming it.

Reforming the design and administration of EQAO assessments
There was a strong consensus about the need for changes in EQAO assessments. There is a high level of concern about the current nature and impact of EQAO assessments given commitments to student equity, recognizing the culture and experiences of students, and minimizing undesirable indirect effects of assessments on students' learning and well-being. In particular, there were concerns about whether Grade 3 was an appropriate age for large-scale assessments in light of concerns about children's development, well-being and anxiety, whether Grade 9 was an inappropriate time as students were transitioning into the first year of secondary school and whether the OSSLT was outdated and should continue to be a one day assessment linked to a graduation requirement.

Transforming EQAO reporting
In an era of Open Data and Freedom of Information, it is not realistic to prevent data from becoming public; however, future reporting needs to be transformed to provide a broader range of information, advice on interpretation of that information and to minimize misuse.

Developing educator, parental and public understanding of the appropriate use of large-scale assessment data and reports
There is a desire for EQAO and the government to explain clearly the appropriate, against inappropriate uses. Such inappropriate uses include: uses of large-scale assessment data and to speak out strongly against inappropriate uses. Such inappropriate uses include: using large-scale provincial assessments for student diagnostic purposes, to infer evaluation of educators, and for ranking schools and school boards.

Pan-Canadian and International Assessments

There is low awareness of Ontario's participation and/or results in national and international assessments. Therefore, the area for improvement is:

Communicating Ontario's participation and results in national and international assessments
There was interest in knowing more about Ontario's performance, in understanding the contexts of these assessments, and in communication and use of this information.

Assessment Review: Recommendations

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students and Assessments

Recommendation 1: Partner with the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, to establish Assessment Working Groups for First Nations, Métis and Inuit to support the development of the K-12 System of Student Assessment.

Essential elements to realize recommendation 1:

- The First Nations Lifelong Learning Table with the Central Policy and Planning Circle (CPPC) select the First Nations Working Group and the Minister's Advisory Council on the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework select the members of the Métis and Inuit Working Groups, all in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, to serve the full term of the transformation period.
- The Working Groups will align their work with the assessment system team within the Ministry of Education (see Recommendation 18) to share their findings and align their work with the Transformation Steering Committee as partners in the transformation process.
- These Working Groups approach consultation in the manner that most effectively respects the way in which collective decision making is organized within their cultures, communities and organizations in order to determine effective assessment for learners in the classroom and in province wide assessments.

- The Working Groups examine assessment in all of the following recommendations, with a view to how the recommendations may serve their learners.
- A professional learning community should evolve from the Working Groups to advise and lead work on the development of culturally relevant assessments, resources and training for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners and educators as part of the K-12 System of Student Assessment.
- The Working Groups develop classroom assessments that are culturally and linguistically grounded according to exemplars that promote the learning needs of their students and include benefit for all students.
- Assessment and reporting should align with the *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*.
- The Ministry of Education to support the First Nations, Métis and Inuit to accomplish these tasks.

K-12 System of Student Assessment

Recommendation 2: Develop a K-12 System of Student Assessment to include a multi-year commitment to provide professional learning and assessment resources to develop a culture of assessment and a comprehensive strategy to improve and implement student assessments in Ontario, aligned with the current curriculum refresh.

Recommendation 3: Update the *Growing Success* policy to become a renewed K-12 *Growing Excellence and Equity* policy aligned with the curriculum refresh.

Essential elements to realize Recommendation 3:

- Retain the key principles of *Growing Success* which are well-regarded across the sector;
- Update province-wide assessment policies in light of the goals of *Achieving Excellence* for excellence, equity, well-being and public confidence, plus attention to new developments in assessment purpose, design, implementation and use;
- Integrate and align related policies and practices for assessment within the new comprehensive *Growing Excellence and Equity* policy, including consideration of: Learning for All to support Universal Design for Learning; *The Kindergarten Addendum* to extend attention to student growth and development and pedagogical documentation into later grades; and embed culturally relevant and responsive assessments to support equity for all students and with particular attention to ensuring alignment with the *Aménagement linguistique Policy for French-language education*, Indigenous learning and assessments, and the *Equity Action Plan*'s commitment to supporting racialized and minoritized students;
- Include the Early Development Instrument (EDI) as part of Ontario's repertoire of provincial assessments;
- Ensure that the principles of the renewed *Growing Excellence and Equity* policy are consistent in examples of practice within the policy document and in the supporting resources and materials;
- Clarify effective processes for use of accommodations and modifications to ensure appropriate assessment for students with special needs and learning disabilities;

- Revise guidance on use of criterion-referenced assessment practices to inform student learning, particularly review appropriate levels of achievement, forms of feedback and concerns about the use of percentage grades.

Recommendation 4: Commission an independent evaluation of the new system of assessment after it has been implemented for three years.

Classroom Assessments

Recommendation 5: Resource and provide a comprehensive, multi-year range of differentiated professional learning and development to support understanding and implementation of the renewed *Growing Excellence and Equity* policy.

Recommendation 6: Establish a range of evidence-informed, modularized, online assessments and print versions of assessment resources, aligned to curriculum expectations, as optional, on demand resources for teachers who are seeking quality assured resources to support formative assessments within their classrooms beginning with implementation in the Primary Division and extending to later grades of elementary schools and for secondary schools.

Essential elements to realize recommendations 5 and 6:

- Develop a repertoire of assessment and feedback practices, including culturally and linguistically relevant assessments and inclusive practices for the diverse population of learners and provision of a range of ways to receive and discuss regular feedback and updates on a student's learning and progress, including use of technology to document and share student work, and student, parent and teacher conferences;
- Ensure the assessment process is inclusive of students' voices and values their diverse experiences, contexts and needs within assessment practices;
- Provide consistency of accommodations and modifications for students with Individual Education Plans in assessments from one grade and class to another, and consider how to maintain consistency as these students transition from one school to another;
- Develop meaningful opportunities for engagement with parents/guardians to support student learning as part of the development of these new assessments;
- Require focused attention to understanding, developing and critiquing a repertoire of assessment practice during Initial Teacher Education for teacher candidates and to assessment literacy in Principal and Supervisory Officer Qualifications Programs and in continuing professional learning and development for educators;
- Develop and fund opportunities for educators to collaborate, co-develop and share assessment resources and practices, including collaboration and teacher moderation within and across classrooms, school district learning teams, and a province-wide educator network.

Large-scale Assessments

Recommendation 7: Revise the *EQAO Act* to focus the future purpose and role of the EQAO agency as a leader in provincial large-scale assessment of student learning outcomes.

The office is to have the following purposes:

1. To develop and implement independent, evidence-informed and standards-based provincial large-scale assessments of student learning outcomes within the elementary and secondary publicly funded education system.
2. To provide an annual, province-wide snapshot and public reporting of large-scale assessment results and related evidence of student learning, achievement and equity.
3. To provide school board-level, school-level and student-level reports that clearly identify the appropriate use and interpretation of large-scale assessment results, including relevant contextual information and a range of data to provide a coherent and comprehensive snapshot of performance.
4. To develop capacity and understanding across the Ontario education system on the appropriate and effective use of large-scale assessment data.
5. To coordinate and communicate to the public and the Ontario education system about the results and effective use of pan-Canadian and International assessments.
6. To champion and undertake a robust research agenda to improve continuously the design, understanding, implementation and use of large-scale assessments within Ontario and to provide national and international leadership in current and future innovative and effective large-scale assessment design, implementation and use.
7. To report and to make recommendations to the Minister of Education on the results of the assessments and generally on the performance of the Ontario publicly funded education system to provide system level accountability and public assurance.

Essential elements to realize recommendation 7:
Re-envision and transform the EQAO to be consistent with the above purposes, and consider re-naming and re-launching the Crown agency.

Recommendation 8: Undertake a redesign of provincial large-scale assessments, aligned with the curriculum refresh and taking into account developments in student learning and assessment design, including equitable, inclusive and culturally relevant practices, student choice and voice in assessments, and integration of technology. Develop a parallel implementation process to:

(1) Reform core annual provincial large-scale assessments to:
   a. Continue, but substantially modernize Grade 6 census assessments of literacy and numeracy, plus consideration of transferable skills needed to equip elementary students as they proceed in their education;
   b. Discontinue the OSSLT, and design and implement a new Grade 10 census assessment of key knowledge, skills and competences, including consideration of literacy, numeracy and competences needed to equip students for success in post-secondary school destinations (e.g. apprenticeship, college, university, community living, or work). This would replace the OSSLT, but would not be linked to graduation requirements.

(2) Phase out and end over a multi-year period:
   a. the current Grade 3 EQAO assessments and make better use of the EDI and classroom assessments to support early intervention; and
   b. the current Grade 9 EQAO assessments and the OSSLT.

Recommendation 9: Investigate and develop as a priority the integration of adaptive technology for large-scale assessments of students' learning and progress, to enable flexible administration of assessments over time and location, to consider various modes of assessment including digital portfolios, and to provide timely feedback and reporting on results.

Recommendation 10: Consider the potential for one-off or cyclical (3-5 years) research or assessments of priority subjects and/or competences for a broader understanding of the performance of Ontario's education system. These assessments should not become annualized census assessments, and would supplement, not replace other recommendations.

Essential elements to realize recommendations 8 - 10:

The new large-scale assessments should embody principles consistent with the goals of *Achieving Excellence*, for example:

- Align the new provincial assessments to the refreshed curriculum and assess key knowledge, skills and competences that are considered to be essential outcomes before the end of elementary school and of secondary school.
- Enable teachers to have flexibility over the timing of administration of assessments, within a pre-established assessment window. No assessment should be available only on one specific date.
- Value and recognize all levels of student learning and progress. The large-scale assessment results should not contribute to students' grades or promotion decisions or secondary school graduation.
- Ensure student choice and voice are central in the design and implementation of assessments, including choice of assessment questions and approaches to fulfilling assessment criteria.
- Pay careful and vigilant attention to ensuring curriculum and assessment materials provide linguistically, culturally and geographically relevant items and materials, including attention to the diversity of Ontario's students and communities, French-language students, and to Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing.
- Provide appropriate and effective accommodations and modifications for students with special educational needs, including learning disabilities, and English/French language learners.
- Consider whether students in French Immersion schools should be able to take all provincial assessments in French.
- Reform the criteria for official exemptions in partnership between teachers, parents/guardians and students to take account of special educational needs and also factors such as new immigrant and refugee status.
- Use a census approach for the new assessments in order to provide population level information concerning student learning and equity.
- Embed approaches to mitigate the unintended negative consequences of provincial assessments in future assessment design and in the linked communications and development of an assessment culture to support appropriate implementation, for example:
  - The design, implementation, reporting and use of provincial assessments should be consistent with the purpose of large-scale assessments to provide a summative snapshot.
  - The overall number of provincial assessments should be minimized.

- The amount of time required for one assessment should be minimized, taking account of an appropriate balance of rigor, validity and the experiences of the students participating.
- The learning environment in which students take the assessments should remain as close to their everyday learning environment as possible.
- Research and key messages about appropriate approaches to ensuring students are familiar with the expectations of assessments versus the negative consequences of extensive and pervasive test preparation should be developed and widely communicated.
- All professional associations, the Ministry of Education, the EQAO, and educators should be vigilant in ensuring inappropriate approaches to test preparation are identified and not implemented further.

Recommendation 11: Transform approaches to reporting provincial large-scale assessments to be consistent with the purpose of annual system-level summative snapshots at the provincial, school board and school levels. These reports should not be used to rank schools.

Essential elements to realize recommendation 11:

- EQAO should produce:
  - A provincial annual report, including provincial results for elementary and secondary provincial large-scale assessments, considerations of equity, sub-group analyses with disaggregated data, cohort data, questionnaire responses, relevant provincial data and research, and in years when pan-Canadian and international assessment results are released, key findings for Ontario.
  - Annual school board and school reports that are appropriate to the effective use of large-scale assessments, including provision of relevant contextual information, assessment results, questionnaire responses and other relevant data concerning education performance, and clarify the inappropriate use of this information, including opposing ranking of schools and use of summative assessment information for individual student diagnostic purposes or teacher evaluation.
- Overall results reported publicly should be based on the student population who actually participate in the assessments rather than all students in the grade.
- If the new assessments move to adaptive testing, provision of real time/rapid feedback to students should be considered. In the meantime, student reports should clarify this is a snapshot of performance on a system assessment and is not intended for diagnostic or evaluative purposes.
- EQAO should replace current individual reports [both the Primary/Junior and Grade 9/OSSLT grade level reports, and the Individual Item Results (IIRs) Reports] for each assessment with the proposed annual reports.
- As part of revising the EQAO legislation, two-way data-sharing from the Ministry of Education and EQAO should be agreed. Data sharing agreements with First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners should be agreed.
- EQAO, in partnership with professional associations and the government, should proactively identify and respond to the inappropriate use or misuse of provincial large-scale assessment data by other organizations/individuals, including opposing public ranking of schools.

Recommendation 12: Implement professional learning and development for educators at all levels of the education system (Ministry, school boards, schools), in concert with the roll out of the new provincial assessment system to support a new assessment culture for understanding the appropriate use of EDI and EQAO assessments.

Recommendation 13: Further develop Ministry of Education, Board and School Improvement Planning Processes and publication of Plans to include appropriate use of EDI and EQAO data, along with other relevant achievement, program, demographic and perceptual data.

Recommendation 14: Implement a high profile and comprehensive public communications strategy by the EQAO and the government to develop public and parental understanding of the provincial assessment redesign, the purpose of these assessments, and the appropriate interpretation and use of reports and related data from provincial assessments.

Recommendation 15: Implement a systematic and cyclical evaluation of the EQAO and EQAO assessments at least every five years.

Recommendation 16: Document the legacy and lessons of over 20 years of the EQAO agency and the EQAO assessments in a capstone report analyzing key findings and implications from EQAO assessment data concerning student achievement, equity and the quality of the Ontario education system.

Pan-Canadian and International Assessment

Recommendation 17: Continue Ontario's participation in PCAP, PISA, PIRLS and TIMMS and maximize the use of this information through public communication of the results, including relevant context, and identifying key findings of relevance to informing educational improvement in Ontario.

Implementation Support

Recommendation 18: Establish a dedicated team within the Ministry of Education to work in partnership with all relevant organizations and stakeholders to oversee progress for implementation of the proposed recommendations from the Assessment Review.

Conclusions

We have conducted a rapid yet extensive review of assessment and reporting practices in Ontario. The main feedback that we heard was concern and hope that the Review would result in recommendations and action for improvement in the assessments that Ontario's students experience. Indeed, our conclusion is that the recommendations as a set represent a needed change in the very culture of assessment in the province.

Our recommendations have been informed by thousands of Ontarians, plus relevant research, evidence and our best judgement to offer advice when the findings are clear and compelling and to navigate the trade-offs and complexities when consensus and definitive evidence were not present. Our decisions were guided by our fundamental commitment to support students' learning, equity and well-being. We heard widespread hope that change will result. Now is the moment to begin this transformation and to move forward together with and for Ontario's students, educators, parents/guardians and communities.



Introduction

On September 6, 2017, the Premier and Minister of Education announced an Independent Review of Assessment and Reporting to update and improve Ontario's assessment and reporting practices. As Education Advisors to the Premier and the Minister of Education (see Appendix A for Advisor Biographies), we were asked to undertake a public consultation and examine the evidence locally, nationally and internationally, concerning classroom assessments, large-scale assessments, including the work of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), and participation in pan-Canadian and international assessments, and to provide evidence-informed and implementable recommendations for improvements in assessment (see Appendix B for Terms of Reference).

Our review of assessment is part of a larger plan to refresh Ontario's curriculum over the next five years. A Transformation Steering Committee involving key stakeholder organizations has been established to inform, and guide coherence across the broad, transformative changes in education over the next five years (see Appendix C). The Assessment Review is the first part of this process investigating and reporting on improvements in assessment that will inform and align with the curriculum refresh.

In *A Learning Province (2017),* we set out our vision, goal and questions for the public and stakeholder engagement process:

OUR VISION

is that students' experiences – their needs, learning, progress and well-being – are at the centre of decisions about future assessment design and use.

OUR GOAL

is to ensure further development of, and improve approaches to, assessment which support all children and young people to learn and develop to their fullest potential from early childhood through to high school graduation and post-secondary destinations.

It has been over twenty years since the establishment of the EQAO and its large-scale provincial assessments; we began this Review thinking that it was time to reconsider what assessments are needed to improve students' learning, knowledge and skills in a time of complex and rapid global, economic, social, cultural and technological change. Prior to this Review, EQAO had already initiated a process of modernization of their large-scale assessments, reports, research, engagement with Ontarians and internal business practices with a priority commitment to equity and inclusion (see Appendix D). Having now completed public and stakeholder consultations engaging thousands of Ontarians and reviewing relevant research and evidence; we are convinced that this Review was not only timely; it was essential and overdue.

We value and want to build on existing good practices, while identifying and seeking to end practices that are having negative consequences for students, schools and communities. This report sets out our evidence and recommendations for a future K-12 System of Student Assessment. We are proposing a change in the culture of the system of assessment and learning so that it is underpinned by co-learning – among educators, with and among students and their parents/guardians, as well as with all others connected to the education system.

It is time to make continuous improvement of effective classroom assessments and feedback the central feature of assessment in Ontario. This will require resources and supports for educators, students and parents/guardians. It is time to focus and transform the role of large-scale assessments to provide snapshots of student achievement and equity of outcomes. This will inform the public, government and education system of the overall performance of Ontario's education system and provide evidence that schools, boards and the province need to continue making improvements in these areas. Finally, it is time for Ontario to build on its work as a world-class education system and as a leader nationally and internationally in the appropriate design and use of assessments to support students' learning, equity and well-being and for system accountability and improvement.



A Changing Ontario in a Changing World: Students' Learning, Equity, Well-Being and the Future of Assessment

Ontario's provincial assessments and reporting began in 1996 following the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Learning. The aspirations of the Royal Commission were to prepare Ontario's children and young people for the technological, social and economic changes of the 21st century. Over twenty years later, we continue to hold the highest aspirations for Ontario's children and young people.

However, the world has changed and is changing at an unprecedented rate. Economic changes are bringing about new opportunities and new demands for a range of knowledge and skills. The future employment market is unpredictable – new jobs arise and old ones fade away. The notion of a lifelong career is gone: people need to be entrepreneurial and adaptable to changing work. Innovation and disruption are bringing major developments in technology and society. At the same time, artificial intelligence and the rise of a digital society opens up new questions about what it means to be human and to be a community. The social world is changing – more connected globally yet sometimes more disconnected locally. Loneliness, anxiety and stress are on the rise. Global migration, increasing social and cultural diversity are shaping and changing countries and communities in positive ways. Yet global political instability, trauma and widening inequalities between the richest and poorest require considerable attention. The physical world is also changing – climate change and diminishing natural resources require us to consider our role as stewards of the Earth. All of these changes are being felt in Ontario and by our students.

Ontario's student population is changing. The global migration of people and talent draws many people towards our increasingly diverse province, bringing their cultures and skills as well as their hopes and ambitions for their children. According to Statistics Canada's 2016 census, approximately 11 per cent of Ontario's 4 million young people up to age 24 were immigrants. When adding second generation Canadians to that number, the percentage rises to 48 per cent for that age group. Newcomers bring new experiences to our communities and our schools; many languages, cultures and identities have to be recognized and included throughout the classrooms of Ontario.

> When we talk of Ontario's future changing demographic; that future is here, it is now.
>
> *— Director of Education, Think Tank Participant*

Ontario has been shaped in the past by its relationship with First Nations and Métis peoples and Inuit who are recognized as rights holders with Treaty and Constitutional rights. However the rights and traditions of First Nations and Métis have not yet been adequately addressed in the Ontario curriculum and educational practices. For the future, we have the opportunity to deepen our commitments to truth and reconciliation with First Nations and Métis peoples and Inuit

through the many "Calls to Action." We can also examine how the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, accepted by Canada, can support the emergence of Indigenous knowledge systems into the classrooms and present new opportunities to build relationships of mutual respect and shared benefit. In 2016, 374,395 people identified as Aboriginal in Ontario, representing an increase of 54.1 per cent since 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2016). The Indigenous population is one of the fastest growing populations in Canada (in 2011–12, an estimated 64,000 Indigenous students attended provincially funded elementary and secondary schools in Ontario), a fact that enhances the learning dynamic with its rich wisdom and traditions (see Appendix E for Ontario population and demographic information). Through voluntary self-identification, we know there are Ontario school boards where the majority student population is now Indigenous.



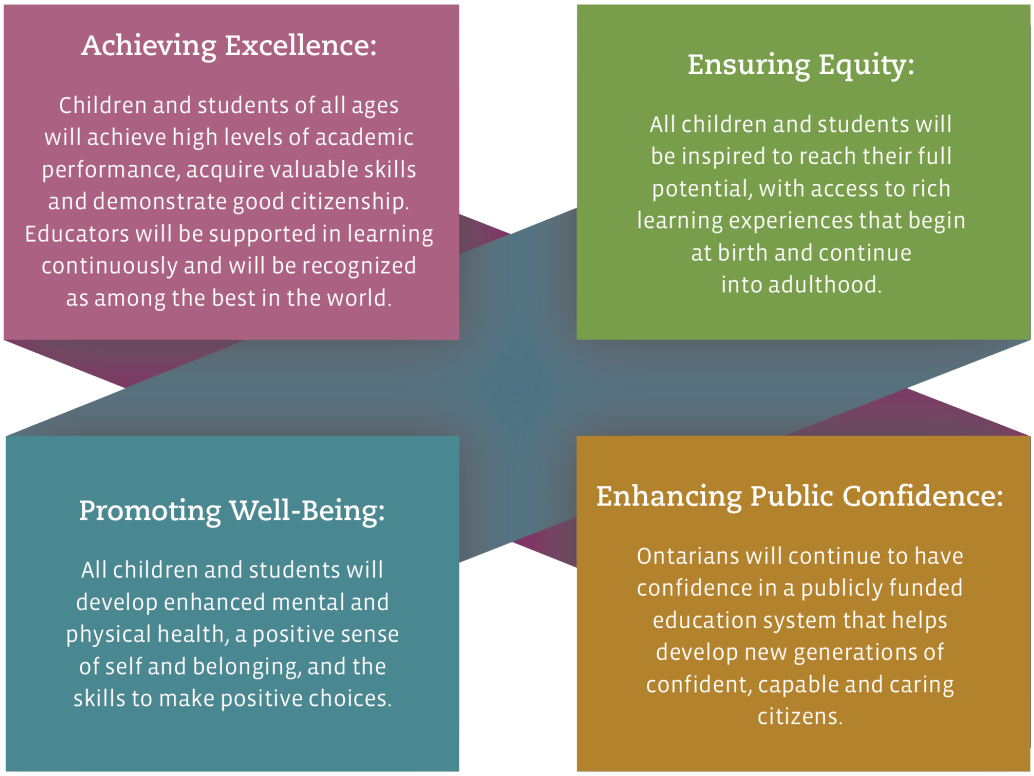
We are at an unprecedented moment in time. There is an awakening that we need to do more, that reconciliation is needed. I feel optimism for the future. If ever there was a time to do something right, it is now. Do not lose this moment.

— Director of Education, Think Tank Participant

The only certainty is that our children face a dynamically different future. We must seize the opportunity to prepare them for this changing world. We know that we have to provide our students with the capacity, knowledge building blocks, and scaffolds now to equip them for their futures, beginning in the early years. We need to continue to develop students' knowledge, skills, compassion, resiliency, and work habits so they become self-sufficient in a global context, as well as people who are confident, capable, and caring citizens respectful of diversity. We need to ensure that students acquire transferable skills for communication, collaboration, innovation and creativity, citizenship, critical thinking, and self-directed learning. Student leadership, the ability to embrace dynamic change, live in an ethical context of justice and peace, and strive for sustainability in a changing world are ideals of education systems of the future that need to be seeded today. A fundamental purpose of any education system is to develop students who are deeply capable of engaging in the world that they find themselves in, while working with others to help change this very world for the better - and to do so on an ongoing basis. This is the future of the learning required to thrive and enjoy prosperity. The need for this system transformation is so urgent that we conceive of it as an immediate priority and a long-term proposition!

If we want an education system that truly helps all students to become functioning and contributing residents of Ontario, and citizens of Canada and the world, we need to consider all aspects of the schooling experience in an effort to develop a quality education system that values the learning, equity and well-being of students. In a changing Ontario, our aspirations for Ontario's students and education system are also changing.

In 2014, after extensive consultation, the Ministry of Education announced a renewed vision *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* (2014) with four priority goals:



Realizing this vision requires educators who know their students - really know them culturally, socially and emotionally - as participants in their learning process, and in so doing build the necessary relationships with their students. Our concern with students' academic achievement must be accompanied by providing equitable schooling and education by taking into account the experiences, needs, languages, cultures, varied histories, interests, expectations and aspirations of students and those of their parents/guardians and communities. Holding high expectations for all students can also mean treating students differently at times. This values and acknowledges their differences; noting intersecting identity characteristics such as gender, indigeneity, ethnicity, race, sexuality, and spirituality. Such an approach works fundamentally to enhance and monitor the well-being of all students by developing positive relationships which foster a sense of belonging and connection to the school, enrich their learning, satisfaction with physical and emotional safety at school, cultivate healthy minds and bodies, and have a positive sense of self/spirit (Ministry of Education, 2017).

The educator's role is to work with and beside their students to guide their inquiries, nurture their growth, sustain their curiosity, develop their knowledge, skills and competences, provide supportive relationships for learning and well-being, and open up avenues for further learning.



The original meaning of 'assessment' is to 'sit beside'. Assessment, then, is one of the important ways in which educators can know their students better and more completely, as individuals and as groups. Assessments are the deliberate, planned collection and evaluation of information on what students know, understand, and can do in order to make informed decisions about next steps to support student learning and equity. Good quality assessments, ones that provide data on students' performance, engagement and growth combined with timely, specific feedback, can be powerful agents for change.

While *Achieving Excellence* did not examine future approaches to student assessments, our vision recognizes that a change in the culture and practice of assessment is essential for the next phase of education in the province. Ontario is not alone in looking at its assessment and reporting practices. Over the last decade, varying levels of reform in educational assessment and reporting approaches have been happening across the globe, for example to include skills and competences, to use technology, and to be adaptive to the learning needs and diversity of students. The world is changing, Ontario is changing, our students are changing, and our education system is changing. It is time for Ontario's assessment system to evolve to meet these changes.



Current Assessment Policies and Practices in Ontario

The overarching policy for assessment in Ontario is *Growing Success* (2010) which sets out fundamental principles for assessment, evaluation and reporting practices (See Figure A). Later, *The Kindergarten Addendum* (2016) applied the principles to the new Kindergarten program with an emphasis on play- and inquiry-based learning and assessment of student growth and development. Current student assessments in Ontario involve classroom, large-scale, and national/international assessments (see Figure B). Assessment practices include EQAO large-scale census testing annually of reading, writing and mathematics in Grades 3 and 6, in academic and applied mathematics in Grade 9, and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in Grade 10. The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a large-scale full census gathering of data on children's developmental readiness collected by Kindergarten teachers. Lastly, Ontario participates in several national and international assessments: Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP), Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).



Figure A: *Growing Success* (2010) Fundamental Principles

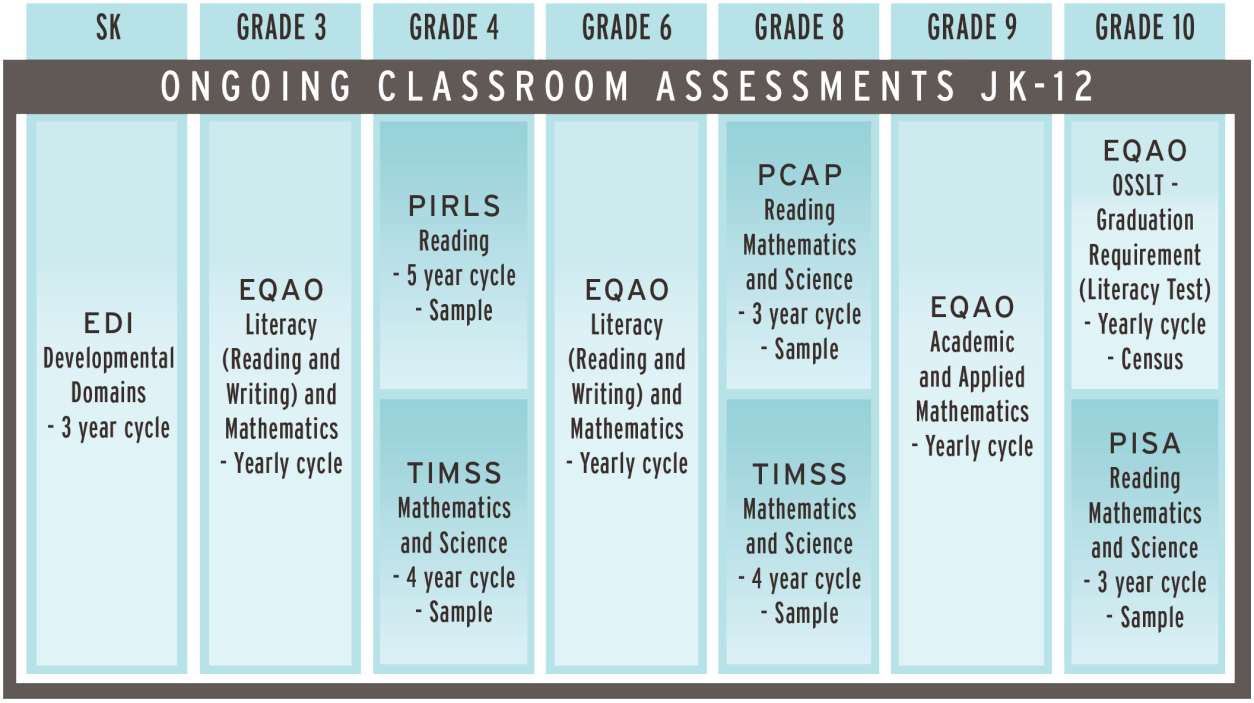
The Seven Fundamental Principles

To ensure that assessment, evaluation, and reporting are valid and reliable, and that they lead to the improvement of learning for all students, teachers use practices and procedures that:

- are fair, transparent, and equitable for all students;
- support all students, including those with special education needs, those who are learning the language of instruction (English or French), and those who are First Nation, Métis, or Inuit;
- are carefully planned to relate to the curriculum expectations and learning goals and, as much as possible, to the interests, learning styles and preferences, needs, and experiences of all students;
- are communicated clearly to students and parents at the beginning of the school year or course and at other appropriate points throughout the school year or course;
- are ongoing, varied in nature, and administered over a period of time to provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate the full range of their learning;
- provide ongoing descriptive feedback that is clear, specific, meaningful, and timely to support improved learning and achievement;
- develop students' self-assessment skills to enable them to assess their own learning, set specific goals, and plan next steps for their learning.

Source: *Growing Success* (2010), p. 6

Figure B: Current Student Assessment Practices in Ontario



The Scope and Conduct of the Independent Review of Student Assessment

Purpose and Scope of Assessment Review

The Terms of Reference for the Assessment Review included:

An evidence-informed review of the current model of assessment and reporting practices at the student, classroom, school, board and provincial levels which examines its impact on learning, achievement and well-being. This should include consideration of Indigenous educational assessments at the classroom, school, board and system levels where language, culture and land-based learning are part of well-being.

And:

Evidence-informed and implementable recommendations for change.

To guide our review, we established six key purposes for the appropriate design and use of future assessments (see Figure C). We prioritized also the importance of:

- equity, including cultural relevancy, and well-being which should be more intentionally woven into assessment models at all levels;
- the need for assessments that better reflect societal changes, including the importance of technology and transferable skills and competencies.

Figure C: Purposes of Assessment

Future assessments need to be useful and appropriate if Ontario is to:

- Support students' learning, their well-being, and equitable opportunities and outcomes.
- Support professionals' practices and judgement.
- Inform students and parents/guardians/caregivers/families of learning progress and include meaningful input from them.
- Inform school and system improvement.
- Provide information for public assurance and confidence about the quality and progress of the Ontario education system.
- Advance the achievement of the above goals with positive benefits for the overall goals of Ontario's publicly funded education system.

(Ontario: *A Learning Province*, 2017, p. 4).

[1] In this report, wherever the term "Indigenous" appears, it refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

Conduct of Review

Understanding that our assessment and reporting review would be part of a larger transformation of education in Ontario, and working within a mandated rapid review period, our goal was to engage as many Ontarians as possible in a province-wide conversation to hear their concerns about, and hopes for, student assessment and reporting. We issued a discussion guide titled *A Learning Province: Public Engagement on Education Assessment in Ontario* and held regional public and stakeholder engagement sessions in seven locations across Ontario between November 22nd and December 12th 2017. A total of 407 participants attended afternoon stakeholder meetings with representative teams from District School Boards, and a total of 380 participants attended public, open evening meetings (see Appendix F –Engagement Documents). Recognizing that not everyone would be able to participate in person, two engagement sessions were live-streamed and two webcast sessions were offered (one in French and one in English). We created a dedicated website (OntarioALearningProvince.com) which included resources and discussion materials from the regional sessions in a variety of formats. Sixty-seven participants took part in the two live-streamed meetings, 32 participated in the webinars, and 4,100 people responded to a detailed survey (See Appendix G for engagement statistics). We also initiated a Twitter conversation. From November 22 to December 15, there were 1,255 mentions of education assessment (#OntEDAssessment and #OntEvaluationEdu) on Twitter by 564 unique users.

In addition to the public engagement, we held separate meetings with over twenty different education sector stakeholder organizations including groups that represent teachers, directors of education, supervisory offices, principals, parents, trustees and students. We also wanted to hear from relevant ministries in the government and engaged with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, and the Anti-Racism Directorate, all of whom provided us with valuable insights and information.

We benefitted from advice and input from an Educator Panel established for the Review. The panel included teachers from across Ontario, secondary school and elementary levels, English and French systems, an early childhood educator and an Indigenous teacher. Additionally, we held two 'think tank' sessions with leading experts in the field of assessment, one for large-scale assessment and one for Indigenous assessment practices. We also commissioned a review of assessment research, including a jurisdictional scan of assessment practices in Canada and internationally. (See Appendix H for a list of individuals and groups that helped to inform our review).

Indigenous Engagement Process for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students and Assessment

A parallel engagement process was recommended for First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners, consistent with government commitments to the Indigenous community. Through initial information sessions with partners on the Minister's Advisory Council on the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework and some members of the Central Policy and Planning Circle of the First Nations Lifelong Learning Table, it became clear that the time frame of this review would not allow for meaningful engagement with First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators and community members in a manner that would be respectful of their established processes. First Nations and Métis peoples and Inuit have specialized forms of consultation for decision making that are cyclical with established ethics of engagement that are culturally based in order to represent their peoples who are rights holders respectfully. The processes of consultation are dedicated to gathering input for collective decision making so that parents, guardians, community members and educators have equitable understandings of the deeper issues in the relationship of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. The discussions ensure that the core values, cultural capital and language in assessment are culturally relevant, place based, acknowledge Treaty and Constitutional rights, and serve community aspirations. As we express in our first recommendation, there is a need for a longer process of engagement and consultation with First Nations and Métis people and Inuit about assessment policies and practices.



Assessment Review Findings: Areas for Improvement

Ontario has a world-class education system. Through this Review and from each of our own experiences working in and with the Ontario education system, we are aware of excellent and innovative assessment practices existing within and across classrooms, schools, school boards, and the province. The focus of the Review, however, is to identify areas of assessment requiring improvement and updating. In the sections that follow, we identify areas for improvement and provide our proposals for future updating of assessment policies and practices.

In the following sections, we discuss areas for improvement and our proposals under five key headings: A K-12 System of Student Assessment; Classroom Assessment: Large-Scale Assessment; Pan-Canadian and International Assessments; from Review to Action. We then detail related recommendations.

A K-12 System of Student Assessment

While Ontario has solid existing assessment policies, our conclusion is that there is a need to develop a culture of assessment further with a coherent strategy, updated policies and supports for implementation and continuous review.

We identify four key areas for improvement in developing the overall K-12 System of Student Assessment:

- Developing a clear and coherent K-12 System of Student Assessment.
- Updating and re-launching the provincial assessment policy with implementation support.
- Reviewing appropriate approaches for evaluating criterion-referenced assessments.
- Establishing a process of continuous review and independent evaluation of the implementation and impact of assessment practices.

Area for Improvement: Developing a clear and coherent K-12 System of Student Assessment

It is necessary to develop consistent understanding of the distinctive purposes and appropriate use of various forms of assessments. In particular, participants in the Review identified a need to clarify the purposes of classroom assessments and EQAO assessments in practice for students, educators, trustees, parents/guardians and the wider public. EQAO assessments serve – or should serve – different purposes from classroom assessments. The existing definitions of classroom and large-scale assessments in *Growing Success* (2010) are helpful in clarifying the different purposes and use. In a review of assessment research conducted for the Assessment Review, Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group provide further detailed distinctions between large-scale and classroom assessments (see Figure D).

Figure D: Distinctions between Large-Scale and Classroom Assessment (Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, 2018, pp. 13-14)

LARGE-SCALE ASSESSMENT	CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT
Conducted by ministry of education across schools	Conducted by teachers within classrooms
Produce comparable information, based on standardization of administration, scoring and reporting procedures.	Produce highly individualized student information based on variable procedures and time allowed, amount of teacher support, use of and/or modification of tasks and questions to suit student needs, and teacher autonomy in marking
Provide a macroscopic view of system outcomes	Provide a microscopic view of student outcomes
Guided by reliability, validity and generalizability	Guided by professional notions of authenticity
Provide reliable, objective and high-quality data for informing operational improvement and planning	Encourage students to engage in self-evaluation and personal goal setting; provide parents with information on strengths and weaknesses that can be used to encourage improvement
Assessments are created and scored "at a distance." The test makers and test scorers do not know the students personally which allows for an unbiased third party judgment about student performance in relation to provincial, national or international standards or benchmarks	Assessments materials are usually created and marked by a teacher who knows the students personally. That individual attention allows teachers to make adjustments in instructional practice, diagnose areas of weakness and tailor instruction to student characteristics
Present a summative snapshot of student achievement at the time of assessment	Administered at regular intervals to document student progress and to meet diagnostic, formative and summative goals
Require students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills independently on standardized tasks and under uniform conditions, although some accommodations are made for special needs	Often include a wide variety of teacher supports (reminders, clarifications) to address students' individual needs and abilities
Measure achievement against expectations from the prescribed curriculum and contain tasks and items that sample from and represent the curriculum for the assessed domain	Reflect expectations from the curriculum and contain tasks and items that represent instructional topics and themes that have been taught. Rely on language used regularly in the classroom by the teacher
Inappropriate for some curriculum dimensions (e.g., oral and media-viewing skills) because of the resources required.	Can be adapted to address a wide range of curriculum expectations
All scorers use the same scoring guides and are trained and monitored to ensure objectivity and consistency	Marking is more subjective and often influenced by contextual information available to the teacher
Audience for results is broad, ranging from admissions officers, to institutional heads, to school board officials, to educational policy makers	Audience for results is mostly other teachers, the student, parent(s)/caregiver(s), and school administrators.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 'CLASSROOM' AND 'LARGE-SCALE' ASSESSMENT?

Large-scale assessments differ from classroom assessment and evaluation in their purposes and in the way they are designed, administered, and scored. Classroom assessment and evaluation strategies are developed by teachers to help individual students take the next steps in learning and to determine and inform students and parents of the student's achievement. Large-scale assessments, by contrast, are one-time measures, developed by institutions or agencies at a provincial, national, or international level and designed primarily to provide snapshots of the strengths and weaknesses of education systems.

– Growing Success, p. 92 (2010)

In developing a coherent assessment strategy, ensuring consistent understanding of the differences between diagnostic, formative and summative assessment is vital. Again these distinctive purposes are explained in *Growing Success* (2010) and in *Learning for All* (2013) for students with special educational needs. Classroom assessments can be diagnostic, formative or summative (see Figure E) to provide information for use by teachers/early childhood educators and students, and also for parents/guardians. By contrast, large-scale assessments, including the EQAO assessments, are summative, intended to provide information for use at the level of the overall system (province, school boards, and schools) not for individual students. In practice, EQAO assessments are being perceived and used as diagnostic, formative and summative assessments. This is inappropriate and problematic as large-scale assessments are not intended to be diagnostic or formative for individual student's learning or for individual educators' teaching practices. The resulting confusion of purposes and practices makes it difficult for parents and the wider public to understand the appropriate use of the results and reporting of different assessments. Our conclusion is that there is a clear need for a coherent and well-understood K-12 System of Student Assessment that clarifies and supports the distinctive and complementary purposes of the assessments in which Ontario's students participate.

Figure E: Nature of Classroom Assessments

Diagnostic assessment: occurs before instruction begins so teachers can determine students' readiness to learn new knowledge and skills, as well as obtain information about their interests, learning preferences and special needs (e.g. formal and informal observations, use of diagnostic testing instruments, discussions, questions, homework, projects, performances, etc.).

Formative assessment: occurs frequently and in an ongoing manner during instruction, while students are still gaining knowledge and practising skills. And can occur also with support, modelling and guidance from the teachers (e.g. quizzes, essays, questions, group tasks, digital portfolios, conversations, journals, performances, etc.).

Summative assessment: occurs at or near the end of a period of learning, and may be used to inform further instruction and for evaluation and reporting purposes (e.g. tests/exams, assignments, essays, portfolios, projects, student-created films, etc.).

> OTF and its Affiliates continue to believe in evidence-based research tempered and informed by the experience of classroom teachers. OTF believes it is time to set a new course for assessment in Ontario's public education system.
>
> *—Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) Written Submission*

Area for Improvement: Updating and re-launching the provincial assessment policy with implementation support

The assessment policy, *Growing Success* (2010) is well-regarded and generally supported by professionals in education. Nevertheless, a majority of Review participants suggested it was time to update the current policy. Since the publication of *Growing Success* in 2010:

- An updated and expanded *Learning for All* was released in 2013 to support Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction;
- *Achieving Excellence* was released in 2014 with a renewed vision for Ontario's education system, including priority goals for excellence, equity, well-being and public confidence;
- *The Kindergarten Addendum* to *Growing Success* was released in 2016 with an emphasis on student growth and the use of pedagogical documentation;
- Technology and Innovation Funds have supported the development and integration of technology in Ontario's schools.
- The Ministry of Education's *Equity Action Plan, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* and continued implementation of the *Politique d'aménagement linguistique* have emphasized the need for culturally and linguistically relevant and responsive educational practices.

In particular, participants expressed that the Ministry of Education's renewed commitment to equity and well-being, as well as learning and achievement, needed to be reflected in the renewed assessment policy:

> The Ministry of Education's primary objectives outlined in Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario (2014) are achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being, and enhancing public confidence. Current assessment approaches are not always conducive to achieving these objectives.
>
> *— Executive Director, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO), Written Submission*

A participant in one of our assessment Think Tanks noted that *Growing Success* does not include policy or guidance concerning culturally relevant assessments – assessments which take into consideration the cultural contexts, experiences and needs of different students for example through ensuring that the content of assessments are inclusive and through enabling student choice and voice within assessments. We heard concerns about ensuring that assessment policies and related practices attend effectively to recognizing the range of learning skills and achievements of students, including appropriate assessment and evaluation for students with special education needs. There was considerable interest in integrating an emphasis on inquiry-based learning, student development and growth, and use of pedagogical documentation from *The Kindergarten Addendum* throughout K-12 assessment practices. It was hoped that future assessment practices could be engaging and motivating for students, contributing to their development and well-being, rather than sources of excessive anxiety. Our conclusion is that focused revisions and updates of *Growing Success* are required to take into account changing knowledge about assessment and new commitments to early childhood, equity, inclusion, special educational needs, culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, and use of technology.

A revising of *Growing Success* also provides an opportunity to clarify parts of the existing policy which may be perceived as unclear and have created challenges in practice. For example, making sure that the materials provided in the Appendices fully embody the principles of *Growing Success*. A key concern expressed by teachers and by school and district leaders was the lack of clarity as to what was province-wide policy that needed to be applied consistently, contrasted with aspects which are more open to local discretion. One review participant suggested that all of *Growing Success* could be improved by removing one sentence from the document, namely:

> Recognizing the needs and circumstances of individual boards vary widely, the policy outlined in this document provides flexibility for boards to develop some locally focused guidelines and implementation strategies within the parameters set by the ministry.
>
> *(Growing Success, 2010, p. 2).*

There was a consensus that implementation support for provincial assessment policy was required. The majority of survey respondents suggested that *Growing Success* was released without full and sustained implementation support, including a lack of professional learning and assessment resources to support implementation of what the principles of *Growing Success* actually looked

like and involved in practice. Furthermore, participants suggested that about twelve to eighteen months after the initial launch of *Growing Success*, other policies became priorities and the education sector's attention shifted elsewhere. In short, there is strong support for updating and re-launching the provincial assessment policy, along with continued priority attention and implementation support.

> When the Growing Success Policy was released, its implementation fell short of expectations. Ontario's goals to achieve excellence, ensure equity, promote well-being and enhance public education can be realized with proper implementation of the Growing Success Policy. To accomplish this, the Ministry needs to provide ongoing professional learning opportunities […] that are teacher-driven and based on student learning and research.
>
> *— President, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), Written Submission*

> PCODE supports the continued implementation of Growing Success. If minor adjustments are to be made, reinforcement of the message that we are 'staying the course' on implementation of the document is essential.
>
> *— Executive Director, Public Council of Ontario Directors of Education (PCODE), Written Submission*

Area for Improvement: Reviewing appropriate approaches for evaluating criterion-referenced assessments

The area of *Growing Success* and related practices that caused most consternation in our Review was appropriate practices for criterion-referenced assessment practices, use of levels, the role of the Anchor Chart, use of percentage grades, the appropriate procedures for final evaluations and for determining Report Card grades. We received detailed feedback and suggestions from assessment experts which suggested that current assessment practices were inconsistent with a criterion-referenced (assessment against criteria) approach, particularly moving from levels to percentages. In the Review, the use of percentage grades was widely criticized. For example:

> Percentage grades focus students and teachers not on learning progressions and criteria driven assessment but rather on "calculating grades", despite the provision for professional judgement.
>
> *— School Principal, Written Submission*

> The use of levels makes sense, but not their conversion to percentage grades. And how was the split of 70% for most consistent achievement and 30% for most recent achievement decided? That doesn't recognize students' overall performance.
>
> *— School Principal, Review Participant*

Students' responses indicated that grades, especially in secondary school, were a major source of anxiety. There were also many suggestions to eliminate or de-emphasize grades. Several educators suggested that marks be eliminated for primary school students with more emphasis on descriptive feedback. There was debate about the use of grades in secondary school. One student spoke powerfully about the challenges of *"being defined by a grade"*. Yet another secondary student spoke persuasively also about being *"okay about receiving grades, they let me know how I am doing"*. Overall, it was recognized that students who wish to continue their education after secondary school (e.g. apprenticeships, colleges, universities) would need to receive summative academic achievement grades to gain entry to those courses. As part of the updating of provincial assessment policy and linked practices, our advice is that there is a need for focused attention on ensuring appropriate approaches to criterion-referenced assessments, evaluation and reporting.

Area for Improvement: Establishing a process of continuous review and independent evaluation of the implementation and impact of assessment practices

The process of public and stakeholder engagement through the Review has generated interest in continuing opportunities for province-wide dialogue, interaction and input to the future of assessments in Ontario. It was suggested that the Ministry of Education implement ongoing reviews of assessment and reporting practices. There is no previous comprehensive review or evaluation of assessment policies in Ontario, including the implementation and impact of *Growing Success*. The EQAO Board conducted its own review, *Ensuring Quality Assessments*, during 2002-2004. The Auditor General of Ontario also conducted a review, mainly of procedural matters of the operation of EQAO, in 2009 and a follow up in 2011. Within EQAO there are procedures for input and advice from external experts. Nevertheless, for such a large assessment program, which all of our evidence suggests has a major impact on the education system and all individuals involved, the lack of independent evaluation and systematic review is not good practice. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) team that contributed to EQAO's 2002-2004 review, recommended that a major review of EQAO should be conducted every three to five years. We agree and re-enforce this recommendation as one to be implemented going forward.

Proposals for Improving a K-12 System of Student Assessment

Our conclusion is that there is a profound need to develop a coherent K-12 System of Assessment, aligned with the curriculum refresh that clarifies the appropriate, distinctive and complementary roles of different forms of assessment in which Ontario's students participate. In our proposed K-12 System of Student Assessment, the priority focus is on the development of classroom assessments to support students' learning, growth and development. Classroom assessment is at the heart of student-teacher interactions and improved learning. These assessments can help teachers and students understand how to improve instruction and learning and they can strengthen communication that enables students and their parents/guardians to become more active partners in the learning process.

Large-scale provincial assessments provide a different purpose; they are a snapshot of students' achievements or progress at a specific period in time to provide schools, school board and provincial system-level information against agreed standards. These snapshots can provide independent accountability for the overall performance of the education system and by highlighting gaps and disparities through disaggregated data to identify inequities for sub-groups of students. Large scale assessments can provide data that can be leveraged to inform, highlight disparities, and improve policymaking and education system improvement actions. The provincial assessment system and linked policies and practices should integrate effective use of the Early Development Instrument (EDI).

National and international assessments provide a different purpose again; like provincial assessments, they are a snapshot of performance at a specific time, but unlike provincial assessments which link to the Ontario curriculum, they are benchmarked to national or international criteria to provide comparisons across jurisdictions.

The overall K-12 System of Student Assessment should assist: students in experiencing and engaging in quality assessment practices, parents/guardians in receiving and understanding assessment information, educators in their professional practice, and the wider public in knowing the purposes and appropriate uses of assessment information from different sources.

Relatedly, it is time to update the *Growing Success* policy. The key principles of *Growing Success* remain valued and valuable to educators. Therefore, we are not proposing a full re-write. We propose the development of a renewed K-12 *Growing Excellence and Equity* policy, which updates and clarifies province-wide policies consistent with the goals of *Achieving Excellence* for excellence, equity, well-being and public confidence, plus attention to new developments in assessment purposes, designs, implementation and use. This policy must be accompanied by a comprehensive multi-year implementation strategy, including differentiated professional learning and assessment resources.

Particular attention is required to reviewing and updating policies and practices for appropriate criterion-referenced assessment practices and linked evaluation and reporting. We are not proposing the elimination of secondary school grades, but the need to develop an appropriate and consistent criterion-referenced approach. This should connect and align with the Transformation Steering Committee's work on the wider curriculum refresh and report cards. We recommend that dedicated assessment experts are also part of this review process.

No system of assessment is perfect. Any given system will have weaknesses and unintended consequences. The goal is to establish a system that is well understood, maximizes benefits, minimizes limitations and evolves through continuous innovation and improvement. It is imperative that a continuous process of review of EQAO assessments is put in place and that research and evaluation of all aspects of the assessment system, that Ontario's students experience, is conducted including attention to impact and efficacy for students, educators and parents/guardians.

Classroom Assessments

Classroom assessments are vital to students' learning, educators' teaching, and informing parents/guardians of their child's progress. Our conclusion is the importance of prioritizing, valuing and improving classroom assessments and feedback.

We identify three key areas for improvement in classroom assessments:

- Providing differentiated professional learning and development to support implementation and understanding of a repertoire of differentiated, equitable and inclusive assessment practices;
- Making available quality assured, curriculum-linked assessment tools and resources; and
- Strengthening the use of descriptive feedback and communication of students' learning by and for students, teachers and parents/guardians.

Area for Improvement: Providing professional learning and development to support implementation and understanding of a repertoire of differentiated, equitable and culturally relevant inclusive assessment practices

Before launching the public and stakeholder consultation, we identified key assessment goals we wanted to consider as part of the Assessment Review. Participants had the opportunity to complete a survey online or at public engagement or stakeholder meetings concerning how well or poorly current classroom assessments support these goals (see Table 1 and Appendix I for summary of online survey responses). Encouragingly the majority of respondents in each of the online, stakeholder and public engagements indicated that classroom assessments provided support for:

- Improving student learning, knowledge and skills;
- Providing evidence to inform educators' professional practice;
- Enabling educators to use their professional judgement to provide meaningful feedback to students; and
- Providing a useful, effective and manageable way to track the progress of students.

However, the responses of stakeholders (school district teams invited to participate in the consultation) are of note and concern as they consistently rated the support lower than other respondents. Less than 40 per cent of stakeholder respondents considered the following goals to be supported well or very well by classroom assessments:

- Ensuring equity;
- Recognizing the culture and experience of each student;
- Minimizing undesirable effects on students' learning and well-being; and
- Providing parents/guardians with meaningful information on their child's achievement and progress.

Many participants in the consultation meetings noted that promoting well-being and equity requires classroom assessments to respect the diverse demographic and cultural needs of students. These findings require addressing in the new updated *Growing Success* policy and, more importantly, in professional learning and resources to support implementation of equitable, culturally relevant and inclusive assessment practices to support students' learning and well-being.

Classrooms have become more diverse in terms of newcomers and refugees coming to Ontario and in terms of the exceptionalities and mental health challenges children bring to the classrooms. There is a need for greater differentiated instruction and assessment to support the increased classroom diversity and improved professional learning for educators.

— Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Written Submission

Just because a group may be in minority, does not mean their concerns don't need to be addressed. We who have privilege must pay attention to which voices we are oppressing and which voices we are elevating, and we must act to reduce the marginalization. We no longer have the option to do nothing.

— District School Board Assessment Manager, Written Submission

Table 1: Review responses about classroom assessments

How well or poorly do classroom assessments support each of the following goals	% of Responses Very Well and Well			% of Responses Poorly and Very Poorly		
	Online	Stake-holder	Public	Online	Stake-holder	Public
Improving student learning, knowledge and skills	72	62	68	11	8	18
Ensuring student equity, including the unique, diverse and specific needs of all learners	64	38	54	16	23	21
Recognizing the culture and experiences of each student	56	30	42	19	33	31
Minimizing undesirable indirect effects of assessment practices on students' learning and well-being	59	30	50	18	25	24
Providing evidence to inform educators' professional practice, including instruction and assessment	71	54	67	12	14	17
Enabling educators to use their professional judgement to provide meaningful feedback to students	73	53	67	13	14	16
Providing a useful, effective and manageable way to track the progress of students	72	54	60	13	17	14
Providing parents/caregivers with meaningful information on their child's achievement and progress	66	38	57	17	26	22

Many respondents appreciated the flexibility teachers have to develop assessment practices in a way that works for their students. The use of a repertoire of assessment strategies that could be differentiated and tailored to the particular student is needed. Frequently mentioned, preferred forms of assessment, included the potential use of portfolios, pedagogical documentation, oral assessments (presentations and conversations), as well as written assessments. There continues also to be a role for more conventional approaches to the use of tests and assignments. Involving students as co-creators of assessments and engaging in self-assessment and peer assessment was supported. Many participants also support differentiated assessment that support the "whole child", including transferable skills and work habits. In *Growing Success*, student-centred assessment of learning and students' engagement and agency in self and peer-assessment are key features. This has not been fully realized in practice. The importance of student choice and voice in assessment was a major theme throughout the suggestions for improvement.

> Classroom assessment practices should be appropriately differentiated to meet the specific educational needs of all students.
>
> *— Associate Dean, Written Submission*

> Make more assessment training mandatory during B.Ed. programs. Give teachers adequate training on how to define, assess, and report on learning skills and work habits.
>
> *— Student, Online Survey*

There is strong desire for continued and increased trust in teachers' professional judgement, while also a desire to build more consistency in understanding and practices for assessments across classrooms, schools and school boards. Striking a balance between professional judgement and consistency across the education system will require careful attention. Solutions offered by participants were for professional learning and development to support educators' individual assessment knowledge, skills and practices, and collaborative learning to develop shared understanding and practices. There were calls for increased attention to effective assessment practices in Initial Teacher Education, plus continuing professional learning and development opportunities, and to assessment literacy in Principal and Supervisory Officer Qualifications Programs. There was also interest in opportunities for moderated marking and professional collaboration within and across schools, with district teams, and for educator networks across the province. As well as providing professional learning for educators, participants suggested that the Ministry and school boards could communicate the value of a range of assessments to parents/guardians and students to change mindsets about future assessment practices. There is a clear need for professional learning – and wider educative process with parents and students – to understand and use a range of assessments, particularly practices which are differentiated and appropriate for the diversity of students in Ontario's classrooms.

> From my perspective classroom assessment varies from class to class and school to school. Many teachers have embraced more progressive assessment techniques giving students both voice and choice in demonstrating their understanding. This unfortunately takes time - time to develop these assessments and manage the reporting based on the varied assessment strategies. More support and resources and updated curriculum is required to support classroom assessment.
>
> *— Teacher, Online Survey*

Area for Improvement: Making available quality assured, curriculum-linked assessment tools and resources

The key principles of *Growing Success* encourage a range of approaches to assessment to meet curriculum expectations, learning goals, and students' experiences. While there was strong support for the *Growing Success* principles, many participants – especially teachers – would appreciate examples from the Ministry of Education and/or from professional associations of what these principles actually look like in practice with examples of assessment strategies, materials and resources. Respondents were particularly interested in the availability of assessment rubrics, tools and resources that teachers could select to use if they wished. Good exemplars developed by educators should also be recognized, promoted and shared.

It was noted that teachers often develop their own assessment approach due to the lack of time or opportunity for collaboratively developing assessments with other educators and also lack of existing quality curriculum-linked assessment materials, but this is time consuming and involves many teachers individually working to develop similar resources. Francophone educators noted particular challenges for the French-language education systems, where there is a lack of specific Franco-Ontarian research and expertise to develop assessment tools and resources and there are challenges with adapting English-language resources. Participants suggested that provincial, quality assured assessments that teachers could select to use, as part of their professional judgement and practice, would be beneficial. The Educator Panel proposed the value of the Ministry of Education developing a tool or platform for providing a variety of quality assured diagnostic and formative curriculum-linked and grade related assessments that teachers could choose to use, particularly at the start of the year. The Panel noted that the availability of quality-assured assessments would be incredibly valuable to teachers, would support improvement and consistency in practices, and support classroom level monitoring of student learning and growth. Francophone consultation respondents also suggested the value of developing and providing appropriate technology-based assessment tools and resources in French.

Our conclusion is that the availability of quality-assured assessment tools and resources, embedding provincial assessment principles and linked to curriculum expectations and learning outcomes, is an important and powerful opportunity to enhance classroom assessments. The assessment tools should be combined with professional judgement to support students and educators and communication with parents/guardians.

Area for Improvement: Strengthening the use of descriptive feedback and communication of students' learning by and for students, teachers and parents/guardians

Participants overwhelmingly supported giving students and parents/guardians qualitative, descriptive feedback. In a meta-analyses of education practices that have the most impact on students' learning, the top rated practices were provision and use of feedback by teachers and students, and the development of students' meta-cognition and self-regulation to reflect on, understand and develop their own learning (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018). Both of these areas were positively supported as priorities in our Review and also seen as needing further development. There was a widespread belief that grades alone are insufficient to improve student learning or give students an accurate sense of what actions they should take to progress. Several participants noted that student self-evaluation and reflection is an important reporting tool that can improve student learning.

> The majority of participants supported parent, student and teacher conferences as the most useful form of reporting. There was also a strong interest in ongoing informal communication with parents/guardians to report student progress and provide feedback. Many parents/guardians, administrators and teachers were supportive of communication with parents/guardians through daily journals, occasional emails and phone calls to provide feedback.

Some school boards have moved to board-wide policies for online updates to parents/guardians and to use of students' digital portfolios; these were highly valued. We heard interesting approaches involving SMART televisions, apps, and online platforms. However, not all school boards have these resources currently and some educators expressed reservations about online communication, especially for younger students. The need for practical approaches that were mindful of early childhood educators'/teachers' and parent/guardians' time was also expressed.



Proposals for Improving Classroom Assessments and Reporting

It is important to recognize that classroom assessments and effective feedback are part of students' day-to-day learning. We propose the priority need to resource and provide a comprehensive, multi-year range of professional learning and development to support understanding and implementation of a range of appropriate and effective approaches to assessment. The further development of assessment literacy – the ability to identify, select and/or create assessments that are optimal for their purpose and the ability to analyze, understand and use evidence from assessments – is vital across the Ontario education system. Particular attention is required to creating assessment practices that recognize the diversity of students and can be differentiated to their unique needs. Developing assessment knowledge, skills and practices requires focused attention at all stages of an educators' career, beginning in Initial Teacher Education, and at all levels of the education system, including Principal and Supervisory Officer Qualifications Programs and continuing professional learning for early childhood educators, teachers, school and system leaders.

Developing professional judgement and expertise in the use of assessments is central to the proposed System of Student Assessment. Our focus is not only on the development of individuals – there is a need for collective development, including opportunities for educators to collaborate within and across schools and for school district teams bringing together professionals to develop collaboratively shared understanding and approaches to assessment policies and practices. Teacher moderation is a powerful learning, teaching and assessment strategy which requires dedicated resources and support. We propose developing opportunities for early childhood educators and teachers to collaborate within and across classrooms. We propose facilitating learning teams involving district and school administrators, teachers and early childhood educators to develop assessment practices for each school board collaboratively to support a shared understanding and clear approaches, consistent with PPM 159 Collaborative Professionalism. We also propose that the Ministry of Education fund the development of a province-wide educator network to co-create and share assessment materials, strategies and practices.

While educator-created and led professional learning and judgement are vital, there is need also to make available quality-assured assessment tools and resources. We propose that the Ministry of Education and professional associations should co-develop exemplars, materials and resources demonstrating effective assessment and evaluation practices by grade and curriculum expectations, taking into account the requirements of PPM 155 for teacher professional judgement. We support the suggestion to establish evidence-informed, curriculum-linked online assessments that educators can select to use as part of their diagnostic and formative assessment practices during the school year.

The further development of meaningful feedback to students and also to parents/guardians is required. Opportunities to research and share the existing range of effective approaches to student-parent-teacher conferences, regular communication and growing use of online sharing of students' work and progress should be explored. In addition, a proposed review and updating of Report Cards is being led by the Transformation Steering Committee. Although the Assessment Review did not specifically seek to investigate report cards, they were frequently mentioned as a main source of reporting to parents/guardians and there is interest in improving the process and content of report cards. We encourage the Transformation Steering Committee to continue to consider future report cards as part of their work going forward.

Large-scale Assessments

The topic of large-scale assessment, specifically the role of the EQAO agency and the purpose, design, use, reporting and consequences of EQAO assessments generated high interest and contention throughout the Review. The EQAO itself has already recognized, and is acting on, the need to modernize its operations and assessments. Our conclusion is that it is time to clarify the purposes and transform the use of large-scale assessments in Ontario.

We identify five areas for improving large-scale assessments:

- Strengthening the effective use of the EDI
- Clarifying and renewing the role of the EQAO agency
- Reforming the design and administration of EQAO assessments
- Transforming EQAO reporting
- Developing educator, parental and public understanding of the appropriate use of large-scale assessment data and reports.

Area for Improvement: Strengthening the effective use of the EDI

The EDI measures the physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, communication skills and general knowledge of children in Kindergarten. The EDI has been used in Ontario since 2003/2004 when the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) sponsored its implementation on a three-year cyclical basis. Most publicly funded school boards participated in each full provincial collection. The Ministry of Education sponsored the EDI in 2014-2015. In that cycle, the fourth, data collection took place entirely in a single school year.

As Ontario's participation in the EDI continues there is a need to integrate the EDI within the assessment policies of the Ministry of Education and to support understanding and effective use of the EDI results within school boards. In British Columbia (BC), for example, there has been considerable attention to developing provincial and local capacity in the use of the EDI. By reducing high levels of vulnerabilities in the BC Kindergarten population, a heightened community ownership and collaborative commitment resulted in local programs bringing about positive change for young children and their families (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2009).

In Australia, the EDI was adapted into the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), which allows vulnerabilities to be pinpointed by schools and communities at the local level so they may work together to offer the services, resources and support for families to help shape the future and well-being of children, including improvements in children's language and cognitive skills (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015). In both BC and Australia, the collection and provision of early development data enables supports and services to be designed for families and young children where and when they are most needed. We conclude that there is a need to integrate the EDI further into Ontario's assessment policies and practices and to increase understanding and use of this data at the provincial, district and school levels. This will provide valuable information for early childhood development and transitions from early years to primary schooling and support decision-making for improvement priorities and resource allocation.

Area for Improvement: Clarifying and renewing the role of the EQAO agency

The EQAO is recognized nationally and internationally as having world-class psychometric expertise in large-scale assessments (Wolfe, Childs & Elgie, 2004: Directions, 2018), and has influenced Ontario's education policies and practices, for example an emphasis on literacy and numeracy achievement and the performance of sub-groups of students, schools, school boards and the overall province. Nevertheless, within Ontario, EQAO has a very mixed perception publicly and among educators, students and parents/guardians. While we heard support for the work of the EQAO; we also heard extensive criticism of the EQAO and related assessments during the consultations. We heard comments ranging from "abolish EQAO" to "you will not undo EQAO" during the Review. In discussions with an Assessment Think Tank, composed of assessment experts from Ontario and across North America, one participant commented that "EQAO was attempting to become all things to all people" and this was highly problematic; instead the participant proposed one or two core purposes should be agreed and done exceptionally well.

Many Review participants felt that the purpose of the EQAO had changed since its implementation 22 years ago, and was no longer well understood. In 1995, the Royal Commission on Learning recommended initiating large-scale provincial assessments of literacy and numeracy in Grade 3 and of literacy in Grade 11 to be administered by a proposed Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability which would provide reports to the Minister of Education and to the public about provide-wide data on student achievement overall and for sub-groups of students, according to gender, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. The recommendations resulted in the establishment of the EQAO as a Crown agency through the *Education Quality and Accountability Office Act*, 1996 with seven main objects (see Figure F). In rapid succession, a set of new large-scale assessments were implemented in Ontario with the introduction of Grade 3 reading, writing and mathematics assessments in 1996-97, Grade 6 reading, writing and mathematics assessments in 1998-99, Grade 9 mathematics assessments in 2000-2001, and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in 2002.

Figure F: *Education Quality and Accountability Office Act*, 1996 Objects

The Education Quality and Accountability Office has the following objects:

1. To evaluate the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education.
2. To develop tests and require or undertake the administering and marking of tests of pupils in elementary and secondary schools.
3. To develop systems for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education.
4. To research and collect information on assessing academic achievement.
5. To evaluate the public accountability of boards and to collect information on strategies for improving that accountability.
6. To report to the public and to the Minister on the results of tests and generally on the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education and on the public accountability of boards.
7. To make recommendations, in its reports to the public and to the Minister, on any matter related to the quality or effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education or to the public accountability of boards. 1996, c. 11, s. 3; 017, c. 34, Sched. 46, s. 12 (2).

The lack of clarity about the purpose of the EQAO as a Crown agency and about related assessments is not new. Early in the implementation of the new EQAO assessments, Earl and Torrance (2000) observed challenges of fulfilling the EQAO's desire to support improvement within the education system and also provide external accountability to the public. As part of an Ensuring Quality Assessments review conducted by the EQAO during 2002-2004, a report commissioned from OISE came to the following conclusion:

> Finding 1. The assessment programs have been asked to serve a myriad of purposes. EQAO has tried to accommodate these purposes. However, because it is impossible to design an assessment program to meet diverse purposes, the proliferation of purposes may compromise how well EQAO's assessments can accomplish any one of them.
>
> *(Wolfe, Childs & Elgie, 2004, p. 5).*

Fourteen years later, our Assessment Review has reached the same conclusion.

With regard to the Crown agency, EQAO, current practices vary from both the aspirations of the Royal Commission on Learning and from the objects of the *EQAO Act*. While the EQAO has wanted and attempted to introduce quality indicators and a broader range of evidence and research; in practice, their role has become primarily focused on objects 2 and 6 of the *EQAO Act*, the development, administering and marking of provincial tests, and related reporting. On

the one hand, the activities of the EQAO are focused on "quality and accountability", as primarily concentrated on provincial assessments; on the other hand, the purpose and reporting of those assessments has expanded considerably from the Royal Commission's recommendations of assessment of key learning outcomes at one grade in elementary and one grade in secondary. There has also been expansion of reporting beyond the *EQAO Act*'s requirements only for reports to the Minister and the public. As forewarned fourteen years ago by the OISE team, "there has been 'mandate spread'" (Wolfe, Childs & Elgie, 2004, p. 7).

Our conclusion is that for the EQAO to provide provincial leadership in providing independent scrutiny of the Ontario education system to inform system accountability and public assurance; the EQAO itself has to hold the public's confidence in their leadership, role and work. EQAO assessments have been central to education strategies. It is time now, however, to update EQAO's role with important responsibilities to contribute to future educational improvements. Moving forward, we propose that the purpose of EQAO is focused on being a leader in provincial large-scale assessments and related evidence, research and reporting. Several participants in the Review also suggested it was time to consider a re-naming and re-launching of the EQAO to focus its future role and purposes; we agree.

Area for Improvement: Reforming the design and administration of EQAO assessments

A strong consensus emerged in the public consultations, stakeholder engagement sessions and written submissions about the need for changes to current EQAO assessments. A very small minority of participants indicated that the EQAO assessments should remain as they currently are. Participants were invited to rate the extent to which EQAO was serving very well/well or poorly/very poorly several potential goals for large-scale assessment (see Table 2). Table 2 provides the percentage of responses by form of engagement - online survey, stakeholder session, or public engagement session. Respondents could also select "neutral" or "don't know", the full data is available in Appendix I.



Table 2: Review respondents' views on EQAO assessments

How well or poorly do EQAO assessments support each of the following goals	% of Responses Very Well and Well			% of Responses Poorly and Very Poorly		
	Online	Stake-holder	Public	Online	Stake-holder	Public
Improving student learning, knowledge and skills	8	26	15	76	42	73
Ensuring student equity, including the unique, diverse and specific needs of all learners	6	8	6	84	70	74
Recognizing the culture and experiences of each student	5	4	2	83	73	78
Minimizing undesirable indirect effects of assessment practices on students' learning and well-being	6	4	7	83	68	80
Providing evidence to inform educators' professional practice, including instruction and assessment	14	46	22	65	20	59
Providing a useful, effective and manageable way to track the progress of students	13	36	12	75	32	69
Providing evidence to inform policies and prioritiy actions by schools, school boards and the government to support improvements for all students and for students requiring additional support	13	46	16	70	21	65
Providing independent scrutiny and accountability to report to the public on the performance and quality of schools, school boards and the overall Ontario publicly funded education system	12	32	20	73	46	61

The survey findings are highly concerning. EQAO assessments were not considered to be doing "well" or "very well" for any of the proposed goals by the majority of respondents for any of the online, stakeholder or public sessions. The main goals which EQAO were considered to be supporting very well/well by almost half (46 per cent) of stakeholder engagement respondents were:

- Providing evidence to inform educators' professional practice, including instruction and assessment
- Providing evidence to inform policies and priority actions by schools, school boards and the government to support improvements for all students and for students requiring additional supports.

Less than a third of all respondents (32 per cent of stakeholders, 20 per cent of public respondents, and 12 per cent of online respondents) reported that EQAO was supporting the goal of "providing independent scrutiny and accountability" well or very well; yet, this was a fundamental founding purpose for the establishment of EQAO. The responses to goals where EQAO is performing "poorly" or "very poorly" are very high in the online responses and in the public engagement sessions. While the stakeholder responses are not as negative for some items, the overall pattern is one of respondents indicating EQAO assessments are "poorly/very poorly" supporting goals. Across all three respondent groups (online, stakeholder, and the public), the top three goals where EQAO was considered to be "poorly" or "very poorly" in providing support were:

- Ensuring student equity;
- Recognizing the culture and experiences of each student;
- Minimizing the undesirable indirect effects of assessment on students' learning and well-being.

As part of their modernization, EQAO have made a priority commitment to supporting equity and inclusion. Notably, these are the same goals where classroom assessments were also reported to be poor/very poor in providing support. This re-enforces the need to develop an overall K-12 System of Student Assessment with improvements in classroom and large-scale assessments.

While there was a broad consensus about the need to change EQAO assessments; there was not a consensus on the details of change. We discuss the following areas for consideration and improvement:

1. What is assessed?
2. When do assessments take place?
3. Who is assessed?
4. How are assessments conducted?

What is assessed? Identifying key knowledge, skills and competences

The Royal Commission on Learning (1995) recommended the development of literacy and numeracy tests. However, their focus was broader in terms of students demonstrating knowledge and key skills as they progressed in and beyond schooling. For what became the OSSLT, the Royal Commission had recommended an assessment to demonstrate: "that no high school graduate is incapable of reading and writing well enough to communicate in a post-secondary classroom, on

the job, or in order to meet the demands of everyday life as a citizen and voter" (vol. 2, p. 151). Wilson's (2003) review of the OSSLT suggested that it had combined a focus on "functional literacy" applied to the real world with the Ontario curriculum requirements. However, in our Review, the majority of participants considered the current content and the format of the OSSLT, for example students being required to write a three paragraph report, was outdated to the multiple literacies and skills required for success in and beyond school.

Combining curricular expectations, subject knowledge, and demonstration of skills and competences is a key concern in assessment design. In our Review, we continued to hear support for the importance of literacy and numeracy as foundational knowledge and skills, especially in elementary schooling. Having literate and numerate high school graduates of course remains a priority. Individual contributors to the consultation advocated for other subjects to be included also, for example science, arts or physical education. More predominantly, there is interest in assessing what is more commonly referred to as transferable skills, including critical thinking, innovation and creativity, self-directed learning, collaboration, communication and citizenship, particularly to support post-secondary school destinations, a highly skilled workforce and contributing citizens. We did, however, hear concerns from special education communities about the suitability of assessing transferable skills for all students, particularly those with specific learning needs. It is important that the demonstration of skills is integrated appropriately and inclusively into assessments. The importance of attention to students' well-being was also noted.

> If students have difficulty in these areas (transferable skills), based on their exceptionality [...] Is it fair to mark students on the basis of these skills? It may be something to strive toward an emphasis of, but we need to ensure that we are supporting students to develop the skills if they don't inherently have them and in a way that does not look like a character flaw based on the student's profile.
>
> *— Chair, Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE), Written Submission*

> The province should be measuring student's global competencies as well as the basics of literacy and numeracy. How well do they understand how to use their critical thinking and analysis skills to go beyond the superficial, especially with regard to internet content? Can they detect fake news? How are their citizenship skills developing? What is their level of well-being and how can schools improve it?
>
> *— Trustee, Regional Session*

The question of what knowledge, skills and/or competences are important also includes consideration of what to assess and for what purpose. Large-scale assessments are to provide a system-wide snapshot of independent evidence about student achievement and related outcomes. Therefore, not all curricular areas should be included in provincial large-scale assessments. The question is what are the knowledge, skills and/or competences we aspire for our students to have

achieved before the end of elementary and secondary schooling and which of these are essential to be assessed and reported at the system-level. These are key questions for the Curriculum Refresh. With the opportunity to align curriculum reform and assessment redesign, there are many interesting possibilities to re-consider whether large-scale assessments are about assessing achievement against levels (as currently in Ontario) or moving to cross-curricular skills (as British Columbia is currently proposing) or demonstration of performance tasks (as in Victoria, Australia for example) or progress over time requiring vertical curriculum and assessment alignment (as developed in England).

Our conclusion is that the question of "what" should be assessed in future provincial large-scale assessments needs to be considered and aligned with the Curriculum Refresh, planned over the next three to five years, and with input from the Transformation Steering Committee and engagement with students, parents/guardians, employers, universities, colleges, and the public.

When do assessments take place? Timing appropriate large-scale assessment snapshots

There were many calls from participants to revisit the grades in which assessments were administered. In particular, concerns were expressed about testing students in Grade 3 for educational reasons concerning whether this was an appropriate age to begin use of large-scale assessments, for concerns about well-being and anxiety for children, and because in Grade 3 the key assessments should be diagnostic and formative which is the role of classroom assessments not large-scale assessments. Research indicates that children's metacognitive processes for participating in tests develop over time. For example, in a study of 9 and 11 year olds, the 11 year olds displayed more developed metacognitive processes to know the difference between correct and incorrect answers in a test and in their capacity to return to review answers and change them from incorrect to correct answers contributing to higher test performance for the older children (Roebers, Krebs & Roderer, 2014). There were calls for an end to provincial assessment in the primary division. The Educator Panel advised that the earliest EQAO assessments should begin was Grade 6. However, there were also concerns to ensure that early identification of struggling learners and students in need of additional support existed. The current Grade 3 assessment, however, is not designed as a diagnostic tool for individual students. The reporting of results happens in the school year following the administering of the assessment, i.e. students have moved into Grade 4 by the time their previous Grade 3 assessments are being reported, which means the Grade 3 teacher, students and parents/guardians are not receiving prompt feedback. In our proposed System of Assessment, system-level early assessments should focus on the use of the EDI to monitor overall developmental strengths and needs for children in the province and school boards. For day-to-day diagnostic assessments, strengthening quality classroom assessments is the priority to ensure real time feedback to students, for use by educators and to inform parents/guardians.

In our Review, concerns were expressed about large-scale assessments conducted in Grade 9. The initial rationale for introducing Grade 9 mathematics assessments in 2000-01 was to assess implementation of the (then) new mathematics curriculum. In the consultation, the concern was about having a large-scale assessment in the first year of secondary school – a time of transition and change for students – and there was a strong view that Grade 9 was not appropriate. Also, students commented that Grade 9 is the first time they write end of semester exams and some of the Educator Panel members noted that the EQAO Grade 9 exam occurs one week prior to end of semester classroom exams; this potentially results in the majority of a student's grade being determined in the last couple of weeks of the semester. Potential changes in Grade 9 courses are also being considered by the Transformation Steering Committee. For the Grade 6 assessments and the OSSLT, the responses were less about the specific grade and more about the design and experience of participating in the assessment.

In the public and stakeholder engagement sessions, in our conversations with the Educator Panel and in advice from a Think Tank with assessment experts, we heard a wide range of views on what the appropriate grades to be assessed were or could be. Some respondents proposed continuing Grade 3, 6, 9 and OSSLT to enable sustained longitudinal data and cohort analyses. However, in the context of a Curriculum Refresh and the EQAO's plans for modernization of the assessments, the assessments will be changing and that already has implications for consistency of data over time. Our view is that now is the time for an aligned curriculum refresh and assessment redesign.

We asked assessment experts for specific advice on grades and the response was that existing grade decisions tend to be more by tradition or convention around key stages or transitions in schooling rather than clear evidence of which particular grades are the most developmentally and psychometrically appropriate. We conducted an inter-jurisdictional scan of large-scale assessment practices across Canada and in other countries. Large-scale assessments are being used for every grade level. Generally, in Canada, there are assessments at specific grades in primary and/or junior and/or intermediate and secondary school. In Saskatchewan, however, the emphasis is on a Grade 12 assessment. A pattern of select grades at key stages in schooling is common internationally. In the USA, students are assessed in each grade from Grade 3 through to 8, plus further assessments. By contrast, in some countries, large-scale assessments are towards the end of schooling for example, Singapore has a Primary School Leaving Exam and Finland administers a high school matriculation exam.

Some members of the Educator Panel suggested moving assessments towards the end of elementary schooling (early in Grade 8), although this timing may not be appropriate for all schools and school boards. Our analysis of current[2] school grade configurations in Ontario indicates that the JK-8 is the predominant form of elementary schooling (2,519 schools). However, there are 839 JK-6 schools and 12 District School Boards where JK-6 is the main form of elementary schooling. If the assessments were to move to Grade 7 or 8, a significant number of elementary schools would be excluded. For secondary schooling, Grade 9-12 schools continue to be the majority of school

[2] 2015-16 data from Ontario School Information System (OnSIS) provided by Ministry of Education

types. The Educator Panel suggested also moving to a Grade 12 final exam, but responses from secondary school teachers suggested that Grade 12 is already a full and stressful year for students and proposed that Grade 11 or 10 would be more appropriate.

Within grades, a major theme was the possibility for more flexibility of timing with the potential for teacher choice of when best to administer the assessments linked to students' readiness, within an assessment window. Members of the Educator Panel suggested that holding assessments towards the start of the school year would relieve teachers of the pressure to "teach to the test" throughout the year. Other participants suggested moving assessments fully to the end of the year so that teaching of the curriculum for that grade is complete. There are jurisdictions, like British Columbia, where large-scale assessment takes place earlier in the year and some jurisdictions have no set day (e.g. New Hampshire) or a flexible time period for their standardized assessments over the school year (e.g. Scotland). The idea of moving to having several small tests or modules over the year rather than one large test was also suggested.

Holding the OSSLT on one specific date is highly problematic; students who are not able to participate on the specific date are affected in their ability to fulfil graduation requirements. While this applies to all students, students who are in transient or in vulnerable situations, students in Section 23 schools, and students with medical conditions or in hospital schools are particularly adversely affected. No assessment that carries stakes for a student's progression, graduation and success should only be offered on one day of each school year. Our conclusion is that it is worth considering flexibility in the timing of the assessments.

The evidence from our review of research and the range of perspectives we heard from our consultation, leads us to the following two certainties that:

- The appropriate grade for large-scale assessment depends on the intended purpose of that assessment; and
- Large scale assessments should maximize the benefits of improvements for systems and minimize negative disruption for students, educators and parents/guardians.

Our conclusion is that the purpose of EQAO assessments should be consistent with the existing definition of large-scale assessments agreed in *Growing Success*: administered at key summative stages in elementary and secondary schooling for system level reporting and use. Taking all evidence and suggestions into consideration, Grades 6 and 10 continue to be reasonable grades for large-scale assessment.

Who is assessed? Ensuring appropriate assessments for diverse students

Another recurrent theme was advocacy for a move to random sampling (only a sample of students to participate in assessments) rather than the current practice of a census (all students participate in assessments, except those officially exempted). Random sampling was proposed to be effective to provide a snapshot of the overall performance of the province (but not of individual students, schools or boards), to be less stressful and to reduce costs. We also heard evidence for maintaining a census approach to enable disaggregation of data and analyses of sub-groups of students

to identify inequities in educational achievement. In the review of research commissioned to support the Assessment Review, we requested that the pros and cons of sampling versus census be investigated and explained. Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group (2018) concluded that a census was essential to ensuring the Ontario government's commitment to reach every student was supported and to monitoring and improving equity for students and the education system.

Excerpts from the Directions (2018) report include:

> **Ontario, similar to other provincial education systems, has begun to create systems that enable the collection and analysis of data about students at different points in their educational careers. One advantage of such systems is that they permit analyses that have the capacity to identify factors over which the system exerts influence that facilitate or impede educational progress of identifiable groups of learners (for example, FNMI (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit), second language learners, students with special needs, etc.). (p. 60)**

> **Sampling students is inadequate if one is concerned about equity among groups, that is, if one wants to determine whether the gaps among students have diminished over time or been eliminated. There are several reasons for this. First, no matter how carefully samples are drawn, there will be changes to the composition of the student population as a consequence of in and out migration of students that cannot be accounted for by the sampling procedure, invalidating comparisons over time. A second problem with sampling with regard to equity is that even with carefully drawn samples, there will sub-populations of students that may be undetected or too small to support meaningful judgements. For the purpose of improving equity, sampling will not accomplish the intended purpose of providing useful information about the performance of groups of students from one-time point to another and, as a consequence, sampling will not produce the benefits even for the reduced cost. (p. 61)**

> **[Premier] Wynne's desire to see improvement among the many categories of students who might potentially be at risk ("recent immigrants, children from low-income families, Aboriginal (Indigenous) students, boys, and students with special education") complicates the sampling problem even further. In order to ensure that the above named categories of potentially at risk students were adequately represented in the sample, the sample sizes would approach the size of the population, complicating the exercise and likely increasing costs dramatically. (p. 64).**

The evidence demonstrates that a move from census to sampling would reduce the ability to identify factors that impede the success for every student, as well as monitor improvement among sub-groups of students who might potentially be at risk, and would be complex to implement. Sampling is not realistic for the Franco-Ontarian education systems due to small population size if results for each system were to be reported. A concern with random sampling is that even with carefully developed samples, there will be sub-population of students (for example, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, second language learners, francophone, students with special needs, children in care – including Crown wards, students living in rural communities) that become too small to enable analyses by

sub-group. Without data to identify and assess the extent of issues facing students from diverse communities, backgrounds, and identities, the issues may go unacknowledged and unaddressed. With data, educators locally and provincially are in a better position to identify, monitor and eliminate gaps between groups of students in opportunities and outcomes. It is through the disaggregation of the data that sub-populations of students can be considered and systemic barriers may be identified (e.g. currently for Black students) (Quan and James, 2017). Through the continued collection of census data, Ontario is in a much better position to support and demonstrate progress in alignment with Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan, Ontario's Black Youth's Action Plan, Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan and the Indigenous Education Strategy.

However, substantial changes in the design and administration of EQAO assessments are required to ensure that they are inclusive of the cultural, linguistic, social, racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, religious, and geographical diversity of Ontario's students. Although EQAO uses a process of item development and sensitivity checking to ensure test items are inclusive and relevant, serious concerns were expressed in the consultation about cultural, linguistic, geographical and socioeconomic biases within EQAO assessments that can hinder the success of certain student populations. In particular, special education needs, English or French language learners, racialized students, newcomers, students experiencing poverty, Indigenous learners, and students living in northern, rural and remote communities were identified as groups where EQAO test items required further adaptation. Additionally, educators from French immersion schools requested that their students be able to select whether or not to take EQAO assessments in French.

> [We recommend] that the Education Quality and Accountability Office examine more deeply areas where students are having difficulty with the test process and introduce changes in content and references that eliminate cultural bias for students including reference that present barriers for newcomer students, First Nation students, rural versus urban students, and students in low socio-economic circumstances.
>
> *— President and Executive Director, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA), Written Submission*

There is a need also to review appropriate processes for officially exempting students from EQAO assessments. In the Review, there were mixed views on eligibility for exemptions and the criteria for exemptions from EQAO assessments; the main concerns were for students with Individual Education Plans and newcomers to Canada who were English/French language learners during the first year after arrival, and for Indigenous students in their first year transferring into the publicly funded, provincial school system. Exemptions are currently provided to students who are unable to participate in part or all of an assessment even with accommodations or special provisions – this includes students with special needs and those attending schools where English/French is their second language. Exemption decision must be made for each student individually and in consultation with the student, parents, and appropriate teaching staff, and with the consent of parents (EQAO *Administration and Accommodation Guide*, 2017). An update to the criteria and processes for official exemptions should include a process where teachers, parents/guardians and students consider what is best for the student and determine jointly whether the student should be exempted from the assessment or not.

A particular issue is that some EQAO results and reports are based on all students who are eligible to participate in the assessment, including students who are exempted or absent who receive zeros (reflected in the report for all students not in the one for participating students). Issues with this practice were also identified by the Auditor General's 2009 review of EQAO. It is time to re-consider processes for exemptions and also for ensuring results reported are based on those students who actually participate in the assessment. Currently, EQAO provides separate reports for 'all students' as well as for 'participating students' in the public reports for each school. Our conclusion is that in future, only results for 'participating students' should be included in public reports.

> For students with special education needs who do participate in large group standardized assessments, it's imperative that they receive accommodations that they are comfortable using, based on their Individual Education Plans.
>
> *— Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario for the Provincial Parent Association Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committees, Written Submission*

How are assessments conducted? Transforming the assessment experience for students

For all of the current assessments (Grades 3, 6, 9 and OSSLT), the design and experience of the assessment were considered to be very different from students' regular learning environments and experiences. As everyday teaching and learning moves to differentiated instruction, collaboration, feedback, conversation, use of technology and other resources to support learning; the continued experience of a paper-and-pencil EQAO assessment which students take individually, in silence and without access to use learning resources that are familiar to them in their daily learning was considered outdated and inappropriate. There were many suggestions about needing to make EQAO assessments more similar to students' learning experiences and environments in classrooms. It was widely expressed that the current practice of removing materials from classroom walls on EQAO assessment days should stop.

> There was a lot of interest in increasing student voice and choice in terms of a wider range of questions/items to select from in the assessments and for availability of different formats of assessment, including opportunities for oral communication and for use of portfolios.

> Innovative learning supports derived from new and more accessible and performing technologies have an effect on teaching practices and enable access to cutting-edge assessment tools. Whereas paper alone was used, today's assessment tools, such as portfolios, journals and learning logs toname but a few, can be technology-based.
>
> *— Executive Director and Treasurer, Conseil ontarien des directrices et des directeurs de l'éducatrion de langue française (CODELF), Written Submission*

Overall, there is a strong interest in the possibilities of online digital technologies for future assessment redesign. Web-based tests (WBTs) are available on any computer with browser software (internet capability) and assess students with tasks or questions (including closed and constructed responses) associated with various types of stimuli (print, audio, video). The students' responses can typically be scored immediately and results and feedback about performance can be provided during or immediately after the testing session. Since WBTs are available online and use a single platform, WBTs are often less costly to administer and score than paper-based assessments, and test taking can be more flexible with respect to timing (Buchanan, 2002). In a review of assessment research literature commissioned for this Review, Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group (2018) summarized the potential benefits of online testing, including:

- Efficiency: reduced time for test preparation, administration, data entry, scoring, and reporting
- Reliability: data management is more efficient and accurate than with paper-based tests; no loss of data due to incorrect data entry or lost testing materials
- Flexibility: "anytime, anywhere" access
- Integrated functions: for educators and education systems, testing can be complemented with other functions such as storing results, tracking performance over time, integrating the testing data with other information, etc.
- Potential cost savings: potential savings include printing, delivery, storage, disposal, hardware (scanning), data entry, administration, and scoring costs. (pp. 66 – 67).

The key issue is that moving to online testing is not simply placing existing testing formats into an online medium; it is important to design assessments specifically to harness the potential and power of digital learning technologies. An online format should be adaptive to students' performance and able to vary both the level of difficulty of questions based on student responses and the quantity of items to which a student has to respond to have sufficient responses for test validity. In practice, students generally have to complete fewer test items, reducing time spent on assessments.

> In light of the shift toward digitization and the emergence of technology as support for learning in schools, research should be undertaken to determine how technology should be used in EQAO assessment programs.
>
> *— Directeur général et secrétaire trésorier, Conseil ontarien des directrices et des directeurs de l'éducation de langue française (CODELF), Written Submission*

> Use adaptive testing techniques that will adjust to learner skill demonstrations and provide immediate feedback. Assessment items need to have choice of items and passages that reflect the diverse learners across the province.
>
> *— Assessment Lead, District School Board, Written Submission*

In a paper prepared by the EQAO in response to the Assessment Review, EQAO set out future guiding principles for the potential benefits of modernization, including digitalizing provincial assessments and providing more flexibility to schedule and deliver them (EQAO, 2017). We support EQAO's move to use of technology to enhance students' experiences when participating in assessments. While EQAO has not previously developed computer adaptive tests, there are examples of the use of digital and adaptive technologies by other organizations in Ontario, for example the work of TelevisionOntario (TVO) in online and adaptive learning and university-based projects developing such assessment technologies. Our conclusion is that investigating the potential of online and adaptive testing is a priority to meet the needs of current and future students.

However, it is not advisable to move fully online for all assessments and all students simultaneously, consideration should be given to data security, and the school community's access to broadband. Online assessments may not best serve some students' needs. As with all assessments, the format should be differentiated to meet students' needs for accommodations and/or modifications linked to special educational needs, and/or English or French language learners, and a range of assessment types may be needed, including paper and pencil. It was regularly raised that students who have different accommodations all year long should receive similar accommodations for the test. It was suggested that a more personalized adaptation for students with Individual Education Plans should be allowed to ensure that the experience of assessments is supportive of their well-being and provides an opportunity to show their potential.

> Technology may provide new and varied ways that students with special education needs can participate in the expanded learning environment, and a crucial component of assessment will be to understand how well the technology meets the needs of all students. Access to technology use is important for universal design for learning and assessment. Currently there are many students with special education needs who are not even able to access the Ontario curriculum because they have been denied access to technology.
>
> *— Co-chair, Provincial Parent Association Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committees (PAAC on SEAC), Written Submission*

As well as enhancing future assessment design, it is important to address proactively and intentionally current negative consequences of large-scale assessment experiences for students. Major concerns and issues were identified in our Review about the pervasive impact of "test preparation" for students' learning and well-being. While ensuring students are familiar with the expectations of a test in advance is important; extensive test preparation is not good practice. Research indicates that extensive test preparation can actually undermine learning as students focus on the procedures of the assessment format rather than the knowledge or skills to be learned (e.g. Blazer and Pollard, 2017, Decker and Bolt, 2008). We heard anecdotes of Kindergarten children practicing filling in "bubbles" (multiple choice response boxes) in preparation for Grade 3 EQAO assessments, of preparation for the EQAO assessments beginning in September of the year of the assessment, of teachers' teaching becoming predominantly focused on the upcoming

assessments in Grades 3, 6, 9 and 10, and saw examples of secondary school welcome videos for current Grade 8 students that focused exclusively on preparation for the Grade 9 assessments and OSSLT. Large-scale assessments that were intended to be snapshots at key points in elementary and secondary have become extensive in their influence on teaching, learning and student experience from Kindergarten through to secondary school. These negative consequences must be addressed and prevented in the future.

Area for Improvement: Transforming EQAO reporting

> As a parent, [I] want to empower teachers to have control over classroom assessment, but also embrace [an] era of open data [with] public access to school specific, standardized data with important contextual info to frame results (e.g. anon tracking info for cohort, demographics).
>
> *— Parent, Written Submission*

Moving forward, as the curriculum is refreshed and correspondingly provincial assessments are redesigned, it is necessary also to transform EQAO reporting. Most respondents in the public and stakeholder consultations saw a purpose for a system-wide report about the performance of the Ontario education system. It was noted that contextual data would be helpful to provide a fuller picture of the context and performance of Ontario's students and overall education system. Disaggregated data to examine equity of outcomes for different student groups was also considered important. The use of cohort analyses was viewed as useful to show trends over time. There was interest in use of the attitudinal surveys administered by the EQAO to consider a wider range of factors about students and their learning.

There were significant concerns about the publication of school-level reports, especially if they are misused for competitive and ranking purposes. Participants proposed eliminating the publication of school reports by EQAO. Some participants considered only Board and provincial reports should exist; while some thought there should only be a provincial report. The use of individual student reports divided opinion. Many parents/guardians seek information about their child, yet there were concerns about the suitability of reporting on large-scale assessments. For some participants, student reports were the most useful part of EQAO assessments; although these reports were requested to be provided more quickly to be of use. The use of technology could enhance the speed of feedback to students.

Initially, we considered recommending only a provincial-level report consistent with the purpose of a system-level large-scale summative assessment. However, Ontario's position on data is for it to be open by default, meaning that all the data it creates, collects, or manages will be publicly available, unless it cannot do so for legal, privacy, security or commercially-sensitive reasons (please see Appendix J - Open Data and Freedom of Information). In practice, in a context of commitments to transparency, open access to data, and Freedom of Information, it is not feasible to withhold data fully from public use. If there is a vacuum in public information, yet the data is available to be used by any organization; this opens up scope for inappropriate use or misinterpretation of the data.

Additionally, there is value to the education system in having school board and school level data. These data allow for the Ministry, school boards and schools to identify priorities, inform improvement plans and decisions for resource allocation. An alternative to ending public reporting, therefore, is to improve appropriate reporting that seeks to minimize negative consequences for students, schools and communities. Transparency with safeguards is more realistic than secrecy.

Participants were interested in receiving information on the appropriate use of EQAO data and on reports including contextual information and a wider range of data and evidence concerning schools, school boards and the province. We agree with a modernization plan for EQAO to develop their research agenda further. At present, as EQAO mainly reports on assessment results, for example a Grade 3 and 6 provincial report, a Grade 9 report, and an OSSLT report, there is no overarching system report. One participant in the review noted that, "it gives the impression that 'quality' is only measured by student achievement tests". This was never the original vision for EQAO, rather it included a broader range of quality indicators; we support the collation of a range of research and data to present the performance, context and progress of the overall provincial education system. Our conclusion is the need for careful attention to the presentation, contextualization and explanation of EQAO data in reports published. Researchers should also be encouraged to use provincial data appropriately to provide depth of investigation on topics of concern.

Area for Improvement: Developing educator, parental and public understanding of the appropriate use of large-scale assessment data and reports

There is a clear need for the EQAO and the government to communicate, explain and develop understanding of the appropriate uses – and to speak out strongly against inappropriate uses – of large-scale assessment data. The future culture of assessment in Ontario that we propose requires developing understanding of the appropriate (and inappropriate) uses of large-scale assessment data both within the education sector and by/for parents and the wider public.

> Inappropriate interpretations made based on EQAO results challenges the test's validity. We recommend that, moving forward, EQAO attends to the appropriate definition of validity by ensuring that the design of the test and the results available cannot be misinterpreted or misused.
>
> *— Executive Director, People for Education, Written Submission*

> Efforts are needed to increase understanding that EQAO results are only a snapshot.
>
> *— President and Executive Director, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA), Written Submission*

> The language surrounding EQAO results should be written using more student-friendly and parent-friendly language.
>
> *— Co-chairs, Provincial Parent Associations Advisory Committee (PAaC) on Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Written Submission*

Within the education sector, over time, the EQAO has expanded the range of reports and data available to schools; however, caution needs to be exerted in attempting to use large-scale data for instructional decisions or for formative or evaluative purposes with individual students. Large-scale assessment is not designed for diagnostic or formative purposes. Serious caution in the use of Individual Item Results and interval data is required. The use of large-scale assessments, specifically Grade 9 math, has also become part of students' summative grades in school. Students expressed concern about the use of up to 30 per cent of their EQAO score being used towards their mathematics grade. From the students' perspective, the fact that the use of a percentage of the EQAO score varies by school board was unclear, unfair and added to stress about the test. Issues about inconsistencies in the use of a proportion of a student's Grade 9 EQAO result in the mathematics grade were also identified in the Auditor General's review of EQAO in 2009. There were also suggestions that no large-scale assessment, including the OSSLT, should be a graduation requirement –although there was of course agreement about the importance of graduating literate students. According to the 19th OISE Survey (2015) on public attitudes toward education in Ontario, 65 per cent of the public want teachers' assessments rather than the use of EQAO assessments to determine students' final grades. Our conclusion is that large-scale assessment data should only be used for system accountability and improvement, not for individual student evaluation.

In the wider public use of EQAO data and reports, the use of data for competitive or comparative purposes between schools or school boards was widely criticized. We heard considerable concerns about the use of school reports and results for ranking schools. Both the EQAO and the government officially oppose ranking schools; our view is that there needs to be clear and proactive communication by government and EQAO about the appropriate purpose of this data.

For parents/guardians and community members seeking information about schools, it is also important to stress that the main source of information about a school is that school itself. There are a variety of options to pursue, including a school visit, speaking to professionals and/or parents/guardians and community members engaged with the school, or through school and board websites and improvement plans.

It is important that school boards and schools provide a range of information for interested parents/guardians and community members. Current guidance from the Ministry of Education for school board and school improvement plans includes EQAO data, alongside a range of other potential achievement, program, demographic and perceptual data. Our advice is that it is important that schools, school boards, the EQAO and the Ministry of Education take professional ownership and leadership in the appropriate communication and use of their data by the public.

Proposals for Improving Large-Scale Assessments

With the current Curriculum Refresh, the work of the Transformation Steering Committee, and EQAO's commitment to modernization; it is time – a golden opportunity – to redesign a world-leading large scale assessment system.

The following purposes of large-scale assessments were defined in *Growing Success* (2010):

> **Large-scale assessments are administered at key stages in students' education. They contain standardized content and are administered and scored according to standardized procedures. They enable governments and school boards to compare results over time in a consistent and objective manner, providing information that can be used to develop education policies and allocate resources. These objective measures of student achievement also help to build public confidence in the ability of governments and educators to readily identify key areas in which the education system needs improvement. (p. 92).**

These purposes, in keeping with the *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education* (1996), should be the foundation of the role of EQAO and of future provincial large-scale assessments. We propose, therefore, that there is a need to focus the future purpose and role of the EQAO agency as a leader in provincial large-scale assessment of student learning outcomes within the elementary and secondary publicly funded education system. This role should be clarified and confirmed in revisions to the *EQAO Act* and in a potential re-naming and re-launching of the Crown agency. It is important also to learn from the legacy of the EQAO with over twenty years of assessment information. We propose a capstone report highlighting the work of the EQAO and findings from EQAO about the performance of the Ontario education system.

Moving forward, EQAO assessments and reporting should be redesigned to maximize the benefits of a summative system-level snapshot at key stages in schooling and to minimize the unintended negative consequences for students, schools and communities. From our own experiences of working internationally, we considered that attempting to end all existing assessments or to introduce a completely new system of assessments and curriculum changes simultaneously can cause considerable disruption to the education system. A phased process of change is required, one that allows time to remove existing negative practices and to amplify positive practices, including professional learning and development for educators and communication and engagement for students, parents/guardians and the public.

Our recommendation is to move to provincial assessments in one grade of elementary school and one grade of secondary school. While we heard persuasive arguments for changing grades, there is no definitive evidence of a "best" grade to test. On balance, retaining grades 6 and 10 as key assessment grades makes sense in terms of including the majority of elementary schools and secondary schools. We decided to balance needed change with some stability by recommending the continuation of Grade 6 assessments of literacy and numeracy but these need to be substantially modernized. We recommend replacing the existing OSSLT with a new secondary school assessment in Grade 10 of key knowledge, skills and competencies, involving the range of literacies and numeracy students need to be successful post-secondary school. Both assessments – Grade 6 and 10 – should be a census of all participating students to enable collection and disaggregation of data by student sub-groups to support equity goals. Processes for exemptions, modifications and accommodations need to be enhanced. We recommend the phased ending of the current Grade 3, 9 and OSSLT assessments.

Students' experiences of large-scale assessment need to be enhanced through changes in design, administration and communication about the nature and purposes of these assessments. A top priority is investigating the potential of adaptive technology to take into account students' learning and progress, enable flexible timing of assessments, reduce time on assessments, decrease the time before schools boards and schools receive their data, and to include a variety of assessment content and approaches. Careful and vigilant attention is required to ensuring future assessments include linguistically, culturally and geographically relevant items, materials and methods to be inclusive of the diversity of Ontario's students. Excessive test preparation must stop: it is a professional responsibility of all involved in the education system to identify and prevent these practices and to develop a healthy assessment culture for students, schools and communities.

Once the new assessment system has been established, it is also feasible to assess a wider range of curricular areas or skills, if they are deemed a government, educational or public priority, on a one-off basis, through a dedicated research or assessment project and/or on a cyclical basis over three to five years. These assessments, intended as one-time or occasional investigations of priority topics, should not become routinized into annual census assessments over time. The goal of the new assessment system is to maximize classroom assessments and to minimize the quantity of large-scale assessments and students' time spent on these assessments.

> …EQAO assessments need to be revisited and reviewed to better reflect the current context with regard to learning competencies.
>
> *—Executive Director, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO), Written Submission*

Our advice is that the EQAO should provide an annual provincial report primarily for the public and for the government, which includes assessment data, attitudinal survey data, and other relevant research and evidence to provide a profile of the performance of the overall education system. For example, more recent, "quality" agencies in Ontario, such as the Higher Education Quality Council Ontario (HEQCO) or the Health Quality Organization (HQO) provide a range of research, data and information. Approaches to school board, school and student level reporting should also be transformed.

There is a clear and urgent need for professional learning to support understanding of the purpose and appropriate use of the new provincial assessment system, including EQAO and EDI. The Ministry of Education, school boards and schools should also further develop their appropriate use of this data – in concert with a range of multi-year data – for improvement planning purposes. EQAO data should not dominate, and data from only one year should not drive major strategy, policy or improvement planning decisions. There is also a need for a high profile and comprehensive communications strategy by the EQAO and the government to develop parental and public understanding of the purpose, redesign and use of EQAO assessments and reports.

Pan-Canadian and International Assessments

Samples of Ontario's students and schools participate in the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) and in international assessments, including PISA, PIRLS and TIMMS. The clear conclusion from our Review is that there is low awareness of Ontario's participation and/or results.

Area for Improvement: Communicating Ontario's participation and results in national and international assessments

More than 40 per cent of people who participated in the online survey did not know about Ontario's results in national and international assessments (see Appendix I) and many participants at the in-person engagement sessions were not aware that Ontario students even participate. For school boards and schools whose students had participated in national or international assessments, school board trustees and officials and school administrators commented that they did not directly receive any information back about the results. At the sessions, once participants discussed the fact that Ontario's students and schools are sampled for pan-Canadian and international assessments, there was interest in knowing more about these assessments, including their purpose and how the results affect Ontario's education system.

The main interests were:

- To know about Ontario's performance in national and international comparisons and contexts;
- For educators, parents/guardians and students to learn if there were particular educational strategies and practices identified in the assessments that could support student learning or system improvement; and
- a desire to participate in and contribute to the global debate on how to improve assessment and the performance of education systems around the world.

Participants also noted the importance of understanding context and exercising caution when considering the comparative results of international assessments. There was an acknowledgement that different jurisdictions have different cultures and values, and comparisons are not always straightforward. Practices that work well elsewhere may not be appropriate for Ontario. There was, however, no strong view that Ontario should stop participating in these assessments. There was, also, no major interest in Ontario expanding further participation in additional national and international assessments.

> These assessments are crucial for the province to stay committed to Achieving Excellence and remaining Canada's leader in the field of education.
>
> *— Executive Director, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO), Written Submission*

From a nation's perspective, it is useful to understand where Canada places overall in international rankings. However, as with all comparative rankings, we need to evaluate carefully what these assessments are measuring, and how important these criteria really are to what we actually consider the success of our students.

— Co-chairs, Provincial Parent Associations Advisory Committee (PAaC) on Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC), Written Submission

Proposal for Improving Ontario's Participation in Pan-Canadian and International Assessments

In practice, Ontario's participation – as the most populous province – has implications for Canada's overall participation in international assessments. We support the continued involvement of Ontario in existing pan-Canadian and international assessments. Given that Ontario's students are participating in, and that Ontario is providing resources to support, pan-Canadian and international assessments, our conclusion is that there needs to be higher profile communication of the findings from these assessments, with appropriate contextual information, to the education sector and to the public. However, we urge serious caution about expanding participation into any further assessments unless there is an extremely compelling benefit for Ontarians. We are encouraged by the current decision of the Council of Education Ministers of Canada not to agree to further Canadian – including Ontarian – participation in new international assessment programs.



From Review to Action

The essence of our proposals are that the curriculum and associated teaching and learning processes, including those of assessment, must, as far as possible, be tailored to the child or young person. At the front line of practice, closest to the student, are four interrelated elements.

1. A refreshed curriculum that challenges and stretches learners, that is personalized to them as individuals and that is responsive to, and inclusive of, the cultures and communities to which they belong.
2. Improved pedagogy that builds on the best and most distinguished traditions, is consistent with relevant research evidence, is connected to shared knowledge that teachers and early childhood educators have of their students in every classroom and school, and is stimulated by connections to breakthrough new pedagogies across the province and the world including the pedagogy of Indigenous learning.
3. New technology that, at its best, enables students and teachers to learn and to engage parents/guardians in more innovative and sophisticated ways.
4. Assessment processes that give students and teachers/early childhood educators timely and relevant feedback on their progress, that stimulate growth in relation to their past performance and future goals, and that communicate real-time information to parents/guardians and professionals who can help students in their quest for fulfillment and success.

Any consideration of altering assessment policy and practices must be embedded in the totality of the system changes that are required and occurring, including engagement of stakeholders throughout the education system and the public. While our vision of assessment places students, teachers/early childhood educators, and parents/guardians at the centre of a learning partnership; relationships with, and the support and expertise of, school, school board and provincial leaders, partners and support staff is also vital. The ambitious goals of *Achieving Excellence* for deep learning and strong well-being call for a system that cannot be directed in detail from the policy level, that enables educators to be responsive to the needs and circumstances of their unique communities, and that encourages educators and support staff, schools and school boards to take collective responsibility for improvement together. Consistent with Collaborative Professionalism, moving forward requires valuing all voices, sharing effective and promising practices, and co-owning and co-developing future policies and practices.

In conducting and completing our Review, we have been supported by a specially created Education Assessment Secretariat within the government and have worked to engage and collaborate with the Ministry of Education, EQAO, professional associations and stakeholders, as well as the wider public. Moving forward the Transformation Steering Committee is charged with the longer-term Curriculum Refresh. The recommendations we set out below are far-reaching and will require collaboration and connection across many Ministry of Education policies and strategies, including but not limited to the *Well-Being Strategy*, the *Equity Action Plan*, *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, French-language policies, and special education policies. It is clear that the transformation we propose requires alignment, engagement and ownership of all involved, alongside continuing dedicated support from a Ministry of Education team to oversee the progress of our recommendations into practice, if accepted by the Premier and Minister of Education.

Assessment Review: Recommendations

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students and Assessments

Recommendation 1: Partner with the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, to establish Assessment Working Groups for First Nations, Métis and Inuit to support the development of the K-12 System of Student Assessment.

Essential elements to realize recommendation 1:

- The First Nations Lifelong Learning Table with the Central Policy and Planning Circle (CPPC) select the First Nations Working Group and the Minister's Advisory Council on the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework select the members of the Métis and Inuit Working Groups, all in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, to serve the full term of the transformation period.
- The Working Groups will align their work with the assessment system team within the Ministry of Education (see Recommendation 18) to share their findings and align their work with the Transformation Steering Committee as partners in the transformation process.
- These Working Groups approach consultation in the manner that most effectively respects the way in which collective decision making is organized within their cultures, communities and organizations in order to determine effective assessment for learners in the classroom and in province wide assessments.
- The Working Groups examine assessment in all of the following recommendations, with a view to how the recommendations may serve their learners.
- A professional learning community should evolve from the Working Groups to advise and lead work on the development of culturally relevant assessments, resources and training for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners and educators as part of the K-12 System of Student Assessment.
- The Working Groups develop classroom assessments that are culturally and linguistically grounded according to exemplars that promote the learning needs of their students and include benefit for all students.
- Assessment and reporting should align with the *First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework*.
- The Ministry of Education to support the First Nations, Métis and Inuit to accomplish these tasks.

K-12 System of Student Assessment

Recommendation 2: Develop a K-12 System of Student Assessment to include a multi-year commitment to provide professional learning and assessment resources to develop a culture of assessment and a comprehensive strategy to improve and implement student assessments in Ontario, aligned with the current curriculum refresh.

Recommendation 3: Update the *Growing Success* policy to become a renewed K-12 *Growing Excellence and Equity* policy aligned with the curriculum refresh.

Essential elements to realize recommendation 3:

- Retain the key principles of Gr*owing Success* which are well-regarded across the sector;
- Update province-wide assessment policies in light of the goals of *Achieving Excellence* for excellence, equity, well-being and public confidence, plus attention to new developments in assessment purpose, design, implementation and use;
- Integrate and align related policies and practices for assessment within the new comprehensive *Growing Excellence and Equity* policy, including consideration of: *Learning for All* to support Universal Design for Learning; *The Kindergarten Addendum* to extend attention to student growth and development and pedagogical documentation into later grades; and embed culturally relevant and responsive assessments to support equity for all students and with particular attention to ensuring alignment with the *Aménagement linguistique Policy for French-language education*, Indigenous learning and assessments, and the *Equity Action Plan*'s commitment to supporting racialized and minoritized students;
- Include the Early Development Instrument (EDI) as part of Ontario's repertoire of provincial assessments;
- Ensure that the principles of the renewed *Growing Excellence and Equity* policy are consistent in examples of practice within the policy document and in the supporting resources and materials;
- Clarify effective processes for use of accommodations and modifications to ensure appropriate assessment for students with special needs and learning disabilities;
- Revise guidance on use of criterion-referenced assessment practices to inform student learning, particularly review appropriate levels of achievement, forms of feedback and concerns about the use of percentage grades.

Recommendation 4: Commission an independent evaluation of the new system of assessment after it has been implemented for three years.

Classroom Assessments

Recommendation 5: Resource and provide a comprehensive, multi-year range of differentiated professional learning and development to support understanding and implementation of the renewed *Growing Excellence and Equity* policy.

Recommendation 6: Establish a range of evidence-informed, modularized online assessments and print versions of assessment resources, aligned to curriculum expectations, as optional, on demand resources for teachers who are seeking quality assured resources to support formative assessments within their classrooms beginning with implementation in the Primary Division and extending to later grades of elementary schools and for secondary schools.

Essential elements to realize recommendations 5 and 6:

- Develop a repertoire of assessment and feedback practices, including culturally and linguistically relevant assessments and inclusive practices for the diverse population of learners and provision of a range of ways to receive and discuss regular feedback and updates on a student's learning and progress, including use of technology to document and share student work, and student, parent and teacher conferences;
- Ensure the assessment process is inclusive of students' voices and values their diverse experiences, contexts and needs within assessment practices;
- Provide consistency of accommodations and modifications for students with Individual Education Plans in assessments from one grade and class to another, and consider how to maintain consistency as these students transition from one school to another;
- Develop meaningful opportunities for engagement with parents/guardians to support student learning as part of the development of these new assessments;
- Require focused attention to understanding, developing and critiquing a repertoire of assessment practice during Initial Teacher Education for teacher candidates and to assessment literacy in Principal and Supervisory Officer Qualifications Programs and in continuing professional learning and development for educators;
- Develop and fund opportunities for educators to collaborate, co-develop and share assessment resources and practices, including collaboration and teacher moderation within and across classrooms, school district learning teams, and a province-wide educator network.

Large-scale Assessments

Recommendation 7: Revise the *EQAO Act* to focus the future purpose and role of the EQAO agency as a leader in provincial large-scale assessment of student learning outcomes. The office is to have the following purposes:

1. To develop and implement independent, evidence-informed and standards-based provincial large-scale assessments of student learning outcomes within the elementary and secondary publicly funded education system.

2. To provide an annual province-wide snapshot and public reporting of large-scale assessment results and related evidence of student learning, achievement and equity.
3. To provide school board-level, school-level and student-level reports that clearly identify the appropriate use and interpretation of large-scale assessment results, including relevant contextual information and a range of data to provide a coherent and comprehensive snapshot of performance.
4. To develop capacity and understanding across the Ontario education system on the appropriate and effective use of large-scale assessment data.
5. To coordinate and communicate to the public and the Ontario education system about the results and effective use of pan-Canadian and International assessments.
6. To champion and undertake a robust research agenda to improve continuously the design, understanding, implementation and use of large-scale assessments within Ontario and to provide national and international leadership in current and future innovative and effective large-scale assessment design, implementation and use.
7. To report and to make recommendations to the Minister of Education on the results of the assessments and generally on the performance of the Ontario publicly funded education system to provide system level accountability and public assurance.

Essential elements to realize recommendation 7:

- Re-envision and transform the EQAO to be consistent with the above purposes, and
- Consider re-naming and re-launching the Crown agency.

Recommendation 8: Undertake a redesign of provincial large-scale assessments, aligned with the curriculum refresh and taking into account developments in student learning and assessment design, including equitable, inclusive and culturally relevant practices, student choice and voice in assessments, and integration of technology. Develop a parallel implementation process to:

(1) Reform provincial large-scale assessments to:
   a. Continue but substantially modernize Grade 6 census assessments of literacy and numeracy, plus consideration of transferable skills needed to equip elementary students as they proceed in their education;
   b. Discontinue the OSSLT and design and implement a new Grade 10 census assessment of key knowledge, skills and competences, including consideration of literacy, numeracy and competences needed to equip students for success in post-secondary school destinations (e.g. apprenticeship, college, university, community living, or work). This would replace the OSSLT, but would not be linked to graduation requirements.

(2) Phase out and end over a multi-year period:
   a. the current Grade 3 EQAO assessments and make better use of the EDI to support early intervention; and
   b. the current Grade 9 EQAO assessments and the OSSLT.

Recommendation 9: Investigate and develop as a priority the integration of adaptive technology for large-scale assessments of students' learning and progress, to enable flexible administration of assessments over time and location, to consider various modes of assessment including digital portfolios, and to provide timely feedback and reporting on results.

Recommendation 10: Consider the potential for one-off or cyclical (3-5 years) research or assessments of priority subjects and/or competences for a broader understanding of the performance of Ontario's education system. These assessments should not become annualized census assessments, and would supplement, not replace other recommendations.

Essential elements to realize recommendations 8 - 10:

The new large-scale assessments should embody principles consistent with the goals of *Achieving Excellence*, for example:

- Align the new provincial assessments to the refreshed curriculum and assess key knowledge, skills and competences that are considered to be essential outcomes before the end of elementary school and of secondary school.
- Enable teachers to have flexibility over the timing of administration of assessments, within a pre-established assessment window. No assessment should be available only on one specific date.
- Value and recognize all levels of student learning and progress. The large-scale assessment results should not contribute to students' grades or promotion decisions or secondary school graduation.
- Ensure student choice and voice are central in the design and implementation of assessments, including choice of assessment questions and approaches to fulfilling assessment criteria.
- Pay careful and vigilant attention to ensuring curriculum and assessment materials provide linguistically, culturally and geographically relevant items and materials, including attention to the diversity of Ontario's students and communities, French-language students, and to Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing.
- Provide appropriate and effective accommodations and modifications for students with special educational needs, including learning disabilities, and English/French language learners.
- Consider whether students in French Immersion schools should be able to take all provincial assessments in French.
- Reform the criteria for official exemptions in partnership between teachers, parents/guardians and students to take account of special educational needs and also factors such as new immigrant and refugee status.
- Use a census approach for the new assessments in order to provide population level information concerning student learning and equity.

- Embed approaches to mitigate the unintended negative consequences of provincial assessments in future assessment design and in the linked communications and development of an assessment culture to support appropriate implementation, for example:
  - The design, implementation, reporting and use of provincial assessments should be consistent with the purpose of large-scale assessments to provide a summative snapshot.
  - The overall number of provincial assessments should be minimized.
  - The amount of time required for one assessment should be minimized, taking account of an appropriate balance of rigor, validity and the experiences of the students participating.
  - The learning environment in which students take the assessments should remain as close to their everyday learning environment as possible.
  - Research and key messages about appropriate approaches to ensuring students are familiar with the expectations of assessments versus the negative consequences of extensive and pervasive test preparation should be developed and widely communicated.
  - All professional associations, the Ministry of Education, the EQAO, and educators should be vigilant in ensuring inappropriate approaches to test preparation are identified and not implemented further.

Recommendation 11: Transform approaches to reporting provincial large-scale assessments to be consistent with the purpose of annual system-level, summative snapshots at the provincial, school board and school levels. These reports should not be used to rank schools.

Essential elements to realize recommendation 11:

- EQAO should produce:
  - A provincial annual report, including provincial results for elementary and secondary provincial large-scale assessments, considerations of equity, sub-group analyses with disaggregated data, cohort data, questionnaire responses, relevant provincial data and research, and in years when pan-Canadian and international assessment results are released, key findings for Ontario.
  - Annual school board and school reports that are appropriate to the effective use of large-scale assessments, including provision of relevant contextual information, assessment results, questionnaire responses and other relevant data concerning education performance, and clarify the inappropriate use of this information, including opposing ranking of schools and use of summative assessment information for individual student diagnostic purposes or teacher evaluation.

- Overall results reported publicly should be based on the student population who actually participate in the assessments rather than all students in the grade.
- If the new assessments move to adaptive testing, provision of real time/rapid feedback to students should be considered. In the meantime, student reports should clarify this is a snapshot of performance on a system assessment and is not intended for diagnostic or evaluative purposes.
- EQAO should replace current individual reports [both the Primary/Junior and Grade 9/OSSLT grade level reports, and the Individual Item Results (IIRs) Reports] for each assessment with the proposed annual reports.
- As part of revising the EQAO legislation, two-way data-sharing from the Ministry of Education and EQAO should be agreed. Data sharing agreements with First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners should be agreed.
- EQAO, in partnership with professional associations and the government, should proactively identify and respond to the inappropriate use or misuse of provincial large-scale assessment data by other organizations/individuals, including opposing public ranking of schools.

Recommendation 12: Implement professional learning and development for educators at all levels of the education system (Ministry, school boards, schools), in concert with the roll out of the new provincial assessment system to support a new assessment culture for understanding the appropriate use of EDI and EQAO assessments.

Recommendation 13: Further develop Ministry of Education, Board and School Improvement Planning Processes and publication of Plans to include appropriate use of EDI and EQAO data, along with other relevant achievement, program, demographic and perceptual data.

Recommendation 14: Implement a high profile and comprehensive public communications strategy by the EQAO and the government to develop public and parental understanding of the provincial assessment redesign, the purpose of these assessments, and the appropriate interpretation and use of reports and related data from provincial assessments.

Recommendation 15: Implement a systemic and cyclical evaluation of the EQAO and EQAO assessments at least every five years.

Recommendation 16: Document the legacy and lessons of over 20 years of the EQAO agency and the EQAO assessments in a capstone report analyzing key findings and implications from EQAO assessment data concerning student achievement, equity and the quality of the Ontario education system.

Pan-Canadian and International Assessment

Recommendation 17: Continue Ontario's participation in PCAP, PISA, PIRLS and TIMMS and maximize the use of this information through public communication of the results, including relevant context, and identifying key findings of relevance to informing educational improvement in Ontario.

Implementation Support

Recommendation 18: Establish a dedicated team within the Ministry of Education to work in partnership with all relevant organizations and stakeholders to oversee progress for implementation of the proposed recommendations from the Assessment Review.

Conclusions

Within six months, we have conducted a rapid yet extensive review of assessment and reporting practices in Ontario. We listened intently during stakeholder and public engagement sessions, we read written submissions, we reviewed online survey results, we engaged in dialogue with key professional associations, stakeholder organizations and interested individuals, we used social media and traditional media to stimulate and listen to wider conversations about assessment, and we considered relevant local, national and international research and evidence. Of course, no review of assessment is purely about assessment. We heard about aspirations for Ontario's current students and future societies, about a need to understand and reconcile our histories while innovating towards an unknown future, about existing promising practices and suggestions for transformations of practices in Ontario's education system, about concerns for meeting diverse needs of students individually and inclusively, and about negative and positive effects of assessments for achievement, equity, well-being and public confidence, and about hope that the Review would improve assessment practices to support and appropriately include each and every learner and value all of their learning, knowledge, skills, growth and development. The main thing we heard was both concern and hope that the Review would result in recommendations and action for improvement in the assessments that Ontario's students experience.

This report has been informed by thousands of Ontarians, plus relevant research, evidence and our best judgement to offer advice when the findings are clear and compelling and to navigate the trade-offs and complexities when consensus and definitive evidence were not present. We identify 13 Areas for Improvement and we offer 18 recommendations for a K-12 System of Student Assessment. There is no perfect assessment system; but we are confident that the system proposed in our report offers an improvement of Ontario's current policies, practices and outcomes.

We began the Review with our vision that students' experiences – their needs, learning, progress and well-being – are at the centre of decisions about future assessment design and use. We have held firm to that vision to guide our decisions. It is our unanimous view and conclusion that it is time to make the continuous improvement of effective classroom assessments and feedback for students with educators and parents/guardians the central feature of assessment in Ontario. This is beneficial to students as they will be able to engage in a range of high quality assessment practices with ongoing feedback to support their learning, development and progress throughout their schooling. Relatedly, it is time to focus and transform the role of large-scale assessments. The main purposes of large-scale assessments are to inform system accountability and improvement plans. Going forward, large-scale assessment data should not be used for individual student diagnostic or evaluative purposes and students should not be subject to excessive test preparation for a summative system-level snapshot. The use of large-scale assessment data to improve policies and practices to address weaknesses in the education system and to advance inclusivity and equity for sub-groups of students identified as needing additional support will benefit the overall student population. It is time for Ontario to build on its work as a world-class education system to be a leader nationally and internationally in the appropriate design and use of assessments to support students' learning, equity and well-being and for system improvement and accountability.

Our review focused on assessment, but in essence it is about the improvement of learning in the entire system. More fundamentally, as a set, our recommendations amount to a change in the culture of assessment in the province – one where student learning is at the center, and where everyone is informed about the progress and performance of the system. It is about redefining learning for all students as an urgent priority for the province. These are long-term developments that will require a multi-year strategy and resources. However, there is a momentum and an urgency to the Assessment Review and the recommendations presented. Now is the moment to begin this transformation and to move forward together with and for Ontario's students, educators, parents/guardians and communities.



Appendices

Appendix A: Biographies of the Education Advisors to the Premier and Minister of Education

Dr. Carol Campbell *Associate Professor, Leadership and Educational Change, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto*



Carol Campbell is a national and international expert in educators' professional learning and development, educational leadership, educational change and system improvement, and the use of research evidence to inform policies and practices. She has held education, academic and government roles in Canada, the UK and the USA. In Ontario, Carol was the Senior Executive Officer – Research, Evaluation and Data for The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, the Ministry of Education's first Chief Research Officer, and the founding Director of the Education Research Strategy and Evaluation Branch. Carol was a member of the Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel. Originally from Scotland, Carol serves also as a member of the International Council of Education Advisors to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in the Scottish Government.

Dr. Jean Clinton *Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University*



Jean M Clinton BMus MD FRCP(C) is a Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster, division of Child Psychiatry and an Associate in the Department of Child Psychiatry, University of Toronto and Sick Children's Hospital. In addition she is a Fellow of the Child Trauma Academy and Zero to Three. She has been a consultant to children and youth mental health programs, child welfare, and primary care for 30 years. Her special interest lies in brain development, and the crucial role relationships and connectedness play therein. Jean champions the development of a national, comprehensive child well-being strategy including a system of early learning and care for all young children and their families. She is equally committed to ensuring that children's and youths' needs and voices are heard and respected.

Dr. Michael Fullan, OC *Professor Emeritus and former Dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto*



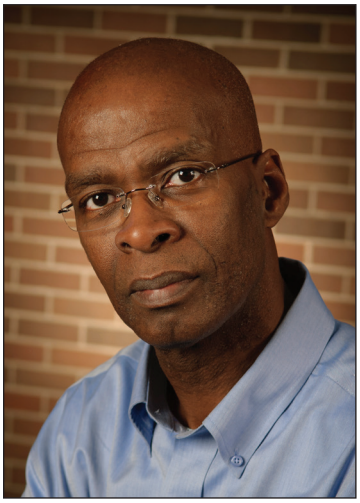
Michael Fullan, Order of Canada, is the former Dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Recognized as a worldwide authority on educational reform, he advises policymakers and local leaders around the world. He has written several prize-winning books including Professional capital (with Andy Hargreaves) that won the prestigious Grawemeyer Award in 2015. His latest books are: Coherence (with Joanne Quinn), and Deep learning: Engage the world Change the world (with Joanne Quinn, and Joanne McEachen), and Surreal change.

Dr. Andy Hargreaves *Research Professor in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College*



Andy Hargreaves is an international expert on educational change, collaborative professionalism and sustainable leadership. He advises governments, professional organizations and international bodies worldwide. In the last ten years he has continuously researched the impact of educational reform in Ontario schools and school boards. As a returning resident and citizen in Ontario, Professor Hargreaves's contribution to education in the province has persisted over 30 years.

Dr. Carl James *Jean Augustine Chair in Education, Community and Diaspora, Faculty of Education, York University*



Carl James is recognized nationally and internationally for his work in equity -- particularly in relation to race, class, gender, racialization, immigration and citizenship. Using a framework of social justice, he has researched and written on the extent to which institutional policies, programs and practices afford accessible and equitable opportunities in schooling, education and employment for marginalized and racialized youth -- particularly Black youth. He brings to his work his interest in programs that address and foster partnerships that enable and support inquiry and innovation among educators, learners, parents, community workers, community agencies, and governments.

Kahontakwas (Diane) Longboat *Senior Project Manager, Guiding Directions Implementation, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health; ceremonial leader, educator, teacher of Indigenous spiritual ways and healer*



Kahontakwas Diane Longboat is a professional educator, with a graduate degree in education and has taught and lectured on the topics of spiritual renewal as the guiding force for nation building. She currently consults with federal and provincial governments and global organizations around the issues of sovereignty in First Nations jurisdiction over education and the role of spirituality in leading.

Appendix B: Terms of Reference

Purpose

This review is being undertaken at the request of the Premier and Minister of Education in order to update assessment and reporting practices at the classroom, school, board and provincial levels, with an emphasis on large-scale provincial assessments.

Rationale:

- The research is clear about the inextricable link between curriculum and assessment, and increasingly also the relationships between assessment, learning, and well-being. As Ontario moves towards a refreshed curriculum and the further enhancement of well-being, it is necessary to review and align assessment practices as appropriate.
- It has been over two decades since the establishment of provincial large-scale assessments to provide independent information to inform public confidence in the quality of Ontario's public education system. In light of a renewed vision for *Achieving Excellence*, it is timely to review the intent and process for provincial assessment to support excellence, equity cultural relevancy and well-being for Ontario's students and to inform public confidence about the performance of Ontario's education system.
- Considerations of well-being and equity should be more intentionally woven into assessment models at all levels, including cultural relevancy.
- Societal changes, including but not limited to those related to the use of technology, and the recommendations for the development of a Highly Skilled Workforce, require the importance of learning transferrable skills and competencies. Assessment ought to capture and reflect this reality.

Parameters

Leadership:

Dr. Carol Campbell will lead the Review, with the support of the other five Education Advisors: Dr. Jean Clinton, Dr. Michael Fullan, Dr. Andy Hargreaves, Dr. Carl James and Kahontakwas Diane Longboat.

Scope and Outcomes:

- An evidence-informed review of the current model of assessment and reporting practices at the student, classroom, school, board and provincial levels and its impact on learning, achievement and well-being. This should include consideration of Indigenous educational assessments at the classroom, school, board and system levels where language, culture and land-based learning are part of well-being.
- A theory of action to support the best roles and uses of assessment and reporting at each level to inform various objectives including student learning. This should include consideration of the role of the learner.

- Evidence-informed and implementable recommendations for change based on the above.
- A more detailed set of recommendations regarding large-scale assessment practices, including a vision for the future. This should include consideration of:
  - The Grades to be assessed, taking into consideration the developmental stage of the learner and research on important outcomes or milestones
  - The competencies to be assessed
  - Timing of assessments (interval between assessments and timing within the school year)
  - Where assessments take place and who administers them
  - The format of assessment (including technology and self-assessment)
  - Equity, human rights and cultural relevancy
  - Feedback and reporting to students and parents/caregivers
  - Appropriate uses of large-scale data at classroom, school, board and provincial levels
  - Participation in, and uses of, pan-Canadian and international assessments

Guiding Questions:

The following guiding questions will inform the scope, process and recommendations of the Review.

What are appropriate and useful assessments and assessment practices that:

- Support students' equitable outcomes?
- Support professionals' practices and judgement?
- Inform students and parents/caregivers/families of learning progress and include meaningful input from them?
- Inform school and system improvement?
- Provide information for public assurance and confidence about the quality and progress of the Ontario education system?
- Advance the achievement of the above goals with positive benefits for the overall goals of Achieving Excellence?

Guiding Principles:

- The Review will build on the fundamental principles of assessment, evaluation and reporting outlined in *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools*.
- For the purposes of this Review, primary principles informing consideration of assessment and reporting are to provide:
  - students with timely feedback to support well-being, equity and learning;
  - classroom educators with reflective feedback to support professional judgement;
  - parents, families and educators at all levels with the means to know how students are or are not progressing in their learning and well-being; and
  - the public with confidence in the overall education system.
- All elements of assessment should positively support learning, well-being and equity. Well-being and equity should be central pillars within assessment models and reporting at all levels. The review will complement the government's approach to further promote well-being, including indicators of progress, and the Education Equity Action Plan.

- Assessment and reporting should consider both content and skills/competencies.
- Individual students and their parents benefit from clear, focused, regular feedback that informs their current and future learning.
- Educators possess the best knowledge of each student's learning relative to the curriculum.
- Large-scale assessments can provide information that is valuable to both individual students, families and broader system improvement.
- Data on learning and engagement at the classroom, school, board, and provincial levels should be designed to support evidence-based learning and decision-making.
- Assessment and reporting policy must respect collective agreements.
- EQAO/OQRE will continue to create, oversee and implement large-scale assessment in Ontario to provide independent and transparent data to support public confidence in Ontario's education system.

Deliverable and Timelines

Dr. Campbell and team will submit a report to the Minister of Education providing actionable advice on policy and implementation matters within the scope of the Review. The advice will be based on research, evidence and input through consultations. March 9, 2018 has been set as a preliminary date for receiving the final report.

Resources

- A secretariat reporting directly to the Deputy Minister will be established to provide policy, research and administrative support to Dr. Campbell and team, including psychometric expertise.
- To support external consultations, Dr. Campbell and team will work with a consultation firm responsible for facilitating sessions and summarizing the feedback as needed.

Consultations

- Dr. Campbell and team will engage the public and education sector stakeholders through a series of consultation sessions across the province. Invitees will include:
  - Parents
  - Students
  - Community, including employers
  - Teacher federations
  - Other education workers (EAs, ECEs, etc.)
  - Principal associations
  - Directors and supervisory officers
  - School board trustee associations
  - School board advisory committees
  - Post-secondary community (Teacher Ed Facilities, colleges and universities)
  - Relevant expert stakeholders, including EQAO/OQRE.

- A combination of regional public consultations across Ontario, combined with invited stakeholder and expert meetings with the Education Advisors and Assessment Review team, will be conducted. Regional consultations will include a stakeholder consultation, including a robust student consultation, paired with an evening public/parent consultation.
  - Consultations will strive to include diverse voices, including from racialized and other marginalized groups.
  - The consultation will include opportunities for Francophone specific representatives, perspectives and experiences. The secretariat will also include expertise in the French Language sector.
  - A parallel consultation will be organized for Indigenous partners, per government commitments to the Indigenous community. These partners include First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators, community members, education associations, Aboriginal Institutes and Tribal Councils.
- Intra-government consultations will include MCYS, MCI, MAESD, MIRR, Accessibility Directorate, Anti-Racism Directorate and others.
- Existing stakeholder tables, such as the EQAO/OQRE Advisory Group and the Initiatives Committee, will also be engaged regularly.
- Consultations will be supported by a consultation document or guide and augmented through the opportunity for online submissions and online Twitter chat and feedback opportunities through #OntEdAssessment
- Reviewers will hold invited focus groups with key stakeholders and experts as deemed necessary.
- An Educator Panel will be established to provide advice and input from front-line practitioners.

Appendix C: Transformation Steering Committee

Purpose

At the request of the Minister of Education, a broadly representative Transformation Steering Committee was established, co-facilitated by Marilies Rettig and Ken Thurston, to secure sector and broader community-based input to inform the transformative changes announced for the next three to five years in education, outlining the guiding principles, elements of implementation and providing ongoing oversight and feedback.

Guiding Principles:

The Transformation Steering Committee's work and advice will be informed by and aligned with the four goals of *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*: Achieving Excellence, Ensuring Equity, Promoting Well-Being and Enhancing Public Confidence.

The approach of the Transformation Steering Committee will be consistent with the principles of collaborative professionalism which value all voices, fosters a trusting environment and respect for all, allows open sharing of ideas to achieve a common vision, has a focus on research, evidence and best practices, respect for the Education Act, other relevant Acts, Regulations and Agreements and respects and promote the distinct missions of Ontario's four Publicly Funded School Systems.

Scope and Outcomes:

The Transformation Steering Committee will:

1. Establish the guiding principles for transformative change in the following areas –
   a) Revisions to student report cards through the inclusion of transferable skills,
   b) Broader Curriculum Refresh,
   c) Renewed approach to Grade 9,
   d) Assessment practices aligned with the refreshed curriculum,
   e) Reporting on student progress to students, parents and the public, and
   f) Enhanced parent and community connections to school.
2. Scope the key elements of implementation, and
3. Provide ongoing central oversight and feedback on the process.

Composition and Timelines:

Transformation Steering Committee will be composed of education stakeholders and representatives from groups and agencies representing broader community interests.

The curriculum refresh and transformation process is a three to five year process.

Consultation and Outreach:

Broad consultation and outreach is important throughout the entire transformation process.

In the first preparatory phase, co-facilitators met and reached out to a wide range of sector associations and the IC leading to the formation and initial meeting of the TSC.

Phase two and ongoing, the TSC through the co-facilitators will liaise with and seek input from relevant standing committees including but not limited to the First Nation Lifelong Learning Table, Minister's Advisory Council on First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education; the Curriculum Council, the Minister's Student Advisory Council, the Minister's Principal Reference Group and the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education.

Phase three (spring '18 and beyond) – there will be outreach to broader sector and public associations including cultural, advocacy, employer and post-secondary representatives.

Phase four (fall of '18 and beyond) wide-ranging sector, student and public engagement by TSC.

Appendix D: Summary from EQAO Outlining Ongoing Modernization Initiative to Better Support Student Learning

Prior to this review, EQAO had embarked on an ongoing, multi-year modernization initiative to ensure that the agency continues to meet the needs of the students, education community and province of Ontario. EQAO's modernization focuses on five distinct areas:

- large-scale assessments;
- reports;
- research;
- engagement with Ontarians and
- internal business processes.

The agency's modernization initiative is guided by the principles of benefit, quality, partnership and transparency, and it represents an opportunity to better address matters of equity and inclusion.

Background

EQAO was established in 1996, in response to parents and taxpayers, who were seeking a more independent gauge of quality and accountability in the publicly funded education system. To fulfill its mandate and help improve student learning, EQAO administers large-scale assessments grounded in The Ontario Curriculum, coordinates Ontario's participation in national and international assessments, contributes to education research and assists the education community in understanding, analyzing and appropriately using EQAO data.

Through EQAO's assessment program, the agency currently administers full-census assessments at key stages in each student's education. This approach:

- evaluates progress over time at the individual, school, school board and provincial levels;
- fosters discussions about improvements to learning programs in schools and boards across the province and
- allows policy-makers to better understand system-wide trends, and make student-focused and evidence-informed decisions accordingly.

Vision

EQAO's vision for modernizing provincial assessments is to reflect classroom experiences more closely, incorporate more digital tools, broaden the assessments' range of insights into student achievement and create a customizable and more easily accessible assessment experience for all students. Further, modernization offers an opportunity to update reporting practices, optimize contributions to education research initiatives, engage with Ontarians more effectively and streamline business procedures.

Equity and Inclusion

As part of its modernization, EQAO is taking measures to update its activities, policies and procedures with respect to equity and inclusion—areas that constitute a priority for the agency. EQAO is analyzing best accommodation practices across the province that support students with special education needs. This work also considers the experiences of schools with new Canadians who have not experienced Ontario's education system and curriculum for long, and the responsibilities of districts as part of the Ministry's Ontario Education Equity Action Plan, 2017. The agency's modernization will demonstrate a commitment to universal design and culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, inclusive of all students regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, or any other factor related to individual identity.

EQAO has also provided further accommodations to secondary students without the requirement of Individual Education Plans, to reflect regular classroom practice across the province. These accommodations included assessment settings, preferential seating, prompts for students with severe attention problems, and extra time in accordance with regular student learning opportunities. Policies are currently being developed to provide further accommodations and exemptions that support the success of all students, and will be in place as early as 2018-19. The agency is also reviewing culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy as outlined in Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan, 2017, and is looking at ways to offer student choice in large-scale assessments.

These actions are important to ensure that Ontario can offer large-scale assessments that are inclusive of its diverse student population.

Potential Benefits

Multiple benefits for students, educators, stakeholders and the broader Ontario public can be realized through modernization. These benefits include the promotion of equity and inclusion within large scale assessments, including by:

- creating an assessment experience that is more student-focused and easily accessible, with built-in customization options and accommodations for students who need them;
- making the assessments more engaging for students by allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a number of different ways and
- aligning provincial assessments with the digital world we live in and the digital classroom, which play an increasingly important role in education.

Appendix E: Ontario Population and Demographic Information

Population growth

The latest census (2016) estimated the total population of Ontario to be 14 million. The population grew by 4.6 percent when compared to the 2011, with most of the growth focused in large urban centres. The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) continues to grow rapidly (+6.0 per cent since 2011).

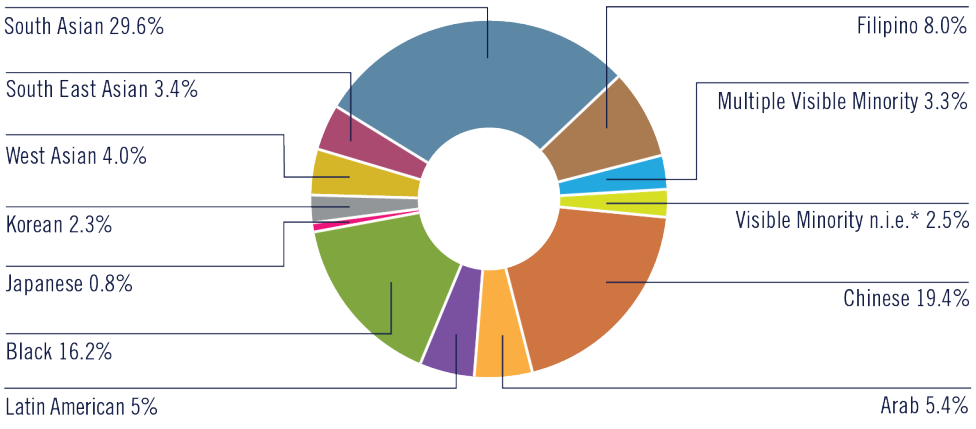
Diversity and immigration

Ontario's population is highly diverse. According to the latest census (2016), while the majority of Ontarians self-identify as "Canadian" almost three in ten Ontarians (29.3 per cent) self-identify as visible minorities.

From 2011 to 2016, Ontario's visible minority population increased by 18.5 percent. The population that did not self-identify as part of a visible minority group declined by 0.2 percent.

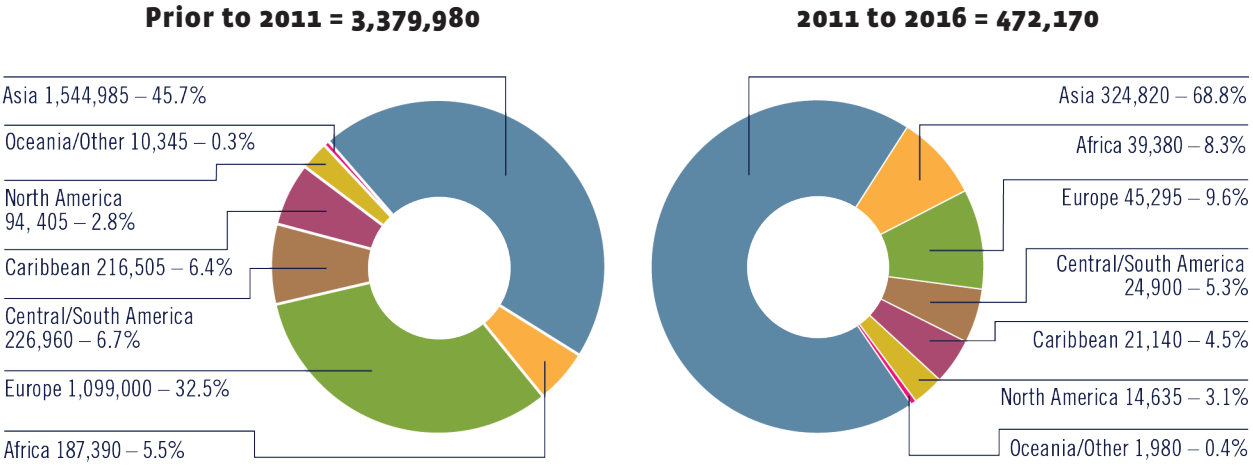
For this same period, the fastest-growing groups were Arab (+39 percent), Multiple Visible Minorities (+33 percent), and West Asian (+26 percent). The share of Ontarians reporting either English or French as a mother tongue declined, while the share of Ontario reporting a mother tongue other than English or French grew significantly [Chinese languages remained the most numerous mother tongue group (outside the official languages), with 627,730 people self-identifying in this group].

Visible Minorities in Ontario, 2016



* Not Identified Elsewhere (Source: Statistics Canada)

Country of birth of foreign-born Ontarians by period of immigration



Note: Percentage figures are share of Ontario. (Source: Statistics Canada)

According to the 2016 census, the population of First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Ontario continues to grow. In 2016, 374,395 people identified as Aboriginal, representing an increase of 54.1% since 2006.

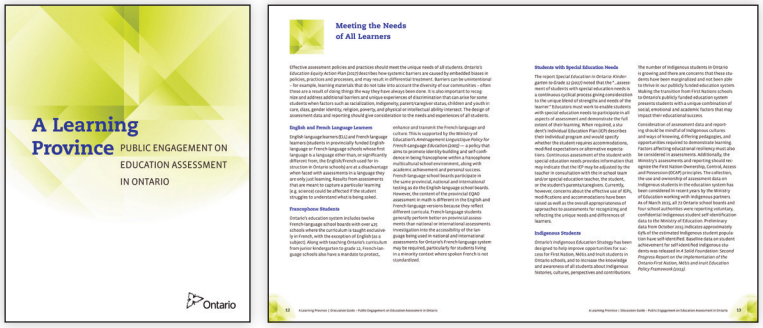
	2006	2011	2016
Aboriginal identity (i.e. the census respondent identified as Aboriginal peoples of Canada on the census (First Nations, Métis or Inuit and/or Registered or Treaty Indians, and/or has membership in a First Nation or Indian band).	241,840	301,430	374,395
Total Ontario Population	11,981,235	12,651,795	13,242,160

The 2016 census also shows that the Aboriginal population is younger than the non-Aboriginal population, with close to a third (32.5 per cent) consisting of children and teenagers aged 19 and under.

Appendix F: Engagement Documents

List of Documents used at Regional Engagement Sessions:

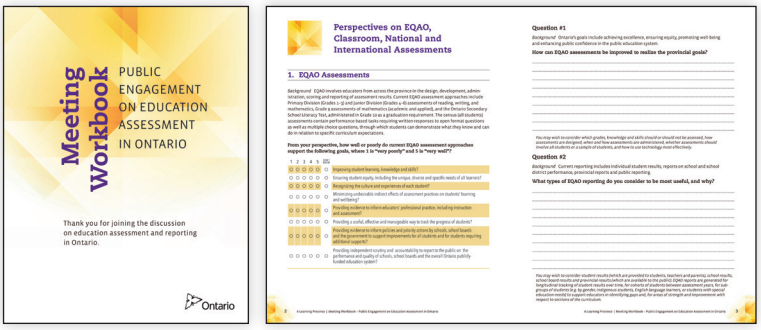
Discussion Guide *A Learning Province: Public Engagement on Education Assessment in Ontario* was the discussion guide for the engagement and included questions to support an informed dialogue on the future of education assessment and reporting.



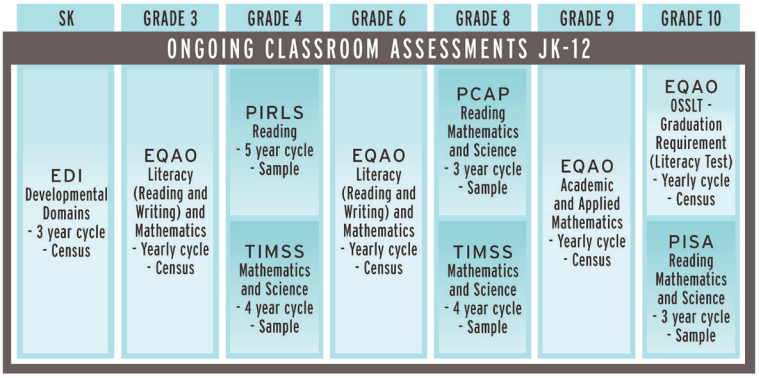
Program Summary An executive summary of the discussion guide was developed to provide a more concise overview of the information presented in the guide.



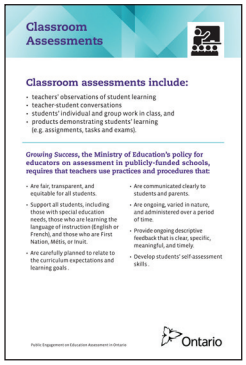
Meeting Workbook The discussion questions from the guide were used to create a meeting workbook that captured participants' input and feedback during the engagement sessions. The online survey was modeled after the meeting workbook.

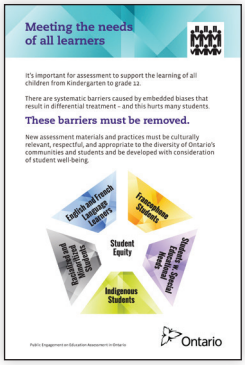


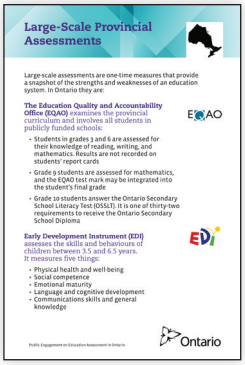
Assessment Overview Graphic *Figure B: Current Student Assessment Practices in Ontario* from the discussion guide was developed into a separate handout to provide an overview of large-scale assessments currently being used in Ontario.



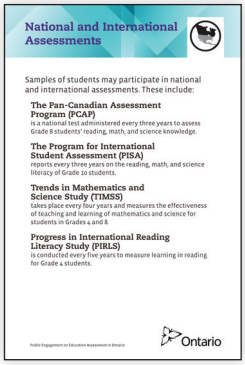
Display Boards Display boards provided information about current classroom assessments, provincial assessments, and national and international assessments, to support an informed dialogue among session participants.



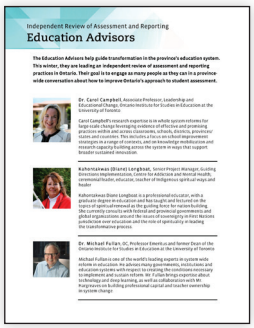






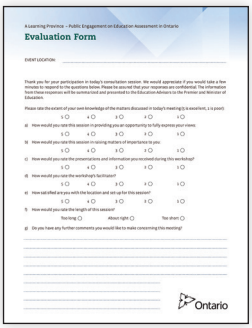


Advisor Biographies A one-page overview of the biographies of the Education Advisors to the Premier and Minister of Education was available at the regional engagement sessions.





Evaluation Form Participants of the regional engagement sessions filled out an evaluation form to provide feedback on the session format, location, timing and the facilitator.



Appendix G: Engagement Statistics

Our review of assessment and reporting is a first step in a larger plan to refresh Ontario's curriculum, assessment and reporting. We set out to hear from as many Ontarians as possible within the tight timeframe engaging people in multiple ways to hear their concerns about, and hopes for, student assessment and reporting in Ontario.

Regional Engagement Sessions

787 people attended regional engagement sessions in seven locations across Ontario and there were 32 participants in two online webinars

LOCATION	DATE
Ottawa (Separate French and English language sessions)	November 22, 2017
Barrie	November 27, 2017
Sudbury (Separate French and English language sessions; live-stream)	November 30, 2017
Windsor	December 4, 2017
Hamilton	December 5, 2017
Toronto (Separate French and English language sessions)	December 8, 2017
Thunder Bay (Live-stream)	December 12, 2017
Online Webinar	December 13, 2017
Online Webinar for French-Language participants	January 17, 2018

Online Engagement

- A website created for the review housed information about the regional sessions, the discussion paper and related resources as well as a short introductory video. The English and French website statistics are below:

LANGUAGE	URL	VISITS	UNIQUE VISITORS
English	ontarioalearningprovince.ca	17,796	14,224
French	ontarioenapprentissage.ca	2,445	1,868
Total		20,241	16,092

- An online survey was created to engage a broader audience. There was a total of 4,100 survey responses (3,664 English and 436 French).
- From November 22 to December 15, there were 1,255 mentions of education assessment (#OntEDAssessment and #OntEvaluationEdu) on Twitter by 564 unique users.

Written Submissions

- From November 14, 2017 to February 8th, 2018, a total of 44 written submissions were received by email to educationassessment@ontario.ca and included emails, links to blogs, research reports and stakeholder position papers.

Appendix H: List of Groups that Informed the Review

Administrator Associations	Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO); Council of Directors of Education (CODE); Conseil ontarien des directrices et directeurs de l'éducation de langue française (CODELF); Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO); Ontario Principals' Council (OPC); Ontario Public Supervisory Officers' Association (OPSOA)
Agencies	Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)
Assessment Experts/ Think Tank Participants	Henry Braun (Boston College), Ruth Childs (University of Toronto), Kristen A. Clarke (Peel District School Board), Linda Darling-Hammond (Stanford University), Chris DeLuca (Queen's University), Lynne Hollingshead (York Region District School Board), Sean Monteith (Keewatin Patricia District School Board), Stephanie Roy (Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute) , Tania Sterling (Keewatin Patricia DSB), Charles Ungerleider (Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group), Louis Volante (Brock University)
Community Groups and Education Stakeholders	Aboriginal Head Start Association; Autism Ontario Simcoe; Big Brother Big Sisters of Toronto; Bridgepoint Hospital; Canadian Accredited Independent Schools; Canadian Assessment for Learning Network; Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity; Chiefs of Ontario; Children's Aid Society of Ottawa; Council of Associated Primary Educators; Hamilton Wentworth Catholic Childcare Centres; Hamilton-Wentworth Occasional Teacher Local; Indspire; I-Think; Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute; McMaster University; Mushkegowuk Council's Omushkegowuk Education Student Success; North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit; NorWest Community Health Centres; N'Swakamok Friendship Centre; Ontario Early Years Centre Stoney Creek; Ontario Healthy Schools Coalition; Ontario Institute for Studies in Education; Ontario Reggio Association; Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre; Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization; Plan Teach Assess; Shkoday Abinojiiwak Obimiwedoon; Teach for Canada; The Association for Bright Children of Ontario; The Critical Thinking Consultation; Thunder Bay District Health Unit; Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre; Tropicana Community Services; Leading in the Knowledge Age; Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario; Wesley Urban Ministries; YWCA Hamilton;
Educator Panel	Dian Baker (Toronto District School Board), Nancy Busetti (Durham Catholic District School Board), Peter Cameron (Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board), Andrew Campbell (Grand Erie District School Board), Jenny Chen (OSSTF), Rob Dubyk (OSSTF), Yves Durocher (Conseil scolaire catholique Providence), Cheryl Emrich (Waterloo Region District School Board), Éric Stephenson (Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario), Michelle Tymkin (Northwest Catholic District School Board)
Ministries	Anti-Racism Directorate; Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration; Ministry of Children and Youth Services; Ministry of Education

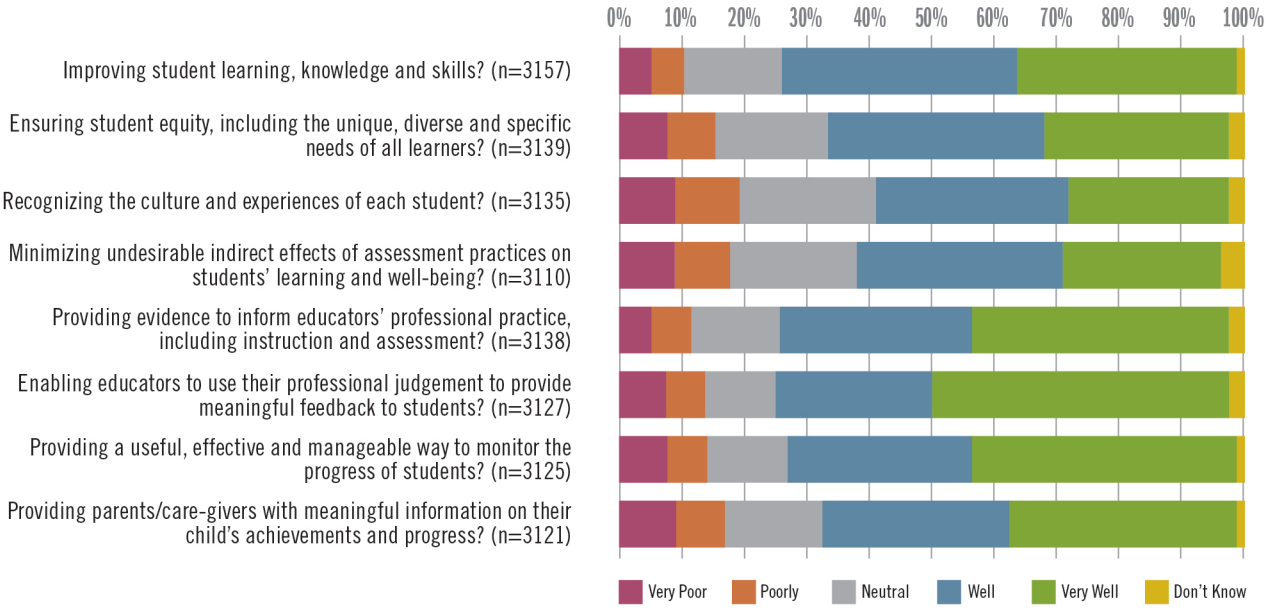
Parent Provincial Groups	Canadian Parents for French, ON; Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE); Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations (OFHSA); Parents partenaires en éducation (PPE); People for Education (P4E); Parent Involvement Committees (PIC); Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC)
School Boards	All 72 school boards (public, catholic and francophone).
Stakeholder Tables	First Nations Education Coordination Unit (FNECU); Initiatives Committee; Minister's Advisory Committee on First Nations, Métis and Inuit Working Group; Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE); Minister's Early Years Advisory Committee (MEYAC)
Teacher Federations	l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO); Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO); Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA); Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF); Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF)
Trustee Associations	Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario (ACÉPO), Ontario Public School Board Association (OPSBA), Ontario Student Trustee Association (OSTA-AECO)

Please note: The list above reflects participants that chose to self-identify their affiliation through any part of the review process.

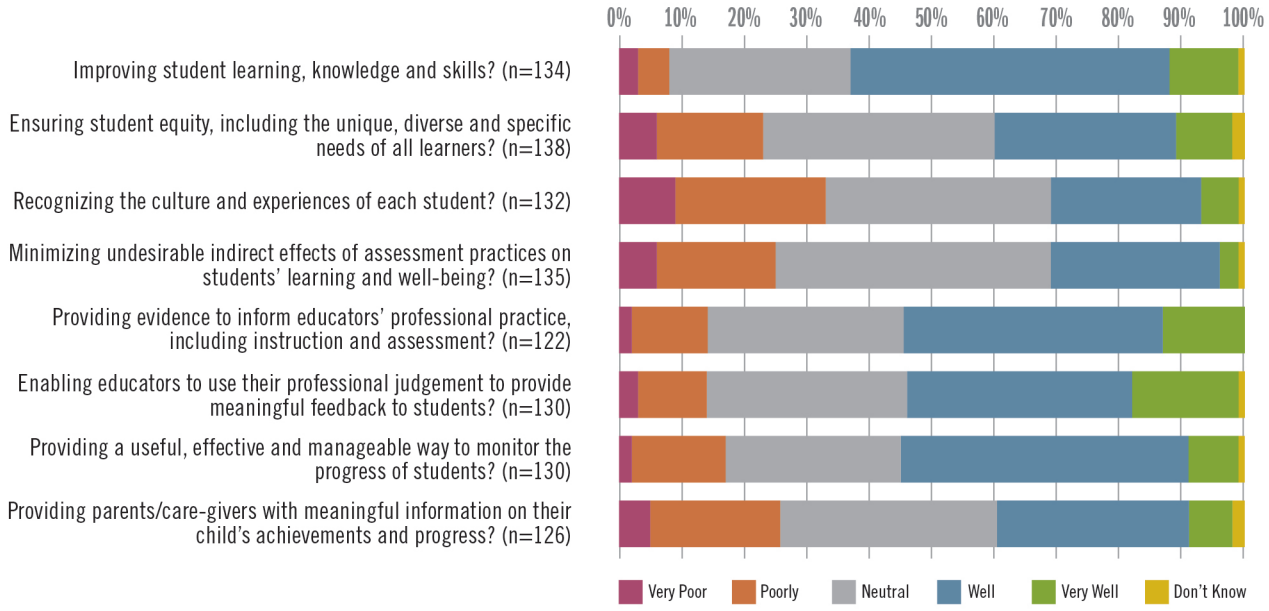
Appendix I: Summary of Online Survey Responses

Source data for Table 2 (classroom assessment)

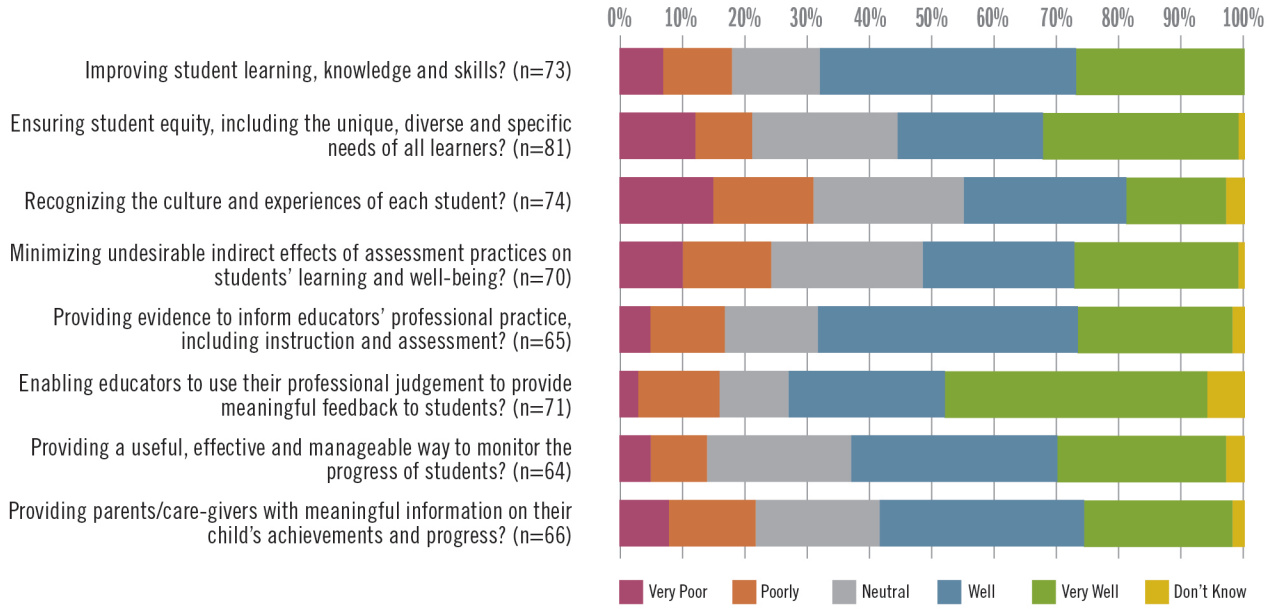
Online Survey From your perspective, how well or poorly do current classroom assessment approaches support the following goals, where 1 is "very poorly" and 5 is "very well"?



Stakeholder Sessions From your perspective, how well or poorly do current classroom assessment approaches support the following goals, where 1 is "very poorly" and 5 is "very well"?

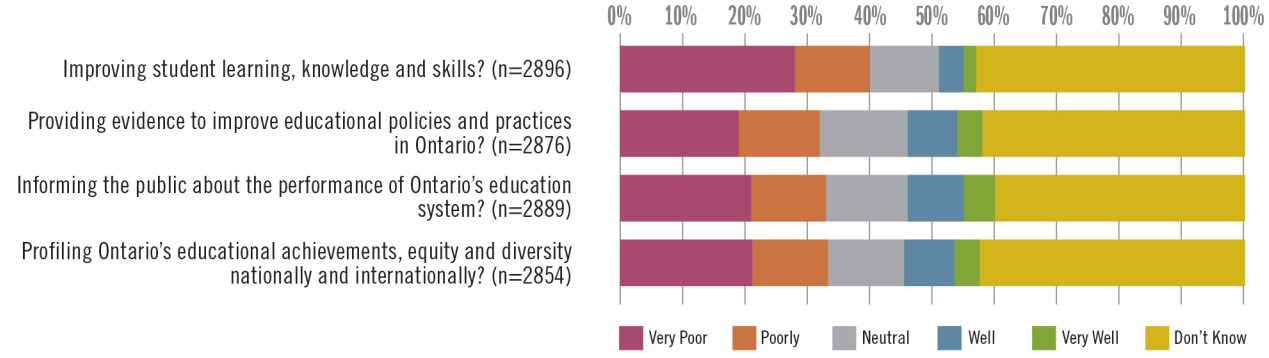


Public Sessions From your perspective, how well or poorly do current classroom assessment approaches support the following goals, where 1 is "very poorly" and 5 is "very well"?

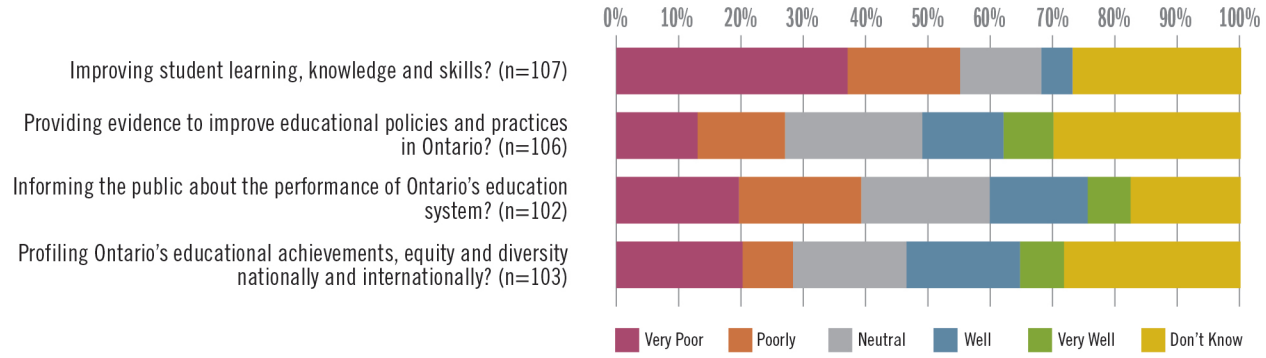


Source data for Table "2a" (national and international assessments)

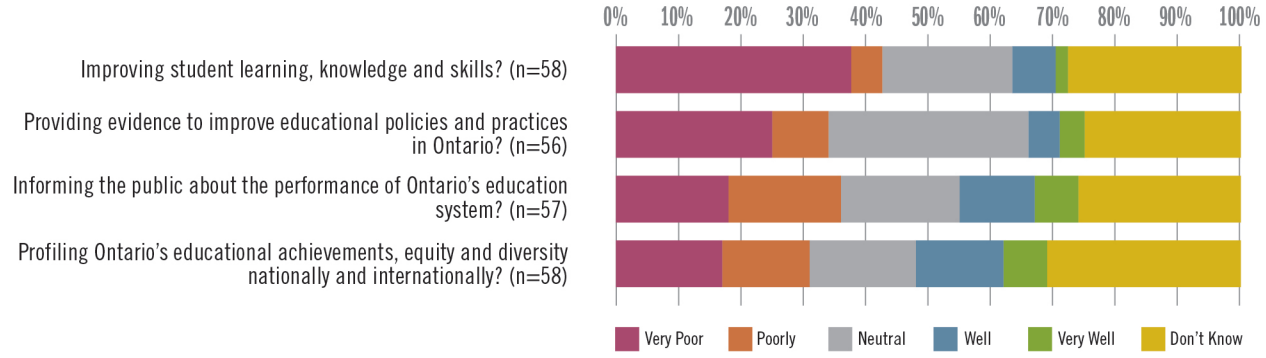
Online Survey From your perspective, how well or poorly do current national and international assessment approaches support the following goals, where 1 is "very poorly" and 5 is "very well"?



Stakeholder Sessions From your perspective, how well or poorly do current national and international assessment approaches support the following goals, where 1 is "very poorly" and 5 is "very well"?



Public Sessions From your perspective, how well or poorly do current national and international assessment approaches support the following goals, where 1 is "very poorly" and 5 is "very well"?



Appendix J: Open Data and Freedom of Information

Ontario has adopted the International Open Data Charter to enhance its Open Data Directive. The charter lays out the following six principles that serve as the foundation for releasing government data; the charter's principles say that data should be:

1. open by default
2. timely and comprehensive
3. accessible and usable
4. comparable and interoperable
5. for improved governance and citizen engagement
6. for inclusive development and innovation

That means that Ontario endeavours to make all data that it creates, collects, or manages public, unless it cannot do so for legal, privacy, security or commercially-sensitive reasons. Ontario has committed to expand the catalogue as new data becomes available.

Ontario's Open Data Directive maximizes access to government data by requiring all data to be made public on the Ontario Data Catalogue, unless it is exempt for legal, privacy, security, confidentiality or commercially-sensitive reasons.

Freedom of Information

Under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), the public has a right to ask certain public-sector organizations in Ontario for the information they hold. Anyone can make a request for information — there are no restrictions based on age or where a person lives. The information requested could include: print, film, electronic records (e.g. emails), plans, drawings, photographs, sound recordings (e.g. voice mail), DVDs. Not all information is available through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests however exclusions and exemptions are limited (e.g. Cabinet records, court records, records containing certain law enforcement information, records that could prejudice intergovernmental relations, personal information that could invade the privacy of an individual, certain records supplied in confidence by a third party, most labour relations records). There is a $5 application fee for each FOI request.

The Ministry of Education and the Education Quality and Accountability Office are both subject to FIPPA and must provide data requested under Freedom of Information requests. Organizations have 30 calendar days to process Freedom of Information requests except in specific circumstances.

Glossary

TERM	DEFINITION
Accommodations	Special teaching and assessment strategies, human supports, and/or individualized equipment required to enable a student to learn and to demonstrate learning. The provincial curriculum expectations for the grade are not altered for a student receiving accommodations.
Achievement chart	A standard, province-wide guide to be used by teachers to make judgements about student work based on clear performance standards.
Assessment	The process of gathering, from a variety of sources, information that accurately reflects how well a student is achieving the curriculum expectations in a subject or course.
Categories of knowledge and skills	Four broad areas of knowledge and skills within which subject/course expectations are organized. The categories are to be considered interrelated, reflecting the wholeness and interconnectedness of learning. The four categories are: (1) Knowledge and Understanding, (2) Thinking (Thinking and Investigation, for Science), (3) Communication, and (4) Application.
Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)	An intergovernmental body founded in 1967 by ministers of education to serve as: a forum to discuss policy issues; a mechanism through which to undertake activities, projects, and initiatives in areas of mutual interest; a means by which to consult and cooperate with national education organizations and the federal government; and an instrument to represent the education interests of the provinces and territories internationally. CMEC provides leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels and contributes to the exercise of the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education. CMEC is governed by an Agreed Memorandum approved by all members. A Chair is elected every two years based on rotation among the provinces. All 13 provinces and territories are members.
Criterion-referenced assessment	Assessment that focuses on whether a student's performance meets a predetermined standard, level, or set of criteria rather than on the student's performance measured in relation to the performance of other students. The goal of using a criterion-based approach is to make the assessment and evaluation of student achievement as fair, reliable, and transparent as possible.
Culture	The way in which people live, think, and define themselves as a community.
Curriculum expectations	The knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop and to demonstrate in their class work, on tests, and in various other activities on which their achievement is assessed and evaluated. Overall expectations describe in general terms the knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of each grade/course. Specific expectations describe the expected knowledge and skills in greater detail.

Diagnostic assessment	Assessment that is used to identify a student's needs and abilities and the student's readiness to acquire the knowledge and skills outlined in the curriculum expectations. Diagnostic assessment usually takes place at the start of a school year, term, semester, or teaching unit. It is a key tool used by teachers in planning instruction and setting appropriate learning goals.
Differentiated instruction	An approach to instruction designed to maximize growth by considering the needs of each student at his or her current stage of development and offering that student a learning experience that responds to his or her individual needs. Differentiated instruction recognizes that equity of opportunity is not achieved through equal treatment and takes into account factors such as the student's readiness, interest, and learning preferences.
Diversity	The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.
Early Development Instrument (EDI)	A questionnaire developed by Dr. Dan Offord and Dr. Magdalena Janus at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University. The EDI is a 103-item questionnaire completed by kindergarten teachers in the second half of the school year that measures children's ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations in five general domains: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, communication skills and general knowledge.
English language learners (ELL)	Students in provincially funded English-language schools whose first language is a language other than English or a variety of English that is significantly different from that used for instruction in Ontario schools, and who require focused educational supports to assist them in attaining proficiency in English. These students may have been born in Canada or may be recently arrived from other countries.
Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)	An independent "arms-length" agency of the Ontario government that is responsible for designing, conducting, and reporting on curriculum-based large-scale assessments in publicly funded Ontario schools, including the annual assessments of Primary Division (Grades 1–3) and Junior Division (Grades 4–6) students in reading, writing, and mathematics; the annual assessment of Grade 9 students in mathematics (academic and applied); and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. The EQAO also manages Ontario's participation in national and international assessments and reports the results.
Equity	A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean that people are treated the same without regard for individual differences.

Evaluation	The process of judging the quality of student learning on the basis of established criteria and assigning a value to represent that quality. Evaluation is based on assessments of learning that provide data on student achievement at strategic times throughout the grade/subject/course, often at the end of a period of learning.
First Nation	A term used to refer to any of the distinct cultural groups of Aboriginal peoples. The term came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the world "Indian" and is now used instead of the word "band" in the names of Aboriginal communities.
Formative assessment	Assessment that takes place during instruction in order to provide direction for improvement for individual students and for adjustment to instructional programs for individual students and for a whole class. The information gathered is used for the specific purpose of helping students improve while they are still gaining knowledge and practising skills.
Grades	**For the purposes of this report, the term grade(s) is interchangeable with the term marks, which refer to reported levels of achievement for students in letter or percentage form.** 1) Grade(s) as used in Growing Success: A. Final course or subject grade, which summarizes all the learning evidence in relation to the overall expectations of the course or subject within a grade year (Grade 3, 6 or Grade 9 English, etc.). Expressed as a letter symbol (A, B, C, etc.) or a percentage (73, 86, 90, etc.) B. Assigning a value for student achievement in discrete or individual demonstrations of learning of curriculum expectations based on the levels of the Achievement Chart, and expressed using letters or percentages. Pages 16, 17 and 40. The collection of these grades are summarized to determine the final course of subject grade, determined by professional judgment and in secondary, mathematical calculations. 2) The year of school that a student is in, based on their age, ranging from Grade 1 (which follows Kindergarten) to Grade 12, the last year of secondary school. Each grade level has its own curriculum expectations. Organized by course subject or discipline, such as math, social science, art, etc.
Inclusive education	Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings, and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected.

Individual Education Plan (IEP)	A written plan describing the special education program and/or services required by a particular student, including a record of the particular accommodations needed to help the student achieve his or her learning expectations. An IEP must be developed for a student who has been identified as exceptional by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC), and may also be developed for a student who has special education needs but has not been identified as exceptional. An IEP is a working document that identifies learning expectations that may be modified from or alternative to the expectations given in the curriculum policy document for the appropriate grade and subject or course. It outlines the specific knowledge and skills to be assessed and evaluated for the purpose of reporting student achievement.
Indigenous peoples	**For the purposes of this report, the term Indigenous refers to First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples.** The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. Section 35(2) of the Constitution Act, 1982, states: "In this Act, 'Aboriginal peoples of Canada' includes the Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada". These separate groups have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. Their common link is their indigenous ancestry.
Inuit	Aboriginal people of northern Canada, living mainly in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, northern Quebec, and Labrador. Inuit are not covered by the Indian Act.
Large-scale assessments	One-time measures that take snapshots of the strengths and weaknesses of education systems. They contain standardized content and are administered and scored according to standardized procedures.
Marks	**For the purposes of this report, the term marks is used interchangeably with the term grades. Grade can also refer to the year of school.** The letter or percentage that is reported in accordance with the achievement charts in the provincial curriculum to demonstrate student achievement of the overall curriculum expectations. It is expected that both mathematical calculations and professional judgement will inform the determination of percentage marks.
Métis	People of mixed First Nation and European ancestry. Métis history and culture draw on diverse ancestral origins, such as French, Irish, Scottish, Cree, and Ojibwa.
Minority group	A group of people within a given society that has little or no access to social, economic, political, cultural, or religious power. The term may refer to a group that is small in number or it may connote inferior social position.

Modifications	Changes made to the age-appropriate grade-level expectations for a subject or course in order to meet a student's learning needs. For students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP), these changes could include: expectations from a different grade level; significant changes (increase or decrease) in the number and/or complexity of the learning expectations; and measurable and observable performance tasks. At the secondary level, a credit may or may not be granted for a course, depending on the extent to which the expectations in the course have been modified. Grade-level expectations may also be modified to support the needs of English language learners. At the secondary level, when modifications are made to support English language learning needs, the principal works collaboratively with the classroom teacher to determine the integrity of the credit.
Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)	The standard method for assessing the literacy skills of students for the purpose of determining whether they meet the Ontario secondary school literacy graduation requirement. The OSSLT is based on the expectations for reading and writing throughout the Ontario curriculum up to and including Grade 9.
Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP)	A national large-scale assessment developed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). PCAP is administered every three years to assess the reading, mathematics, and science knowledge and skills of Grade 8 students.
Pathways	Combinations of courses and learning experiences or programs leading to different post-secondary school destinations. The five possible destinations are apprenticeship training, college, community living, university, and the workplace. All pathways are equally valid and are selected based on the strengths, interests, and future goals of each student.
Policy/Program Memoranda (PPM)	Numbered policy directives are issued to district school boards and school authorities to outline the Ministry of Education's expectations regarding the implementation of ministry policies and programs.
Professional judgement	Judgement that is informed by professional knowledge of curriculum expectations, context, evidence of learning, methods of instruction and assessment, and the criteria and standards that indicate success in student learning. In professional practice, judgement involves a purposeful and systematic thinking process that evolves in terms of accuracy and insight with ongoing reflection and self-correction.
Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)	A large-scale international assessment developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that reports every three years on the reading literacy, mathematical literacy, and scientific literacy of fifteen-year old students.
Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)	A large-scale international assessment conducted every five years by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement to assess the reading achievement of students in Grade 4.

Provincial large-scale assessments	Standardized assessments developed and administered annually by the Education Quality and Accountability Office. Assessments include reading, writing, and mathematics in the Primary Division (Grades 1–3) and Junior Division (Grades 4–6); mathematics in Grade 9; and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test.
Provincial standard	Achievement of the expectations in a subject/course at level 3, as described in the achievement chart for the subject/discipline. Parents and teachers of students achieving at level 3 can be confident that their children will be prepared for work in subsequent grades/courses.
Racialized group	A group of people who may experience social inequities on the basis of race, colour, and/or ethnicity, and who may be subjected to differential treatment.
Reliability	The degree to which an assessment or evaluation is consistent and stable in measuring what it is intended to measure. An assessment or evaluation is considered reliable when the same results occur regardless of when or where the assessment or evaluation occurs or who does the scoring.
Standardized test	A type of test commonly used to provide valid, reliable, and unbiased information about students' knowledge in various areas. The same questions are used and the same directions are given for each group to whom the test is administered. Specific time limits are set, and each student's performance may be compared with that of all other students taking the same test.
Standards-referenced assessment	Assessments that are based on curriculum expectations and standards (levels of achievement) for student performance.
Student-led conference	A student-parent conference that engages the student in direct communication with the parents through the use of portfolios illustrating the student's achievement and learning. Students take the lead in walking their parents through a selection of accomplishments and demonstrations of their work. Student-led conferences bring students to the centre of classroom assessment.
Student self-assessment	The process by which a student, with the ongoing support of the teacher, learns to recognize, describe, and apply success criteria related to particular learning goals and then use the information to monitor his or her own progress towards achieving the learning goals, make adjustments in learning approaches, and set individual goals for learning.
Student-teacher conference	A teacher's planned dialogue with an individual student about the student's learning. Conferences offer teachers opportunities to get to know their students' strengths and the challenges they face in relation to specific learning strands or expectations, to monitor their progress, and to plan future instruction based on identified needs and interests.

Students with special education needs	Students who have been formally identified as requiring special education supports and services by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC), as well as students who are not identified but who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and are receiving special education programs and services.
Summative assessment	Evaluation that occurs at the end of important segments of student learning. It is used to summarize and communicate what students know and can do with respect to curriculum expectations.
Teacher moderation	A process for ensuring that the assessment of student learning and the results of assessment and evaluation are comparable across classes and/or schools. In teacher moderation, teachers examine student work together to share beliefs and practices, enhance their understanding, compare their interpretations of student results, and confirm their judgements about a student's level of achievement. Teachers might also look at the assignment that was given and analyse its effectiveness in relation to the learning achieved by the students.
Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)	An international, large-scale assessment conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement at various grade levels, including Grades 4 and 8, to determine the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of mathematics and science.
Validity	The degree to which an assessment or evaluation actually measures what it claims to measure and the extent to which inferences, conclusions, and decisions made on the basis of the results are appropriate and meaningful.
Well-being	A positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met. It is supported through equity and respect for our diverse identities and strengths. Well-being in early years and school settings is about helping children and students become resilient, so that they can make positive and healthy choices to support learning and achievement both now and in the future.

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