

Towards Fully Appropriate
Public Education in Manitoba
A 75-Year Journey

Lesley G. Eblie Trudel, Ph.D.

Occasional Paper Series

Leadership Education, Number 3

MERN

Manitoba Education Research Network

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Abstract

While students in Manitoba have been required to attend school for approximately 75 years, this has not always been the case for students with exceptionalities. It was at one point illegal to educate them in a public school in the province. If students with exceptionalities were in schools, placement was made in segregated facilities often located far away from their home communities.

Over time, Manitoba introduced legislation to allow students with exceptionalities to attend public schools. This change required additional resources in the way of government funding to school divisions and a reconfiguration of staffing at both the provincial and school division levels. Increased parent advocacy, greater numbers of staff trained in service delivery for students, and shifts in the human rights movement saw increased numbers of students with exceptional needs attending schools. While students were included by law in the mainstream of education, in practice their involvement in school lacked authenticity.

A province-wide review of supports and services and accompanying amendments to provincial legislation saw the introduction of programming changes to support students' participation in both academic and social components of their schools. A related document of standards was developed to assist school divisions in consistently applying elements of the amendments to the legislation.

In years following, the province continued to address challenges of consistency and alignment in education for all students. This involved dilemmas around the implementation and ongoing usage of a provincial report card, challenges in programming due to an increase in the mandatory age for attendance at school, and struggles around province-wide acceptance of legislated amendments on human diversity. A provincial task force recommended a new, strengths-based funding model for students with exceptional needs.

With a legacy of 75 years of gradual change for the inclusion of students in Manitoba schools, the province is poised to redefine success in this diverse learning environment. Discussions regarding success for all students, however, must occur within the context of the changing world. While traditional notions of success in the areas of academic achievement continue to be standard within this dialogue, elements such as equity, inclusion, sustainability, and, above all, well-being are recommended for additional and future consideration. Manitoba schools and school divisions have a solid foundation from which to learn and grow for the benefit of all students.

Education in a Canadian Context

In Canada, unlike other countries, there is no federal department of education and there is no nationally structured system of education. Education is primarily a provincial responsibility (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2017). This arrangement can be found in Section 93 of the *British North America Act* (1867) and subsequently in the *Constitution Act* (1982). The *Constitution Act*, like its precursor, recognizes that each provincial legislature has the exclusive authority to make laws in relation to education. The Council of Ministers of Education (2017) relates that across Canadian jurisdictions, provincial governmental departments are responsible for the organization, delivery, and assessment of education at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. Within this structure the federal government of Canada provides support for post-secondary education, as well as the instruction of official languages. In addition, the federal government is responsible for the education of personnel in the armed forces and the coast guard, and inmates in federal correctional facilities. The federal government shares responsibility with First Nations communities through direct funding for provision of education to children who reside on reserves and attend federal or band-operated schools, and through indirect funding for those who attend provincial schools.

Young, Levin, and Wallin (2014) note that in exercising the constitutional authority in education, Canadian provinces have created local educational bodies that are called school boards or school districts. Each has legally defined powers delegated to them by the provinces; however, school boards exist only at the discretion of the provincial government. Final authority over provincial educational decision making remains with a minister of education in each province and territory in Canada. Young et al. remind us that since 1943, young people have been required to go to school everywhere in Canada. The primary vehicle for this task is a publicly funded, provincial education system. Across the country there are various legislative provisions regarding compulsory school ages, definitions of what constitutes a school, and grounds on which one might be exempted from attending. That being said, provision is made annually for approximately five million young Canadians to attend school.

Educating Students with Exceptionalities in Manitoba

From the time of compulsory attendance until 1958, however, children and youth with exceptionalities in the province of Manitoba either did not attend school or were expected to enrol at special schools. Words such as *mentally retarded*, *mentally defective*, *crippled*, and *mentally handicapped* were used to describe students with exceptionalities during this era. If someone knowingly enrolled a student with exceptionalities at that time, they could be fined. As a result, the Department of Education funded students who were blind to attend school in Brantford, Ontario. Students who were Deaf were sent to be educated at either the Saskatoon School for the Deaf or the Manitoba Day School for the Deaf in Winnipeg. Children with cognitive delay attended the Kinsmen Centre in Winnipeg, an institution that was funded by a provincial service organization, and in isolated cases in Winnipeg school divisions, teachers were assigned to help students who were struggling in school. Outside of the capital city of Winnipeg, however, there were virtually no services offered to students with exceptionalities. In July 1957, the Manitoba government formed a Royal Commission on Education to study all aspects of education in the province below the university level. The Commission submitted its report, along with recommendations for changes, in 1959. The report noted that previous practice was totally inadequate and recommendations were made, such as the development of facilities and implementation of staffing for students with exceptionalities, as well as the organization of programming supported through grants established by the provincial department of education (Blais and Van Camp, 2005).

Blais and Van Camp describe how in the early 1960s the Province of Manitoba introduced legislation to allow children with handicaps to attend public schools. A section of *The Public Schools Act* that excluded those persons with mental deficiencies was repealed. The latter occurred simultaneously with the consolidation of many smaller school districts into larger school divisions. By the late 1960s through to 1977, youth with disabilities were slowly integrated into the school system. Staffing (beginning with two positions at the Department of Education) and block funding was initiated by the Province, while associations were established to provide professional learning through conferences and networking opportunities. Parental advocacy groups were also becoming far more common within this time. Stewart (2008) describes how the 1980s brought about whole-scale school reform through the accountability movement. Commensurate with the idea of accountability was the drive for excellence in student achievement and the expectation of high performance for all. Stewart argues that not only would school divisions have to be accountable for the use of public funds while increasing student achievement, but they were also expected to include all children and youth as part of this movement. With the patriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982, all individuals were considered equal before and under the law. Subsequent provincial human rights codes defined multiple criteria under

which protection from discrimination would be provided, and these included mental and physical disabilities.

The reality of including students within the school system involved challenges, however. While students were included as required by law in the mainstream of education, in practice, their involvement often lacked authenticity. Wolfensberger (1983) writes extensively on this issue, and coins the term *social role valorization* to highlight the right of individuals not only to be included in mainstream society, but also to be valued equally, and expected to contribute meaningfully to their communities. Blais and Van Camp outline how specific funding was eventually allocated by the Department of Education to ensure that students who met delineated criteria for disabilities received adequate services. As well, the use of educational assistants (also known as teacher assistants or paraprofessionals) became an increasingly common practice to support students with disabilities as they attended Manitoba schools. Collectively, these efforts were seen as significant steps toward the achievement of dignity, individualization, and inclusion.

In 1989, Manitoba Education and Training released a manual entitled *Policy and Procedural Guidelines for the Education of Students in the Public School System*. This provincial document remained the principal tool for navigating the education system for students with disabilities. It was not until the late 1990s that a review of existing programs, policies, and practices began, including a comprehensive public consultation and data collection process. This became known as the Special Education Review (SER). The purpose of SER was essentially to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of education and school-based services for children who required special education in order to strengthen their learning opportunities and outcomes. The results of this review were detailed in a final report in 1998 (Proactive Information Services). A working committee known as the Special Education Review Initiative (SERI) was given the task of implementing the recommendations of SER. In 2001, *Supporting Inclusive Schools: A Handbook for Student Services* (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth) was released, containing a philosophy of inclusion that remains current today. The Manitoba Philosophy of Inclusion reads as follows:

Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship.

In Manitoba we embrace inclusion as a means of enhancing the well-being of every member of the community. By working together, we strengthen our capacity to provide the foundation for a richer future for all of us. (p. 3)

The intention of the statement was to reflect critical declarations to initiate a shift in the practice of school divisions from bureaucratic compliance to a new way of thinking and acting. In spite of the Special Education Review Initiative and a provincial philosophy of inclusion, Manitoba was one of the few provinces in

Canada that did not yet have specific legislation and clear regulations regarding students with exceptionalities. The governance in Manitoba relating to education had for the most part been consensus driven. After all, most agreed that the province should provide the best possible education for all students, and no one disagreed with the goal of a quality education. However, amid pressures to improve academic performance, increase services, keep more students in school, yet reduce spending, the issue of education for students with exceptionalities was one of many initiatives that the government of the day had to balance (Stewart, 2008). Nonetheless, the support for special education legislation in Manitoba continued to grow purposefully. Parents advocated for the right to contribute to their children's educational programming, for consistent services, specialized assessments, and training for staff, and the public in general demanded that schools address issues around student behaviour.

Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba

In November 2003, Bill 13, *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Appropriate Educational Programming)*, was introduced by the Province of Manitoba. In October 2005, the bill and supporting regulations were proclaimed. This amendment to Manitoba education legislation set the context for the future development of standards to guide policy and programming for all students in the province, particularly those with exceptional needs, to receive the programming that they required. The legislation supported the Manitoba Philosophy of Inclusion that was introduced earlier and became part of the education regulation. *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Appropriate Educational Programming)* reflected Manitoba's commitment to providing all students with appropriate programming to support their participation in both the academic and social life of their schools. The legislation went beyond affirming the practice that was already occurring in school divisions, and further outlined the obligations to provide appropriate programming for each student, regardless of need. An additional document entitled the *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006) was developed to elaborate upon the education regulations and establish consistent criteria for school divisions. The *Standards* document provided school divisions with a framework that they could use in developing local policy. Appropriate educational programming was defined within the *Standards* document as a "collaborative school-family-community process where school communities create learning environments and provide resources and services that are responsive to lifelong learning, social and emotional needs of all students" (p. 1). Although the provincial document *Towards Inclusion: A Handbook for Modified Course Designation, Senior 1-4: A Resource for Senior Years Schools* (1995) alluded to how appropriate educational programming should be implemented, *Standards for Student Services* helped to clarify that appropriate educational programming begins with Manitoba's regular curriculum. Programming would then branch out, depending

on the particular requirements of the student involved. Students who were unable to access the regular curriculum due to specific needs would be required by the standards to have an individual education plan (IEP), documenting outcomes that were different from the regular curriculum. At the high school level, students who experienced significant cognitive delay would have the curricular outcomes of their course work changed (modified) or could have their programming revised entirely (individualized). Principals, as educational leaders in their schools, were required to take responsibility for the education of all students, and for the instruction provided by the staff under their direction. The requirements contained in the *Standards* document applied to all grades in the public school system and the publicly funded independent school system, from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

One of the hallmarks of the legislation and related standards was the necessity that all school division policy and practice in the province occur in alignment with the *Constitution Act* (Canada, 1982) and *The Human Rights Code* (Manitoba, 1987). School divisions would be required to provide reasonable accommodation for students' special needs, unless divisions could prove undue hardship due to cost, risk to safety, impact on others, or other identified factors. Given that in Manitoba the rights and responsibilities relating to education are defined in *The Public Schools Act* and in *The Education Administration Act*, school boards were then required to provide all enrolled resident students with school accommodation, and were required to provide access to appropriate educational programming for all students attending catchment area schools. The idea behind the *Standards* document was to promote consistency and enhance the quality of educational practice within the province, so that regardless of where a student attended school, there could be assurance of appropriate educational programming and services. *Standards for Student Services* outlined and provided direction for appropriate educational programming in the areas of policy, access, early identification, assessment, planning in education, student discipline, coordinated services, and professional support. At that time, school divisions were required to develop local policies and procedures that reflected the content of the *Standards* document. Additionally, and for the first time in Manitoba's history, a process for dispute resolution in education was introduced to protect the rights of students and parents, as well as address differences of opinion about the education of their children. Within the document, the province reinforced the importance of a partnership between schools and parents and encouraged the resolution of differences, prior to proceeding with any formal dispute resolution provision allowed by the standards. Nonetheless, through alignment of policy with provincial legislation, school divisions would be less likely to face challenges to their practices.

Appropriate Education: From Inclusion to Diversity

In the years following *The Public Schools Amendment Act* and the publication of *Standards for Student Services*, the province continued to address challenges of consistency and alignment in education. The Manitoba provincial report card was introduced in 2010 with mandatory implementation in 2013. The purpose of the common report card was to ensure that parents received information about their children's education and could fully participate as partners in the education process. The report card is written in plain language to communicate more clearly with parents. The report card was developed through consultation with parents and educators, including representatives of teachers, parent councils, school business officials, superintendents, and school boards. Despite the clarity and commonality that the Province envisioned, ambiguity continued to exist in the reporting process for teachers and parents. For example, while the reporting mechanism seemed obvious for a student working through regular curriculum at the student's assigned grade level, there was confusion on how to report a student working on regular curricular outcomes, but at another grade level (e.g., a student struggling in Grade 9 Mathematics and working on regular curriculum at the Grade 5 level). Though there was acknowledgement of the need to indicate that students were working outside of the regular curriculum, there was no method created by the Province to accurately collect and report the reality of this situation. Additionally, the Manitoba report card templates in Grades 1 through 8 were created with check boxes to signify that a student was working on an individual education plan (IEP). Report card templates for high school students in Grades 9 through 12 allowed for teachers to report a student working on modified or individualized programming due to significant cognitive delay, or to indicate that a student was working on an IEP due to behavioural concerns. Yet in either case, there were no means for communicating further results. Essentially, all of the standard report card data could be collected and reported for typical students who were engaging with the regular curriculum at their assigned grade levels, but this could not be communicated clearly, or accurately, for typical students who were working at other grade levels. As well, there remained no standard reporting format or equitable process established to communicate progress for Manitoba students who had an IEP.

Equity continued to be an enduring yet somewhat elusive concept, subsequent to *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Appropriate Educational Programming)*. Shortly after, a number of acts were also amended, but this time consolidated under the guise of *The Safe Schools Charter*. This process eventually led to Bill 18, *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools)* (2013). Bill 18 not only required schools to define bullying and cyber-bullying and develop policies to address the issues, it required school boards to establish a Respect for Human Diversity Policy to recognize the equity of all pupils, primarily promoting the acceptance of and respect for others in safe, caring, and inclusive environments. This amendment was significant in the province, as it shifted the concept of inclusion beyond

the context of students with exceptional needs. Shaddock, MacDonald, Hook, Giorcelli, and Arthur-Kelly (2009) remark that while youth with exceptionalities were one group who were at the forefront of the inclusion movement, the scope has since widened. They add that diversity now encompasses those with different ethnicities, religions, languages, family structures, personalities, orientations, and learning styles. This expanded lens of inclusion, Shaddock et al. note, requires those working within education to adopt an approach where diversity is the norm—a shift in thinking to reframe and reconfigure how all students could be supported.

When the province extended the age requirements for students to attend school by an additional two years, this challenged Manitoba educators to reframe their thinking on how all students could be supported in a school until they were adults. While Manitoba students would continue to have a right to attend school between ages 6 and 21, the compulsory school age, which begins at age 7, was now extended from 16 to 18 years of age. The Minister of Education at the time took significant steps through *The Preparing Students for Success Act* (2011) to focus on the importance of school attendance for all children and youth from the time they were of school age until they reached the age of majority. Funding was made available by the province for school divisions to address the diverse learning needs of students who may have become disengaged from learning and to ensure the attendance of all students until adulthood.

Ten years after *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Appropriate Educational Programming)*, the Province of Manitoba chose to make possible changes and improvements to the legislation. The Province's Inclusive Education Advisory Committee began a review of the *Standards for Student Services*, with the intention of updating original language, adding new information, and providing further clarification for certain items that had caused confusion over time. Specifically, the proposed addition for the *Standards* was information on the role of the student services administrator, a school division position that had evolved with the inclusion of students with exceptional needs in schools.

During this same time, the Province also sought to explore alternative models relating to funding for students with exceptional needs. A provincial task force was struck by the Minister of Education and Training that consisted of representatives of Manitoba teachers, business officials, parent councils, student services administrators, superintendents, and designated school division personnel. The purpose of the task force was to make recommendations to create a more equitable, inclusive, user-friendly, and effective funding model. Manitoba was, nonetheless, the last province in Canada to support and practise an individual categorical and deficit-based model to fund students with exceptional needs in schools. The task force identified that the new model should above all focus on student strengths. Four funding model options were given for consideration, and in the end, the structure that was endorsed would combine the total funding amounts for individual students with severe and profound needs

into a formula base that would be provided to school divisions. An additional block funding amount known as the Student Services Grant was also proposed to remain as an allocation to school divisions. The task force further endorsed that students with profound emotional and behavioural challenges would retain their individual categorical based support, as would students who had profound health care needs.

Aside from the funding recommendations, the task force went one step further by recommending an additional mechanism for accountability. The task force recognized that an Individual Education Plan Report (IEPR) was an important element to document plans, supports, and achievements relating to students with exceptional needs. Although a reporting mechanism of this description is not currently mandated by the province, the realization of this specific recommendation would finally offer equity in communication of school performance for all Manitoba students.

The recommendations of the Task Force on Special Needs Funding (2015) were welcomed by most in the province, although some groups remained tentative about the possible changes. It was noted in the proposed funding recommendations that specific supports should be made available to help parents understand the changes to the funding model in the province, and to reassure them that a new funding model would by no means reduce the accountability that school divisions had to provide supports to students. According to those who endorsed the changes, the potential opportunity for school divisions to support students in a strengths-based, inclusive process was timely. The idea of encompassing school and classroom diversity in general allowed for the full spirit and intention of the philosophy of inclusion. Inclusive schools, as defined in the *Standards for Student Services*, should be aware of the concept of universal design—an architectural term referring to the process of creating environments that are usable by people with the widest range of abilities and operating within the greatest variety of situations. Applied to the field of education, the concept of universal design signifies that school communities, including classroom teachers, would develop plans for the full capacity of their student population. In other words, in universally designed schools, all students in Manitoba would be provided with access to the resources they required, regardless of their learning needs.

Defining Success in Diverse Learning Environments

Manitoba Education and Training (2017) indicates in its mission statement that it endeavours to ensure that all Manitoba's children and youth have relevant, engaging, and high quality educational opportunities that prepare them for citizenship in a democratic, socially just, and sustainable society. The statement goes on to describe a vision of having every learner in the province complete high school, with a sense of accomplishment and optimism. High school completion is viewed by the Province and most in the general public as the minimum requirement for either pursuing further education or for entering into the world of work. In order to gauge this vision, the province attempts to understand where schools in Manitoba are making progress and where improvement is still required.

As a result, the High School Graduation Rates and Student Achievement Statistics (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017) data was gathered and shared with school divisions and the public. In Manitoba, data on the graduation rate is calculated as either the traditionally collected proxy cohort rate (obtained by dividing the number of graduates in any given year by the number of Grade 9 students entering high school four years earlier) or through an improved technique known as the student-tracked method. The latter is able to follow individual students as they progress through school and allows the public to understand the length of time it would take for individual students in the province to graduate from high school. The student-tracked method also helps the province to better identify achievement gaps, especially for designated groups of students.

In addition, the province began collating and sharing data available on provincial assessments in Grades 3, 4, 7, 8, and 12. Manitoba Education and Training focused on a comparison of credit attainment in English language arts and mathematics at Grades 9 and 12. The observation of data in these subject areas showed that credit attainment in Grade 9 was indicative of credit achievement in Grade 12. In December 2016, the province also requested that school divisions upload provincial report card data from their student information systems. Grades from report cards were noted as additions to the existing collection of data, which was intended to develop a more accurate understanding of how students were progressing through the provincial education system.

Data in terms of high student achievement encompassed one priority area indicated by Manitoba Education and Training (2017); however, provincial officials also announced that they would be looking toward other priority areas as well, including equity, citizenship, sustainability, well-being, and public engagement. Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi (2010) write that in a performance-oriented society, metrics matter. In addition, they note that we value what we measure, and what we measure largely affects what we do. The step by the Province of Manitoba in addressing and eventually measuring additional priority areas is evidence of a shift in discourse from accountability and excellence to the measurement of

significant contextual factors surrounding student achievement. Falkenberg says the following about this shift:

The slow but progressive shift at the political and economic level on what we should actually measure to assess social progress is informative for . . . the discourse of shifting what we measure when we assess the quality and success of public school education in Manitoba. (2015, p. 3)

Falkenberg, in comparing measurement and accountability programs in national and international assessments, argues for consideration beyond measuring student outcomes on narrow metrics. He suggests that if educators concentrate solely on achievements in language, mathematics, and science, students may be worse off in terms of their well-being and well-becoming. He characterizes well-becoming as linking to sustainable development or sustainable living. Well-being, on the other hand, he describes as how students are, as opposed to how well they are prepared to live. He suggested that well-being is more than the absence of illness, and could be equated with quality and purpose in life, even happiness and flourishing. Falkenberg concludes that Manitobans should conceptualize these ideas of well-being and well-becoming as important ends of school education.

Falkenberg's observations are worth considering in light of the current context of Manitoba schools. Pagtakhan (2016) notes that the educational system is now vastly different. "Schools now strive to identify, honour, and celebrate diversity in all forms—from cultural diversity to neurodiversity. Schools work to create safe places where students are accepted and valued" (p. 37). However, despite the progress and positive changes for all students in Manitoba over time, the education system is not without its challenges. With over ten thousand children living outside their birth homes, the province has one of the highest rates of children in care in the world. A high rate of children in care is indicative of unacceptable living conditions, such as poverty, poor housing, parenting difficulties, and family dysfunction (Brownell, Chartier, Au, MacWilliam, Schultz, Guenette, and Valdivia, 2015). Trocmé, MacLaurin, and Fallon note that "the incidence of out-of-home placement is a gauge of overall well-being for children in a community" (2009, p. 4). According to Brownell et al., there is also an over-representation of Indigenous children in care in the province. While they comprise approximately one quarter of Manitoba's children, Indigenous children represent 90% of the total number of children in care. This is largely due to the destructive effects of colonization in Indigenous communities, through government-sanctioned residential schools and the removal of children from their families (Ball, 2008; Blackstock, Trocmé, & Bennett, 2004; Sinha, Trocmé, Fallon, MacLaurin, Fast, Prokop, et al., 2011). Additionally, Manitoba Education and Training's four-year Manitoba student-tracked high school graduation rate data showed Indigenous students graduating at approximately half the rate of their non-Indigenous peers. In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) highlighted the importance of identifying and understanding differences of this nature, in their call to eliminate the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

Manitoba schools have also become sites of growing, learning, and belonging for the large number of new Canadians who have immigrated to the province. Many of the students have English as an additional language; some of those students are refugees who have experienced trauma from war-affected backgrounds. All require an appropriate and supportive environment with a future emphasis on education pathways. Accordingly, in light of the diversity and change in Manitoba schools, when education is discussed, public engagement and discourse must include the priorities of equity, citizenship, sustainability, and well-being.

The Future of Diversity in Manitoba Education

The main work of schools, to educate children and youth, has remained largely unchanged over the years in provinces across Canada. What has changed, however, is the practice and process of education within each jurisdiction, which largely reflect conditions and pressures of a changing world. There is an ongoing need for improved performance by students in light of global competition for employment and wealth, yet at the same time, schools are expected to enhance students' attitudes, develop expanded values, and improve behaviour (Young, Levin, & Wallin, 2014). The journey of Manitoba schools and school divisions reflects this path, as evidenced by the changes and challenges over the past 75 years. A key challenge involves a need to conceptualize student success as more than academic achievement alone. Educators in Manitoba, like many others across the country, are attempting to determine what student success means and at the same time identify data that will inform achievement and standards. Nonetheless, if the message around success is relevant only to the context of passing or failing, this narrow conceptualization will encourage students to sacrifice their mental health, physical health, and well-being (Bradley & Greene, 2013; Symons, Cinelli, James, & Groff, 1997). In addition, success may appear unattainable, disenfranchise learners, and allow schools and classrooms to become exclusive despite the diversity of the population. Nunn (2014) indicates that it is important for definitions of success to be informed by the socio-economic indicators of students. Burbules and Warnick (2006) suggest that "we critically examine the multiple uses and meanings of the term student success to expose the ambiguities it contains for the purpose of clarification" (p. 491).

Manitoba is poised to embrace the search for a wider definition of student success with the establishment of the Student Achievement Support Unit and a *K-12 Framework for Continuous Improvement* (2016). This framework, initiated by Manitoba Education and Training, will assist Manitoba schools and school divisions in the future. It is flexible to allow for alignment with emerging provincial and local priorities and for planning for students with exceptional needs as part of the wider school division continuous improvement planning process. In addition to literacy and numeracy goals, school divisions are currently being asked to identify and include priorities in the areas of Aboriginal academic achievement and English as an additional language. In the future, school divisions

will also include planning in the areas of career development, technology education, early childhood development, and learning until age 18. Again, these focus areas are respectful of the changing demographics and dynamics in the province.

Similarly, Manitoba Education and Training would be well advised to focus on additional metrics in the areas of equity, citizenship, sustainability, and well-being in the journey toward identifying a more robust definition of student success. The identification of data to support this wider definition of success would better reflect the capacity and culture in the province today, and allow school divisions and schools to more fully address both the achievements and challenges involved in educating a diverse student population. Manitoba Education and Training is for all students, and the picture of student success is being redefined. As an excerpt from the Philosophy of Inclusion reads, “We embrace inclusion as a means of enhancing the well-being of every member of the community. By working together, we strengthen our capacity to provide the foundation for a richer future for all of us” (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017). The context is changing, and so must the narrative and process that surrounds it.

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