
LEARNING CONTENT AND STRATEGIES FOR LIVING TOGETHER IN THE 21st CENTURY

REPORT OF CANADA

In response to the International Survey in Preparation for the
Forty-sixth Session of the International Conference on Education
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COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION, CANADA

CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO



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by

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada

September 5-8, 2001

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INTRODUCTION

In September 1993, Canada's ministers of education issued a joint statement describing the future orientations of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. That statement read as follows:

“We are all well aware of the challenges to the education systems posed by our rapidly changing world: globalization of the economy, openness with regard to other cultures, pressing needs for skilled labour, technological advances that are having an impact on our daily lives as well as the job market. These changes require constant adjustments to our educational practices to ensure high quality, accessibility, mobility and accountability.”

Excerpt from Joint Statement – Future Orientations of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada [CMEC], September 1993

When they met in Victoria, British Columbia, in September 1999, the ministers of education of Canada's provinces and territories expanded the joint ministerial statement by adding the following:

“We, the ministers responsible for education, unanimously reaffirm our responsibility for providing leadership in education at the pan-Canadian level through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. While the provinces and territories remain responsible for education in their jurisdictions, there continues to be a need for joint action. We believe that our collective will to work together will create a synergy that will benefit each province and territory.”

Why we need to work together

As ministers responsible for education, we are committed to providing the highest possible quality of education to citizens at every stage of their lives. We place a high value on developing and adapting education policies for the needs of regions and communities, and on administering programs at the local level, close to the people served by the education systems.

Residents of all provinces and territories, however, recognize that, when faced with the same challenges, it is often in their own interest to work together to address them. We are aware of the challenges that continue to be posed by our rapidly changing world: youth unemployment, the development of a knowledge economy, economic globalization, and technological advances that are having an impact on our daily lives, as well as the job market. In all regions, there are similar challenges and, as a result, the desire for provinces and territories to work together in a cooperative manner.

Provinces and territories will collaborate on shared priorities through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. Sharing our perspectives on particular issues will enhance our ability to reach creative solutions and to add value to what we are doing in our respective jurisdictions.

Values and beliefs

We believe that education is a lifelong learning process and that we must continue to strive to create a learning society in which the acquisition, renewal, and use of knowledge are cherished. We also believe that the future of our society depends on informed and educated citizens who, while fulfilling their own goals of personal and professional development, also contribute to social and economic progress. On the international scene, our activities should reflect these values and our priorities, while contributing to strengthening our role globally. Above all, we want all citizens to have a fair and equitable opportunity in whatever educational and training endeavours they may pursue.

Priorities for joint action

While our specific action plan may change from time to time, for the next five years, our work together through CMEC will be carried out in the following priority areas:

- Focusing on education outcomes
- Sharing information on best practices
- Collaborating on curriculum initiatives
- Promoting policy-related research
- Strengthening the postsecondary sector and increasing access
- Supporting international activities
- Promoting mobility
- Enhancing CMEC as a forum for effective and fruitful cooperation with the federal government

Our work must involve cooperation with our partners — students, parents, educators, trustees, education organizations, federations and institutions, business and labour, the Forum of Labour Market Ministers, Aboriginal governments, and where appropriate, certain federal departments and agencies. All cooperative activities must be carried out in the full respect of the jurisdiction of the various partners. In most cases, this work will involve all members of CMEC, but sometimes the programs or projects will be carried out by a group of members that does not necessarily include all provinces and territories. Our actions will continue to be guided by five themes: accountability, quality of education, accessibility, mobility, and responsiveness to learner needs.

Through these statements, the ministers of education were echoing the curriculum reforms already begun in their respective jurisdictions over the previous decade and confirming the orientations that will continue to influence these reforms at the dawn of the third millennium.

Although education in Canada is the responsibility of the provinces and territories, the ministers found that a number of shared concerns had led them over the previous 10 to 15 years to step up their efforts to cooperate and share information, and in part to introduce major changes to curriculum at all levels.

These changes were driven by the fast and sweeping changes taking place in Canadian society through globalization and internationalization, dizzying growth in information

and communications technology, population shifts toward urban centres, immigration, and fundamental changes in the nature of work and in the labour market.

This report will show that the provinces' and territories' initiatives can generally be grouped under several main themes:

- curriculum reform
- adoption of higher performance standards
- adoption of more specific learning outcomes
- integration of generic skills into curriculum
- integration of job skills into curriculum
- integration of information and communications technology into curriculum as content and as a program delivery tool
- adoption of more intensive performance appraisal programs
- adoption of measures for accountability for and communication of outcomes to learners and taxpayers
- adoption of concerted, integrated and more intensive approaches to early childhood development
- renewal of postsecondary education
- renewal of adult education and job-related training
- adoption of measures to ensure access to education and training, and equivalency of outcomes for all members of Canadian society
- adoption of a vision of Canada as a community of learners in which education and training are a lifelong pursuit
- an increase in cooperation, sharing and joint projects between the provinces and territories.

Curriculum Management in Canada

In Canada, section 93 of the *Constitution Act, 1867* (previously known as the *British North America Act*) grants the provinces exclusive power to legislate in the field of education. Through education or school legislation and the related regulations, ministries of education can exercise their authority over curriculum, school funding, and teacher training and professional certification, student appraisal methods and standards, school reporting and administrative structures, the establishment of school boards, as well as the design and distribution of instructional materials (Fleming, 1993).

In addition to the full powers over education vested in the provinces, the *Constitution Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982* recognize specific rights in the areas of separate school systems and minority-language instruction, and guarantee the right of all Canadian citizens to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination, regardless of their race, religion or national origin (Brown and Zuker, 1994). Against this backdrop, the right to a separate school system allows Catholics and Protestants to have their own separate school system; the right to minority-language instruction applies to the French-speaking and English-speaking linguistic minorities.

Preschool programs

Most provinces and territories provide preschool or kindergarten programs before the first year of primary education. These programs are administered by local school authorities.

Early childhood development programs have been a key focus of all administrations in the late 1990s and at the start of the new century. Most governments have introduced or upgraded and strengthened health and learning programs for children. Some of these programs have names such as “Healthy Children Initiative” in the Northwest Territories, “School Meals, Inner City Schools and Kids at Risk” in British Columbia, “The Early Years Challenge Fund” in Ontario, and “Integrated School-Linked Services” in Saskatchewan.

Elementary and secondary education

Public education is free for all Canadian citizens or landed immigrants until completion of secondary school (normally age 18). The length of compulsory school attendance varies by province. Attendance generally is mandatory from six or seven years of age until the age of 16, although in New Brunswick it is compulsory from 5 to 18.

In most provinces and territories, primary education covers the first six to eight years of compulsory education, after which students enter high school, where they can enrol in a wide range of general and vocational education programs. A high-school diploma is granted to students who successfully complete the mandatory and optional courses in their academic program.

The transition point between primary and secondary school is not necessarily the same in all provinces and territories. The primary-secondary continuum can be divided into schools accommodating various levels. In northern and rural communities, schools often provide all levels of education (from kindergarten to high-school graduation). In Quebec, secondary schooling ends after 11 years of instruction. In Ontario, students normally meet the requirements of the high-school diploma, which include the Ontario Academic Course (OAC), in four or five years. Ontario students who entered ninth grade in 1999 are following a new four-year program.

Postsecondary education

Once they have successfully completed their secondary education, students may apply to a university or college. Enrolment in skills training programs for trades, such as apprenticeship programs leading to an occupation or trade, generally do not require a high-school diploma. Students may enter a postsecondary institution without coming directly from a secondary school. For example, students may enrol in a college program after earning a university degree. Postsecondary programs are available in public and private institutions, some of which grant degrees.

After 11 years of primary and secondary instruction, Quebec students planning to pursue postsecondary studies must obtain a diploma of collegial studies (from a Cégep – collège d’enseignement général et professionnel). Cégeps provide a general program leading to

university admission, and a vocational program that prepares students to join the labour force.

Colleges, such as technical and vocational institutions, community colleges, regional colleges, Cégeps and institutes of technology, provide continuing education programs designed for adults in the community, and development programs in the business, applied arts, technology, social services, and health sciences sectors. Programs may run from six months to three years.

Colleges generally grant only diplomas or certificates of collegial studies. In British Columbia, for example, students who complete 60 semester credits in a program of first and second year university transfer courses at a college, university college or institute, are eligible to receive an associate degree, and to pursue further studies at a university. In Alberta and, to a lesser extent, Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories, however, community colleges deliver courses that allow students to complete the equivalent of two years of credits toward some bachelor's degree programs. These programs enable students to complete their third and fourth years in a university college or university and earn a degree. In several provinces and territories, students must submit an application for admission and obtain an assessment of their colleges studies, to determine whether they can be granted university credits for the courses completed.

Programs leading to a university degree are taught in universities as well as non-university institutions with the authority to grant degrees. Most universities in Canada, especially those in major cities, offer a full range of programs. Others specialize in certain disciplines and have developed fields of excellence. There are also a few specialist universities without a campus that provide distance education programs.

University studies are divided into three levels, leading to a bachelor's and master's degree and to a doctorate. Not all universities offer graduate programs. Most do, however, offer programs leading to diplomas or certificates. These may be undergraduate or graduate programs lasting one to three years.

CURRICULUM AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Elementary and secondary levels

From the 1960s to the 1980s, governments tended to decentralize decision making in education by delegating many responsibilities to school boards/commissions/districts.

Ministries of education generally were content to prescribe the very broad curriculum thrusts in programs that describe and organize content to be taught into large blocks of time, leaving local authorities a very large degree of flexibility. This flexibility usually included responsibility for adapting program content to the realities and needs of local communities, the freedom to choose teaching strategies and assess the qualifications of teaching staff and the quality of education, the ability to raise funds locally to upgrade existing programs or introduce new programs, and the responsibility for selecting instructional materials based on a few ministry guidelines. School

boards/commissions/districts were also free to determine how to assess and report outcomes to parents, students, and taxpayers. In fact, local authorities enjoyed a great deal of freedom and independence in curriculum organization and delivery in elementary and secondary schools.

In recent decades, however, the provinces and territories have undergone or introduced major changes in this distribution of responsibilities. For example, the territories have inherited from the federal government responsibility for delivering education and training services, and the new territory of Nunavut has been carved out from the original Northwest Territories. The provinces and territories have created language-based school boards in recognition of the right of official-language minorities to manage their own schools.

Several provinces have centralized or more closely regulated many functions previously delegated to school boards/commissions/districts, including local fundraising, curriculum development, performance appraisal, reporting of outcomes, and even supervision of the quality of teaching.

Postsecondary level

Higher education in Canada is a responsibility vested by the Constitution in the provinces and territories. Universities are fairly independent institutions administered by a board. These institutions are created by provincial legislation, are responsible for all academic subject matter, and enjoy considerable latitude in financial management and the programs they offer. Most universities have a bicameral management structure consisting of a Board or Assembly of Governors (which oversees funding and policy matters) and a Senate (which governs program and admission requirements, degree requirements and planning of academic instruction). Senate recommendations must obtain the final approval of the Assembly of Governors. Intervention by government is usually limited to the areas of funding, tuition fee structures and introduction of new programs. In some provinces, an intermediate body serves in an advisory capacity on these matters; this is the case for the Newfoundland and Labrador Council on Higher Education, the Saskatchewan Postsecondary Advisory Council, the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission and, in Quebec, the Conseil supérieur de l'Éducation. Some intermediate bodies have the authority to make basic funding decisions; this is true of the Manitoba University Grants Commission and the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education (CMEC, 1995a). Manitoba is now creating a Postsecondary Education Council that will combine responsibilities for universities and colleges, and replace the University Grants Commission.

A *federated* college or university institution is responsible for its own administration and has the power to grant degrees. An *affiliated* institution enjoys administrative independence but lacks the power to grant degrees (about 70 of the 90 university-level institutions in Canada grant degrees; some grant degrees in only a small number of fields, such as theology). A *constituent* institution is subject to the authority of the parent university in administrative matters and for the granting of degrees.

Colleges are generally more closely regulated than universities because they serve as important policy adaptation tools for governments. Most colleges have an assembly of governors appointed by the provincial government or a municipality. In some instances, the assembly of governors is elected. The government often is represented on assemblies. As a rule, governments exert influence over admissions policies, curriculum, planning and working conditions. Members of the community and business world also contribute, either through representatives on the assembly, or by sitting on advisory committees to the assembly.

In Ontario, the Ontario Council of Regents for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology advises the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on matters that arise throughout Ontario's network of 25 colleges of applied arts and technology. Quebec's Conseil des collèges fills a similar role in that province.

Canada has no national accreditation board to assess universities or programs. At the provincial level, charters are granted to institutions of postsecondary education by legislation. Membership in the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada or the Association of Canadian Community Colleges is generally an indication that an institution meets certain standards of acceptability. For degree granting colleges and universities, external peer review is conducted by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. Provincial or regional organizations may also supervise quality control, such as the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission. In many cases, regulatory bodies or professional associations assess undergraduate and graduate professional education programs. Finally, all institutions conduct a type of self-assessment as part of internal review.

In Alberta, a performance-based funding system for postsecondary education that examines factors such as graduates' satisfaction with their education, success in job placement, transfer of credits between institutions, program costs, teaching load, and the quantity and quality of research, was introduced in 1997 (CMEC, 1995b).

In Ontario, a system to assess key performance indicators has been introduced in the province's colleges to measure student and employer satisfaction. In April 2001, the Government of Ontario established the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board / Commission d'évaluation de la qualité de l'éducation postsecondaire to assess proposals for new programs leading to a degree to be offered by colleges and by new institutions seeking to grant degrees in Ontario, and to advise the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on this matter.

Some institutions of postsecondary education, usually colleges, provide training under contract to the private sector, thereby establishing a direct link between curriculum and market requirements. The College of the Arctic in the Northwest Territories, for example, has substantially increased the number of contracts it has signed with employers. The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology offers co-op programs in sales techniques and engineering that provide students with valuable workplace experience (CMEC, 1995a). In Ontario, Waterloo University is world famous for its

successful co-op programs in fields such as engineering. Graduates of co-op programs apparently are 10 per cent more likely to be hired before graduation or in the month after obtaining their diploma (Statistics Canada, 1995a). In Quebec, Université de Sherbrooke offers tailor-made training programs in conjunction with the business sector.

In British Columbia, public postsecondary institutions are autonomous organizations governed by Boards, which have overall responsibility for administrative and educational matters at the institutions. The institutions are responsible for program standards admission and instruction. Decisions on academic policy and standards are made by the Senates or Academic Councils at the universities, and by the Education Councils at university colleges, colleges and institutes. Legislation governing two new universities in the Province (Royal Roads University and the Technical University of British Columbia), provides for an Academic Council instead of a university Senate vested with legislative authority over academic matters. The Academic Councils exercise substantive authority over academic decisions as delegated by the President of each institution.

CURRICULUM REFORM IN THE PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES

A paper prepared for the second national conference on education held in Edmonton in 1996 already reflected a shared determination to introduce major curriculum reforms. It included the following points.

The following system-wide trends have emerged:

- *Concerted regional and national efforts.* We see increased cooperation and sharing of services in areas such as curriculum development, student performance appraisal, program assessment, information technology and transfer of credits between institutions.
- *Greater accountability to the public.* Several of the trends mentioned above are directly or indirectly related to this theme.
- *Acceptance of information technology as an integral part of education.* A key priority is preparing students, from primary levels through to high-school graduation, to participate in the information age. In most cases, this means determining the skills that all students must acquire, making major investment in information-processing hardware, software, and wiring (often in conjunction with the private sector), ensuring the professional development of teaching staff, and having connected all institutions to the Internet by 1997. In New Brunswick, a defined level of computer literacy is a requirement for high-school and community college graduation.
- *Declining education grants.* Efforts are being made to direct shrinking resources toward the classroom rather than the administrative sector.

The following trends are evident at the elementary and secondary levels:

- *Decline in the number of school boards/commissions/districts.* Measures to amalgamate school districts generally accompany the establishment of school committees. These changes are designed to promote and facilitate parents' participation in the education of their children and to rationalize administrative activities, thereby cutting costs.

- *Curriculum outcomes and standards.* Curriculum restructuring is focused on what students should know or be able to do. The measures implemented are designed to make education more relevant, to enhance student performance, and to find more viable ways of delivering programs.
- *A growing number of provincial tests and examinations.* Many authorities are now introducing complete multi-year assessment programs inextricably linked to the outcomes and standards of their curriculum. The goal of these programs is to give parents and the public a more detailed report on the performance of education systems, improve teaching quality and ensure greater uniformity in all systems.
- *Transition programs.* Initiatives designed to assist students with the transition from school to the workplace include changes in vocational and technical teaching, apprenticeship programs, career guidance and cooperative education programs.

The following trends have been observed in postsecondary education:

- *Renewal and articulation.* The efforts implemented are designed to revitalize the postsecondary sector, to ensure the delivery of quality programs that meet the changing needs of our day and reflect the reduction in resources. Through the articulation of programs, policies, and the accreditation system, access to programs will be enhanced, duplication will be minimized and learners will be better served.
- *Indicators of success.* The development of performance data and key indicators to report on outcomes to the public require the various parties to negotiate among themselves.
- *Recognition of a student's prior experience.* The goal is to assess a person's prior learning, level of knowledge, regardless of where or how the learning took place, and to promote transfer of credits between institutions, within an authority and between various authorities.

In the training and adult education sector, the following trends are noted:

- *Assessment of current programs.* Studies conducted to determine the best way to address the rapid changes affecting the labour market are influenced by the federal government's plans to withdraw from the occupational training sector.
- *Attention paid to social assistance recipients.* There is a growing move to foster economic independence of social assistance recipients fit for work, by providing job preparation programs, training courses on specific skills, on-the-job training programs, and job search and placement services.
- *Partnerships.* Emphasis is being placed on programs that promote partnerships between the postsecondary system and industry, to provide students with relevant skills. Other programs focus on community programs to increase community participation in decisions on training and adjustments. Access to training programs through information technology is also growing in importance.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

Key initiatives during the 1990s centred on the implementation of recommendations of a Commission of Inquiry on program and service delivery at the primary, intermediate and secondary levels. Initiatives of the Department of Education included:

- restructuring and management of the school system (e.g., consolidation from 27 denominational school boards to 11 non-denominational boards, consolidation of schools from 472 in 1995 to 337 in 2001, new capital funding process)
- major changes in curriculum
- new Schools Act (1997)
- creation of school councils
- restructuring and extending of services to students with special needs
- creation of a provincial French First Language school board in June 1997

In April 2000, the Department of Education began focusing on the implementation of the recommendations of *Supporting Learning: A Report of a Ministerial Panel on Educational Delivery in the Classroom*. Key initiatives emanating from the Panel Report include:

- the development of a balanced curriculum and delivery of an essential program in all schools, regardless of size and location
- the creation of a Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation to utilize available technology and expertise to develop and deliver curriculum, professional development, and support services across the education system
- early literacy programs and training at the pre-school and primary school levels
- a new teacher allocation formula that provides more teacher support to primary and elementary classrooms
- a system of greater accountability for student learning (e.g., comprehensive testing at grades 3, 6, 9, and 12; yearly school reporting on overall achievement, publication of provincial indicators; the deployment of an educational effectiveness team)
- an action plan to ensure appropriate levels of training for and supply of teachers and school administrators
- enhanced professional development for teachers and other personnel within the education system

Curriculum

The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education is constantly making efforts to provide curricula that will ensure students have the knowledge, skills and attitudes required in the 21st century. In preparing students for their economic and social realities, the province has focused on a number of key initiatives including:

- collaboration with the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF) to develop and implement new, outcomes-oriented curriculum in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies for the Province's schools
- an increased emphasis on literacy, particularly in the early grades
- a strong emphasis on ensuring that students have modern technology education and second language programs
- a strong cultural focus through curricula with a cultural emphasis, e.g., a new religious education program and a Newfoundland and Labrador history course

Support Services

The province supports integrated service delivery to children with special needs through The Model for Coordination of Services to Children and Youth, an interdepartmental approach that involves the departments of Health and Community Services, Education, Justice, and Human Resources and Employment. Within the Department of Education, program planning for students with special needs is guided by a framework Pathways to Programming and Graduation which describes how the provincial curriculum may be adapted or modified to meet the individual needs of children.

Teacher Professional Development

The Department of Education, in collaboration with its educational partners, has placed a strong emphasis on teacher professional development to facilitate improved classroom practices. Key initiatives include:

- an increased emphasis on effective curriculum implementation, with a strong emphasis on early literacy
- a focus on effective instruction for diverse learners
- leadership training
- programming for students with special needs, with a focus on autism, behavioural issues, and learning disabilities

Access to Technology

Continued efforts to maintain and upgrade access to computers and the Internet in all primary and secondary schools as part of the STEM~Net project and other provincial initiatives.

Academic Assessment/Student Evaluation

Criterion-referenced tests have been developed in language arts and mathematics for primary, elementary, and intermediate levels of schooling. These tests are based on the key stage outcomes at the end of each of these levels and are administered to grade 3, 6, and 9 students. These tests enable the Department of Education to determine student achievement in relation to the curriculum outcomes and to use the information to improve the teaching/learning process. Once the results of these tests are available, the Department of Education collaborates with the school districts and schools through the school improvement process to create action plans based on the data for each school and district.

In June 2001, public examinations for senior high students were reinstated in mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, and literature. In June 2002, in addition to these, public examinations will be administered in world geography, world history, French, and earth systems. These examinations make up 50 per cent of the final mark in these courses and are used as part of secondary certification.

Therefore, reform has been based on a series of initiatives such as:

- development and implementation of criterion-referenced tests at the grades 3, 6 and 9 levels in mathematics, science, and language arts, as well, as grades 6 and 9 core French
- re-introduction of public examinations for high school courses
- publication of provincial indicators reports and school reports to parents and other partners on the performance of the primary, elementary, and secondary levels

INITIATIVES THAT INVOLVE BOTH THE ELEMENTARY/SECONDARY AND THE POSTSECONDARY SECTORS

Distance Education

Distance education has been widely advocated as a means of equalizing educational opportunity, providing wide access to programs and learning resources and responding to varying learning styles and lifestyles. In March 2000, The Ministerial Panel on Educational Delivery in the Classroom recommended that a Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation be established. This Centre is now operational and is responsible for the development and delivery of Web-based programs for students and teachers in the K-12 system. The Centre will also facilitate the coordination of all distance education activities at the secondary and postsecondary levels.

Literacy

The province's Strategic Literacy Plan was released by the Minister of Education in May 2000. It looks at literacy for all ages, both within and outside the formal education system, and outlines strategic directions in the areas of early literacy, the formal K-12 system, and adult education, as well as a new approach to planning and coordination.

Accountability and Reporting

In the reorganization of 1997, School Development Specialists were assigned to each school district to facilitate school development planning. Each school prepares an annual accountability report designed for parents and the public. Most recently, the Department of Education has been working with school districts and other educational agencies to implement the government-wide accountability framework for public bodies.

Special attention has been given to the transition process for graduates of high schools, colleges, and universities by conducting periodic surveys with graduates. New surveys are scheduled to take place during the next year. The resulting publications are used by policy-makers, administrators and, most importantly, students to make informed decisions related to postsecondary programming.

POSTSECONDARY AND ADULT EDUCATION

New Department of Youth Services and Post-Secondary Education

The newly created Department of Youth Services and Post-Secondary Education will strengthen the government's focus on youth. The Department, with legislative responsibility for the province's postsecondary education system, will focus on improving access and affordability, and enhancing the academic and technological excellence of graduates. The Department will work toward enabling the postsecondary institutions to assume a position of leadership in teaching nationally and internationally, to build recognition for areas of specialized knowledge and expertise and to engage in research and development to support economic advancement. Through the development of labour market policies and programs, the Department will also advance the potential of the province's youth to avail themselves of opportunities associated with the new economy and improve their capacity to participate in and gain from economic development.

Review of the Newfoundland and Labrador Student Loans Program

The Newfoundland and Labrador Student Aid Review Advisory Committee with representation from postsecondary institutional sectors, student groups, government departments, and the provincial House of Assembly was established in the fall of 2000 to undertake a major review of the provincial student loans program. The committee has produced a consultation report with recommendation pursuant to the following Terms of Reference: to examine the provincial student loans program and make recommendations on a financial assistance program that supports students pursuing postsecondary education while respecting the Province's fiscal realities; to make recommendations which address high levels of student debt; to recommend measures to improve the overall performance of the student loans portfolio including reducing loan default rates, ensuring appropriate collection activities, maximizing loan recoveries, and reducing the Province's risk, and; to examine equity issues related to student aid and to make appropriate recommendations. Consultations are presently taking place and final decisions will be made during the coming year.

Student Investment and Opportunity Corporation

The Newfoundland and Labrador Student Investment and Opportunity Corporation has been established to strategically support young people in their pursuit of postsecondary education and/or employment opportunities. The Corporation provides financial resources to initiatives that generate employment and help students fund their education. Together with the Department of Youth Services and Post-Secondary Education, the Corporation acts as a coordinating agency with respect to student employment programs, enhanced career opportunities, and priority youth-related programs and services. The Corporation also provides a focus on youth in rural areas of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship training in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is undergoing considerable change. This change is prompted by the need to keep pace with technological changes in industry, the need to be competitive, and the desire to be efficient and effective in meeting the needs of the apprentice.

There are many different models for delivery of apprenticeship training in Newfoundland. Some programs are delivered using the traditional model which involves an individual spending their first year of training in-school, followed by approximately 1800 hours on-the-job, supplemented by a 6 to 8-week in-school period each year of the apprenticeship term which, for the majority of occupations, is 4 years. Other models of delivery designed to provide quality, access, and transferability include Internship, Cooperative Education, Block training for new entrants, Block training for those individuals who have the equivalent of 1200 hours in the occupation, and a Youth Apprenticeship for secondary students.

Youth Apprenticeship

The Department is in the process of launching a Youth Apprenticeship Program that is based on the apprenticeship concept and provides youth with the opportunity to acquire skills training and work experience directly related to their occupational interests, aptitudes and career aspirations. This initiative proposes the development of a new approach to labour market challenges and skills shortages by engaging those with limited or no job experience in an opportunity for sustained employment and involving partners from the private sector in the process.

Apprenticeship Information Management System

An Apprenticeship Information Management System received approval in March 1997 and became operational in September 1998. The system, known as AIMS, allows a single entry point for all information on an apprentice or trades qualifier and is being used to track an apprentice from entry level to journeyman status. Regional offices and training institutions involved with apprenticeship training are now online and using the system.

Accreditation

The Department conducts accreditation of both apprenticeship and information technology programs. The accreditation process provides an auditing mechanism for provincial programs to ensure quality and relevance. It also meets the challenges of technological changes by stimulating ongoing curriculum improvement through the process of continuous review.

Community Access Program (CAP) – Public Internet Access

The Canada/Newfoundland and Labrador Community Access Program (CNL-CAP) obtains its mandate from the “Memorandum of Agreement on Community Access,” a federal/provincial agreement between the Department of Education and Industry Canada. The agreement allowed for the establishment of 70 CAP sites in addition to the 84 that Industry Canada had already established. CNL-CAP’s mandate is to assist rural and urban communities in the province to establish public Internet sites.

Oil and Gas Development Partnership

Memorial University launched the Oil and Gas Development Partnership initiative in the fall of 2000. The initiative will result in a comprehensive set of new programs and activities that build on existing strength at Memorial and in the local industry, and create

new opportunities in collaboration with educational partners, including the province's College of the North Atlantic.

National and International Marketing of Education

The Department is presently undertaking initiatives aimed at attracting international interest in Newfoundland's educational products and services. A Trade and Marketing Strategy for the Newfoundland and Labrador Education Sector has been drafted and has been submitted to a funding agency. The objective of the strategy is to increase the number of international students studying in Newfoundland and Labrador, increase the number of placements for Newfoundland students to study overseas, and further develop international links and expand markets for educational products and services.

Newfoundland and Labrador's College of the North Atlantic, in partnership with the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE), recently was awarded the largest-ever Canadian educational contract to establish a technical college in the State of Qatar — \$500 million over ten years.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Council on Higher Education, which functions as a mechanism for joint planning and coordination on matters of common interest in the public postsecondary community, primarily Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic, supports initiatives related to the national and international marketing of education.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

Program and student assessment

In Prince Edward Island, the Department has implemented the following:

- A program assessment model that specifies the Department's role in the curriculum development process (a system that enables all partners in the education field to intervene), needs-assessment methods, methods for locating qualitative and quantitative resources, and an implementation plan and calendar.
- A continuing professional development program to upgrade teachers' knowledge and skills in student assessment.
- Assessment tools administered by a third party, used for training purposes in the assessment of program assessments and system reports.
- Committees to develop shared, clear, comprehensible methods for reporting on curriculum and student performance.

School committees

Parents at all schools in the province have been given an opportunity to form a school committee. These committees were established in the spring and summer of 1995.

Atlantic Canada College of Languages

The Department of Education, the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) and Holland College pooled their resources to create a new institution, the Atlantic Canada College of Languages (ACCL). Located in Charlottetown, ACCL specializes in teaching English as a second language (ESL) to foreign students.

Technology in schools

The Technology in Education (TIE) project gives students an opportunity to develop information technology skills. The project has supported the purchase and installation of new computers and companion software, as well as delivery of training courses for teachers in primary, intermediate, and secondary schools on the island.

Emphasis was placed on teacher training. The Department of Education's media library training laboratory handles professional development in computer skills for teaching staff. The work stations are connected to the Novell network, simulating the school networks on the island. Teachers have access to all courseware copyrighted by the province.

Alternative education program

The Department of Education has allocated major grants to educational projects under the PEI Youth Initiative program, set up in cooperation with the health care and education systems as well as communities, to meet the needs of children, young people, and families on the island.

One of these programs is an alternative education program to meet the needs of students for whom traditional teaching is not effective and who have dropped out of school or are at risk of dropping out. Traditionally, once they drop out, these students rarely return to school. Without a high-school diploma and practical job skills, most of these young people experience difficulty finding a stimulating job. The alternative education project attempts to break this cycle by providing an alternative short-term solution to conventional classroom instruction, with a long-term objective of returning these young people to school.

The alternative education program is available at seven locations in the province. The program is based on partnerships between government organizations, school boards, colleges, the federal government, and others. Each site maintains close links with the regular education system.

Initiatives in Prince Edward Island focus on the development and implementation of curriculum, information technology, lifelong learning, and accountability.

The following initiatives are linked to curriculum:

- Regional and national projects.
- Outcomes-based curriculum.
- Innovative in-service teacher training programs.
- Initiatives specifically targeting certain grades.
- Initiatives linked to information technology.
- Integration of technology into programs and services — support for curriculum, learning, the community and cultural activities, and improved administrative efficiency and access to services.
- Partnerships with the private sector and other organizations.
- Training for teachers and administrative officials.

Measures have also been adopted to strengthen accountability:

- Publication of tangible results in annual reports.
- A three-year plan clearly describing the Department's policies and orientations.
- Regional performance indicators.
- Standards applicable to programs and services.
- Participation in national and regional assessment programs.
- Improved management of provincial records.

POSTSECONDARY AND ADULT EDUCATION

Prince Edward Island has also adopted initiatives linked to lifelong learning:

- Viable, high-quality postsecondary and adult education programs adapted to the needs of our Island population.
- An education and literacy strategy for adults and students.
- A strategy for work force training programs.

- Upgraded career guidance courses.
- Assessment of existing cooperative education programs and development of new programs.

NOVA SCOTIA

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

New Education Act

Legislative support was necessary for many education reforms submitted as part of the education restructuring process — amalgamating school boards, defining and clarifying roles and responsibilities, and establishing school advisory councils, to name just a few. This situation provided the Department with an opportunity to review and combine the *Education Act* and the *School Boards Act* into the new *Education Act* with greater emphasis on students in the classroom. The new act also provides for the creation of the Council on African-Canadian Education and the Council on Mi'kmaq Education which have the responsibility of promoting the rights and interests of the African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq students respectively by providing recommendations to the Minister on programs and services in public schools and adult education. The new *Education Act* was passed in January 1996.

School Advisory Councils

The *Education Act* contains provisions on the establishment of school advisory councils, as well as their roles, responsibilities, and organizational structure. The first document in the series of guides for school advisory councils is *Establishing School Advisory Councils: New Roles and Responsibilities to Support Student Success*, which was published and distributed in September 1995 and revised in December 1999. Other documents in this series included *Developing School Improvement Plans* and *Writing School Accountability Reports*, which were published in September 1996 and March 1998 respectively.

Basic knowledge for earning a diploma, and the curriculum

Through the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF), representatives of the departments responsible for education in the four Atlantic provinces have reached agreement on the basic knowledge that students should have learned to earn a diploma, in the fields found in the curriculum as a whole.

Common basic curriculum and assessment in the Atlantic Provinces

Nova Scotia, in conjunction with the APEF, is developing a curriculum and assessment program in the four common basic subjects: language arts (English), social studies, science, and mathematics.

Academic performance indicators

Nova Scotia is working in conjunction with APEF to develop academic performance indicators. These indicators are the same in all the Atlantic provinces and, as such, help them report on the performance of their education systems and the factors that may influence that performance.

African Canadian Services Division

Following the recommendations of the Black Learners Advisory Committee, the Department created the African Canadian Services Division. The Division is responsible for providing the leadership, direction, and planning required for the development and implementation of policies, procedures, programs, and services to ensure that African Nova Scotians benefit from a fully supportive learning environment. The Division works in close cooperation with the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE) and participates in public school education and adult education.

Mi'kmaq Services Division

The Mi'kmaq Services Division was established within the Department at the request of the Council on Mi'kmaq Education (CME). The purpose of the division is to provide the leadership, direction, and planning required for the development and implementation of policies, procedures, programs, and services to ensure that Mi'kmaq students benefit from a fully supportive learning environment. The Division works in close cooperation with CME and participates in public school education and adult education.

Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development (CEED)

Since 1993, the Department has developed and delivered dynamic entrepreneurship curriculum to more than 25,000 student participants annually. In late 1995, the Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development (CEED) was jointly established by the Nova Scotia Departments of Education and Economic Development and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

CEED's mission is to nurture entrepreneurship in young people by undertaking, creating, coordinating, and acting as a catalyst in entrepreneurship education, research and program design, professional development, and community entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship now reaches more than 75,000 youth annually in the school system and through avenues provided by CEED.

CEED develops teaching resource materials for the classroom from primary to grade 12. The annual Summer Institute, offered by CEED for entrepreneurship educators, is now a half-credit toward some Master's of Education degrees. During CEED's annual Spirit of Entrepreneurship Conference, students and teachers are brought together to network and attend sessions. Open for Business, CEED's network of community-based storefront entrepreneurship centres with sites in 14 communities in three countries, interacts with schools by providing entrepreneurial activities for students on site or during class visits.

Nova Scotia has launched a series of initiatives to:

- encourage students to excel and to prepare learners to succeed in the workplace, at home, and in the community.
- devote more resources to students.
- consolidate relations among partners in education, to promote quality leadership.
- promote equity, diversity and inclusion.

These initiatives include the following:

- With its partners in the Atlantic region, Nova Scotia is developing a new curriculum.
- Smaller class sizes, priority on the early years, and team planning of individualized program plans for children with special needs will help meet the needs of all students more effectively.
- Nova Scotia is introducing a Student Career Portfolio that secondary students will use for educational and career planning and for tracking their employability and entrepreneurship skills.
- As part of the Youth Pathways and Transitions initiative, senior high students have the option of taking programs directly connected to community college programs.
- Nova Scotia is introducing an innovative Web-based advanced studies program that features collaborative problem-based learning and advanced information and communications technology.
- A Racial Equity Policy will soon be implemented in school boards across Nova Scotia.
- The Special Education Policy Manual was released in April 1996. This policy for students with special needs assists in providing consistency and accountability across regional school, boards. Individualized program planning, parental involvement, inclusive schooling and a team approach to meeting the special needs of students are emphasized.
- Efforts are under way to implement a code of conduct and to promote safe schools.

POSTSECONDARY AND ADULT EDUCATION

The Higher Education and Adult Learning Branch, Nova Scotia Department of Education, consists of: Apprenticeship Training Division, Provincial Apprenticeship Board, Postsecondary Education, Student Assistance, Rehabilitation Programs and Services, Private Career Colleges, Literacy, Adult Learning, Teacher Certification, and the Provincial Library.

Nova Scotia is recognized for excellence in teaching, research, education and technology, and for its first-class institutions that benefit students, business, and communities. Nova Scotia's university system is so well regarded in Canada that approximately 26 per cent of its students come from other provinces to study, and a further 5.3 per cent are international students.

A recent longitudinal study of the Class of 1996, conducted in 2000 by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC), demonstrated that 93 per cent of the Nova Scotia university graduates in the labour force were still employed, four years after graduation.

There are two community colleges in Nova Scotia: one English and one French.

Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), the only English-language public college in Nova Scotia, has thirteen campuses and offers 112 applied education programs right across the province.

Collège de l'Acadie is Nova Scotia's only francophone community college. Using advanced distance education technologies, the college offers technical and vocational programs in French to residents of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

College Prep Programs, created through agreements between the NSCC and provincial school boards, allow students exposure to college programming prior to high-school graduation. These agreements also allow for faculty exchanges, joint access to facilities, and credit transfer for some secondary level courses to college programs.

Apprenticeship Training has become ever more responsive to the needs of Nova Scotia business by providing a flexible, accommodating approach to the delivery of recently revised apprenticeship programs and courses. Delivery has moved from multi-week segments to 30-hour courses, offered in the classroom and via the Internet. Partnerships with business, industry, training providers, and the other Atlantic provinces have streamlined processes, reduced costs, established common standards, and increased mobility for workers in the skilled trades.

The Department has launched a new adult learning initiative called the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning. This School will work in partnership with program deliverers and funding agencies to ensure a better coordinated system for adult education, from basic literacy to high-school completion. The School will also introduce a new credential, the Nova Scotia High School Diploma for Adults.

At the postsecondary level, CEED developed and supports the university-level Entrepreneurial Skills Program (ESP) that is delivered in two Nova Scotia universities.

NEW BRUNSWICK

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

A new governance structure

Recent amendments to the *Education Act* provide for a new governance structure for public education, effective July 1, 2001. Publicly and locally elected District Education Councils (DECs) allow for local decision-making and accountability within the context of provincial standards. There are nine anglophone and five francophone DECs. There is also a legislated Parent School Support Committee at each school, charged primarily with school improvement planning.

A healthy school initiative

In the year 2000, the government announced a four-year \$100 million Healthy Schools initiative. Funding from this program is being used in existing schools to ensure the physical environment is safe and healthy for children, teachers, other staff and volunteers. It complements the capital budget set aside for major renovation projects.

A quality education agenda

The Department is currently working on the development of a quality education agenda designed to put New Brunswick children on a level footing with their peers across the country and around the world. The agenda will focus on such areas as: early reading and learning; improving math and science achievement; improving language learning; ensuring a balanced curriculum; quality teaching; parental role in learning; the community as partners; and accountability.

Accountability

The Government of New Brunswick is introducing a performance appraisal system for departments and government agencies. The government's objective is to make each department accountable to the public for the efficiency it achieves in its operations. This in turn determines whether programs are meeting expectations.

In the Department of Education, performance objectives have been set for graduation rates, pupil-computer ratios, and student performance in language arts, mathematics, and science, consistent with the national School Achievement Indicators Program.

The Department believes that all parts of the education system must be accountable for improving student learning. As such, the Department sets standards, administers provincial tests, monitors results and makes public, by school, annual dropout rates and provincial assessment results. The Department is also introducing a systematic evaluation of schools. DECs must develop district plans and make public annually a district performance report. Schools develop school improvement plans and report results to the district.

Organization of learning

New Brunswick has two separate education systems: one English, and one French. This duality is reflected throughout the structure, including at the level of the Department. Children in French schools receive instruction in French (except for English, starting in grade 4). Children in English schools are taught in English (except for Core French from grade 1 to 10), or in French through immersion starting in grade 1 (early immersion) or grade 6 (intermediate immersion).

New Brunswick also has full inclusion of children with special needs in regular classrooms. All high-schools in New Brunswick now comprise grades 9 through 12.

Updating learning outcomes

As a member of the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, New Brunswick is actively participating in efforts to specify the expected learning outcomes in a number of curriculum fields. The ultimate objective is to specify for all curricula what students are expected to know and be able to do.

Preparation of a strategic plan for information technology in education

New Brunswick has invested heavily in information technology for its school system, and continues to do so in a strategic way. Over the next three years, all schools will be equipped with high-speed bandwidth to provide greater access to enhanced on-line courses at the secondary level, and to give all students improved access to on-line research materials.

Assessing student performance

The Department of Education has a provincial testing program that assesses the performance of students in grades 3, 5, and 8 in the anglophone sector, and in grades 4 and 8 in the francophone sector. In addition, secondary students in both sectors must take provincial examinations.

New challenges

Since 1999, young people have been required to stay in school until the age of 18, or graduation, whichever comes first. All school districts have been provided with additional funding to address and report on stay-in-school issues for at-risk students.

Unlike most other provinces, New Brunswick is experiencing a spectacular decline in enrolment — the number of students has decreased by about 18 per cent over the past 20 years — and this is resulting in challenges with respect to the effective use of infrastructure.

National and international tests show that the level of the best students is comparable to that of their fellow students. Children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, however, lag significantly behind their fellow students. The Department is working to help these children achieve their full potential by paying more attention to remedial programs and other intervention measures, including new programs and services for Aboriginal students.

POSTSECONDARY AND ADULT EDUCATION

New Brunswick is increasing funding to universities and adopting a multi-year funding formula that allows universities to plan for the long term and stabilize student tuition fees. In order to improve accessibility to postsecondary education for those most in need, the Department is directing additional monies, in 2001, into non-repayable bursaries. This is part of a three-year commitment to invest additional funding in student bursaries and create a matching scholarship fund aimed at helping students most in need to attend university, community college, or a private college. These initiatives follow from the recommendations made by the Premier's Working Group on Postsecondary Accessibility.

The Department is also purchasing additional spaces for its students in certain specialized out-of-province universities.

New Brunswick works through the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) to ensure regional collaboration respecting university initiatives. As well, the MPHEC administers a quality control process for the approval of all new university programs and program changes.

Initiatives in distance delivery

Connect NB Branché has been added to the Department of Education's responsibilities. With a focus on rural communities, community access centres show how innovation can meet the changing needs of the 21st century. Providing people of all ages in many New Brunswick communities with affordable access to information through technology will lead to a better-informed and educated population with suitable job skills.

Through community access centres, Connect NB Branché is focusing on the complex task of cooperating directly with communities and partners to maintain 222 access centres in the province. There are 130 English-language centres and 99 French-language centres, and 155 centres are located in public schools.

This partnership between governments, communities, and the private sector is helping young people and adults use current information technology to cooperate on creating education and job prospects.

Through the efforts of TeleEducation NB as well, New Brunswick can continue to promote and maintain a distance education network. TeleEducation NB is a leader in education. Its virtual on-line campus, TeleCampus, provides access from around the world to continuing education.

Efforts in distance learning, in both K–12 and postsecondary, are part of New Brunswick's development of an e-learning strategy.

QUEBEC

In Quebec, education reform is now under way. The challenge is to refocus education on success, to make the transition from access for the greatest number of people to success for the greatest number of people.

Objectives

The quantitative objectives of the reform are as follows:

- In the year 2010, at least 85 per cent of young people in the same generation must earn a secondary diploma before the age of 20.
- At least 60 per cent must earn a college diploma.
- At least 30 per cent must earn a bachelor's degree.

By comparison, the data currently available show that of 100 young people in the same generation, 73 earn a secondary diploma before the age of twenty, 39 earn a college diploma, and 28 earn a bachelor's degree.

Lines of action

To achieve the reform objectives, seven major lines of action have been defined:

- Intervene in early childhood.
- Teach basic subjects.
- Grant schools greater autonomy.
- Support schools in Montreal.
- Intensify reform of occupational and technical training.
- Consolidate and rationalize higher education.
- Provide better access to continuing education.

The pursuit of at least two of these lines of action — intensifying reform of occupational and technical training, and improving access to continuing education – will have a direct influence on the transition from initial education to working life by Quebec students.

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

The missions of schools

INSTRUCT, with renewed determination

School serves an irreplaceable function of transferring knowledge. Reconfirming this mission places importance on developing intellectual activities and mastering knowledge. In the current setting of the knowledge-based society, training young minds must be a priority for each institution.

SOCIALIZE, to teach students to live together more effectively

In a pluralist society such as ours, school must serve as a factor for cohesiveness: it must promote a sense of belonging to the community, and teach students how to “live together.” In carrying out this function, schools must be attentive to young people's

concerns about the meaning of life, must promote the fundamental values of democracy, and prepare young people to be responsible citizens. Schools must also avoid internal risks of exclusion that compromise the future of too many young people.

QUALIFY, through various approaches

Schools have a duty to equip all students to undertake and successfully complete a school program or integrate into society by mastering occupational skills. To carry out this mission, government must define the basic national curriculum, and institutions must provide different educational approaches based on the interests and abilities of each student, especially beyond basic education. The time has come to pay more sustained attention to guiding students and rehabilitating occupational training as a normal educational program.

Changes to the curriculum:

- in the educational environment.
- in course content —
 - major educational disciplines.
 - cross-skills.
- in the organization of teaching.
- in curricula.

The desired educational environment

The changes made to the content and organization of learning must comply with certain principles and form part of a perspective that promotes the success of all students. Certain conditions therefore must be met:

Focusing on the essentials

Curricula must be stripped of all accessory elements that have been gradually added, to preserve and consolidate essential learning, essential learning that is vital to the success or failure of students: mastery of their mother tongue and a second language, mastery of the key elements of mathematics, knowledge of their history, introduction to the languages of art, assimilation of basic scientific knowledge, and acquisition of work methods. This basic knowledge and these methodological skills and intellectual abilities are the priority for schools, from the very first year of primary school. Other skills and behaviours related to personal development and living in society are also indispensable and will be taught through special curriculum or as part of the general instruction provided at school and in daily life at school.

Raise the cultural level of curriculum

The cultural content of the “school menu” must be enriched. Changes to meet this goal will take three approaches. First, greater emphasis will be placed on subjects that more “naturally” incorporate culture, such as language, art, and history. Second, a cultural approach will be advocated for teaching these subjects. For example, learning a language must be accompanied by a background in literature and literary history; arts education must introduce students to theatre, music, painting, dance or the visual arts to give them new keys for understanding reality; history must introduce students to the works,

lifestyles, and institutions that characterize a period. This applies to cultural works related to all disciplines. Third, to avoid leaving this approach solely to the personal initiative of teachers, curriculum review will specifically provide for integrating the cultural aspect into disciplines.

Establish more academic discipline in schools

School must be demanding if it is to lead students to succeed: requirements must be known and accepted by students, teachers, and parents. Growing numbers of students must meet those requirements. Thus, each school must pay attention to its weakest, slowest students and those who learn in different ways, by suggesting suitable learning strategies and providing adequate assistance and support measures.

These school requirements, however, must also be present in the main components of the national curriculum:

- In the **course selection**. Students must be aware of the seriousness of the proposed menu, of the meaning of the learning they must complete.
- In **curricula**. Objectives must be clear and the requirements and progressive steps from one class or level to another as well as the links with other disciplines must be clear. Sequences will also be established for all subjects to indicate the progress of learning and avoid unnecessary repetition, but especially to promote consistency and integration of learning.
- In **assessment methods**. Students' progress must be regularly assessed; the methods used to conduct assessments (assignments, tests, examinations) and to report outcomes (assignment sheet, transcript, report card) must be fair, methodical, and easy to understand for students and parents.
- In **teaching material**. Textbooks and materials provided to students must be based on a disciplined scientific approach and give students learning approaches that pique their curiosity and joy of discovery.
- Finally, school requirements also apply to classroom assignments, homework, lessons, and personal study time.

Pay special attention to each student

Schools must fight against academic failure. It is not enough for schools to be open to all: they must provide each student with the best education possible and accompany each through the learning process. School staff must share the conviction that every student is teachable if given the necessary means, and is capable of learning more complex knowledge than is often thought possible. Students with difficulties or disabilities must also be given every opportunity to develop talents and skills to their full potential. This accompaniment, if consistent and appropriate, will prevent their exclusion.

Provide students with the basics of continuing education

Curriculum must incorporate what has become an unavoidable reality, the rapid renewal of knowledge. From the earliest school years, students must be prepared to meet the requirement of continuing education and must learn the rudiments and methods that will enable them to continue learning and develop the impulse that drives them toward this goal. The following concerns, therefore, must inspire curriculum renewal:

- Foster the development in students of intellectual activity, using a teaching approach that focuses on discovery and production rather than consumption of knowledge.
- Arouse students' intellectual curiosity and develop their reflex to question and challenge their own ideas with those of classmates or teachers.
- Pay special attention to the integration of knowledge, the ability to establish links between knowledge and the capacity to reorganize them.

Focus school organization on service to students

Organization of the various curriculum components must allow teachers to exercise their professional autonomy and skills, and to make decisions with an impact on teaching based on the interests of students. Thus, the organization and content of curriculum in particular and of assessment tools, rules, and practices related to recognition of studies and school reports, as well as ongoing teacher training activities, must leave enough room for their professional intervention and judgment. Even the breakdown of class schedules and the use of school time must reflect the type of learning to be completed rather than respond to uniform standards.

Course content

Essential learning must ensure mastery of basic knowledge by all students. There is no justification for a student being unable to read or write after completing basic education. This essential learning is defined by the main learning disciplines and cross-skills.

Major learning disciplines

It is important to identify the main fields of learning that should be included in the curriculum as well as the general intentions to be promoted for each field, thereby indicating benchmarks with a view to curriculum review. These five fields are: languages; technology, science and mathematics; the social world; the arts; personal development.

Languages

The *mother tongue* (or language of instruction) must take top priority in schools: its mastery is indispensable. Students obviously learn this language to communicate, but also because it is a key component of their heritage. Our language opens the door to all other learning, especially reading, which in turn provides access to literary works.

The *second language* and *third languages* will also be promoted because of the linguistic duality prevalent in North America, as well as the phenomena of globalization and universal communication. There is also growing recognition that the study of other languages supports better mastery of one's own language through comparison with others, and that younger children find it easier to learn any language.

Technology, science, and mathematics

Technology is all the means invented and used to produce what is necessary for people's survival and comfort. Technological development is everywhere and students must be introduced to this fact very early to understand the world in which they live.

Science is one of the most significant manifestations of human cultural achievements. Students therefore must be introduced to the mental processes specific to science: questioning, methodical observation, trial and error, experimental verification, and development of models. Then, without converting science courses into courses on the history of science, historical examples must be used to demonstrate the living, constantly changing process of science. Finally, students must be led to understand the ethical problems posed by scientific progress.

Without *mathematics*, entire vast sweeps of the universe become inaccessible and incomprehensible. Students therefore must know and be able to use these calculation methods, since their entire daily environment requires use of the language of mathematics. Calculating, measuring, estimating, and solving problems are operations of daily life. Some mathematical knowledge is elementary knowledge in the same category as reading and writing. To understand a chart or statistics, students must know how to read and interpret quantitative data in every form. Finally, the cultural aspect of mathematics must also form part of their studies.

The social world

Schools must provide students with the tools that will enable them to live in a society where human relationships are more complex than in the past. The rapid changes of the past 50 years have resulted in a growing complexity of the forms and functions of social organizations.

The teaching of *history* and *education in citizenship*, *geography*, and *economics* must enable students to understand the institutions and know and understand human beings as social creatures, introduce them to the roots of the present, and open their minds to the history of the world, introduce them to the world of financial markets and industrial and commercial activities. Teaching of the humanities must be open to other societies in the world and specifically focus on their growing interdependence. The major milestones in our history and the history of the world as well as the main space-time benchmarks must be mastered, thus memorized, and learning of these benchmarks must be periodically verified. In Quebec, the teaching of history takes on greater significance, given the need to be open to other cultures and to compare various interpretations of our past.

The arts

Teaching of the arts plays a special role in the development of student awareness and intelligence and in students' cultural and social education. By awakening their interest in artistic creation and introducing them to the diversity of works, teachers open students' minds to other aspects of reality. To ensure that teaching of the arts achieves these goals:

- It must introduce students to the languages and forms of thought that foster development of their creativity; it must also teach them the knowledge inherent in these practices and lead them into artistic creation.
- It must introduce students to and help them understand the creations and works of their current artistic and cultural environment. It therefore must encourage students to visit cultural sites and meet with creators.

- Finally, it must present students with artistic creations of the cultural heritage of humankind and their own country, and provide them with the knowledge that will enable them to interpret and understand that heritage.

Teaching of the arts must be open to all forms of artistic expression, but two generally must comprise teaching of the common basic knowledge: the plastic arts and music, first as universal languages, but also as tools of creativity.

Personal development

All activities experienced in a school tend toward personal development of the student. In curricula, however, the introduction to values initially was entrusted to certain subjects, *moral education* and *religious education*. Knowledge of the permanent presence of religion must form part of moral education, to ensure that students who do not receive religious education do not remain ignorant of a key component of our civilization. Concern for teaching values is not limited, however, to only these two subjects. It also involves other disciplines such as literature, science, technology, and the social disciplines, and also forms part of cross-skills encompassed by other subjects or disciplines, or in certain activities conducted at school. For example, student participation in the organization of student life and extra-curricular activities provides a wonderful opportunity to put the values they have learned into practice.

Physical education and *health education* must also be added. To maintain the concern for physical fitness, the following must be incorporated very early into students' life habits: hygiene, sports, knowledge of physiological functions, diet, and discipline to balance work and recreation. This also constitutes elementary, fundamental knowledge and is the concern of everyone in schools.

Cross-skills

Schools must also continue the learning of skills and, in some cases, attitudes that do not fall strictly within the exclusive field of teaching disciplines and therefore must be incorporated into all educational activities organized by schools: these are *cross-skills*. These can be defined in four categories:

- *intellectual skills*: Schools must prepare students more effectively for intellectual work; for example, developing their memory, taking on and completing a project, developing a critical mind, learning to communicate.
- *methodological skills*: All teachers must show a concern for teaching students how to organize their work and work in teams or cooperatively; all students must also develop their ability to use appropriate methods for processing information, especially new information and communication technologies (NITC).
- skills related to *attitudes* and *behaviours*: Schools must educate students to “live together” and especially must provide intercultural education and teach respect for differences, entrepreneurship, respect for the environment, education in the media, the rules governing preservation of health.
- *language skills*: Mastery of language must be a concern in all disciplines and for all teaching staff.

These cross-skills will be integrated into curriculum in two ways:

- The content of some is linked to disciplines and thus will be integrated into *curricula*.
- Other cross-skills encompass all disciplines. These skills therefore will be gathered into a different section for primary and secondary curricula, the “*Program of programs*,” intended for all teaching staff and for members of the school professional staff with educational responsibility for students.

ORGANIZATION OF TEACHING IN SCHOOLS

Common basic education

The basic education common to all students extends from first year in primary school to the end of the first level in secondary school, thus ninth grade. It now must include *preschool education*, available full-time to all students five years of age, both to support their overall development and to give each the same opportunity upon admission.

The **goals of primary school**. Primary school must enable all students to acquire the basic learning that will contribute to progressive development of their intellectual autonomy and to access the knowledge that will be provided by secondary school. While acquiring the essential basic knowledge, students must formally undertake the learning of work habits that will prove indispensable to their subsequent studies and begin to learn about other educational content and the main characteristics of society and the values that must be promoted.

Primary school cycles. Primary school has been divided into three two-year cycles designed to:

- spread teaching out over multi-year steps more consistent with child psychology and the stages of childhood development.
- set the pace of one year of new knowledge and a second year of consolidation; conduct the assessment earlier at the end of a step, thereby making remedial measures more effective to avoid repetition of the grade. Alternative solutions must also be found for repetition, which locks students into a feeling of failure yet does not address the underlying problem.
- promote and encourage the formation of small teams of teachers to work with the same students for two years or, at the very least, teach the curriculum of a cycle as a group.

New emphasis.

The relative importance of some subjects will be modified to place special emphasis on the role of certain elements of learning:

- In the first primary cycle, greater importance must be placed on teaching and learning the *language of instruction* (especially reading and writing) and *mathematics*.
- *French as a second language* will continue to be taught from the first year on. Schools will be encouraged to continue using the immersion method, and many have

already adopted this approach. Thus, a program to teach French through immersion will be developed and included in the regulation on the primary teaching system, which will be amended accordingly.

- Teaching of *English as a second language* will begin earlier, in third grade; in addition, the Ministry and school officials will be encouraged to explore various models for organizing the teaching of English as a second language and to adopt innovative educational practices to promote learning that meets public expectations more effectively.
- New emphasis will be placed on teaching *history* starting in third grade, and *citizenship education* will also be incorporated into this teaching.
- Teaching of *art* will continue to be mandatory starting in the first grade and will focus primarily on music and the plastic arts. However, this should not prevent schools with an established tradition in teaching dance or theatre arts to maintain that program, if they wish. Schools are also strongly encouraged to provide activities in all the fields of art outside class time.

Programs clearly determine the ESSENTIAL CONTENT to which enrichment content is added. Schools that choose to provide this enrichment content can, if necessary, increase the teaching time allocated for this subject.

POSTSECONDARY AND ADULT EDUCATION

Postsecondary and adult education will be renewed as follows:

- Intensify the reform of occupational and technical training.
- Objective: quadruple the number of occupational training diplomas granted to young people under 20 years old.
- Communications strategy in school boards and Cégeps to upgrade this sector.
- Increased service levels and number of student places.
- Introduction on a broader scale of aspects of the experimental program for access to occupational training in secondary 3 (aspect 5), development of integrated secondary-college programs (aspect 4), and provision of programs leading to semi-skilled trades (aspect 2).
- Cooperation on implementation of the learning system.
- Increased enrolment in co-op work-study programs.
- Adaptation of general education delivered in technical training programs.
- Identification of programs between which bridges are possible, and tightening of mechanisms for coordinating action between professional orders.
- Adoption in each region of three-year planning for developing options.

CONSOLIDATE AND RATIONALIZE HIGHER EDUCATION

College

- Legislative and regulatory amendments to increase institutional independence and the flexibility of administrative structures, and promote the creation of regional colleges and pooling of services.

- Introduction of financial incentives for success (payment by students of special fees for courses not passed).
- Continuation of three-year plan (1996-1999) for new information and communication technologies.

University

- Support implementation, by the Conférence des recteurs et des directeurs des universités du Québec, of a commission on program rationalization.
- Review of university funding rules, based on proposals of the task force set up for this purpose.
- Development of a university policy, a sort of social contract between Quebec society and universities.

Continuing education

A draft governmental policy on adult education has been developed from the viewpoint of lifelong learning, with the goal of clarifying ministerial thinking on how the stakeholders can share roles and deliver the services.

ONTARIO

The Ontario Ministry of Education is determined to establish an education system based on excellence of student performance, accountable to all Ontario taxpayers, and affordable.

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

The reform essentially focuses on the following components:

- New skills for the new millennium.
- High-quality standards: priority on children.
- Major improvements to education of exceptional children.
- Channel resources into the classroom.
- Responsibility to parents, students, and taxpayers.
- Successful transitions, the key to success in education.

The Ministry of Education has developed a totally new provincial curriculum, from kindergarten to grade 12, which prepares students for success in the labour market or in learning programs at college and university.

In Ontario, provincial standards have been set for teaching time and classroom size, and standards have been developed to improve the quality of education for exceptional children in Ontario schools.

The educational system is becoming more accountable through the administration of tests to students throughout the province, the appraisal of teaching staff, and the use of report cards that are easier to understand

Steps have been taken to help parents and students make informed decisions on course selection and to give secondary students the information they need to select the postsecondary program that will enable them to carry out their plans for the future.

The curriculum requires students in all elementary classes to study technology and strives to give Ontarians throughout the province more learning opportunities via the Internet and other new technologies.

Students in Ontario need the latest knowledge and skills to make their full contribution to a highly competitive global economy and to become responsible citizens in their respective communities. This requires relevant, stimulating programs.

In June 2001, the Government of Ontario announced a new provincial curriculum for grades 11 and 12, thereby completing the most sweeping school reform the province has ever seen.

The Government of Ontario has instituted a new provincial curriculum, thereby completing the most sweeping school reform the province has ever seen. From

kindergarten through elementary to the last year of secondary, a new curriculum has been prepared to help Ontario students continue to learn throughout their lives.

Highlights of the new curriculum

After 50 years, Ontario has introduced a new curriculum for kindergarten.

Elementary students learn to read and write earlier and also learn mathematics skills earlier.

Technology is now taught in each year of the elementary curriculum.

The new four-year secondary program helps students choose the destination best suited to them: the labour market, additional training, or higher education.

Clear standards help parents understand what students should learn in each school year.

The emphasis is placed on reading, writing, mathematics, science and technology, and on understanding the student's community and the surrounding world.

As students advance through school, each year presents new challenges that extend and enrich what they have learned in the previous year.

The new curriculum sets consistent standards and clear expectations of what must be taught throughout the province.

The new kindergarten and elementary programs are now in place. The new secondary curriculum is being phased in over a four-year period. Students who began ninth grade in September 1999 will be the first to graduate from the new curriculum, in 2003. This more demanding curriculum is designed to provide students with indispensable tools to prepare them to meet the challenges of the knowledge-centred global economy.

Preparing students for the real world

The Government of Ontario is taking the following measures to ensure that our young people learn the indispensable values for becoming good citizens of their community and the world.

The new Code of Conduct will create a learning environment that fosters respect for others. By setting clear and consistent province-wide standards of conduct and by clearly explaining what can happen if these standards are not observed, the Code will promote respect, a sense of responsibility, and courtesy.

Other initiatives to support the curriculum:

- new textbooks
- greater resources for student catch-up
- teacher training
- teacher manuals and other resources for teachers

The new secondary curriculum places greater emphasis on history and global issues, to help students gain a better understanding of Canada and the world.

A good education extends beyond the classroom. Thus, all students must now perform at least 40 hours of community service during their secondary years.

These innovations are based on the fact that personal responsibility and good civic spirit go hand in hand, and that learning must always be linked to the community and the world beyond the school doors.

Education of exceptional children

In Ontario, more than 188,000 students require educational programs for exceptional children, to ensure that they benefit fully from their school experience.

The Government of Ontario has decided to expand consultation of parents of exceptional children and develop higher standards for curricula for exceptional children. For example:

- Ontario is now investing \$1.4 billion in education for exceptional children (special education): this is the largest amount ever allocated for this purpose in the history of one province.
- The funding being granted by the Government of Ontario to school boards for educating exceptional children cannot be used for other purposes.
- Since 1998, a regulation has confirmed the right of parents to be present at and contribute to the process that identifies their child as an exceptional child.
- A regulation under the *Education Act* requires that a personalized teaching plan be drawn up for each student deemed exceptional.
- Provincial standards, greater accountability, and increased funding help schools provide exceptional students with the opportunity to learn and achieve their full potential — the same objectives for all students in Ontario.

In 1998, Ontario set provincial standards that increased the time secondary teachers actually spend in the classroom.

Periodic student assessment

Ontario participates in the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP), a national testing program coordinated by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

The Education Quality and Accountability Office administers provincial mathematics and language tests in grades 3 and 6, as well as a mathematics test in grade 9. The results are available for each school. Corrective plans are instituted for schools needing help to improve their students' results.

The new grade 10 language skills literacy test was administered for the first time in the 2000-2001 school year. Starting in the 2001-2002 school year, all students will be

required to pass this test to obtain their secondary school diploma. Students who fail this test will be able to retake it.

Parent participation

To give parents more influence over education and the opportunity to play a more active role, the government has announced major new initiatives. School councils, composed chiefly of parents, have been mandated for each publicly funded school. A regulation planned for this fall will ensure that parents have the right to state their opinion to the school board in several areas, especially:

- development of school upgrading plans
- selection of principals and assistant principals
- local implementation of the new provincial Code of Conduct
- development of local policies on safety and security in schools
- adoption of a school dress code or uniform, consistent with provincial guidelines and with the approval of a majority of parents.

Ontario teacher appraisal program

Ontario is preparing to introduce a comprehensive teacher testing program that includes the following components:

- All teachers must be re-certified every five years to demonstrate that they have updated their knowledge of the curriculum and their teaching skills.
- New teachers must pass a provincial examination before they can be authorized to teach in Ontario schools.
- An initiation program — similar to an internship — helps new teachers acquire the necessary classroom management and teaching skills through the advice and support of more experienced colleagues.
- New provincial standards will be set to ensure that teacher appraisal by principals and school boards is relevant and consistent throughout the province.

The Ontario College of Teachers

Teaching standards and continuing teacher professional development are the responsibility of the new Ontario College of Teachers, a self-funding and self-regulating body. The College coordinates and oversees the professional development of teachers throughout their career. All people employed in publicly funded English- and French-language schools whose employment is contingent on teacher qualifications must be members of the College.

The College's responsibilities include developing specifications for pre-service teacher training programs, accrediting pre-service training programs and continuing teacher training programs, developing specific teaching standards, setting up procedures for obtaining a teaching certificate and continuing professional training, oversee establishment of a complaints-handling process for students and parents, and implementing a procedure to discipline members, where necessary.

POSTSECONDARY AND ADULT EDUCATION

Innovative and appropriate postsecondary programs

Ontario has adopted a new funding approach at the postsecondary level to ensure that colleges and universities strive to follow changes in student needs and meet the demands of the labour market.

A percentage of college operating grants are based on performance, which is measured by employment rates for graduates six months after completion of their studies, satisfaction of their employers, and satisfaction of graduates with their education.

The Government of Ontario provides students with the resources and information they need to make a successful transition and make informed choices throughout their studies. Here are a few examples:

- Expansion of summer programs and additional grants to help students in grades 7 and 10 who need extension programs to meet the higher standards of the new curriculum.
- Students in grades 7 to 10 now prepare an annual education plan to help them select courses, choose extra-curricular activities, and determine their learning options outside the school environment.
- The new secondary curriculum helps students plan their future. The courses have been designed to support lifelong upgrading of knowledge and pave the way to success. The new program is also more flexible and varied.
- A new Passport to Prosperity initiative encourages employers to provide secondary students with training in the workplace.

The government also provides students with detailed information on the performance of postsecondary institutions, measured through key performance indicators such as percentage of students who graduate and find employment in their field, and level of satisfaction among students and employers.

Demographic growth and the need for new skills in all age groups are driving growth in long-term demand for spaces in colleges, universities, and training and apprenticeship establishments. It should also be noted that, in 2003, the first students to complete the new four-year secondary curriculum will receive their diploma at the same time as the last students in the old five-year program.

The Government of Ontario is now taking steps to ensure that there will be sufficient place to recruit all qualified and motivated students in a postsecondary program or an apprenticeship or training program.

Colleges and universities

Through Ontario's SuperBuild corporation, which coordinates all Government of Ontario expenditures on construction projects, the government is investing in Ontario's college and university campuses to create 73,000 new spaces for students.

The Access to Opportunities Program is designed to create 23,000 new spaces for students in cutting-edge technology programs. The private sector is participating in this program, which prepares students for careers in fields with strong demand.

Ontario youth apprenticeship program

Participants in this program start their apprenticeship while still attending secondary school.

Sixty-one school boards and 466 secondary schools participate in this program. More than 2,000 students are currently enrolled in this program, and the number will double over the next four years.

Ontario's apprenticeship system allows industry to play a larger role in setting apprenticeship standards and provides the necessary flexibility to offset the shortage of workers in key industrial sectors such as the automotive industry, manufacturing, and construction.

The goal is to raise enrolment in apprenticeship programs from 12,760 to 19,000 a year.

Training

Ontario has introduced measures to help young people in the province acquire the skills they need to find jobs in a rapidly growing labour market.

To meet growing demand for development courses, Ontario is attempting to set up an education and training system:

- suited to people who want to continue to learn after leaving the established education system and after entering the labour market.
- providing opportunities for education adapted to the needs of adult workers, that reflects constraints such as time available and the pressures of work and family responsibilities faced by many people.
- capitalizing on new training methods to provide opportunities to learn when the need arises, in the most convenient location.

TVOntario will provide programs developed in conjunction with employers, industry associations, labour unions, and educators that will be accessible to workers in their community, to help them upgrade their occupational skills.

Support is available to help young people make informed decisions about their education.

Postsecondary education task force

Created in September 2000, the Investing in Students Task Force was commissioned to study the administrative operations of postsecondary institutions in Ontario and to recommend measures to ensure that students continue to have access to an affordable, high-quality education in the 21st century.

Here are some of the recommendations designed to improve service to students:

- Create a seamless transfer system so students can move easily from one form of postsecondary education to another.
- Establish a single source of information for students planning to seek admission to a postsecondary institution.
- Simplify and coordinate student financial assistance policies.
- Encourage the collective development of electronic learning programs.

The task force also recommended that colleges and universities promote open accountability to the public report, by publishing an annual report on their mission, key strategies and achievements, which also contains audited financial statements and performance indicators.

The report also describes how colleges and universities could improve their efficiency by pooling services, cutting red tape, and adopting viable best practices. Finally, the task force recommended creation of a new charter for colleges to strengthen their role in promoting partnerships and special missions.

MANITOBA

Significant changes have been, and continue to be made in Manitoba's education and training system. Change has occurred at all levels of the system and in policy, program development, and delivery, as well as governance and management structures.

Primary goals for continued development are:

- to improve success rates in all programs and institutions
- to expand the range of people served
- to better integrate and support knowledge and skill development within economic and social priorities
- to build the capacity of institutions and the community to support learning
- to build partnerships within and across sectors.

All sectors within Manitoba education (K-S4, adult education, postsecondary education, and training) continue to strive to ensure that students moving from one sector to another do so in the most effective and seamless way possible.

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

The main focus of renewal in this sector is on:

- improving outcomes for less successful learners
- strengthening links among schools, parents and communities
- strengthening school planning and reporting
- improving learning opportunities for educators
- strengthening pathways among secondary schools, postsecondary education, and work
- establishing links between policy and practice on the one hand, and research and reality on the other.

The creation of centres will be an important opportunity for the secondary schools and the postsecondary system to collaborate to meet the needs of adult learners.

POSTSECONDARY AND ADULT EDUCATION

Renewal of postsecondary and training programs has included:

- The Council on Postsecondary Education (COPSE) was established, which brings universities and colleges under the auspices of a single body.
- The College Expansion Initiative was introduced, which is working with the colleges to develop multi-year expansion plans. This initiative represents the most significant investment in the college system since its inception some 30 years ago.
- Revitalization and expansion of apprenticeship programs continues.
- A provincial Training Strategy has been developed and consultations conducted on the Strategy. The implementation of the Strategy will assist in responding and

adapting to Manitoba's labour market context and will support economic growth and social well-being. The goals of the Training Strategy are:

- to build a skilled work force aligned with labour market needs and emerging opportunities
- to enhance access to relevant learning opportunities for all Manitobans
- to create integrated and high-quality education and training systems.
- New strategies for employment and training programs have been developed to assist unemployed Manitobans to obtain sustainable employment. This has included the establishment of the Canada/Manitoba Labour Market Development Agreement that transferred to the province responsibilities for the design and delivery of programs and services funded under the Employment Insurance Act, Part II.
- Measures have been taken to work to keep postsecondary education affordable for Manitobans. A 10 per cent tuition reduction was introduced to ease the burden on students of the cost of their education and a new Manitoba Bursary was also implemented to assist students with debt reduction.
- Improved articulation, credit transfer, and dual credit arrangements including stronger links between secondary and postsecondary institutions have been given attention. The Department of Education, Training and Youth has implemented program-funded Adult Learning Centres, which will be an important opportunity for the secondary schools and the postsecondary system to collaborate to meet the needs of adult learners.

Recent activity:

- Emphasis continues to be placed on participation and inclusion through consultations with educational stakeholders, parents and students, and building partnerships.
- An inter-departmental, cross-sectoral initiative, entitled Healthy Child Manitoba, has been introduced to support an emphasis on early childhood development and care. This initiative includes the establishment of a number of parent/child centres.
- An emphasis is being placed on improving school safety and improving community use of schools through support for a Safe Schools Program and the introduction of a Lighthouse Schools program in collaboration with the Department of Justice.
- Manitoba continues to participate in projects as part of the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education. New curricula have been developed and implemented in the following subject areas: mathematics, English language arts, physical education and health. New curricula are currently being developed for the science and social studies subject areas. Additionally, frameworks are being developed to support instruction in Aboriginal languages and culture, and international languages.
- Manitoba currently develops and administers mandatory standards tests in Senior 4 (grade 12) mathematics and language arts (English and French) and optional standards tests in grade 6 language arts and Senior 1 (grade 9) mathematics. Manitoba has also recently developed an alternative classroom-based strategy for assessing grade 3 students in numeracy and reading.
- Manitoba continues to encourage and assist parents and the community in participating more extensively in the life of public schools. Advisory councils for

school leadership allow parents and members of the community to play a larger role in decision-making at the school level.

- A Special Education Review was undertaken, and implementation of changes in special education has begun, as recommended by the review.
- A commitment has been made to provide stable funding at the rate of economic growth, and this has been done for the past two years.

SASKATCHEWAN

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

Saskatchewan action plan for children

The action plan launched in 1993 is a provincial strategy designed to enhance the well-being of children, young people, and families. This cooperative process, which involves seven ministries and secretariats responsible for children, is designed to develop a joint method for addressing issues related to children.

As part of the action plan, a number of initiatives have been established. Integrated School-Linked Services is a program that fosters partnerships and cooperation in the human services sector to meet the needs of children at risk. Schools, professional staff in public health, social workers, and other specialists work together to deliver integrated services to children, young people, and their families.

As part of the Prevention and Support Grants Program, launched in 1994, several departments associated with the action plan issue grants to community organizations to set up integrated programs and services for children, based on local priorities.

Multimedia Learning Strategy. In May 1995, the Department announced the implementation of a provincial multimedia learning strategy. This strategy includes province-wide roll-out of a multimedia learning network and the issue of grants for installation of cables in Saskatchewan schools and development of educational multimedia software.

Documents for the Saskatchewan basic education program are now being converted to electronic format for distribution through the Web site. Some curricula are already available for testing, and users of the Internet service are asked to forward their comments about this format. This new exciting solution will provide teachers with access to printed documents and traditional resources through an interactive multimedia format.

The Saskatchewan Department of Education has also worked closely with school divisions, communities, and Industry Canada on various projects, including Rescol, Computers for Schools, Community School Information Centre Pilot Projects, and Digital Collections Projects. All these programs include the use of the latest technology to support teaching and learning in the province.

Community schools and the Indian and Métis Education Development program.

The Community Schools Program has been in operation since the early 1980s. The program provides enhanced support services to 17 schools in underprivileged urban neighbourhoods. Approximately 40 per cent of students in community schools are of Aboriginal origin. The program encourages parents and the community to take part in decisions made in the schools and delivers supplementary programs and services to

students, including nutrition programs, cultural activities, and opportunities to use local community resources.

A new document, *Building Communities of Hope: Community Schools Policy and Conceptual Framework*, has been published. It proposes methods to meet the needs of Indian and Métis students at risk.

The Indian and Métis Education Development (IMED) program issues supplementary grants to school divisions in rural areas with a high percentage of Aboriginal students to help them deliver enhanced programs and services.

The Saskatchewan Education Indicators Program.

The Saskatchewan Department of Education, in conjunction with the main education partners, has developed the Saskatchewan Education Indicators Program. In addition to promoting an excellent learning environment for all Saskatchewan students and providing information on achievement of Saskatchewan's education goals, the provincial indicators program strives to:

- provide a vast range of relevant and effective indicators corresponding to the education goals.
- participate in assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the education system from kindergarten to grade 12.
- provide support for the decision-making process, planning, and policy development at all levels of the education system.
- generate informed dialogue on the education system.

Basic education program.

Following the model developed in *Directions* (1984), a full cycle of curriculum review has been completed in compulsory subjects from kindergarten to grade 12. Program development is ongoing but the focus has now shifted to optional components of the curriculum, such as plastic arts and applied arts.

Emphasis is also placed on updating the curriculum, a process nicknamed *Evergreening*, and constant support is provided for implementing activities.

Under a protocol signed by the western provinces and a national protocol, Saskatchewan is cooperating with the other provinces and territories on development of master programs and expanding resources and support services.

Quality of education remains a priority for Saskatchewan against the background of current changes in the characteristics of its school population. Schools are now taking in students with a broad range of needs and coping with a much greater variety of social and technological problems.

- The *evergreen* common core of the curriculum is interactive, continually renewed, and distributed electronically.

- Two CD-ROMs (*Ideas and Inspiration: Contemporary Art* and *Physics 30 – Nuclear Physics*) have been produced in partnership with two Saskatchewan companies for programs to teach art and physics 30. They have been very well received nationally and internationally.
- The Action Plan for Children program, Integrated School-Linked Services Program and Community Schools Program encourage members of government and local communities to cooperate and use holistic, flexible, and effective methods to meet the broad range of children's needs.
- Quality of education is the byword for the current voluntary restructuring of school districts. This innovative initiative combines government leadership with local decision making. Several initiatives designed to delineate and manage public expectations of postsecondary education have been launched.

POSTSECONDARY AND ADULT EDUCATION

Saskatchewan's Department of Postsecondary Education and Skills Training (PSEST) is developing a strategic plan for the postsecondary, training, and employment services sector with key sector partners, including the universities and the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology. The four goals of this "work in progress" focus on high-quality postsecondary education, training, and employment programs and services; meeting the needs of individuals and communities; meeting the needs of employers and industry and contributing to economic growth; and contributing to the discovery, integration, and application of knowledge.

Other recent initiatives of the department include: the development of a Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy to bring learning to rural and northern residents; the development of an Aboriginal Education and Training Action Plan; the expansion of career and employment services through the twenty Career and Employment Services offices throughout the province; the establishment of a provincial tax credit for graduates starting a career in Saskatchewan; the introduction of *The Postsecondary Education and Skills Training Act* to clarify department responsibilities and powers and *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act* to enable SIIT to grant certificates and diplomas; the launch of a new Internet service for employers and job-seekers; and the implementation of the department's Evaluation Policy and Framework.

The Saskatchewan Training Strategy (Bridges to Employment) addresses the issue of public expectations of training and employment services. It defines the priorities of this sector, which will help guarantee the programs by all residents of Saskatchewan to be able to find lasting employment.

ALBERTA

In Alberta, meeting the challenge of lifelong learning is the mandate of one department of the provincial government, the Ministry of Learning. The department was created in 1999 with the amalgamation of the former Ministry of Education and parts of the former Ministry of Advanced Education and Career Development. Elementary, secondary, postsecondary, apprenticeship, and distance learning are all within the focus of this department, ensuring that government structure reflects the commitment to support Albertans' needs for skills and knowledge throughout their lives. Across the learning system, the ministry brings the practice of performance reporting and the principles of fiscal accountability, as well as a process for business planning. The ministry provides more than \$4 billion annually to a learning system in a province of 740,000 learners.

PERFORMANCE REPORTING AND FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Performance reporting

Alberta students consistently rank among the best, both across the country and internationally. Alberta actively participates in national and international tests, and uses the results as a benchmark for performance. The results reflect the achievements not just of students, but also of teachers, parents, and government.

The School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) is designed to determine Canadian student performance on standards developed across provinces and territories. In 1999, Alberta's 13- and 16-year-old students came in first on a nationwide science assessment. Significantly more students performed at exceptional levels (50 per cent of 16-year-olds, compared to 32 per cent nationally), and significantly fewer did not meet basic expectations (17 per cent versus 27 per cent nationally among 13-year-olds). Between 1993 and 1998, Alberta's results in mathematics and science were significantly higher than those across Canada, and results for reading and writing were comparable.

The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 1995 was a large-scale, international assessment of student achievement. Alberta ranked first in Canada and third in the world in science at the grades 4 and 8 levels. Mathematics results were comparable with other Canadian provinces' results.

The province also measures outcomes at the postsecondary level, and takes measurement a step further by recognizing and financially rewarding institutions' progress toward system-wide objectives. A portion of postsecondary funding is allocated through the Performance Envelope, which measures enrolment, graduate satisfaction and employment rates, administrative expenditures, enterprise revenue and, where relevant, research performance.

The province is committed to measuring outcomes in key areas such as education, the economy, health, justice and the environment. It is also committed to reporting the results to Albertans. Each year, results are reported for each of 27 performance measures relative

to a target that had been set. In education as in other areas, the process confirms that quality is not necessarily a function of expenditure levels.

Fiscal accountability

In the early to mid-1990s, overall provincial spending was reduced both as a response to reduced federal transfer payments and as part of a commitment to fiscal responsibility. A funding framework was introduced, with a number of elements consistent with those introduced across other sectors:

- putting a ceiling on administrative expenditures
- taking a pay-as-you-go approach to capital projects
- ensuring greater effectiveness within government
- setting uniform taxation rates for both the public and separate school systems
- establishing education grants that follow students through the education system

Changes included reducing the number of school boards from 141 to 62. Four government vocational training centres became independent institutions.

The principle of fiscal responsibility underlies annual program budgets and one-time expenditures. In the elementary and secondary school system, the province makes allocations to school boards who in turn decide their local spending priorities. In 1999, a one-time funding allocation was made. Those boards that had accumulated deficits were required to pay them off, while those boards that had carefully managed balanced budgets could direct the funding where they chose.

In the adult learning system, the government believes that learning is a responsibility and benefit shared by students, their families, and society at large. As a clarification of each partner's responsibility, a tuition fee policy requires that tuition revenues not exceed 30 per cent of the cost of providing credit programs. Students' tuition has been well below that cap for the past four years, most recently at 22 per cent.

While provincial grants to the system have increased, revenues from other sources have been rising at an even higher rate.

In the early years of the new millennium, reinvestments are being targeted to the areas of highest priority: expanding services in the classroom, creating additional postsecondary spaces where there is a high demand for program graduates, and expanding the technological backbone of Alberta's learning network.

The Access Fund has been the mechanism for many of the reinvestments in the postsecondary system. It provides one-time and ongoing funding to support additional classroom spaces in programs for medical and health professionals, apprentices, and high-technology workers.

Open planning

Government planning is an open and coordinated process. Each year, the Government of Alberta publishes a business plan that outlines spending targets and upcoming policy

considerations for the following three years. All provincial Ministry plans are expected to align with this plan. In turn, the reports and plans of school boards and individual schools must be consistent with the broad Ministry of Learning plan. The process ensures that schools, school boards, postsecondary institutions, and government are moving in the same direction in developing responses to emerging issues.

Innovative funding approaches are also supporting collaborative planning. The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement supports improved student learning by encouraging teachers, parents, and the community to collaborate on innovative and creative teaching methods. Pilot projects have included reducing class sizes and introducing early literacy programs.

The province also uses consultations as an information-gathering and planning tool. In the fall of 1999, a Minister's Forum on Learning brought together 200 Albertans to provide input on how to foster lifelong learning. The rich mix of insights was a valuable way to identify learners' needs. A separate review of school councils drew input from 3,000 Albertans. Other consultations included talking to stakeholders about how to improve learning opportunities for adults seeking to improve their career potential. Another review included visiting jurisdictions that are facing rapid growth and identifying ways to make the province's funding model more adaptive to changing local needs.

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

The principles of parental responsibility and choice within a flexible system that meets high standards are the foundation of the Alberta elementary and secondary school systems.

Parental responsibility and choice

The approach seems to be working. More than 90 per cent of parents are satisfied with the overall quality of education. And nearly 80 per cent of parents are satisfied with opportunities for involvement in school decisions.

Legislation was introduced to clarify the process for establishing charter schools. These are public schools that operate independently of the school board and that offer both the standardized curriculum and an area of learning of particular interest to a group of students and their parents (e.g., religion, sports, or the arts). Also included in the bill is a provision to ensure greater sharing of information between jurisdictions about investigations into a teacher's conduct. School boards, private and charter schools are required to report a teacher who was leaving a position in order to avoid an investigation into his or her suitability to hold a teaching certificate. This change is consistent with a protocol adopted by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to further protect students.

Flexibility

The ministry conducted the Native Education Policy Review to identify ways of better meeting the needs of Aboriginal students (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students), and

propose ways to foster a greater appreciation of Aboriginal culture. In collaboration with the western provinces, Alberta has also completed a common Aboriginal Language and Culture curriculum. As a pilot project, the provincial government and the Edmonton Public School Board are partnering to build a new high-school to better meet the educational needs of urban Aboriginal students.

Additional funding was allocated for children with special needs and children who need English as a second language instruction. The Ministry also worked with the Alberta Teachers' Association to develop professional resources for teaching students with emotional disorders or mental illnesses.

A system with high standards

Alberta continuously reviews elementary and secondary curriculum with a view to ensuring appropriateness and relevance. Under the Western Canadian Protocol, it is an active participant with other western provinces in curriculum development and sharing ideas and expertise to optimize results. Changes have been made to the secondary mathematics curriculum, and both pure and applied mathematics are now offered at the secondary level. In September 2000, a new physical education curriculum that focuses on active living was introduced.

The Ministry of Learning publishes a parent handbook for each grade to confirm what students are expected to be learning in each subject, and makes material about the provincial curriculum available in print and on the Internet.

The province has administered standardized tests to students in grades 3, 6, and 9 since the 1990s to confirm that students are familiar with the required materials. Students continue to perform well at all levels, and continue to improve overall. Grade 12 students are required to write Diploma Examinations in the core subjects. These students did particularly well in the exams in 2000, with more students than expected meeting the standard of excellence in many subjects. Detailed results are provided to schools and school boards so that they can monitor students' performance and identify ways to better meet students' learning needs.

ADULT LEARNING

The principles of accessibility, affordability, responsiveness, and research excellence underlie the adult learning system.

The province is continuing to explore ways of ensuring that Albertans can move smoothly into and around the adult learning system. A requirement for prior learning recognition processes was introduced for institutions offering programs under the Adult Skills Alberta framework.

About \$400 million in annual grants and loans are available for students who need financial assistance for a postsecondary education, and about half of Alberta postsecondary students participate. The province has one of the most comprehensive and flexible student finance systems in the country, including over \$19 million in annual

scholarships, and interest-free periods on borrowing. In July 2001, the province announced that it had contracted with a private agency to administer both federal and provincial student loans. The province will continue to provide funding, and determine eligibility. The agency will provide processing services in postsecondary institutions, and will also offer limited services through 63 post offices in the province.

A recent survey conducted by a national polling company found that although most respondents over-estimated the cost of postsecondary education in Alberta, the majority still felt it was a good investment that increased their employability and earning power. The ministry will be developing a series of information products, to ensure that a lack of accurate information about the costs and benefits of postsecondary education is not a barrier to access.

The apprenticeship system is a vital part of adult learning. Combining formal classroom with on-the-job training, the apprenticeship system produces skilled workers in more than 50 designated trades and occupations. The strength of the Alberta system is clear: although the province has about 9 per cent of the country's population, it trains 19 per cent of the country's apprentices. In response to industry and consumer needs, a newly designated trade – outdoor power equipment technician – was added in March 2001.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR BETTER LEARNING

As is the case across the country, about one-third of adult Albertans are taking training of some sort. An extensive network of postsecondary institutions, community adult learning councils, private providers, and others supports this learning. The network continues to grow with the development and use of learning technologies.

The province is developing the concept of "Campus Alberta," a province-wide learning network that would make learning available in new ways, in new places, at new times. In practice, the network could mean that learners apply once to any program in any place, get credit without repeating their learning, and transfer easily between school and work. Early investments include funding to nine postsecondary institutions to redevelop courses for distance and multimedia delivery on video, CD-ROM, or in other formats.

To ensure students develop the necessary technological skills, Alberta developed Canada's first technology curriculum, which is integrated into kindergarten to grade 12 programs. The province also supports a number of professional development initiatives in technology for teachers and administrators, and is currently developing on-line curriculum resources for students, parents, and teachers. An electronic library of multimedia learning items for classroom and on-line instruction has also been compiled.

Technology is also being used to expand Albertans' mobility within the learning system. When applying for entrance to postsecondary programs, students must provide a transcript confirming completion of earlier studies. Transcripts can now be ordered via the Internet. Applications for student loans are also accepted on-line.

The ministry also works with other provincial departments to provide information and advice. The Alberta Learning Information Service (www.alis.gov.ab.ca) is an on-line service offering information about career paths, learning opportunities, and employment.

All of these components will be further enhanced by donations through a public-private partnership called Computers for Schools, and by the province's commitment to implement a provincial high-speed network to link all postsecondary institutions and school district offices. A broader project, the SUPERNET initiative, will connect the entire province to a high-speed high-bandwidth network by 2004. It will connect universities, school boards, libraries, hospitals, provincial government buildings, and regional health authorities to the network, and give rural businesses and people the opportunity to access high-speed network services at costs equivalent to urban rates.

CONTINUING CHALLENGES

Growth

Alberta's population and economy continue to grow at a rate well above the national average. Strong population growth brings a number of challenges, including pressures on infrastructure to accommodate families' learning, living, and thriving. Enrolments are rising quickly in some communities, and families who arrive in Alberta from other provinces and nations have a diverse range of learning needs. Strong economic growth also puts pressures on the adult learning system to ensure an appropriate number of graduates are available for high-demand occupations. With unemployment rates consistently below 5 per cent and more than half of the occupations facing a labour shortage, there are also pressures to increase graduates' employability, thereby minimizing the length of time needed for school-to-work transitions.

Like Alberta employers in many sectors, schools and postsecondary institutions are finding it increasingly difficult to find the skilled staff they need. Together with other provinces, Alberta signed an agreement-in-principle on the labour mobility of teachers, and worked to develop an Alberta Portability Credential that recognizes years of teaching experience in Canada. Some additional resources have also been allocated to school boards' budgets to accommodate salary increases in order to retain skilled professionals.

Globalization

The province has an economic strategy to increase exports, a technology strategy to build the sector's success and, as of the year 2001, a strategy to develop international education and provide Albertans with the skills and abilities they need to compete internationally. Exchange programs between students and faculty, institutional partnerships in research and programming, and government-sponsored missions are all part of current activities. The strategy will expand on these and introduce new initiatives.

Conclusion

Alberta is developing the strategies to meet those changes. The province has committed to a 19 per cent increase in educational spending over the next three years. Some of the new funding will help explore new ways to deliver programs and offer alternatives beyond full-time, classroom-based instruction.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

British Columbia's priorities are improvement of education, job creation and protection, and support for children and families. The reforms undertaken by the province are designed to guarantee young people free and fair access to education systems.

A coordinated interministerial plan has been adopted to address issues such as child poverty, neglect, and abuse. Programs such as School Meals, Inner City Schools, and Kids at Risk meet the dietary and social needs of young people in primary and secondary schools.

Implementation of a five-year school technology plan, the community learning network, and distance education programs through the *Open Learning Agency* is continuing. These initiatives expand access to education and instill in young people the knowledge they require for a career in the high technology sector.

As part of its commitment to strengthen public accountability, the government has launched a new accreditation program for primary and secondary schools and is now developing a system of performance indicators for postsecondary education.

Education plan from kindergarten to grade 12

In 1994, the provincial government announced a comprehensive strategy to improve the quality and relevance of education. This strategy called for the review of all provincial curricula and consolidation of basic academic skills. It also recommended teaching students computer skills and other important skills.

New secondary graduation requirements

Since 1995-1996, the following new requirements have applied to secondary graduation: applied techniques, fine arts, and career planning and personal planning. In 1996-1997, the 30 hours of workplace experience included in the career planning and personal planning course became voluntary. The Ministry is working jointly with school districts to develop classroom activities that will enable students to meet the requirement for workplace experience to earn their diploma.

New curriculum

The curriculum from kindergarten to grade 12 has been revised. The Ministry provides kits that include the curriculum required by the province, suggested teaching strategies, a complete list of recommended learning resources (books, videos, electronic resources, etc.) and the methods that may be used by teachers to measure students' progress.

Restructuring of school districts

The number of school districts dropped from 75 to 57 in December 1996. The savings achieved from this amalgamation and other rationalization measures have made it possible to maintain classroom funding.

Technology

During the 1995-1996 school year, the Minister announced a five-year plan to invest more than \$100 million in technology for schools. This program will give students greater access to technology and prepare them to participate in the information age. British Columbia participates in the *Rescol* program, which serves the objectives of the five-year plan related to technology in schools.

POSTSECONDARY AND ADULT EDUCATION

Public postsecondary institutions in British Columbia have a statutory responsibility to report to the Minister of Advanced Education on their performance. During the past decade, the provincial government's requirements for financial accountability and legislative compliance for programs to meet statutory requirement have been widened to include a focus on outputs, outcomes, and results of program activity. Performance management and accountability initiatives are continuing for both the university sector, and the university college, college, and institute sector in the province.

There are ongoing standards of quality and effectiveness in the delivery of postsecondary educational programs throughout the province. Initiatives designed to monitor institution and system effectiveness include key performance indicators (learner satisfaction, participation, completion, transfer preparedness) and annual student outcomes surveys (on employment status, academic transfer, and educational satisfaction).

Processes for approving new degree programs, as well as for reviewing and approving new non-degree programs at postsecondary institutions in the province, have been established. These processes ensure that all new and significantly revised programs maintain the high level of educational standards, are relevant and viable, and contribute to the development of a successful economy and society. The new degree approval process was established in 1995 to assist the Minister responsible for postsecondary education to fulfill the statutory responsibility for approving new degree programs. A process for reviewing and approving new non-degree programs at postsecondary institutions in the province has been in place since the late 1970s.

The British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer has been in place since 1989 to facilitate admission, articulation, and transfer arrangements among the colleges, university colleges, institutes, the Open Learning Agency (OLA), and the universities in British Columbia. The Council, in cooperation with the postsecondary sector, evaluates courses so that credit can be applied toward bachelor's degrees in degree-granting institutions.

British Columbia has a well-developed system of distance education (distributed learning), which provides a wide range of open learning services to a diversity of learners in all regions of the province and beyond. OLA, which has had a provincial mandate in distance education for many years, and other postsecondary institutions throughout the province continue to deliver and expand distance education programs and on-line courses to increase access to postsecondary education.

The Industry, Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITA) was established in 1997 with the mandate to oversee apprenticeship in British Columbia. This mandate includes developing and expanding a system of provincially recognized credentials for designated trades and designated occupations that promote laddering, portability, mobility and transferability, and that recognize provincial, national, and international occupational standards. ITAC is responsible for setting standards for training, program content and completion standards, and methods of apprentice evaluation.

Aboriginal program initiatives in British Columbia continue to enhance learner transition and recruitment into postsecondary education and training, and the development of relevant Aboriginal programming for all learners. Two key initiatives during the past decade are the approval of the Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework in 1995 to increase the participation and success rates of Aboriginal people in postsecondary education and training, and the establishment of two Aboriginal education institutions. These institutions (Nicola Valley Institute of Technology and the Institute of Indigenous Government) provide high-quality postsecondary education relevant to the diverse and evolving needs of First Nations communities.

Prior learning assessment (PLA) enables students to earn credit toward a course or program offered by a postsecondary institution if they can demonstrate, through a systematic and valid assessment process, that the learning is equivalent to that which normally would be required through conventional study at the postsecondary level. PLA has evolved over the past decade from an innovative concept discussed at a few institutions to a significant province-wide initiative in British Columbia. The Ministry of Advanced Education has provided funding for PLA activity at public postsecondary institutions since 1994.

The provision of access to high-quality advanced education and training programs continues to be a high priority of the Government of British Columbia to help students meet their educational goals and participate in the knowledge-based global economy.

Postsecondary education for the new era

British Columbia has a comprehensive and diversified advanced education and training system, which includes 28 differentiated education institutions that offer a wide array of educational programs in many fields.

The mission of the system is to enable British Columbians to develop the skills and knowledge they need to live productive and fulfilling lives and to contribute to the changing economic, social and cultural life of the province.

Guarantee For Youth

In March 1996, British Columbia announced the Guarantee For Youth initiative. A key objective is to ensure that postsecondary education is affordable and accessible throughout the province. Under this initiative, the entire system has a collective obligation to provide access to postsecondary programs for all qualified students. The Guarantee For Youth program has three components:

- Supplementary grants for new programs and institutions, in preparation for rising enrolment.
- British Columbia is committed to creating 7,000 new spaces in the postsecondary education system through various means: new programs and initiatives, increased capacity through the BC Benefits Program and requiring institutions to increase their productivity by 4 per cent.
- Tuition fees for all credit programs are frozen, to keep postsecondary education in the province affordable.

Strategic plan for colleges and institutes

The strategic plan appears in the document *Charting a New Course* and provides a framework for action that specifies the direction the system must take as well as its goals and strategies, and the terms of reference it needs to achieve the desired results.

New institutions

In February 1995, the provincial government announced the creation of a new technical university in the Fraser Valley. The government is committed to investing \$100 million for construction of this new institute of applied studies, which may accommodate as many as 3,300 students. The new institution will provide programs that teach skills and forge partnerships with industry. The university will attract primarily part-time students who already have a job.

The new Royal Roads University, located on the site of the former Royal Roads Military College, opened on a small scale in September 1995, providing a few undergraduate university courses and some college-level courses on the environment in conjunction with the University of Victoria and Camosun College. Programs are delivered in modules of 12 months a year so students have the option of taking them at various times of the year.

Approval process for new degrees

To encourage the establishment of a broad range of high-quality degree programs, a review process for all new degree programs has been introduced. The Degree Programs Review Committee assesses new programs, from those leading to a traditional degree to applied or occupational programs, before submitting recommendations to the Ministry of Education. The Committee, consisting of administration, faculty, government, student, employer, and community representatives, ensures that the new programs meet the appropriate educational standards, are relevant and viable, and contribute to the growth of a prosperous society and economy.

Provincial learning network

The Provincial Learning Network (PLNet) is a shared telecommunications network linking schools, school districts, colleges, training institutes, university colleges, universities, the Open Learning Agency, community learning centres, as well as many libraries, museums, and scientific and cultural organizations.

Innovation Assistance Fund

These innovation assistance funds give postsecondary institutions an opportunity to make the leap from timid exploration of innovative teaching methods to active participation and education enriched by technology.

Adult education

Adult education programs are available in colleges and school districts throughout the province (basic adult education, learning English, and literacy).

Skills training

The BC Benefits program constitutes a major renewal of British Columbia's social safety net and includes new grants for low-income families, as well as new programs to help adults on welfare enter the labour force.

Funding has been allocated to institutions to introduce support services to help participants in the BC Benefits program successfully obtain a postsecondary education.

Additional grants are paid to institutions to help participants in basic education programs cover admission fees and the cost of books.

Colleges and institutes can negotiate contracts with regional staff of the occupational learning division to deliver job preparation and job search programs.

British Columbia places high priority on technical and skills training. Under the Skills Now! initiative announced in 1994, the provincial government has invested \$200 million over two years in 30 innovative training programs. Many programs relied on partnerships between industry and the postsecondary system to ensure that the relevant skills are being taught.

Community Skills Centres (CSC) were created to alleviate the repercussions of the economic and labour market adjustment: greater community participation in decision making on training and adjustment; central point for accessing training resources; option of taking courses via information technology; and access to financial independence.

The Community Outreach Partnerships program encourages public postsecondary institutions in British Columbia to work with the community to provide part-time retraining programs and continuing education programs.

British Columbia has revitalized the learning system. New trades in the broad spectrum of sectors, including the film and theatre industries and the hospitality, tourism, and food service industry, are linked to the learning system. The secondary system learning program is growing so students can earn credits toward a secondary diploma or apprentice licence.

YUKON

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

Curriculum reform is taking the following approaches:

- Mobilize the education sector to strengthen training and postsecondary education and provide effective programs such as Youth Work, Entrepreneurship and Job+.
- Ensure that obligations are met for the cultural and linguistic heritage of First Nations arising from the *Education and Land Agreements Act*.
- Support new and innovative teaching programs for people of all ages: socio-psychological assistance, early intervention, remedial reading, literacy, distance education, and Internet access.
- Eliminate violence and promote safety and security in our schools through initiatives such as Together Towards Safer Schools Action Plan; emergency planning policies, access to information, the battle against harassment, school issues and sexual equity; and directives on teaching controversial topics.
- Forge constructive relationships with First Nations parents, students, and educators by consulting the private sector and labour unions.
- Assist school boards in their work and recognize the role, interests, and participation in the decision-making process by elected school board officials.

The Department follows the principles below in setting its financial priorities:

- Keep children in their community environment.
- Community development.
- Assess schools in the community context.
- Sharing costs with other community groups.
- Prevention and intervention programs.
- Equal opportunity and recognition of the special needs of rural schools.
- Risk factors for health and the environment.
- Long-term planning of renovations and construction.
- School staffing, permanent and temporary buildings, joint viability.

Assessment action plan

The Department of Education's assessment action plan was set up following the full report tabled in the Yukon Legislative Assembly by the education task force in December 1994. In assessing student knowledge against curriculum-based standards, the goal is to:

- Enable parents and the public to assess students' progress throughout Yukon on an objective and credible basis.
- Enable the Department to honour its obligation of public accountability.
- Generate more public respect and support for public schools in Yukon.
- Improve the quality of education in public schools in Yukon.
- Ensure that all public school students in Yukon receive an education consistent with the expectations of the prescribed curriculum.

The following initiatives have been launched:

- The Department of Education has set up a departmental assessment committee.
- The Department of Education has created an assessment unit.
- Yukon Department of Education examinations are now being introduced in grades 8 and 11 in the following subjects: mathematics, science, reading/writing, and social studies, and the score obtained by students represents 25 per cent of their final mark.
- The *Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS)* is mandatory in grades 4 and 7.

Task force to promote safety and security in schools

The task force was formed to study the report *Talking About Crime*, which covered the entire territory and made recommendations on the measures to be taken. Representatives of other departments and government agencies met to discuss their concerns about violence in schools and recommend measures for change.

The report made recommendations to close the gap between the community objectives explained in *Talking About Crime* and the specific programs and procedures of schools.

Keeping Schools Safe Policy Package

A kit of regulations on school safety has been prepared to support school initiatives. The kit includes regulations on harassment, behaviour to be noted in buses, school plans, gender equity, and discipline.

Early intervention program

The program was designed in an attempt to detect students at risk and meet their needs before they become candidates for the learning assistance program.

Note: Students at risk do not include those in special education programs who are subject to an individual teaching plan. The program includes four components: family, community, classroom, and teacher support.

The program has focused on the following activities:

- **For the community:**
Books for Babies Literacy promotion presented to parents of all newborns in Yukon.
- **For the family:**
PALS (Parental Action for Literacy Support) Five sessions for parents of grade 1 and kindergarten students on home support strategies for children at risk. This program is available in eight schools, three rural and five urban.
- **For teachers:**
Reading Recovery Training sessions are provided for teachers to inform them about reading re-education and give them thorough training on assessment (e.g., records management).

In-Services A training program in which kindergarten teachers learn to use play as a literacy technique.

- **For the classroom:**

Wiggleworks This is a CD-ROM presented to all grade 1 teachers and teacher assistants. This program specifically targets students at risk in reading.

The early intervention program is in permanent expansion.

Teaching resources on First Nations

The next three initiatives are designed to provide a better understanding of the language, culture, rights, and values of First Nations peoples in Yukon and their changing role in contemporary society.

- *Dene Games / Arctic Sports curriculum.* A reference document on the physical education program in grades 6 and 11 in Yukon is now being prepared. This is a joint project with the Yukon Department of Sports and Recreation.
- A complete documentation kit on First Nations in British Columbia for grade 12. This course has been adapted to include the study of land claims in Yukon and agreements on self-government.
- *Land of My Ancestors – Environmental Units.* Learning units prepared as part of intermediate social studies, English and/or science courses. The units cover birds and fish, wildlife and the sun, moon, and stars.

Yukon Education Student Network (YESnet)

YESnet is a network established by the Yukon Department of Education for the exclusive use of Yukon students and teachers. Once it is fully operational, the network will allow schools and other educational institutions as well as units in the Department of Education to present material via the World Wide Web. The objectives are as follows:

- provide all Yukon students with Internet access.
- give students an opportunity to communicate globally.
- provide students with access to rich, diverse databases.

Apprenticeship Program

The Yukon Secondary School Apprenticeship Program (YSSAP) gives all grade 11 and 12 students an opportunity to attend secondary school and take apprenticeship training at the same time. YSSAP began in 1994-1995 and is being rolled out in rural communities. Students divide their time between courses at school and the skills training they receive in the workplace. Through YSSAP, students obtain credits toward a secondary diploma and apprenticeship credits while earning an income. Students take all compulsory credit courses for a secondary diploma.

New distribution of school years in Whitehorse

The new distribution of school years, from a three-tier system (kindergarten to grade 6, grades 7 to 9, and grades 10 to 12) to a two-tier system (kindergarten to grade 7 and grades 8 to 12) will support:

- more efficient use of existing staff and facilities.
- fewer changes for students, thereby achieving greater continuity.
- longer stays by students in their neighbourhood school.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment works in close cooperation with Divisional Education Councils and District Education Authorities to implement programs from kindergarten to grade 12 in the majority of communities. Implementation of distance education programs will give students a choice from a full range of quality courses.

The *Education Act (1996)* gives greater responsibility to communities.

In recent years, priority has been placed on early childhood education with increased funding and support.

Implementation of Aboriginal language programs in NWT schools is continuing through Inuuqatigiit (K-12) and Dene Kede (K-9).

Curriculum reform is based on the following principles:

- The major project to expand secondary programming to all communities is nearing completion.
- An electronic network links all NWT communities. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is a major partner, contributing funding for the cost of operating this communications network, over which it is launching a series of applications designed to facilitate curriculum delivery.
- The Healthy Children Initiative launched in 1997 targets children from birth to age six, and their families.
- One priority of the school system is to produce and introduce curricula that reflect Dene and Inuit perspectives.
- Various new pre-employment, trades access, and technology certification programs have been set up to train workers for employment in the rapidly growing non-renewable resource sector, including mining and oil and gas.

NUNAVUT

Created in 1999, Nunavut has set the priority of training a new generation of young Inuit in administration and policies to manage the Territory, and of introducing curriculum in the Inuktitut language for the Inuit as well as the non-Inuit population, especially in the workplace.

Through its network of school boards and school administrations as well as Arctic College, which has 26 Community Learning Centres, Nunavut is completing its secondary curriculum and providing continuing education to the Inuit population by delivering services and programs focused on career development and teaching traditional and modern science.

Nunavut is working in partnership with several institutions, such as banks (loans and scholarships), the Nunavut Teachers' Association, Tungasuvvingat Inuit, a resource centre in Ottawa, the Baffin Region Literacy Committee, the Inuit Cultural Institute, Nunatta Campus, and the Nunavut Literacy Council.

CONCLUSIONS

This overview of provincial and territorial initiatives to upgrade curriculum at the elementary, secondary and postsecondary levels and to renew adult education programs reveals a large number of common elements.

Over the past decade in particular, all provinces and territories have taken significant actions to develop curricula capable of meeting the needs of their respective populations for the 21st century. These actions definitely can be described as fundamental reforms in several respects.

First, departments and ministries of education have exercised more direct and more accurate leadership in the choice of objectives, content, and outcomes to be achieved in each updated curriculum. In general, the outcomes to be achieved are specified and prescribed by the departments and ministries. Greater importance is placed on “basic subjects” such as language, mathematics and science, and in some cases more teaching time is allocated to these subjects. At the same time, outcomes to be achieved have been incorporated into curricula that are based on job skills such as ability for teamwork, analytical and abstract skills, and communication and interpersonal skills. Finally, curricula also incorporate outcomes that are generic abilities or skills known as cross-skills, which support personal development and citizenship skills in a complex, multicultural world.

Paradoxically, this greater control by departments and ministries is accompanied by a joint effort to increase parental participation and contribution to quality of education, and some jurisdictions have even passed legislative amendments establishing school councils or committees with greater authority over school management and improvement.

These efforts to tighten up curriculum and increase participation by parents are supported by the implementation of student performance assessment programs. Tests developed by departments, ministries, or specially created agencies are generally administered at the end of each teaching cycle, in grades 3, 6, 9, and 12. Some jurisdictions have also imposed new conditions for earning a secondary diploma or passing provincial examinations.

In several instances, curriculum reform has been accompanied by major projects to develop new teaching tools and teacher training programs.

To ensure the quality and relevance of instructional materials more effectively, several departments or ministries have instituted criteria and mechanisms for assessing and approving instructional materials.

To ensure the quality of teaching, a few departments or ministries have adopted teacher performance appraisal measures and introduced new training and professional development programs.

Several studies have demonstrated the importance of early intervention for students' academic performance. All provinces and territories have placed high priority on early childhood development by promoting kindergarten and nursery school programs as well as an integrated approach for children up to four years old that provides training to parents and supports the family. Several other departments or ministries, such as health and social services, have been asked to contribute to this effort.

At the other end of the spectrum, departments and ministries have attempted to ensure a smoother transition from secondary school to the workplace or postsecondary education. They have introduced liaison, exchange, and cooperative education programs, as well as work-study sessions in the private sector, and initiatives to develop programs and improve career guidance services.

At the postsecondary level, governments have striven to ensure greater program relevance, especially in response to competitiveness and productivity needs in the Canadian workplace. They have thus raised the criteria for graduation and for approval of new programs, while introducing performance indicators that are sometimes linked to funding for postsecondary institutions.

Ministries and departments have also introduced incentives to foster partnerships between postsecondary institutions and with the private sector, for research as well as postsecondary education.

Adult education has also been reformed and subjected to outcomes to be achieved, with a mission to ensure adjustment of Canada's work force and active participation in Canadian life by certain under-privileged populations. In several instances, adult training programs are closely linked to social support, job search and access, and literacy programs.

Each province and territory independently manages and bears full responsibility for its reforms. However, as shown by their joint statement in 1999, Canada's ministers of education have undertaken reforms with a spirit and determination of cooperation, coordination, and sharing of resources. The School Achievement Indicators Program, managed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), the Atlantic Provinces Protocol, the Western Provinces Protocol and the Pan-Canadian Protocol on Science Programs, Agreements on Transfer of Credits, and Copyright are just a few examples of this cooperation.

In conclusion, the thrusts and focus of the reforms undertaken are ambitious and complex. In coming years, departments and ministries, governments, and the Canadian public will be able to measure and assess the impact of reforms on program accessibility, quality, and relevance, and determine the extent to which outcomes have been achieved.

In the end, will these reforms allow the provinces and territories to build a society whose members are educated and cultured, who have achieved their own personal and professional development goals, while also participating in the socio-economic prosperity of their community, province or territory, and country? Only the future will tell.

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New Brunswick

Department of Education
<http://www.gov.nb.ca/education>

Department of Training and Employment Development
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Quebec

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Ontario

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Manitoba

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Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training
<http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/>

Alberta

Department of Learning
<http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/>

British Columbia

Ministry of Education
<http://www.gov.bc.ca/bced/>

Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology
<http://www.gov.bc.ca/aett/>

Nunavut

Department of Education
<http://www.nunavut.com/education/english/index.html>

Northwest Territories

Department of Education, Culture and Employment
<http://siksik.learnnet.nt.ca>

Yukon

Department of Education
<http://www.gov.yk.ca/depts/education/>

Canadian Teachers' Federation

<http://www.ctf-feo.ca>

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)

<http://www.cmec.ca>

Education@Canada

<http://www.educationcanada.cmec.ca/>