

Education Equity in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 System



REPORT 2003

Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission

“Ensuring that each person has equitable opportunity and benefit, regardless of ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, religious preference, culture, gender, family structure and lifestyle, social or economic background or other difference, is a critical priority. Excellence within Saskatchewan’s education system will only be achieved when education equity is a reality.”

- Equity in Education Forum, 1997 ¹

“Somewhere in the future, we are going to have our place in the world. This is only possible through education.”

- Elder Danny Musqua, Aboriginal Educators Consultation, April 2003

¹ Equity in Education Forum, *Our Children, Our Communities and Our Future* (SaskEd, 1997).

Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission
Education Equity in the K to 12 System
REPORT 2003

Contents

Evolution of the K to 12 Education Equity Program	1
Future Directions	2
This Report	3
Table A Aboriginal Students in Equity Divisions	4
Table B Aboriginal Teachers in Equity Divisions	5
Table C Aboriginal Non-Teaching Staff in Equity Divisions	8

Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission

K TO 12 EDUCATION EQUITY REPORT 2003

Evolution of Education Equity

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code gives the Human Rights Commission authority to approve broad, proactive programs designed to overcome systemic barriers to equality. One of these initiatives is the education equity program designed for the provincial, kindergarten to grade 12 system.

Education equity strives to create supportive learning environments that can help all students realize their full potential. The K to 12 program began in 1985, in response to community demands for a proactive initiative to address the needs of Aboriginal children. Research showed that up to 90 percent of Aboriginal students left school before completing grade 12. Numerous studies, task forces and committees concluded that the performance of Aboriginal children was linked to inhospitable learning environments and curriculum materials that did not reflect the reality of Aboriginal experience.

The Commission saw the failure to provide equality of educational benefit as inconsistent with the right to education without discrimination under section 13 of the *Code*. With the support of the community, it began approving equity plans developed by provincial school divisions (“equity divisions”). Initially, the Commission asked these equity sponsors to focus on five goals:

- increasing Aboriginal content in the curriculum;
- reviewing school policies and practices for bias or systemic barriers;
- providing cross-cultural training for teachers;
- increasing the involvement of Aboriginal parents in school activities; and
- increasing the representation of Aboriginal teachers and non-teaching staff.

By 1989, most school divisions with significant numbers of Aboriginal students had approved equity plans. These initiatives have evolved over time to include anti-discrimination strategies and many other innovations.

The Commission’s first opportunity to review education equity occurred in the mid-1990s, during its comprehensive review of *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*.² Many groups and individuals called for education equity to be strengthened and expanded. They recommended that the program include gender equity, and ensure equality of educational benefit to all students including Aboriginal and visible minority students and students with disabilities. Subsequently, the Commission joined with all major players in the provincial K to 12 system to form the Equity in

2. The results of this review were published in the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission’s 1996 report entitled *Renewing the Vision – Human Rights in Saskatchewan*.

Education Forum, a network and advocacy group for equity in Saskatchewan schools.³ The Forum's 1997 policy framework, *Our Children, Our Communities and Our Future*, broadened the scope of education equity to include Indian and Métis students, students with exceptional needs, rural and northern students, students at risk of school failure, and gender equity.

While participating in Forum activities, the Commission has continued to approve and monitor individual plans. In accordance with the Forum's definition of equity, the Commission has asked equity sponsors to broaden the scope of their programs. While agreeing with the principle of expansion, most school divisions have continued to make the progress of Aboriginal students their immediate priority.

In 2002, the Commission embarked on a comprehensive review of both its education and employment equity programs. As part of its community consultation, the Commission attended meetings with equity sponsors and partners, and hosted a special meeting of Aboriginal teachers, educators and teacher trainers working in the K to 12 and post-secondary fields. The Commission has summarized the observations and recommendations of the focus group in the *Aboriginal Educators Consultation* report, which may be downloaded from the Commission's web site at www.gov.sk.ca/shrc.

Based on its review, the Commission developed a streamlined equity program with less emphasis on approval and monitoring, and a greater focus on education, resources, networking and information sharing. As a first step towards implementing the new approach, the Commission developed an equity page on its web site. Before the new program could be launched, unfortunately, work and financial pressures obliged the Commission to reduce its equity activities. As a result, 2003 was the last year in which the Commission asked school divisions with approved plans to report to the Commission.

Future Directions

In 2005, the Commission's budget was increased. This has raised the possibility of the Commission once again assuming a proactive role with regard to equity programs. Over the next few months, the Commission will consider what role is possible and appropriate for it to undertake in today's circumstances.

Currently, 17 school divisions with close to 80,000 students have education equity plans approved by the Human Rights Commission. In addition, Regina Public School Division - with more than 21,500 students - has an approved employment equity

³ In 2003, members of the Forum included the Commission, Saskatchewan Learning, Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Saskatchewan School Boards Association, the Colleges of Education at the Universities of Saskatchewan and Regina, Gabriel Dumont Institute, and the League of Education Administrators, Directors and Superintendents.

plan allowing outreach recruitment of Aboriginal staff. This brings the total number of students benefiting from equity plans to over 100,000 students – roughly 57 percent of the approximately 175,000 students in the provincial K to 12 system.

There has been enormous progress towards the goals of education equity since the first plans were approved. School divisions with equity plans have developed many practical and creative strategies for achieving positive change. It is also encouraging to see an expanding network of agencies and initiatives dedicated to ensuring equality of educational benefit for all students.

Nevertheless, it is evident that there is still a great need for equity initiatives in the provincial system. Saskatchewan Learning's 2002 *Saskatchewan Education Indicators Report* noted that, of self-declared Aboriginal students who entered grade 10 between 1992 and 1998, about 47 percent completed grade 12. This contrasted with the almost 80 percent completion rate of all grade 10-12 students in the provincial system. Students from other groups also experience barriers and disadvantages. The Commission encourages communication and cooperation between all those who have a critical role to play in helping Saskatchewan students fulfill their promise.

This Report

This report is based on information provided by school divisions with approved plans in 2003, the last year in which the Commission undertook monitoring of the K to 12 program. Sponsor reports contained statistical information, and descriptions of qualitative measures to promote student success and improve the learning environment. Because of the limitations on Commission resources referred to above, this report contains only summaries of the statistical information provided. Tables A, B and C show the proportion of Aboriginal persons among students, teachers and non-teaching staff of equity divisions, from 1998-99 to 2002-2003. No figures are provided for 2001-2002, when the Commission suspended monitoring to undertake its review of equity programs.

Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission
March 2005

Table A
Representation of Aboriginal Students in School Divisions With Approved Plans

School Division	Plan Adopted	1998-1999			1999-2000			2000-2001			2002-2003		
		Students			Students			Students			Students		
		Total	Aboriginal		Total	Aboriginal		Total	Aboriginal		Total	Aboriginal	
			No.	%		No.	%		No.	%		No.	%
Battlefords	*				3,405	950	27.9%	2,994	728	24.3%	2,921	812	27.8%
Biggar	1987	946	170	18.0%	983	200	20.3%	1,002	222	22.2%	955	230	24.1%
Broadview	1988	959	117	12.2%	941	117	12.4%	929	160	17.2%	na*		
Cupar	1988	1,012	60	5.9%	940	38	4.0%	935	35	3.7%	na*		
Indian Head	1987	1,675	557	33.3%	1,664	586	35.2%	1,520	483	31.8%	na*		
Lands West	*	2,554	142	5.6%	2,430	133	5.5%	2,300	110	4.8%	2,023	116	5.7%
Northern Lakes	1987	973	196	20.1%	936	136	14.5%	903	108	12.0%	na*		
Northern Lights	1988	4,392	4,041	92.0%	4,652	3,954	85.0%	4,361	4,010	92.0%	4,587	4,174	91.0%
North West Catholic	*	2,014	424	21.1%	1,959	445	22.7%	1,993	472	23.7%	1,912	426	22.3%
Prince Albert Catholic	1989	2,783	927	33.3%	2,813	1,167	41.5%	2,825	1,098	38.9%	3,011	1,099	36.5%
Regina Catholic	1987	11,015	1,234	11.2%	11,016	1,066	9.7%	10,712	1,087	10.1%	10,640	1,201	11.3%
Regina Public (a)	1994(a)				23,031	5,000	21.7%	22,600	3,800	16.8%	21,561	2,800	13.0%
Saskatchewan Rivers	2002										8,309	3,204	38.6%
Saskatoon Catholic	1987	14,896	1,819	12.2%	14,952	1,855	12.4%	15,225	1,921	12.6%	15,336	1,991	13.0%
Saskatoon Public	1987	21,670	2,872	13.3%	22,788	3,326	14.6%	22,138	3,387	15.3%	21,844	3,685	16.9%
Scenic Valley	1997	1,338	407	30.4%	1,216	246	20.2%	1,134	326	28.7%	na*		
Turtleford	1998	1,201	83	6.9%	1,145	135	11.8%	1,072	50	4.7%	986	50	5.1%
Wadena	1988	1,556	226	14.5%	1,537	258	16.8%	1,349	122	9.0%	1,271	124	9.8%
Total		68,984	13,275	19.2%	96,408	19,612	20.3%	93,992	18,119	19.3%	95,356	19,912	20.9%

* These school divisions were formed in the 1990s through amalgamation.

na* Statistics were unavailable in 2002-2003 from school divisions going through the process of amalgamation.

(a) Regina Public S.D. has an employment equity program, which enables it to take positive steps to hire Aboriginal staff.

(b) No report is available for 2001-2002, when the Commission suspended monitoring to review equity programs.

Table B
Representation of Aboriginal Teachers in School Divisions With Approved Plans

School Division	Plan Adopted	1998-1999			1999-2000			2000-2001			2002-2003		
		Teachers			Teachers			Teachers			Teachers		
		Total	Aboriginal		Total	Aboriginal		Total	Aboriginal		Total	Aboriginal	
			No.	%		No.	%		No.	%		No.	%
Battlefords	*				190	9	4.7%	191	10	5.2%	157	5	3.2%
Biggar	1987	65	1	1.5%	65	3	4.6%	65	4	6.2%	68	5	7.4%
Broadview	1988	63.9	1	1.6%	59.6	1	1.7%	60	1	1.7%	na*		
Cupar	1988	64.2	1	1.6%	57.6	0	0.0%	60.8	0	0.0%	na*		
Indian Head	1987	98.8	6	6.1%	98.5	6	6.1%	93.1	6	6.4%	na*		
Lands West	*	158	2	1.3%	150	2	1.3%	142	2	1.4%	155	1	0.6%
Northern Lakes	1987	67	3	4.5%	67	1	1.5%	62.5	1	1.6%	na*		
Northern Lights	1988	267	81	30.3%	274	75	27.4%	302	78	25.8%	345	108	31.3%
North West Catholic	*	109.5	5	4.6%	107.7	8	7.4%	111.9	8	7.1%	107	8	7.5%
Prince Albert Catholic	1989	165	17	10.3%	173	14	8.1%	173	25	14.5%	166	22	13.3%
Regina Catholic	1987	600	30	5.0%	612	30	4.9%	665	29	4.4%	672	30	4.5%
Regina Public (a)	1994(a)	1324	41	3.1%	1324	44	3.3%	1304	47	3.6%	1,396	53	3.8%
Saskatchewan Rivers	2002										472	87	18.4%
Saskatoon Catholic	1987	845	40.8	4.8%	828.6	44.3	5.3%	944	47	5.0%	976	55	5.6%
Saskatoon Public	1987	1336	65	4.9%	1492	66	4.4%	1442	69	4.8%	1082	64	5.9%
Scenic Valley	1997	89	1	1.1%	85.7	1	1.2%	90	2	2.2%	na*		
Turtleford	1998	73.8	0	0.0%	71	0	0.0%	83	0	0.0%	53	0	0.0%
Wadena	1988	100	1	1.0%	100	2	2.0%	89	3	3.4%	83	4	4.8%
Total		5426.1	295.8	6.5%	5755.7	306.3	5.3%	5878.3	332	5.6%	5732	442	7.7%

* These school divisions were formed in the 1990s through amalgamation.

na* Statistics were unavailable in 2002-2003 from school divisions going through the process of amalgamation.

(a) Regina Public S.D. has an employment equity program, which enables it to take positive steps to hire Aboriginal staff.

(b) No report is available for 2001-2002, when the Commission suspended monitoring to review equity programs.

Table C
Representation of Aboriginal Non-Teaching Staff in School Divisions With Approved Plans

School Division	Plan Adopted	1997-1998			1998-1999			1999-2000			2000-2001			2002- 2003		
		Non-Teaching Staff			Non-Teaching Staff			Non-Teaching Staff			Non-Teaching Staff			Non-Teaching Staff		
		Total	Aboriginal		Total	Aboriginal		Total	Aboriginal		Total	Aboriginal		Total	Aboriginal	
			No.	%		No.	%		No.	%		No.	%		No.	%
Battlefords	*							103	15	14.6%	132	11	8.3%	138	17	12.3%
Biggar	1987	N/A			60	2	3.3%	60	5	8.3%	60	8	13.3%	70	11	15.7%
Broadview	1988	40	1	2.5%	40	1	2.5%	40	1	2.5%	40	1	2.5%	na*		
Cupar	1988	27	1	3.7%	27	4	14.8%	26	0	0.0%	35	0	0.0%	na*		
Indian Head	1987	35.9	7.5	20.9%	39	7.5	19.2%	45	10	22.2%	39.6	5	12.6%	na*		
Lands West	*	138	0	0.0%	138	1	0.7%	134	2	1.5%	125	2	1.6%	74	1	1.4%
Northern Lakes	1987	85	11	12.9%	60.4	2	3.3%	86.8	5.5	6.3%	81.8	0	0.0%	na*		
Northern Lights	1988	164	141	86.0%	168	143	85.1%	221	169	76.5%	227	175	77.1%	340	211	62.1%
North West Catholic	*	35	3	8.6%	36	4	11.1%	57	6	10.5%	74	11	14.9%	103	9	8.7%
Prince Albert Catholic	1989	61	12	19.7%	82	18	22.0%	101	22	21.8%	96	23	24.0%	127	27	21.3%
Regina Catholic	1987	267	9	3.4%	302	9	3.0%	302	9	3.0%	251	9	3.6%	419	11	2.6%
Regina Public (a)	1994(a)	665	49	7.4%	701	57	8.1%	720	62	8.6%	773	65	8.4%	691	84	12.2%
Saskatchewan Rivers	2002													not available		
Saskatoon Catholic	1987	580	25	4.3%	500	23	4.6%	465.3	25.4	5.5%	539	30	5.6%	651	31	4.8%
Saskatoon Public	1987	580	7	1.2%	700	12	1.7%	830	15	1.8%	790	21	2.7%	897	36	4.0%
Scenic Valley	1997	42	6	14.3%	53	8	15.1%	50.8	7	13.8%	54	9	16.7%	na*		
Turtleford	1998	25	3	12.0%	25	3	12.0%	16	1	6.3%	73	5	6.8%	71	3	4.2%
Wadena	1988	63	2	3.2%	63	2	3.2%	65	2	3.1%	65	2	3.1%	90	0	0.0%
Total		2807.9	277.5	9.9%	2994.4	296.5	9.9%	3323	356.9	10.7%	3455.4	377	10.9%	3671	441	12.0%

* These divisions were formed in the 1990s through amalgamation, incorporating school divisions that already had approved plans.

na* Statistics were unavailable from school divisions going through the process of amalgamation in 2002-2003.

(a) In 1994 Regina Public School Board adopted an employment equity plan, which enables it to take positive steps to hire Aboriginal staff.

(b) No report is available for 2001-2002, as the Commission suspended monitoring that year to conduct a comprehensive review of equity programs.