

Towards Equity in Education



A PROJECT OF

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

in partnership with:

Manitoba Association of School Superintendents

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning

Manitoba School Boards Association

Manitoba Teachers Society

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Executive Summary

The 2015 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty states that 1 in 3 (29%) of Manitoba's children live in challenging socioeconomic circumstances (Campaign 2000, 2015). In spite of the federal government's commitment to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000, the numbers have continued to grow. The negative impact of poverty on education and life outcomes has been well researched, and it is important to consider that socioeconomic status intersects with a number of different factors that influence the well-being of children, including a positive home life, adequate shelter, food, labour and income security, and social supports. Schools and school systems are just one part of a broader social support network for children and families, but they can have a significant and direct impact on the quality of a child's daily life and future life outcomes. For that reason it is important to consider, among other factors, the work of schools and school divisions in promoting equity as a means to support the well-being of students and families.

In 2012, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (SPCW) extended an open invitation to interested parties to discuss development of a study of the efforts of the public education sector to achieve greater equity for students across Manitoba. As a result, an Equity in Education Steering Committee, with membership from the SPCW, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS), the Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA), the Manitoba Teachers Society (MTS), Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, and the University of Manitoba (U of M), was established. This report is the culmination of the work of the committee, and is intended to provide a snapshot of equity practice in Manitoba school divisions, support ongoing conversations around equity, provide suggestions about next steps, and celebrate effective practices and progress in creating more inclusive learning environments.

This report contains 21 statements, or indicators of equity related practices, that school divisions can pursue in order to support educational equity across the province. The indicators are grouped into five main areas: our board, our parents and community, our teachers, teaching and learning, and our students. Each of these 21 statements includes information about how divisions interpret their equity practices, and ideas for strengthening those practices across the province.

Background

As noted above, using the Low Income Measure, 29% of children in Manitoba grow up in challenging socio-economic circumstances (Campaign 2000, 2015). There is an abundance of literature on the intersections between racism, poverty, ableism, sexism and colonialism. As two examples, a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Save the Children Canada (2013), found that 40% of Indigenous children in Canada are living in poverty. Indigenous children in Canada were found to be over two and a half times more likely to live in poverty than non-Indigenous children. In a similar vein, a 2009 report on poverty in Manitoba found that recent immigrant children were more than twice as likely to experience poverty as are non-immigrant children (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg). While this report acknowledges that social justice and equity require attention to intersectionality, it focuses primarily on the education of children in challenging socioeconomic circumstances in the public school system in Manitoba. Clearly, it is an initial and incomplete foray into the area of educational equity.

Many people believe that education is the best way to break the cycle of poverty and level the playing field in society, but examining the relationship between education and increased income "... is not an easy undertaking since the links between poverty and schooling are far from fully understood" (Ng & Rury, 2006, 8). On the other hand, the impact of persistent socio-economic disadvantage of the life outcomes of Canadian children has been well researched (Brownell et al, 2012; Ferguson et al, 2007). On average, achievement levels for students from lower income families are lower than achievement levels of other students. As one example, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are often behind their more affluent peers in terms of readiness for school, a key factor for school achievement and later life success (Ferguson, Boviard & Mueller, 2007). Similarly, research shows that much can be done within the education system to improve education outcomes for students living on low income. Nevertheless, continued inequities within the education system have a negative affect both on students and on society. According to the literature, one of the greatest obstacles to equity in education is the societal approach to discrimination and financial scarcity.

Within the school system poverty is often viewed "through the lens of inadequacy" where "fixing kids," and sweeping assumptions about children living in poverty, guide policy and programming (Tileston & Darling, 2009, viii). As noted by Connell in a study that continues to hold true today, ineffective programs to combat poverty, disproportionately high interest in the middle class, and very negative public perceptions of poverty have interfered with children facing socioeconomic disadvantages achieving their potential (Connell, 1994). Nonetheless, noted educational leaders such as Pasi Sahlberg have shown that the impacts of poverty on educational achievement can be mitigated by a commitment to equity ensuring that all students have equal access to the same educational opportunities across social and cultural groups and geographic regions (Sahlberg, 2011, 68). It is therefore important to explore systemic gaps, and highlight and celebrate effective school based equity practices within the Manitoba context.

To that end, this study sought to examine how Manitoba school divisions view educational equity, how resources in schools are allocated, and what initiatives have been implemented to make schools more equitable. The project provided opportunities for divisional leaders to reflect on issues of educational equity and to share their initiatives—successful or not—and their challenges in meeting equity objectives. It also provided them the opportunity to share thoughts about what else they might do, and what public and private supports and resources they might need to achieve their equity aims.

For MASS, this research study is part of a long history of concern with equity, most recently enhanced by a series of Ethical Leadership cohorts and a number of Summer Institutes on the theme of equity, including the 2012 Summer Institute with Pasi Sahlberg and the 2013 Summer Institute with Simon Breakspear. For MSBA, the study is a natural extension of its long standing and ongoing advocacy for poverty reduction, as well as its much earlier intervention by the Canadian School Boards Association which resulted in the creation of the Poverty Intervention Profile and related tools for use by public school boards across the country. For the other participants this research endeavor is an extension of their work in the area of the effects of poverty on student success and well-being.

Goals

The goal of this study is to assist educational partners across the province in their efforts to mitigate the effects of poverty and inequality within the education system on student success and well-being.

The objectives of this study are to:

- inventory and document current policies and practices of the Manitoba school divisions that help equalize opportunities to all
- share information and promising policies and practices for potential replication
- identify obstacles or barriers to implementing successful practices, and
- recommend ways to support and resource replication of these promising practices.

This report is meant to inform educators and the public about the current status of equity practices across divisions and to invite discussions about how to enhance equity across the province. In addition to providing valuable reference points for all participants, the research committee hopes to provide school divisions with encouragement and promising alternatives identified by divisional leaders from across the province to enhance policies and practices regarding educational equity.

This report can be used in many ways, including but not limited to: being a starting point for discussion with school boards, administrators, teachers and others about educational equity; used as a tool for developing a yearly “inventory” related to the 21 equity practices outlined in this document; or serve as a professional learning tool to create divisional and school community equity plans and actions by considering the equity practices described below or focusing on a particular equity practice during each meeting.

We hope that this report will be both informative and inspirational as systems, communities and groups build their own capacities for equity, and adopt strategies which are often home grown and locally responsive. However, the pursuit of educational equity remains a shared responsibility of everyone in the system, from the school level to the provincial level.

Our Study Framework

The research objectives of this study were to inventory current equity practices of Manitoba school divisions and reference them in relation to current literature. This literature highlighted five areas shown to have a significant impact on student success (Hattie, 2008): students and what motivates them; the connection of parents and community members to education; the organization and governance of educational systems and schools; the curriculum, instruction and assessment practices of a school; and the capacity and expertise of teachers. These five areas, which align with earlier work by CSBA, were used to frame this study, to develop a baseline of current practices promoting equity across educational systems in Manitoba, and inform the development of the survey and focus group questions.

A web-based survey was sent to all superintendents in the province asking them to reflect on their division's practice in relation to the equity practices highlighted in the literature review. Thirty-four (34) divisional leaders representing thirty (30) school divisions participated in the survey.

In addition, five focus groups were conducted in the five MASS regions of the province to further examine broader questions about the purposes of education and the barriers to equity. Thirty-four (34) out of thirty-eight (38) school divisions participated in the focus groups, often with more than one representative. A total of 54 superintendents and assistant superintendents, representing all but four (4) of Manitoba's school divisions, joined the focus group discussions. In addition, three board chairs in three different regions responded in writing to the focus group questions.

This research study, as all such studies, has its limitations. First, it does not include the practices of either independent schools or Federal First Nations schools, neither of which was included in the data collection. Second, while this study documents the work of divisions and the experiences of school trustees and divisional administration, these reports are primarily testimonials, and they do not capture many of the rich nuances that exist at many school and classroom levels as a result of the actions of Boards and senior administration. Finally, the real value of this data lies in its ability to invite further discussions on educational equity, engaging our moral and political imaginations and leading to even more positive action. Simply put, the equity work is not done and continues to demand our attention and vigilance. Despite these limitations, the Educational Equity Steering Committee believes that this report promotes a hopeful sense of both the orientation of Manitoba school divisions towards equity and the provincial climate around equity.

Findings

Overall, the results from the survey and focus groups demonstrate some key findings.

Divisions care about students. Improving the educational experiences of each student, and all students, provided the focus for all the Divisional activity around equity and the motivation for participation in this study.

Divisions are talking about equity. Divisions participating in this research project identified equity as a foundational principle and goal for both schooling and democracy, and saw education as part of the solution to achieving equity for all. Equity has become a guiding construct across divisions and across the province.

Divisions have identified potential initiatives to enhance equity for students. The focus group conversations identified a variety of other potential initiatives to achieve student equity in Manitoba schools.

Divisions exemplify coherence in activities and practices related to enhancing equity for students. Divisions fairly consistently reported coherence of activities and practices with embedded divisional policy in the areas of school safety, school culture, and student leadership. Policies for discipline, attendance, and social support showed less coherence within divisions. Divisional coherence was also reflected in teaching and learning issues such as pedagogical practices, curricular choice, authentic assessment, and cultural proficiency, as well as for early years' literacy and numeracy.

Divisions are seeing positive impacts of an equity focus. Signs of success ranged from student participation and school completion to student and teacher well-being.

Divisions are doing amazing things. Divisions across the province are searching for answers, trying out new ideas, and grappling with ways to enhance supports for all students. Divisions are innovating, borrowing ideas, talking and working to adapt education to meet the needs of all students.

Divisional equity practices can be expanded and developed. Survey results indicate that, while most school divisions have engaged in initial discussions about the effects of poverty on student success in schools, some are still in the early stages of developing policies, practices and activities to mitigate those effects.

Educational partners are pivotal in leading provincial equity conversations. The collaborative work of the MASS, Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, MTS and MSBA over the last decades has been an important factor in moving the equity conversation forward across the province. Ongoing and coordinated work of these partners continues to move this agenda forward and remind school divisions about the importance of this conversation.

Divisions are looking to work in collaboration with the provincial government in enhancing equity. Divisions, indeed all educational partners, are looking to Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning to provide leadership, resources and coordination and in their ongoing efforts to achieve educational equity.

21 Equity Practices

A. Board Practices

1. Equity frameworks
2. Teacher Placement and Development
3. Subsidized activities
4. Board advocacy
5. Equitable school funding
6. Participatory decision-making
7. Effective use of data
8. Diversity and inclusion focus
9. Welcoming school culture
10. Evidence-based school policies
11. Alternative pathways for students

B. Parents and Community Practices

12. Community partnerships
13. Family engagement

C. Educator Focused Practices

14. Staff supports

D. Teaching and Learning Practices

15. Academic supports
16. Relevant curriculum and pedagogy
17. Early numeracy and literacy support

E. Student Focused Practices

18. Transition supports
19. Early childhood supports
20. Whole child supports
21. Meta-cognitive learning

Key to the Indicators

The following section contains relevant information on the equity practices identified through this project. Each equity practice includes a description with some comments on the key issues related to this practice.

- This report contains 21 statements, or indicators of equity related practices that school divisions can pursue in order to support educational equity across the province. The indicators are grouped into the five main practice areas identified by the literature review: our board, our parents and community, our teachers, teaching and learning, and our students. The first section provides a description with some comments on the key issues related to this each equity practice.
- A list of possible actions related to each equity practice follows. This list is meant to be generative and suggestive of different ways to approach the equity practice through policy, practice, curriculum, and programming. It is drawn from the project literature review, the practices identified by school divisions, research findings, background papers, and the focus groups. Each action provides a percentage of divisions that currently engage in the practice.
- An analysis of the research findings (surveys and focus group) follows. This section describes the success and challenges that divisions have shared around implementing the equity practice described.



Socioeconomic circumstances have a huge impact on educational outcomes. Not all children experiencing socioeconomic challenges will struggle academically. However, there is research informed evidence of the impact of the stress, marginalization, and lack of basic resources created by inequity of incomes on levels of academic achievement. By developing specific policies to ensure that all students have equitable access to educational opportunities and outcomes, school divisions can lessen those impacts.

Such equity frameworks can be used as a lens, helping divisions to develop a coherent vision and to focus on strategic action to address the challenges faced by low-income students and communities. Equity frameworks are different from a strategic plan or school planning documents. An equity framework is a specific plan that helps to describe how a division will approach issues related to equity.

Current Strategies

- Considering issues of poverty in the school and the divisional planning processes (97%)
- Developing a shared understanding of the effects of poverty on student success across the division (73%)
- Basing school planning on current research into the impacts of poverty on students and families (58%)
- Developing a divisional framework for addressing equity challenges in a comprehensive way (27%)

Equity is a complex idea. School divisions recognize this and understand that equity means different things within different systems. Most see it as encompassing more than academic success and include considerations of health, wellness and happiness. They recognize that societies committed to equity in their educational systems develop more productive citizens.

There are, however, barriers to moving forward with equity frameworks. Some divisions report that an “unspoken” attitude prevails in their communities, a sense that everyone knows everyone else and understands their needs. This means that poverty can be well hidden, especially in schools where children work at blending in. It can be a challenge for divisions to recognize which students are facing challenging circumstances.

Divisions also indicate that they do not always have access to specific socioeconomic or other relevant data to let them know which students are living in challenging socioeconomic circumstances. Some divisions are overwhelmed by widespread poverty across the division and daunting levels of student need. Others perceive themselves as affluent and acknowledge that they have much to learn about identifying poverty and its impacts. As a result of these divisional and regional differences, there is a broad spectrum across the province of how students living with socioeconomic challenges are identified and understood.

Divisions recognize that planning for equity allows more children to have the opportunity to achieve their potential but approach equity frameworks in a variety of ways. Some look to community funding. Others have created socioeconomic profiles to enhance planning and meet the challenges within low-income communities. Some divisions are creating policies to enhance community participation around equity, while others are dealing with the intersection of racism and poverty. Professional learning opportunities

are enhancing dialogue among staff. Several divisions have developed equity planning frameworks and strategic plans focused on poverty. All of these approaches can contribute to the goal of developing a consistent provincial approach to address the educational challenges of children living in poverty.



Responsive teacher placement and deployment can have a positive impact on student outcomes and school experiences. This is especially important for students living in challenging socioeconomic circumstances, many of whom face additional barriers to success. Teachers working with these students may face additional demands related to successfully supporting students, developing effective inter-cultural skills, assessing academic needs, and providing appropriate interventions. Attention and sensitivity to teacher-student compatibility can prove to be rewarding and helpful to students experiencing challenges.

Current Strategies

- Encouraging team teaching in complex learning environments (76%)
- Assigning experienced teachers to work with students who experience challenges (69%)
- Providing professional learning supports around equity issues (69%)
- Working towards staff diversity that reflects student diversity (63%)
- Implementing equity hiring practices (45%)
- Providing extended planning time for teachers (42%)

Divisional leaders indicate that the practice of matching teachers with strong skills sets and capacity with high-needs students has been successful and has paid off over the years. This practice has become an increasing focus for divisions as the link between teacher capacity and student success becomes more fully understood.

While the importance of linking strong, willing teachers with struggling students is generally recognized, many divisions struggle with implementation. Some point out that certain types of educational challenges (such as socioeconomic) are not visibly apparent within the school community.

Many divisions talk about the goal of equity hiring policies and practices, but a variety of issues make this practice difficult to implement. The study reveals strong differences between urban and rural communities related to this issue. Northern and rural divisions sometimes face challenges in recruiting and retaining staff, especially staff with specific skill sets (literacy expertise, resource teachers, and the like). Geographic and financial barriers can limit a division's ability to retain or move "highly effective" staff to the schools where they are most needed. The survey results showed that small rural/northern divisions might face challenges in teaming up novice teachers with experienced teachers while urban areas were very likely to utilize this practice.

In addition, it was said that some experienced staff may feel they have earned the right to teach "plum" courses, which may result in the placement of novice staff in schools with the highest need. While this is not specific to small rural schools, it was described in more detail with division leaders from these areas. In addition, several divisions identify the challenge of limiting conditions in local agreements in relation to re-assigning teaching staff. While all schools work to be equitable, these barriers within northern and rural contexts can make achieving equity across the educational system difficult.

Divisions noted that while the student population is becoming increasingly diverse, the ethnic and cultural

make-up of the current teaching population, as well as of pre-service teacher programs, remains fairly homogenous. As a result, creating a cadre of teachers that reflect the cultural diversity of a community can be difficult. In addition, urban divisions report that there can be a disconnect between the actual demographics of a community and the community's self-perceived diversity, particularly when that diversity is increasing. In this context, engaging in equity hiring practices can be challenging.



Paying attention to the effects of living in low socio-economic circumstances on the school life of students is important. Divisional policies relating to reducing costs of school activities, supplies, and programming can help ensure that all students are included in all aspects of school life and may reduce the impact of challenges that students face due to their economic status.

Current Strategies

- Stocking extra school supplies at the school to assist students as needed (95%)
- Offering no-charge school nutrition programs (breakfast, snack, lunch) (87%)
- Providing books for home reading (87%)
- Offering post-secondary saving supports (82%)
- Eliminating student activity fees (82%)
- Covering activity costs for students from low income families (82%)
- Limiting costs of supplies at the school level (71%)
- Waiving fees for noon hour stay (66%)
- Subsidizing student transportation to and from school (66%)
- Encouraging teachers to select low cost activities to enhance student learning opportunities (61%)
- Offering low cost lunch programs (61%)
- Providing free field trips (61%)
- Developing programs that provide books to all early years students on a regular basis (58%)
- Subsidizing band instrument rental (53%)
- Eliminating user fees for Technology Education and Home Economics (47%)
- Providing free technology devices to all students in certain grades (45%)
- Eliminating user fees for arts, music or sports programs (37%)
- Eliminating student fundraising for school events (34%)
- Providing essential school supplies for all at no cost to families (32%)
- Eliminating user fees for outdoor education (32%)
- Offering low cost school pride wear (29%)
- Paying for graduation banquets from the divisional budget (21%)
- Offering subsidized yearbooks (13%)
- Offering graduation gown exchange programs (13%)
- Limiting school fees for activity programs (13%)
- Supplying school uniforms (7%)
- Offering “earn for learn” programs to help with extracurricular costs (3%)
- Offering “earn for learn” programs for post-secondary costs (3%)

Schools recognize that many parents cannot keep up with the increased up-front costs and “hidden” costs of schooling. As a result, seventy percent of Manitoba’s school divisions prioritize subsidizing programming and extra-curricular activities for students living in challenging circumstances.

School divisions cite limitations to subsidizing student activities. Some of these include limited finances, higher labour costs (for lunch room supervisors, etc.), programming cost increases (lunch programs,

supplies), and the challenges of subsidizing multiple programs. Other issues impacting this practice are less obvious but equally challenging and touch directly on the inequity among communities, schools and divisions. Some divisions indicate a lack of urgency to respond to economic need because much of the community is well off.

Divisions recognize that subsidy costs are not uniform across schools. Some schools request more support than others from parents for field trips, resources, and nutrition programs, while others do not. User fees to cover in-class supplies for art or home economics are a long-standing tradition and generally accepted. Northern and rural divisions face additional financial barriers due to the higher cost of travel. Within more affluent school divisions tensions sometimes arise when higher cost activities (European study tours, elite sports) cause middle class families to struggle to have their children participate.

Little data is available about who is accessing free or low cost programs, and perceptions about need and use are often based on anecdotal opinions and evidence. All of these issues contribute to an opportunity gap between the “haves” and the “have nots” at both the individual and systemic level.



School boards have a responsibility to all children in the community. As policymakers, they have a unique opportunity to act as leaders and advocates in mobilizing community members, government and other educational organizations to address the impacts of poverty.

Current Strategies

- Exploring equity issues through professional learning for trustees and senior administration (71%)
- Encouraging student participation in equity conversations (69%)
- Gathering data about community equity issues (60%)
- Participating at the divisional level in provincial initiatives focused on poverty reduction (57%)
- Initiating conversations about equity issues within the community (57%)
- Participating in cross-sector equity and poverty reduction initiatives (40%)

Many divisions indicate that board advocacy is a priority and strong, inter-sectoral strategies and networks are in place to promote dialogue about equity within their communities. Divisional leaders maintain that equity is integral to successful education and to the survival of democracy. Consequentially, they are working to raise the profile of equity issues with board members.

That said, in this study about one third of Manitoba school boards had not specifically identified equity as an important issue.* A lack of understanding of the causes of poverty may contribute to this gap between intentions and actions as many competing priorities, some of which are often externally mandated. Time, distance and costs can also impair board members from effectively prioritizing their advocacy work. Given these factors, it is sometimes challenging for school board to know where the divisional focus should lie, what data should be collected, and how they can most effectively advocate for equity.

*Anecdotal data suggests that this has changed significantly since the study.



Schools within communities with high rates of poverty may require additional funds to support programs, staffing and interventions.

Current Strategies

- Basing staffing formulas on need (83%)
- Funding additional programs through community grants (72%)
- Authorizing increased funding for bussing for student field trips and activities (70%)
- Providing additional funds for schools in low SES communities (61%)
- Using alternative funding allocation models (53%)
- Establishing partnerships with external funding agencies (50%)
- Developing transparent funding eligibility criteria (42%)
- Developing corporate partnerships to support school programs in low SES communities (42%)
- Developing differentiated school budgets (42%)
- Using equity resource models to guide divisional spending (19%)

Divisions indicate that decisions about how to equitably disperse funds can be difficult and contentious. Across focus groups and survey respondents, it was a commonly held belief that to achieve equity, school boards must provide additional funds to schools and communities with higher needs. Manitoba school boards attempt to express this belief through their funding decisions.

Divisional leaders report some resentment at the school level when funding and staff are not equally distributed among schools, perhaps due to a lack of understanding of the principles underlying these decisions. Some divisional leaders acknowledge that their communities are not yet fully committed to funding equity as a core value. They also indicate that underfunded provincial mandates leave local school boards to rely on local taxation to meet these mandates.

Some divisions raise questions about accountability, specifically whether targeted monies are being spent as planned and claim they could be more creative without the limitations placed on targeted or categorical funding by the province. As well, there appears to be a disparity between urban and rural/northern divisions, with rural/northern divisions often facing greater obstacles to funding equity. At the same time, most recognize that the diverse geography and demographics of our province present difficult challenges for the provincial system of equitable funding.



Including the perspectives of a variety of partners enhances both engagement in and the relevance of education. Manitoba school divisions are making many efforts to include the voices of a variety of partners in decision-making, including families, community members and students, through parent councils and student leadership groups. Some schools are making an additional effort to include diverse perspectives by ensuring that representation on decision-making bodies is balanced in terms of gender, income and ethnicity.

Current Strategies

- Maintaining dialogue with academic staff on educational directions and equity issues (89%)
- Developing transparent and well-established protocols for parent council input into school and divisional decision-making (75%)
- Engaging in community consultation on programs and policies (75%)
- Developing innovative structures that include participation from community (70%)
- Developing mechanisms to gather input from multiple and diverse groups in the school division (70%)
- Partnering with community working groups (70%)
- Maintaining dialogue with support staff on educational directions and equity issues (67%)
- Facilitating an organized divisional parent council structure (64%)
- Providing training and support for liaison groups (33%)

Authentic participatory decision-making can be complicated as it requires stakeholder input, student voice, board participation, and parent engagement.

Divisional leaders acknowledge that participatory decision-making is important, but soliciting feedback and engaging participants is time-consuming, often competing with other priorities. Divisions indicate that opportunities to participate in decision making can create additional demands for parents who have other priorities and obligations or who may experience other barriers such as language and childcare. It can also be difficult to engage groups who are asked to participate in multiple stakeholder engagement sessions.

Supporting opportunities for Indigenous parents to add their voices to the decision-making process can be especially challenging given the legacy of colonization and Residential Schooling.

Seeking authentic feedback on complex issues (equity, strategic visioning) is often beyond the scope of a school or division's time and resources. To be successful and truly participatory, such undertakings require training and support for participants, as well as facilitation skills training for leaders.

Some respondents cited the political nature of participatory decision-making as a deterrent, which may be due to frustration with the complexity of this practice. Engaging diverse and multiple publics in meaningful ways, meeting them in their own spaces at their convenience and framing issues in ways that matter to them can become a daunting task in the face of other priorities.



Developing appropriate and enhanced/enriching programs and supports depends on identifying and monitoring the needs of individual students in the areas of learning, mobility, mental health, and other developmental indicators. This is especially important for students living in low-income situations who may face greater than average barriers to success. The thoughtful use of data can serve as another tool for ensuring equity and attending to the needs of students living in poverty.

Current Strategies

- Using numeracy and literacy data (100%)
- Using academic achievement data (97%)
- Employing EDI measurements (95%)
- Using Tell Them from Me (TTFM) data (95%)
- Developing learning continuums (87%)
- Using teacher observation data (87%)
- Using individual student level data (81%)
- Conducting student surveys (78%)
- Using developmental data (76%)
- Using early warning data (73%)
- Monitoring skills acquisition (65%)
- Using demographic and statistical community data (62%)
- Employing divisional numeracy and literacy testing (60%)
- Collecting school leaving data (51%)
- Using essential learning outcome (ELO) acquisition (51%)
- Collecting mobility data (33%)
- Using educational equity data (30%)
- Tracking students who leave school (30%)

Divisions are collecting and using data with increasing frequency to make programming and policy decisions. Some schools and divisions are finding this a challenge because of the sobering nature of what they may discover, while others indicate that data collection has led to a heightened sense of urgency about equity issues. Some divisions have also indicated that they do not yet rely extensively on data to support practice. Most divisions indicate that they are at the beginning of their journey in using data and are excited about this dimension of their work.

Data collection and analysis continue to generate discussion and debate. Some respondents indicate that there is too much data and, specifically, too much externally mandated data. Others report a desire for more direction from the province in what should be collected and why. Current provincial data is sometimes seen as incomplete, not fully applicable to actual classroom practice, or of limited use because of delays in receiving division- and/or school-specific information. For example, divisions report that the provincial calculation of graduation rates do not always accurately reflect what they see within their schools.

They also indicate that provincial assessments are of little practical value in the classroom; they are not

normally referenced and local data is seen as much more timely, relevant and useful. Finally, even when the value of the data is recognized at all levels within the division, the time and resources (infrastructure and human) needed to gather, manage, analyze and discuss diverse sources of data can present significant challenges.



Equitable and inclusive education is fundamental to ensuring the success of all populations and society as a whole. Supporting diverse populations ensures that all students are welcomed and affirmed in our educational systems. An emphasis on diversity and inclusion is especially important for students from communities facing high levels of poverty.

Current Strategies

- Developing a Respect for Human Diversity policy (97%)
- Utilizing multiple strategies to enhance cultural competencies across the division (65%)
- Offering cultural proficiency training for board members and divisional staff (62%)
- Facilitating board representation from diverse groups within the community (35%)
- Developing an Indigenous education policy (22%)

Diversity and inclusion have long been priorities in Manitoba. Divisions recognize that providing equitable opportunities for all children is important, and that without those opportunities, students may not be prepared to fully participate in a democratic society. Divisional leaders are committed to embedding the concepts of equity, inclusion and diversity in policy and divisional practice.

Despite both provincial and divisional commitments it was acknowledged that students continue to be segregated and excluded from opportunities for success to varying degrees across the province. They note that equity and inclusion practices can be especially difficult to implement in isolated communities with limited human and financial resources. At the conceptual level, some divisions have fairly homogeneous populations, which may affect their understanding of diversity and inclusion, while others face deep-seated, erroneous perceptions and racism within their communities. In some schools, most of the culturally diverse students are children in the care of Child and Family Services. Many children in care are marginalized and may lack the services they need to be successful in school.

Divisions highlight that when equity is talked about with respect to Indigenous students there is a lack of understanding about the differences between Indigenous students attending provincial schools and those attending federally funded schools. Some divisional leaders indicate that they need a specific Indigenous education policy to guide their practice. It is interesting to note that, at the time of this study, while most divisions have a Respect for Human Diversity Policy (97%), few had an Indigenous Education Policy (22%).

Despite the stated commitment to coordinated activity across the province in support of diversity and inclusion, the practices employed suggest that the challenge is ongoing. Most divisional leaders recognize that they are still at the beginning of their journey toward a real understanding of diversity and inclusion.



Indigenous students, newcomers to Canada, and students with disabilities are over represented in low-income communities. Developing a school culture that fosters a sense of comfort, safety, belonging, and engagement is especially important for students, who may experience marginalization. Physical surroundings, personal relationships, and learning environments all contribute to the climate and culture within a school. This climate in turn can enhance the academic and life experiences of all students.

Current Strategies

- Displaying student work in common areas and classrooms (100%)
- Mediating allegations of bullying and abuse (100%)
- Encouraging a variety of student leadership groups (97%)
- Putting effort into developing a welcoming and inviting space for students, staff and community (97%)
- Encouraging opportunities for student voice (95%)
- Being responsive to students during non-contact hours (95%)
- Providing students with opportunities to have an impact on school life (92%)
- Ensuring that schools are well maintained and attractive (89%)
- Encouraging democratic leadership and school management (87%)
- Providing gathering spaces for students (87%)
- Providing supports for diverse student groups (84%)
- Supporting whole school team culture-building activities (81%)
- Reflecting the students' cultures in the school's facilities (68%)
- Ensuring cultural representation of students within school (60%)

Divisions recognize and affirm the importance of developing a welcoming school culture in developing positive relationships with students. As shown above, divisions are highly engaged with a variety of strategies including staff contact hours, supporting the exploration of cultural identity, and providing programming for students who are not currently attending schools. Leadership by Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning around safe and caring schools has contributed to a high level of compliance with divisional planning and process requirements. Creating a warm and welcoming environment for students is a priority, and the practices supporting it are embedded in most divisions across Manitoba.

Similar to previous practices in this document, divisions experience financial and human resource limitations which impact their ability to accomplish all they would like to in this area. They recognize that students are often treated as categories (newcomer, Indigenous), and that individual differences and specific needs or cultural nuances may be overlooked. Some argue that the focus on compliance with provincial priorities and mandates does not always translate into effective practice at the divisional level.

On a broader cultural level, significant intertwining of issues impact on the development of a welcoming school culture: acceptance of difference amongst other students; varying levels of resilience; the complicating factor of social media as it relates to bullying/harassment; overall mental health/anxiety issues and; inter-cultural understandings represent some of the issues that impact relationships within the school

environment. All of these individual issues can be difficult to mediate. The way young people interact with each other and their world in general has changed, in some cases affecting students' coping abilities and their abilities to sustain positive relationships.



Discipline, attendance and learning policies that are respectful of the experiences of students with challenging socioeconomic circumstances can help to balance student needs with expectations for academic achievement.

Current Strategies

- Developing school safety policies and codes of conduct (100%)
- Working with school leaders to ensure understanding of policies or legislation such as the Appropriate Education Act (92%)
- Employing policies to guide relationship with CFS agencies (provincial protocols) (89%)
- Developing attendance policies and supports (89%)
- Developing discipline policies that minimize suspension through alternative means (84%)
- Supporting peer mentorship programs (78%)
- Developing attendance policies which incorporate alternatives to suspension (78%)
- Developing policies to guide school's relationship with justice agencies (68%)
- Offering restorative justice supports (62%)
- Offering culturally sensitive approaches to mediating student challenges (60%)
- Developing culturally sensitive intervention programs for truant students (51%)
- Developing homework policies and supports (41%)

Developing the understanding that fair does not always mean equal can be complicated. Students, parents, community members, staff and administration can all have different perspectives about what thoughtful and effective school policies look like. With this awareness, schools often adhere to more traditional practices that may continue to enjoy broader support.

While divisions indicate that thoughtful school policies are an embedded divisional focus, survey and focus group responses report a continuing strong focus on "justice" or a punitive approach to students such as traditional zero-tolerance policies in place addressing attendance, homework and behaviour. However, divisions that have adopted more equity-focused policy frameworks (such as Restorative Justice) and practices (alternatives to suspension, liaison workers, and the like) are reporting good results. These policies were introduced to support students who qualify for additional supports because of particular challenges they face, including mental health or other disability issues, but their use is spreading.



There are many reasons that students living in challenging socioeconomic circumstances leave school prior to completion. Schools that are responsive to the needs of these students can facilitate a variety of educational pathways focused on keeping students engaged with school and encouraging those who have left to re-enter the school system.

Current Strategies

- Offering high school majors that focus on career pathways (trades, etc.) (89%)
- Offering technical vocational programs (87%)
- Offering alternative classrooms (78%)
- Offering independent distance learning (78%)
- Offering credit recovery programs (76%)
- Offering mature student programming (73%)
- Offering Indigenous programs (65%)
- Offering school transitions programs (65%)
- Offering flexible timetables (65%)
- Offering online learning (62%)
- Offering self-directed learning programs (60%)
- Offering access to post-secondary credits (60%)
- Offering teacher-mediated distance learning (57%)
- Offering co-op programs (54%)
- Offering alternative schools (46%)
- Offering high school re-entry programs (43%)
- Offering self-designed courses (41%)
- Developing student support centers (41%)
- Offering newcomer programs (32%)
- Offering non-traditional scheduling (evening programs, etc.) (32%)

While many divisions recognize the need for alternative pathways for students, there are some that indicate they have little need for such supports. For a variety of reasons, urban and northern divisions appear to focus more on this practice than rural divisions.

There are many misconceptions about supporting students in alternative pathways. Divisions highlight that the law requiring children to attend school until the age of 18 makes little difference to students who are not attending school; however, provincial support and funding for programming for students who leave school is helpful.

Divisions indicate that geography and limited resources (human and financial) make developing effective programming difficult. For example, in some regions of the province it is challenging to recruit and retain staff for apprenticeship and Career and Technology Studies programs. These programs are often effective for students who function better outside the traditional classroom. Even when alternative programs exist, divisions have difficulty finding local placements for students. These challenges will continue as resources

and budgets become tighter.

Divisional leaders indicate that there is a need for more targeted strategies to address the barriers and challenges of specific student populations. They also point out that authentic alternative programming is difficult given provincial curriculum, expectations and policies. Perhaps for this reason, some divisions prefer offering credits through traditional coursework or credit recovery rather than developing alternative programming. Finally, divisions suggest that alternative programs can be problematic because these programs can be used to stream students into a particular track.

All divisions highlight the fact that building strong relationships between teachers and students is imperative for students at risk of leaving school.



Working with community partners can provide wrap-around supports for students living in challenging socioeconomic circumstances, creating positive connections with the community and enhancing the student students' likelihood of school success.

Current Strategies

- Developing policies and practices which facilitate community use of schools (97%)
- Hosting school and/or divisional events which are open to community members and groups (87%)
- Employing community liaison/outreach workers (81%)
- Serving as a community hub (81%)
- Coordinating services delivery with external partners (76%)
- Establishing mentorship and co-op learning program with community partners (57%)
- Supporting Elder programs (51%)
- Developing established community coalitions and networks (51%)
- Developing a proactive community engagement strategy (38%)
- Providing translators at public meetings (35%)
- Supporting grandparent programs (30%)

Most divisional leaders express a strong desire to form relationships with their communities to varying degrees. Some focus on community events (feasts, cultural events, musicals) while others seek greater complexity by including community partners, elders and parents in the work of the school.

Even with this widely-accepted practice, however, challenges exist. Some schools are hesitant to share challenges with communities that may be critical of educational institutions in general. In such cases, organizational barriers, leadership preferences, and a lack of community trust make authentic collaboration difficult. Engaging community members in educational processes can also pose a challenge within communities with low parent involvement or in divisions that span large geographic areas. Large geographic regions with many different populations, communities, languages and cultures can pose even greater barriers to effective community interaction.

In this practice, as in most, funding is an issue. Schools that would like to hire a home-school liaison worker, for example, may choose to make other staffing cuts to accommodate this priority.

PRACTICE 13**Parents and Community: Family Engagement**

Family status, income, dynamics, attitudes, and experiences with school all help to shape the academic success of students. Schools can work with families in many innovative ways to enhance communication, support learning within the home, and encourage collaborative decision-making to provide additional supports for students.

Current Strategies

- Hosting school and divisional events for students and their families (94%)
- Recognizing and respecting alternative family structures and implementing policies and practices to facilitate the involvement of non-traditional families in the education of their children (71%)
- Employing community liaison officers and/or translators to assist with home-school communications and relations (69%)
- Creating safe space for parents to engage in the school in non-traditional ways (60%)
- Providing resources for parents through a parent room in the school (37%)
- Supporting grandparent programs (29%)

Although divisional leaders realize that parent engagement is a significant factor contributing to a student's success, they had very little to say about this practice. They did point out that encouraging parental engagement can be especially challenging in high-risk communities and that this practice highlights a tension within the school system, centering on how much information about families' personal lives and financial situations should be shared with teachers. However, the real issue may be that parental involvement is more a local school issue than a divisional level issue.



Teachers provided with appropriate personal opportunities and professional resources can have a positive impact on student outcomes and experiences with school. This is especially important for students and families facing socioeconomic challenges. Teachers may face additional demands related to successfully supporting students, developing effective inter-cultural skills, developing effective relationships with students, and personal stress.

Current Strategies

- Involving staff in teacher course and grade assignment decisions (81%)
- Employing a staff psychologist or psychiatrist (68%)
- Providing teacher mentorship programs (68%)
- Providing equity-related professional learning (51%)
- Offering co-teaching assignments (54%)
- Offering professional learning related to supporting low-income students (43%)
- Providing additional new teacher support for teachers in low-income communities (41%)
- Offering supports for stress related issues (39%)
- Providing additional new administrator support within low-income communities (30%)
- Supporting discussion groups to explore low SES issues (19%)
- Employing traditional Elders (19%)
- Offering stress prevention programs (19%)
- Offering health club memberships (14%)
- Offering relaxation sessions (3%)
- Implementing staff rotation plans (3%)

Divisional leaders recognize that the fabric of a community is strengthened when its people are trained, educated, and valued. Teacher attrition, especially in high needs areas, suggests that supporting the health and well-being of staff can enhance professional practice. However, providing such supports to educators does not appear to be of equal urgency.

Only some divisions indicate that they actively work to support teacher mental health and well-being. Organizations have worked to create welcoming and safe work environments for staff, but historically, mental and physical well-being have been considered areas of personal responsibility and a reasonable condition of employment. Board members indicate that teacher health and well-being may not be school or site-specific responsibilities, and that practices to support them should be negotiated in Collective Agreements.

Finally, wellness means different things for different people, making it complicated and sensitive to address. The additional costs of support services, the challenge of providing service in remote regions, competing demands on resources, and a lack of time make implementing this practice difficult. Based on responses to this survey, there is much room for divisions to work with their staff towards improved support for mental health and wellness.



Many students who are facing socioeconomic challenges also face academic and systemic barriers that profoundly impact engagement and achievement. Providing a variety of supports and interventions is important to ensure that all students experience success.

Current Strategies

- Resource support (technology, connectivity, books) (97%)
- Learning continuums (87%)
- Credit recovery options (84%)
- Extended learning time (84%)
- Enrichment experiences (78%)
- Student support teams (70%)
- Response to Intervention (RTI) framework to support students (70%)
- Peer tutoring (70%)
- Later literacy programs (70%)
- Dual credits (65%)
- Tutoring (60%)
- Homework clubs (60%)
- Before and after school supports (60%)
- Academic mentorship programs (38%)
- Summer enrichment programs (38%)

Many Manitoba school divisions indicate that they offer coordinated activities at the school level to provide additional academic supports for students. At the ends of the spectrum, 10% of divisions indicate that they do not have any academic supports outside of the classroom, whereas 21% indicate that this equity practice is infused across divisional policy and practice.

Divisions across the province emphasize providing supports for students within the traditional school day and year, pointing out that providing academic supports outside of school hours becomes a matter of limited funds and competing priorities. Some examples of in-school supports include grade 9 cohorts and differentiated instruction. Urban school divisions have access to additional resources and community partnerships and are able to offer a greater variety of supports for students facing barriers to success.

However, in both urban and rural contexts, after-school programming, summer programs, and dual credit approaches can provide opportunities for expanding on in-school supports. Divisional leaders emphasize the importance of frameworks and guidance in developing these supports if they are to be successful.



Schools with a strong commitment to equity rely on democratic, innovative, and rigorous pedagogical strategies to support the learning needs of students. Students who see the relevance of curriculum and learning within their own lives are more engaged in learning. Schools demonstrate their commitment to effective curriculum and pedagogy by offering a wide range of approaches to core curriculum and using a variety of teaching strategies, including culturally affirming curriculum, constructivist approaches, and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

A commitment to innovative and rigorous pedagogical practice appears to be embedded across divisional practice. Divisions recognize the need for engaging curriculum and have explored a variety of options from land-based learning to project-based learning.

Current Strategies

- Professional learning around effective curriculum and instruction (97%)
- Project-based learning (95%)
- Encouragement and support for teachers using a broad range of assessment strategies to measure student learning outcomes (92%)
- Inquiry learning (87%)
- Personalized learning strategies (81%)
- Diverse course choices (81%)
- Policies and practices to facilitate teacher collaboration across grade levels and disciplines (81%)
- Diverse approaches to core curriculum (76%)
- Culturally affirming curriculum (65%)
- Constructivist approaches (60%)
- Land-based strategies (51%)

Most divisions express a commitment, echoed by teachers at the school level, to support relevant and engaging curriculum. They look to the curriculum to be both culturally affirming and engaging but see great need to be more intentional at all levels in order to truly embed these practices at the classroom level.

Division leaders indicate that staff members need more time to collaborate and build their skills, and providing culturally relevant professional learning that reflect the needs of marginalized students can be a challenge.



Children experiencing socioeconomic challenges may face significant barriers to literacy success. They may have fewer books in their homes, parents with lower levels of education, limited academic language proficiency, fewer educational supports, and fewer immersive experiences to develop language skills.

Schools can mitigate these challenges by providing additional numeracy and literacy supports for young students and their parents, including family mentorship programs, early literacy intervention programs, family literacy programs, book lending programs, and other supports to families and communities to encourage literacy and numeracy development.

Support for early years numeracy and literacy is embedded in the practice of many Manitoba school divisions. The emphasis on numeracy and literacy parallels provincial policy direction.

Current Strategies

- Early literacy intervention programs (95%)
- Early numeracy intervention programs (78%)
- Family literacy programs (76%)
- Book lending programs (73%)
- Programs that enhance the relationship between home and school (73%)
- Extended learning time (54%)
- Home visits (54%)
- Parent support programs (54%)
- Family mentorship programs (14%)

While early literacy and numeracy programs are a priority, time and human resources are a limitation, highlighting the gap between provincial funding support and actual programming costs. Some divisions report mistrust between families and schools, which affects the ability to provide support to students. The majority indicate a strong commitment to providing numeracy and literacy support within the school, with fewer resources dedicated to supporting the development of these skills outside of the regular school day, within the home, or with a family focus. They report that supporting parents' literacy and numeracy is an ongoing struggle and that any significant outreach work would require additional staffing.



Smooth transitions between pre-school, elementary, middle school, high school and from high school to post-secondary or the workplace allow schools to be aware of and prepared to meet the academic and social needs of incoming students and to prepare students for their next stage. Easing the transition for students and families who may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the school culture is also an important task of schools.

Current Strategies

- Hosting school open house events (97%)
- Following student records transfer protocols (95%)
- Encouraging information sharing and team planning to support students in transition (95%)
- Sharing community events between schools and communities (84%)
- Using student career planning tools (84%)
- Holding school/community events in community facilities (78%)
- Using online course selection tools for students (49%)
- Facilitating transition planning between First Nation and public school systems (41%)
- Employing transition liaison staff (35%)
- Offering student transition camps (30%)

While divisional leaders suggest that transition support is embedded within divisional practice, a number of promising strategies—such as transition camps, liaison staff, and specific planning for the transition of First Nations students moving between federal and provincial school systems—appear to be under-utilized.

This suggests that the focus of supports continues to be on traditional, in-school approaches. This may leave gaps in programming and support for highly mobile students or those making non-traditional movement between schools, divisions or educational systems.



Birth to age five is a critical period of child development. The evidence is clear that early learning experiences significantly influence future school success and schools can enhance early childhood learning through appropriate programming.

Current Strategies

- Facilitating early vision, hearing and speech screening (100%)
- Using the Early Development Instrument (EDI) instrument to guide practice (95%)
- Housing childcare centers in schools (92%)
- Facilitating early literacy learning (90%)
- Encouraging and supporting collaborative working relationships between schools and childcare centres housed within them (87%)
- Facilitating communication about incoming students between childcare agencies and receiving schools as appropriate (87%)
- Using early identification programs (84%)
- Facilitating early numeracy learning (81%)
- Providing in-kind space for non-divisional preschool programs (73%)
- Facilitating parenting programs (62%)
- Offering physical literacy and health programs (60%)
- Offering preschool or nursery programs (51%)
- Facilitating community literacy programs (49%)
- Employing a home-school liaison staff person (41%)
- Offering family centers in schools (38%)
- Supporting head start programs (32%)

Divisions indicate that early childhood programs are a priority, that they want to support young children, and that children have the right to see themselves accepted within the school systems. Divisional leaders see schools as influential partners in the community with a responsibility to influence the value society places on its children and to help mitigate inequities in children's early childhood experiences.

Many divisions are moving towards a coordinated approach to early childhood programming. Increasingly, divisional leaders are moving nursery and day care facilities into the school and are working to coordinate activities with outside partners. While there have been challenges moving towards a coordinated approach, the last decades have seen greater integration between pre-school and the public school sectors. Both space and money continue to be issues.



Providing additional multi-dimensional supports for physical and mental health issues can have positive effects on student success. This is particularly urgent for students living with socioeconomic challenges who may not have access to other support services.

Current Strategies

- Employing psychologists (100%)
- Employing counselors (92%)
- Facilitating public health supports (87%)
- Using student support teams (87%)
- Employing social workers (68%)
- Providing addictions counseling programs (65%)
- Offering or facilitating Indigenous circles (46%)
- Providing wraparound programs (Bright Futures, Pathways, Bridges) (43%)
- Offering mentorship programs (41%)
- Supporting Elder programs (38%)
- Employing child-care workers (35%)
- Offering mental health services (35%)
- Accommodating dental services (22%)
- Employing culturally affirming mental health therapists (9%)
- Employing psychiatrists (5%)

Many students come to school with challenges related to health and well-being. Divisions report increasing mental health issues within Manitoba's student population and acknowledge that they are overwhelmed by the expanding nature of this problem.

Time and human resources to provide these services continue to be in short supply. Some divisions stress the absence of a strong inter-sectoral approach to psychological and physical supports for students. Access to mental health or other external agency support can be especially challenging in rural areas, where these specialists are often spread very thinly over wide geographic areas. There was a general consensus that more provincial direction and broader community commitment and participation is needed to better address the mental health needs of students.



A wide body of research indicates that a disconnect between the cultural norms of schooling (how to act, what to do, and the like) and the cultural norms of a community can interfere with learning. Students who recognize how they learn, understand school expectations, and know how to navigate through the school system experience greater success. Schools that adjust their practices to embrace different socio-cultural norms and practices experience the greatest levels of student engagement and achievement.

Current Strategies

- Using career planning software (92%)
- Incorporating prior learning assessments (80%)
- Providing social skills programs (69%)
- Offering teacher professional learning around student meta-cognition (60%)
- Providing learning skills classes (29%)
- Offering learning to learn (or meta-cognitive skills) as part of curriculum (46%)
- Offering stand alone “learning to learn” programs or curriculum (5%)

Developing holistic and meta-cognitive strategies has been shown to have a significant impact on student learning. While they recognize this fact, many divisional leaders indicate that both teacher and student awareness of personal learning styles is embedded within the curriculum and within differentiated learning approaches. Specific programming in this area is rarely emphasized.

A full curriculum, cultural disconnects that need to be bridged, the lack of a course specific to this area, and the suggestion that these skills are already embedded into student learning make prioritizing meta-cognitive learning difficult. Respondents express a preference for supporting these skills within core courses and helping students “fit” the existing system rather adapting the system to a variety of cultural norms.

Possibilities for Future/Ongoing Action

A list of possibilities for future and ongoing action is included below. This is meant to be a generative tool to assist divisions in exploring and talking about equity issues. The ideas represented are drawn from literature, divisional feedback, and reflection and insight from the Equity in Education Advisory Group. They are not meant to be exhaustive but rather to provide a starting point for expanding and building on each equity practice.

- Explore with the community the importance of a workforce that reflects the demographics of the community.
- Work with post-secondary institutions to increase the numbers of Indigenous graduates.
- Work with post-secondary institutions to increase the numbers of graduates who represent visible minorities.
- Provide enhanced teacher development opportunities (community-based post-baccalaureate study, in-school professional learning) within rural and northern communities.
- Work together towards a provincial plan to help address issues of equity.
- Provide additional research/knowledge bases to divisions to assist them in developing equity policy frameworks.
- Promote the use of equity funding frameworks across the province.
- Collect data at the divisional level about the socioeconomic makeup of schools across the division.
- Coordinate costs for parents across the division to make them consistent across schools.
- Reduce multiple user fees within a division.
- Work with community agencies and businesses to fund activities and programs.
- Create buying clubs across divisions to reduce costs of resources, breakfast program food, etc.
- Reconsider the exclusive nature of “expensive” activities such as elite sports and international travel.
- Continue to raise awareness about the concepts of equity, equality, fairness and justice.
- Gather additional data to support divisional funding decisions.
- Enhance transparency about how funding decisions are made within a division. Share rationale for why some schools and/or programs receive more resources than others.
- Provide additional support for divisional administration in the use equity resourcing models.
- Look to other jurisdictions that are developing new funding models such as innovation zones.
- Explore alternative models for engaging the voices of minority or marginalized groups within other jurisdictions.
- Provide training and support for liaison groups.
- Work divisionally to develop processes to engage stakeholders in the decision-making process. Examples may include an annual planning process, advisory committees, community events, etc.

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- Use this report to start a conversation about what data is needed to effectively guide practice and enhance equity.
 - Develop a set of educational equity indicators to guide practice.
 - Develop a provincial framework for exploring data.
 - Develop consultative support at the provincial level to help divisions use and explore data.
 - Create policies in a way that they meet the needs of the less privileged children to participate fully in the democratic society.
 - Continue to provide cultural proficiency training across the province.
 - Move towards school Policy Frameworks (ie. Restorative Justice) to guide divisional action.
 - Provide additional supports to divisions seeking to develop alternative pathways to student success.
 - Work with the province to authenticate alternative programming.
 - Review and align programming with specific student needs.
 - Provide additional funds for schools to hire home-school liaisons or community connectors positions.
 - Facilitate discussions with parents about their own experience of schooling and their hopes for their children before they enter the school system.
 - Develop strategies to examine gaps in family support capacity and develop specific supports in these areas.
 - Work at the provincial level to provide support for designing and implementing a variety of alternative academic support programs (evening programming, dual credit, credit- recovery, summer learning camps, etc.).
 - Work at the provincial level to embed more culturally relevant approaches (land-based pedagogy, constructivism, culturally-relevant instructional practices) within the curriculum.
 - Expand support for out-of-school and/or family supports for early childhood numeracy and literacy.
 - Develop specific strategies to support students transitioning between First Nations and the provincial school system.
 - Provide additional supports for mental health services.
 - Enhance coordination with community agencies providing mental health services.
 - Work with the province to provide adequate supports for children's emotional and mental health.
 - Provide ongoing professional learning around the importance of meta-cognitive strategies for student success.
 - Develop a provincial course for middle and high school students focused on meta-cognitive strategies and student success.

Potential Discussion Questions

- It is easy to assume that school divisions with the desire to be equitable can do so. What limitations make equitable hiring difficult for divisions?
- How can divisions work to enhance a community's understanding of the need for teachers who demographically represent students?
- Does your school division use an equity framework? How could this be used to enhance the work of your school?
- How do we develop our sense of what is just and fair?
- How can understandings of what is just and fair be mediated when perceptions across a school and/or community are very different?
- Which policies and practices focused on students who qualify for additional programming or supports could be adopted for the general school population?
- How do health and wellness affect your staff community?
- What does a school that is highly responsive to the academic needs of all students look like? What programs, policies, curriculum and professional learning practices are in place?
- Students from all socioeconomic groups are represented across the academic spectrum. What do academic supports for students who are below, at, or exceeding grade level expectations look like?
- What community resources (eg. technology, mentorships, businesses) can be leveraged to enhance the academic supports offered for students?
- How can academic supports be better integrated into curriculum, instruction and assessment?

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