

Submission to K-12 Education Review Commission

May 31, 2019



Park West School Division

Learners Today, Leaders Tomorrow

Dear Commissioners,

We really appreciated the time that we had to spend with you on May 9th in Brandon; we felt that you heard us and that it was a valuable experience. To that end, we are making this submission to add some possible action plans to the ideas we already shared.

In Park West School Division we believe in students first. Our collective commitment to students is reflected in our vision, our mission, our values, and our motto.

Our Vision: We will bring the world to our students to prepare our students for the world.

Our Mission:

PWSD will work with communities to:

- Provide innovative learning opportunities
- Challenge students to reach their potential as engaged citizens of the world
- Value, accept, and nurture students

Our Values:

- our PEOPLE
- our PARTNERSHIPS
- our PRACTICES
- our PROGRAMS

Our Motto: Learners Today Leaders Tomorrow

Long-term vision:

We strongly believe that the goal of education in Manitoba should be to close the achievement gap by making systemic impactful changes to address poverty and achieve positive mental health for all students. We need to build capacity within the system to respond to the diverse and unique learning needs of all students. Before authentic learning may occur, students' basic human needs must be met first. Relationships are key to student success and teaching self-regulation skills are a necessity in teaching the whole child for their academic success and overall well-being. By creating equality of resources and on-going learning opportunities for all of our educators that there would be potential for creating a much more cohesive and collaborative team of educators in our province; this would lead to more supports for teachers as well as our provincial student population. We have an amazing opportunity to make education in Manitoba among the top in the country. If we work together in strengthening the immeasurable resource that are our teachers, that it will make a profound difference in the growth and success of our students.

Student Learning Action Plan:

Building strong partnerships with Indigenous communities to provide equality of education and opportunities for all students is the key to combat the effects of poverty in Manitoba. There currently exist significant achievement gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. A comprehensive

plan needs to be developed to ensure that all students in our province have an equal chance of school and life success.

Another way to help level the playing field is by developing an extensive partnership with Manitoba Health focusing specifically on children aged 0 – 4. This will put in place a pro-active system rather than a reactive one and will help to combat the effects that poverty and health have on education. The stronger foundation that children receive, the greater the school readiness, and the more cost effective the education, health and judicial systems in Manitoba will be long-term. If we invest more early, we spend less later on. This investment needs to be extended so that additional interventions, resources, and supports are available for students in K – 3. Investing in a social-emotional curriculum for 0-18 will further enable our youth to be successful and thrive in society. There are existing programs available both in healthcare and education that simply need to be utilized. These programs provide resources necessary to support the social and emotional, cognitive and physical needs of children. Additionally, these programs help to educate and support parents in the healthy growth and development of their children.

- In healthcare there is the Growing Great Kids curriculum that is delivered by the Families First Program. It is available to families through a screening process with Public Health. It would be an incredible resource and provide a strong foundational start if this program was made available to all families. https://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/familiesfirst/ff_eval2010.pdf
- Alberta utilizes a curriculum that helps build social-emotional skills that are foundational for success in school and in life. This program is available to all age groups of school aged children. It is called the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). It has five identified connected sets of competencies that build skills to help control emotions and impulses (self-regulation), manage stress, and help with self-motivation, setting and achieving goals and building social awareness.

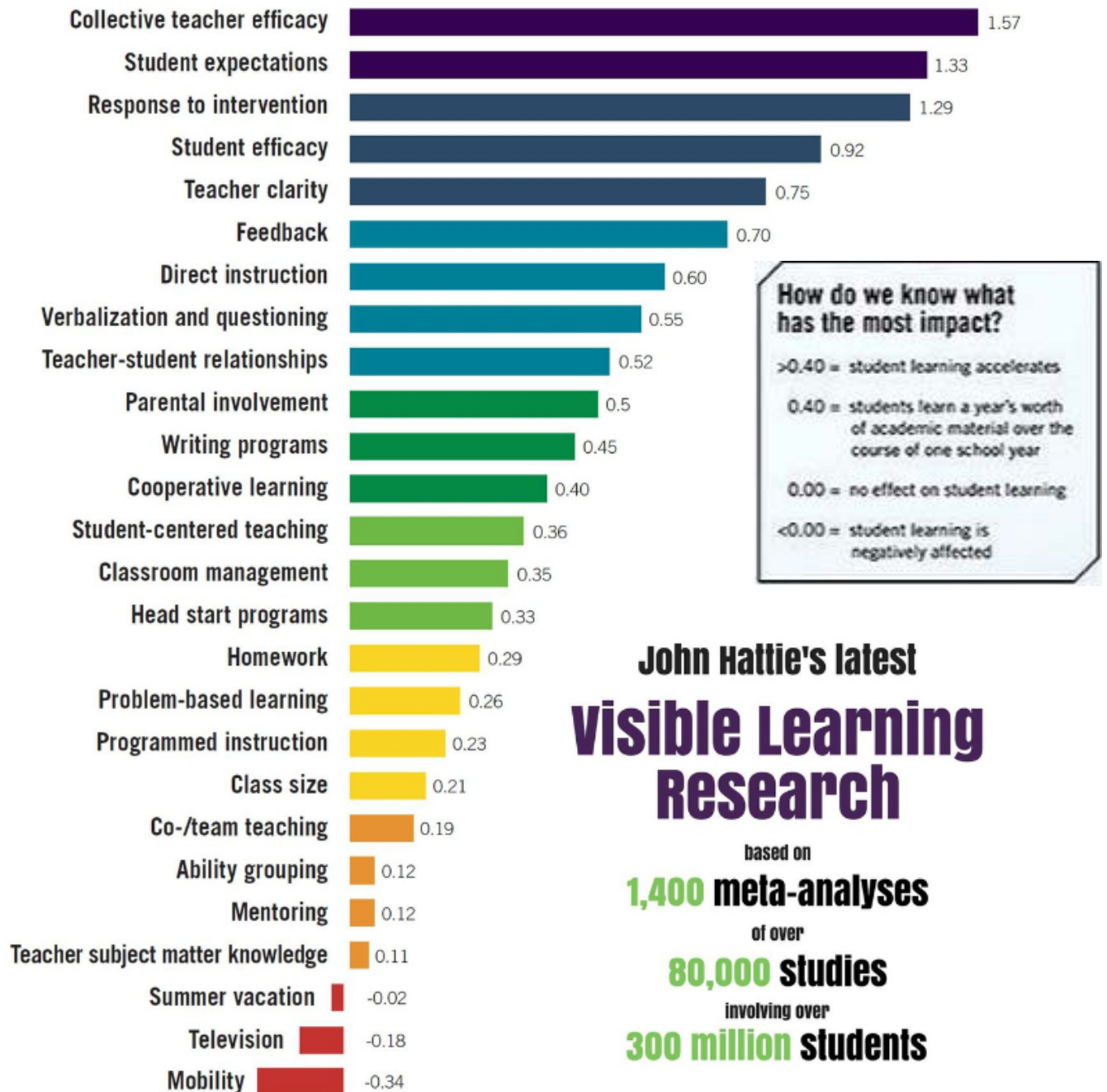
We have had the opportunity to listen to students and consistently students are asking for more life skills training. There is a currently a program in place in the province that is required for graduation (Life Skills), however it is necessary that this curriculum be brought up to date and kept current. For instance, add portions of the grade 12 Essential Math curriculum (credit card management, mortgage planning, etc.) These same students have also shared with us the invaluable experiences that project based and hands-on learning are giving them. It is our job to prepare these students for the real world and in doing so we need to take their voices into consideration. We need to utilize the courses and materials available which focus on life skill development.

Teaching Action Plan:

Unfortunately there is a lack of confidence in our public education system in this province. We believe that this creates an opportunity to improve student achievement in Manitoba. There is a direct correlation between expectations and achievement. We need to raise expectations of teachers and students to improve public confidence in education. For teachers, we must invest further in their professional development and build their capacity so that they continue to grow in terms of ability and confidence. As teachers improve, so should the academic success of students.

Quick fixes have limited success. As John Hattie states: positive impacts on student learning are most strongly influenced by educators' expertise and passion, the relevance and rigor of content and the relationships forged between the learner and educator.

The graphic below is the recipe for increased student achievement according to John Hattie.



By understanding that highly effective instructional strategies, current curriculum, intervention supports and resources available to educators are among the most significant factors that impact student learning, decisions can be made to ensure that these factors are a priority.

All pre-service and certified Manitoba teachers must have the capacity to meet the complex and diverse needs of students in our schools. This will require additional training and understanding in several areas, including, but not limited to:

- Differentiated instruction
- Essential learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy
- Pedagogical, clinical, and social supports in education
- Response to intervention
- Trauma and mental health
- Self-regulation

To build and maintain teacher efficacy, it is essential that professional learning opportunities are accessible and equitable to all Manitoba teachers. Provincial budgets need to be reflective of associated costs in order for educators to equitably receive professional learning opportunities; geographical location should not be a determining factor for learning opportunities.

Accountability for Student Learning Action Plan:

Authentic and purposeful use of data to drive instruction is essential. Literacy and numeracy data in Park West School Division is collected, collated, analyzed, and used to inform planning and instruction. Student and school specific data is used to refine school, class and student learning profiles for educational teams to use for planning, interventions and supports.

Strong connections among stakeholders in education are imperative to support student success. We also need to recognize the impact that engagement, mental health, poverty, self-regulation and trauma have on literacy and numeracy achievement. We need strong systems in place to support educators and students in overcoming these barriers to success.

There are concerns with the provincial report card. It needs to clearly communicate in meaningful ways with parents about their child's achievement in relation to the essential learning outcomes to support growth.

First Nations and Newcomers to Canada liaisons between home and school need to be in place province wide in order to offer support to these students and their families.

Governance Action Plan:

Park West School Division has built very successful partnerships to improve outcomes for students by improving the quality of resources, staffing, and programming. These partnerships have resulted in remarkable changes in the overall well-being and success of students. A significant opportunity exists to foster positive relationships between school divisions and First Nations. Park West has had significant success in our educational partnership with a regional First Nation community which could provide a template for similar partnerships in other areas of our province.

We see opportunities for government departments to work collaboratively to ensure that high quality opportunities and initiatives are dispersed equitably throughout Manitoba. With this review, structures can be implemented that guarantee consistent and regular communication between departments (student services, assessment and curriculum) in order to work effectively and productively.

If we are all working toward the same common goal then we will have opportunities to build and sustain highly effective, collaborative teams between departments. As an example, planning taking place within one department needs to be communicated in a clear and timely manner with other departments so that everyone has an awareness and can productively work together to achieve common goals.

There needs to be accountability measures in place throughout the system (government departments, school divisions and teachers). If school divisions are provided with the necessary supports for success, it is acceptable to expect that they will be accountable to use these supports. For example, when divisions are provided with funds for specific initiatives, reports indicating their use are an acceptable expectation.

Funding Action Plan:

We see opportunities to share resources province-wide as a cost saving measure to the province as well as individual divisions. For example, the province could provide professional learning opportunities via video conferencing to increase uptake and to minimize cost.

Manitoba would gain efficiencies by standardising accounting/payroll software and student information systems. Competition among software vendors would be stronger (and their per student rates would be lower) if vendors were servicing all school divisions in the Province. The Department of Education and Training would have more timely access to the financial records and student data it needs if systems were standardized. This would free up human resources to work on more value-added activities such as measuring and managing key performance indicators for K-12 education (graduation and attendance rates, health and well-being of students, scores on standardized tests). Finally, standardising software systems has the added benefit of having a workforce that can provide short and long term support when needed due to unexpected leaves, which would result in smoother and more efficient transitions and better value for money for Manitobans.

There are opportunities for creating cost saving partnerships in many areas of education in Manitoba. For instance, Manitoba could partner with a financial institution to make acquisition cards available for school division purchases. The Saskatchewan government has an agreement with the Bank of Montreal to provide credit cards for school division purchases, with school divisions getting a percentage of purchases returned to their budgets. An agreement like this would streamline accounts payable processes while simultaneously making more money available to support students and again improving value for money for Manitobans.

Political parties need to also work together with a shared understanding that an improved education system would benefit all Manitobans. A positive first step would be a non-partisan agreement to invest in education. Reducing educational funding should not be an option.

Thank you for the incredible opportunity to share our ideas and for hearing our voices. We believe in students first and that they are the heart of what we do. We need to continue to work together to

improve education in Manitoba. It is fundamental to understand that it takes a village to raise a child and that we are all responsible for the overall well-being and academic achievements of Manitoba's children.

Park West School Division wants to work with the Province to ignite change in Manitoba's education system that will ultimately inspire our youth and educators to be excited about the educational experiences and opportunities in our province. We want to help students find and connect with their spark in order to be life-long learners in a way that works for them.

We need to continue to take a collaborative approach where clear and effective communication is vital to the relationship. The vast array of education inequalities in this province need to be eliminated as to build a strong systemic foundation across Manitoba. We are stronger together as a team. We truly believe that you have within you as Commissioners the power to develop the best education system moving forward in Canadian history and we look forward to working alongside you to achieve these goals.

Yours in Education,

