The Development of Education

Reports for Canada

Report One: The Education Systems in Canada — Facing the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century

Report Two: Inclusive Education in Canada: The Way of the Future

October 2008

Ce rapport est également disponible en français sous le titre « L'évolution des systèmes éducatifs au Canada. Premier rapport – Les systèmes éducatifs et les défis du XXIe siècle. Second rapport – L'éducation pour l'inclusion : la voie de l'avenir »

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Executive Summary

The forty-eighth session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) is scheduled to take place in Geneva on November 25-28, 2008 with the theme of *Inclusive education: The way of the future*. In advance of this meeting, Canada, along with the other Member States of UNESCO, has the opportunity to submit two separate but linked reports. The International Bureau of Education, the organizers of the ICE, has distributed guidelines for the preparation of the reports. The first report, *The Education Systems in Canada – Facing the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century*, concentrates on major reforms and innovations in the education systems, as well as the main policies and achievements in access to education, early intervention, learning outcomes, teacher training, and the role of education in combating social exclusion and poverty. The second report, *Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future*, relates directly to theme of the conference – inclusive education, which is defined as an approach that looks into how to transform education systems and other learning environments in order to respond to the diversity of learners.

Report One – The Education Systems in Canada – Facing the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century

The Education Systems – Legal Framework: In Canada, there is no federal department of education and no integrated national system of education. The 10 provinces and three territories have departments or ministries of education that are responsible for the organization, delivery, and assessment of education at the elementary and secondary levels and for postsecondary education.   The federal government of Canada provides financial support for postsecondary education and the teaching of French and English, the two official languages. In addition, the federal government is responsible for the education of Registered Indian people on reserve, personnel in the armed forces and the coast guard, and inmates in federal correctional facilities.

The Education Systems – Structure: While there are a great many similarities in the provincial and territorial systems of education, significant differences exist that reflect the specialized needs of each jurisdiction. Public elementary and secondary education is provided free of charge to all Canadians who meet jurisdictional age and residence requirements. Local governance of education is entrusted to school boards, districts, divisions, or district education councils. All jurisdictions have some form of pre-elementary education for five-year olds, followed by six to eight years of elementary school and four to six years of compulsory secondary school. Postsecondary education is offered through public and private institutions – universities that focus primarily on degree programs, colleges, cégeps, community colleges, and technical and vocational institutes that focus on certificate and diploma programs, with some also having the capacity to award applied and undergraduate degrees. Postsecondary education is also provided through the apprenticeship system.

The Education Systems – Reforms: The provincial and territorial ministers responsible for education come together in the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to discuss matters of mutual interest and undertake collaborative initiatives. In April 2008, the ministers released a new vision for learning in Canada, *Learn Canada 2020*, to address the educational needs and

aspiration of Canadians. Goals are listed under the four pillars of lifelong learning – early childhood learning and development, elementary to secondary school systems, postsecondary education, and adult learning and skills development – along with eight specific activity areas and accompanying objectives:

- literacy
- Aboriginal education
- postsecondary capacity
- education for sustainable development
- international and national representation
- official languages
- learning assessment programs and performance indicators
- education data and research strategy

Policies, Achievements, and Lessons Learned: In outlining expectations for reflections on the developments in educational policy, the UNESCO guidelines for the preparation of this report focused on four key areas:

- access to education – focusing on actions being taken to reach groups that are currently excluded
- early intervention – as a means to support children's development and learning
- learning outcomes – particularly the efforts to improve learning achievements and reduce inequalities
- teacher training, recruitment, and working conditions

Access to education is protected by legislation in every province and territory in Canada, with public school education free of charge to all between the ages of 5 and 18 (the ages vary by jurisdiction but the principle is consistent) and registration figures that are well above 90 per cent until age 16. The governments recognize that access also includes access to success and achievement and many programs and policies have been put in place so that all groups are assured of equal opportunity. The report focuses on the funding allocations that support school boards and schools in providing services for those who are in danger of exclusion from mainstream education. As attendance at postsecondary educational institutions shows a larger representation of those from higher income families, the report provides detail on the multiple programs that the jurisdictions have put in place to provide financial assistance to all eligible students.

Early intervention examines the results of research that verify its importance in preparing children to learn. Many jurisdictions have established detailed frameworks and strategies that address early childhood education as a family and social issue, offering parental support and collaborative programs that include health and social services. Information is provided on specific programs for children at risk, on community programs, tools offered to parents to encourage their children's learning, and programs for Aboriginal children.

Improvement of **learning outcomes** is a key educational priority in every jurisdiction as standardized achievement tests, improvement initiatives, and curriculum policy are all enacted to

improve student achievement. Student results on international and pan-Canadian tests indicate the strengths and challenges in the educational systems. The jurisdictions have implemented a variety of long-term plans, often based in extensive research and consultation, to address student achievement for all students and especially for those most in need of special supports. The strategies to improve learning outcomes are system wide, encompassing curriculum changes, teacher professional development, new measurement and testing standards, student support and resources, school leadership, accountability and autonomy measures, detailed data collection and analysis, comprehensive reporting to students, parents and the community, and enhanced programs for populations most at risk of failure. The improvement of learning outcomes is not focused on testing alone, but is the basis of educational reform that touches all aspects of schooling.

The pre-service **training of teachers** is available in every province and territory and is largely undertaken by the universities. Professional development for practicing teachers is shared among the departments or ministries of education, school boards, universities, teachers' associations and unions, and nongovernmental organizations with particular expertise. A 2001 study by Statistics Canada indicated that by 2006, there would be a surplus of teachers in Canada, although challenges in recruitment for certain subject specialties and for rural schools would continue.   In studies of their working conditions, teachers have reported that the greatest challenge they face is the diverse classroom, with many students requiring special services and programming. Provincial and territorial governments have implemented funding and program initiatives to address teachers' challenges, including the reduction of class sizes.

The Role of Education in Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion: The final section of the first report highlights the role of the education systems in combating poverty and social exclusion. Some of the provinces have anti-poverty strategies in place that recognize the crucial role that education plays in addressing social inequities and providing enhanced opportunities.

Report Two – Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future

Context of the Report: The guidelines for the preparation of this report define inclusive education as an approach that looks into how to transform education systems and other learning environments in order to respond to the diversity of learners. Inclusive education is therefore quality education that aims at the full participation of all learners. The debates of the forty-eighth session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) are organized around four sub-themes described below. Experiences, innovations, and best practices are to be used to illustrate how the Member States approach these key aspects of inclusive education.

Approaches, Scope and Content: The themes for the ICE move from the broadest examination of inclusive education at the legislative level to the much more focused look at specific programs and classroom approaches. In this first section, the spotlight is on the vision of inclusive education, the legal frameworks that support this vision at the federal and provincial/territorial levels, and the challenges faced in ensuring educational and social inclusion. A brief demographic profile of Canada provides a necessary context for the consideration of inclusive education in a pluralistic society.

Public Policy: The second of the major themes outlined for this report and for the conference discussion of inclusive education highlights the dimensions of exclusion, with questions of the indicators and the data used to inform policy development and decision making. In the Canadian context, the groups considered most vulnerable to exclusion are Aboriginal students, students with physical, emotional, mental and learning challenges, newly arrived immigrant students, visible minority students, and students from lower socio-economic groups. The educational reforms that have been put in place in the jurisdictions are described – the broad scope, long-term programs that encompass multiple levels of education and numerous aspects of the systems. The majority of these reforms involve public consultation and/or the direct involvement of the communities affected and their results influence curriculum, delivery methods, management and educational leadership, issues of language and culture, assessment and accountability, and policy.

Systems, Links, and Transitions: The third section focuses more closely on specific programs that are designed to address the needs of one or more of the groups that receive special attention to encourage their educational inclusion and success. A lengthy list of facilitators of inclusive education is followed by descriptions of programs, services and supports for Aboriginal, special needs students, and other vulnerable groups.

Learners and Teachers: The final component of the report focuses on the schools and the classrooms, detailing the resources and programs provided for teachers and learners. These include new approaches to teaching and learning provided by the ministries of education or innovative projects devised by teachers; curriculum designed to respond to the needs of at-risk groups; resources and supports offered to teachers in their classrooms; and school and learning environments that foster learning for all. Most of the projects highlighted in this section focus on one particular segment of the at-risk population.

Introduction to the Two Reports

The Nature of the Reports

The forty-eighth session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) is scheduled to take place in Geneva on November 25-28, 2008 with the theme of *Inclusive education: The way of the future*.

In advance of this meeting, Canada, along with the other Member States of UNESCO, has the opportunity to submit two separate but linked reports. The International Bureau of Education, the organizers of the ICE, has distributed guidelines for the preparation of the reports.

The first report, *The Education Systems in Canada – Facing the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century*, concentrates on the legal frameworks, structures, and major reforms in the education systems, as well as main policies and achievements in access to education, early intervention, learning outcomes, teacher training, and the role of education in combating social exclusion and poverty.

The second report, *Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future*, relates directly to the theme of the conference – inclusive education, defined as an approach that looks into how to transform education systems and other learning environments in order to respond to the diversity of learners. The inclusive education report headings reflect the topics of the debates at ICE:

- approaches, scope, and content to broaden the understanding of the theory and the practice of inclusive education
- public policies to demonstrate the roles of governments in the development and the implementation of policies on inclusive education
- systems, links, and transitions to create inclusive education systems to offer opportunities for life long learning
- learners' and teachers' support to foster a learning environment where teachers are equipped to meet the learners' diverse expectations and needs

Experiences, innovations, and best practices are to be used to illustrate how the Member States approach these key aspects of inclusive education.

Canada has 13 provincial and territorial educational jurisdictions, all of which are committed to educational reform and innovation and the principles and practice of inclusive education at all levels. Given these 13 educational jurisdictions, plus the activities of nongovernmental organizations and the federal government, only limited examples of legislation, policies, and programs can be included. Throughout the document, selected examples are provided to give an overview of the numerous, varied, and high-quality activities focused on educational reform and innovation and on inclusive education in all parts of Canada; they have been chosen on the basis of geographic representation, client groups, types of initiatives, and to illustrate the extensive investment in education.

Much more can be learned by visiting the web sites of the provincial and territorial departments and ministries responsible for education listed in Appendix A, as well as by consulting the source documents listed there. Appendix B contains a map of Canada, identifying each of the provinces and territories.

Report One – The Education Systems in Canada – Facing the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century

The Education Systems – Legal Framework, Structure, and Reforms

Legal Framework

In Canada, there is no federal department of education and no integrated national system of education. Within the federal system of shared powers, Canada's Constitution Act of 1867 provides that "[I]n and for each province, the legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education." In the 13 jurisdictions — 10 provinces and three territories — departments or ministries of education are responsible for the organization, delivery, and assessment of education at the elementary and secondary levels, for technical and vocational education, and for postsecondary education. Some jurisdictions, have two separate departments or ministries, one having responsibility for elementary-secondary education and the other for postsecondary education and skills training.

The federal government of Canada provides financial support for postsecondary education through transfer payments to the jurisdictions and the teaching of the two official languages. In addition, the federal government is responsible for the education of Registered Indian people on reserve in accordance with the Indian Act, personnel in the armed forces and the coast guard, and inmates in federal correctional facilities.

Canada is a bilingual country and the constitution recognizes French and English as its two official languages. According to the 2006 Census, more than 85 per cent of French-mother-tongue Canadians live in the province of Quebec: the minority language rights of French-speaking students living outside the province of Quebec and English-speaking students living in the province of Quebec are protected in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Charter defines the conditions under which Canadians have the right to access publicly funded education in either minority language. Each province and territory has established French-language school boards to manage the network of French-first-language schools. In the province of Quebec, the same structure applies to education in English-first-language schools. Postsecondary institutions can be bilingual or unilingual.

Organization, Structure, and Management

While there are a great many similarities in the provincial and territorial education systems across Canada, there are significant differences in curriculum, assessment, and accountability policies that express the geography, history, language, culture, and corresponding specialized needs of the populations served. The comprehensive, diversified, and widely accessible nature of the education systems in Canada reflects the societal belief in the importance of education.

Public education is provided free to all Canadians who meet various age and residence requirements. Each province and territory has one or two departments/ministries responsible

for education, headed by a minister who is almost always an elected member of the legislature and appointed to the position by the government leader of the jurisdiction. Deputy ministers, who belong to the civil service, are responsible for the operation of the departments. The ministries and departments provide educational, administrative, and financial management and school support functions, and they define both the educational services to be provided and the policy and legislative frameworks.

Local governance of education is usually entrusted to school boards, school districts, school divisions, or district education councils. Their members are elected by public ballot. The power delegated to the local authorities is at the discretion of the provincial and territorial governments and generally consists of the operation and administration (including financial) of the group of schools within their board or division, curriculum implementation, responsibility for personnel, enrolment of students, and initiation of proposals for new construction or other major capital expenditures. According to Statistics Canada, there are approximately 15,500 schools in Canada — 10,100 elementary, 3,400 secondary, and 2,000 mixed elementary and secondary — with an overall average of 350 students per school. In 2004–05, provinces and territories reported that there were 5.3 million students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools.   For Registered Indians living on reserves, the schools are funded by the federal government and administered by the communities.

Public funding for education comes either directly from the provincial or territorial government or through a mix of provincial transfers and local taxes collected either by the local government or by the boards with taxing powers. Provincial and territorial regulations, revised yearly, provide the grant structure that sets the level of funding for each school board based on factors such as the number of students, special needs, and location.

All jurisdictions have some form of pre-elementary (kindergarten) education, operated by the local education authorities and offering one year of pre–grade 1, non-compulsory education for five-year-olds. In most jurisdictions, elementary schools cover six to eight years of schooling. The elementary school curriculum emphasizes the basic subjects of language, mathematics, social studies, science, health and physical education, and introductory arts, while some jurisdictions include second-language learning. Secondary school covers the final four to six years of compulsory education. In the first years, students take mostly compulsory courses, with some options. The proportion of options increases in the later years so that students may take specialized courses to prepare for the job market or to meet the differing entrance requirements of postsecondary institutions. Secondary school diplomas are awarded to students who complete the requisite number of compulsory and optional courses. In most cases, vocational and academic programs are offered within the same secondary schools; in others, technical and vocational programs are offered in separate, dedicated vocational training centres.

The legislation and practices concerning the establishment of separate educational systems and private educational institutions vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Three jurisdictions provide for tax-supported separate school systems that include both elementary and secondary education. These separate school systems allow religious minorities to receive education in accordance with the tenets of their faiths, especially Roman Catholics and

Protestants, some of whom have constitutionally protected rights in this area. Public and separate school systems that are publicly funded serve about 93 per cent of all students in Canada. Six jurisdictions provide partial funding for private schools if certain criteria, which vary among jurisdictions, are met. No funding for private schools is provided in the other jurisdictions, although they still may be regulated.

Postsecondary education is available in both government-supported and private institutions, which offer degrees, diplomas, certificates, and attestations depending on the nature of the institution and the length of the program. The postsecondary environment has evolved during the past few years, as universities are no longer the only degree-granting institutions in some jurisdictions. Universities and university colleges focus on degree programs but may also offer some diplomas and certificates, often in professional designations. The colleges, community colleges, and technical and vocational institutes offer diplomas, certificates, and, in some cases, two years of academic credit that can be transferred to the university level, as well as applied and bachelor degree programs. Les collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel (cégeps) in Quebec offer a choice of two-year academic programs that are prerequisite for university study or three-year vocational and technical programs that prepare students for the labour market or for further postsecondary study.

Publicly funded universities are largely autonomous; they set their own admissions standards and degree requirements and have considerable flexibility in the management of their financial affairs and program offerings. Government intervention is generally limited to funding, fee structures, and the introduction of new programs. Most Canadian universities have a two-tiered system of governance that includes a board of governors and a senate. Boards are generally charged with overall financial and policy concerns. Academic senates are responsible for programs, courses, admission requirements, qualifications for degrees, and academic planning. Their decisions are subject to board approval. Professors and students are often represented on both bodies, as are alumni and representatives from the community at large. In colleges, government involvement can extend to admissions policies, program approval, curricula, institutional planning, and working conditions. Most colleges have boards of governors appointed by the provincial or territorial government, with representation from the public, students, and instructors. Program planning incorporates input from business, industry, and labour representatives on college advisory committees.

Vocational education refers to a multi-year program or a series of courses providing specialized instruction in a skill or a trade intending to lead the student directly into a career or program based on that skill or trade. It is offered in secondary schools and at the postsecondary level in public colleges and institutes, private for-profit colleges, and in the workplace, through apprenticeship programs.

Many institutions, governments and groups are involved in the delivery of adult education programs, with the providers varying by jurisdiction. Colleges offer adult education and training for the labour force; government departments responsible for literacy, skills training, second language learning, and other adult programs may provide programs themselves or fund both formal and non-formal educational bodies to develop and deliver the programs. Some jurisdictions have established dedicated adult learning centres. Community-based, not-

for-profit, and voluntary organizations, school boards, and some private companies, largely funded by the provincial, territorial, or federal governments, address literacy and other learning needs for all adults, with some of them focusing on specific groups such as rural populations, the Aboriginal communities, immigrants, displaced workers, and those with low levels of literacy or education. The federal, provincial, and territorial governments collaborate to fund many of the skills training and English and French second language programs.

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) was formed in 1967 by the provincial ministers responsible for education. CMEC provides a forum in which the provincial and territorial ministers can discuss matters of mutual interest, undertake educational initiatives cooperatively, and represent the interests of the provinces and territories with national educational organizations, the federal government, foreign governments, and international organizations. CMEC is the national voice for education in Canada and, through CMEC, the provinces and territories work collectively on common objectives in a broad range of activities at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels.

Current and Forthcoming Reforms

A bold new vision for learning in Canada was released in April 2008 by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), to address the education needs and aspirations of Canadians. *Learn Canada 2020* is the framework that the provincial and territorial ministers of education, through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, will use to enhance Canada's education systems, learning opportunities, and overall educational outcomes. The vision of *Learn Canada 2020* is the provision of quality lifelong learning opportunities for all Canadians. The document's key components reflect many of the themes to be highlighted at the International Conference on Education.

Learn Canada 2020 recognizes the direct links between a well-educated population and a vibrant knowledge-based economy in the 21st century, a socially progressive, sustainable society, and enhanced personal growth opportunities for all Canadians.

Learn Canada 2020 encompasses four pillars of lifelong learning from early childhood to adulthood and addresses the most pressing education and learning issues facing Canadians today. The ministers of education, in conjunction with their Cabinet colleagues as appropriate, will pursue ambitious goals for each pillar as follows:

- Early Childhood Learning and Development: All children should have access to high quality early childhood education that ensures they arrive at school ready to learn.
- Elementary to Secondary School Systems: All children in our elementary to secondary school systems deserve teaching and learning opportunities that are inclusive and that provide them with world-class skills in literacy, numeracy, and science.
- Postsecondary Education: Canada must increase the number of students pursuing postsecondary education by increasing the quality and accessibility of postsecondary education.

- Adult Learning and Skills Development: Canada must develop an accessible, diversified, and integrated system of adult learning and skills development that delivers training when Canadians need it.

Within the four pillars of lifelong learning, ministers have identified eight specific activity areas and accompanying objectives:

- Literacy: Raise the literacy levels of Canadians.
- Aboriginal Education: Eliminate the gap in academic achievement and graduation rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.
- Postsecondary Capacity: Enhance and stabilize the long-term capacity of postsecondary systems to meet the training and learning needs of all Canadians seeking higher education learning opportunities.
- Education for Sustainable Development: Raise students' awareness and encourage them to become actively engaged in working for a sustainable society.
- International and National Representation: Speak effectively and consistently for education and learning in Canada in both pan-Canadian and international settings.
- Official Languages: Promote and implement support programs for minority-language education and second-language programs that are among the most comprehensive in the world.
- Learning Assessment Programs and Performance Indicators: Support the implementation of national and international learning assessment programs and performance indicators for education systems.
- Education Data and Research Strategy: Create comprehensive, long-term strategies to collect, analyze, and disseminate nationally and internationally comparable data and research.

Learn Canada 2020 reflects the educational priorities of Canadians. Ministers will engage key partners and stakeholders in reaching the stated goals and objectives. Education in Canada is under the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories. Ministers recognize the national interest in ensuring a healthy economy and the importance of education for economic development. To this end, Canada's education ministers will engage all those who can and must participate in meeting these goals — parents, educators, key stakeholders, and other orders of government. They will encourage the federal government to meet its constitutional obligation and work with provinces and territories to provide equality of opportunity for Aboriginal peoples. Ministers plan to keep Canadians informed of their collective and individual progress on *Learn Canada 2020* on an annual basis. Ministers will pursue the goals of *Learn Canada 2020* through their Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC).

Policies, Achievements and Lessons Learned

In requesting information on the developments in educational policy, the guidelines for the preparation of this report focused on four key areas:

- access to education – focusing on actions being taken to reach groups that are currently excluded
- early intervention – as a means to support children's development and learning
- learning outcomes – particularly the efforts to improve learning achievements and reduce inequalities
- teacher training, recruitment, and working conditions

Comprehensive approaches have been taken in every jurisdiction in response to each of these issues. The examples provided below include legislation, policies, long-term plans and strategies, funding initiatives, collaborative programs, and specific projects that address the needs of groups who are seen as vulnerable or at risk of exclusion.

Access to Education

Legislation and policies are in place to protect the Canada-wide principle of free public education for all at the elementary and secondary levels. Every jurisdiction has legislation similar to that of Nova Scotia which states that all public schools established under the *Education Act* are free and that every person over the age of five and under the age of 21 years has the right to attend a public school serving the school district or school region in which that person resides.

The 2002 *Education Act* for Yukon affirms that all are entitled to receive an elementary and secondary school education program free of charge that is appropriate to their needs in accordance with the provision of this *Act*, provided they meet the age requirements of being between 5 years 8 months old and 18 years of age as of September 1 of a specific year and that they meet residency requirements. This applies to Canadian citizens, those lawfully admitted to Canada for temporary or permanent residence, a child of a Canadian citizen, or child of an individual who is lawfully admitted to Canada for permanent or temporary status. It is required that each school board provides every school-age person who resides in its education area with an educational program consistent with the requirements of the *Education Act* and its regulations. No tuition fees are to be charged to the student or the parent for this education. Other jurisdictions have different age inclusions in their legislation, but the principles are consistent.

According to the *Summary Public School Indicators for the Provinces and Territories, 1997-1998 to 2003-2004* published by Statistics Canada, the school age population between five and 17 years of age in 2003-2004 was 5,328,417; headcount enrolment in public elementary and secondary schools in 2003-2004 was 5,289,031. The headcount enrolment figures do not include private school, independent school, and distance education students, or students enrolled in schools financed by the federal government. From these numbers, it is clear that the overall enrolment rate in elementary and secondary schools is very high. Up until age 16, enrolment is always well over 90 per cent.

However, the provincial and territorial governments remain very committed to programs that ensure equal access for all. One approach to combating social exclusion is through school funding formulas which differ in detail from jurisdiction to jurisdiction but all have

provisions for special funding for services for those who are in danger of exclusion from mainstream education. This is a form of positive discrimination that supports equity and equality of access and treatment within the school system – rather than discriminating against any group, support is provided to expand their access to quality learning. In addressing the issue of access, the emphasis in this report is on the role of funding in increasing opportunities for education for all. The second report in this document, *Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future*, provides a broader spectrum of information on the many policies, projects, and educational innovations that encourage greater access to and success within education.

The *Funding of Schools* document for Manitoba for school year 2005-06 outlines both the base support and the categorical support that are available to schools on a per student basis. In addition to the support for instruction, curricular materials, and other basic items, support is provided for an extensive list of special students and services including special needs, English as a Second Language, Aboriginal Academic Achievement, Heritage Languages, French Language programs, students at risk, small and northern schools, early behaviour intervention, early childhood development, and early literacy and numeracy.

A flexible funding framework that recognizes the unique needs and priorities of school boards was put in place in 2004 in Alberta. While urban school boards are more likely to have a large mix of students with special needs, rural boards have challenges of geography, transportation, and declining enrolment. The new framework provides base funding according to general enrolment, plus differential funding for special-needs students, English-as-a-Second-Language students, Aboriginal students, and students of lower socio-economic status, as well as for boards with large enrolment growth or decline, northern allowances for jurisdictions, necessary small schools, geographically large jurisdictions, and the cost of living in various parts of the province. School boards have increased flexibility to respond to their communities' realities, along with enhanced accountability requirements. In this way, the school boards can apply the funding to their own particular challenges in terms of equal access and services for students within their schools.

Enhanced support services for students with special-needs are features of education in all jurisdictions. The Ministry of Education in Newfoundland and Labrador funds a full range of personnel to support children with special needs, including classroom teachers, special education teachers, guidance counsellors, educational psychologists, speech and language pathologists, and student assistants as well as professional development consultants to work with the teachers. Specialized technology and transportation are also available.

Although public education is provided free of charge, there are other costs that must be assumed by the parents. The Quebec National Assembly adopted legislation in June 2004 that obliges the school commissions to develop policies related to the costs they require parents to assume, policies that maintain the accessibility of public school. Individual school councils may determine the principles under which parents are charged for school supplies such as exercise books and writing materials.

This represent a very small selection of examples of the funding that ministries and departments of education provide so that elementary and secondary education is free to all and that those in need of extra services do not suffer from discrimination whether in access to education or the opportunity to achieve and succeed. In all jurisdictions, the needs are multiple and the resources are limited. The jurisdictions respond with policies and programs that reflect their regional needs and realities. In the report, on Inclusive Education, more information is provided on the programs and services that are made available through this funding as well as some of the achievements and ongoing challenges.

Canada has about 1,700 private and independent schools with more than 280,000 students or about six per cent of children. Quebec has the highest percentage of students in private schools at 10 per cent, with British Columbia as second highest. Enrolment in public education has declined slightly – 1.9 per cent between 1998-99 and 2004-05. Although there has been an increase in private school enrolment, this does not account for the decline in public school numbers which are linked to declining population of school-age children. Private schools are often chosen by parents who want their children educated within a certain religious context or a particular educational approach, or for their specialized programs in such areas as athletics and the arts. With total revenues of $2.7 billion in 2002-03, private schools received 25 per cent of their revenues from government sources (some jurisdictions provide no funding at all to private schools). Over 56 per cent of their income is derived from tuition fees.   A 2001 Statistics Canada publication indicated that children from both ends of the income distribution attend private schools: 29 per cent of students who attend private schools are from families with incomes below $50,000, while 26 per cent are from families with incomes over $100,000.   In public schools, only 12 per cent of the children are from families with income over $100,000.

Access to postsecondary education is also a key government priority. According to the 2006 census, Canada has the highest portion of its adult population with university or college attainment of any Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development nation. Overall, 48 per cent of Canadians between 25 and 64 years of age have completed university or college. Twenty-three per cent have a university degree.

In 1976, the graduation rate from bachelor's and first professional degree programs for Canada as a whole was 18 per cent; in 2004, the rate was 33 per cent. Graduation rate is the per cent of the population at the typical age for graduation who have graduated.

In all jurisdictions, postsecondary educational institutions charge tuition fees. For universities, these annual fees varied in 2007-08 from about $2,025 in Quebec to almost $6,500 in Nova Scotia, with an average of about $4,400 for a full-time undergraduate student. This is almost triple the average tuition in 1990-91. In 2004-05, college tuition ranged from about $1,300 to $3,000. (Instruction in public colleges in Quebec is free of charge for students with Quebec resident status.) In many jurisdictions, tuition levels have been frozen for the last few years.

Studies done on those who have attended postsecondary education reveal the important influences of gender, family income, and parental education. The 2002 Statistics Canada

Postsecondary Education Participation Survey showed that an estimated 1.6 million young Canadians aged from 18 to 24 (17 to 24 in Quebec) had taken some form of postsecondary education (PSE) after leaving secondary school. Two-thirds of young women (67 per cent) pursued education beyond secondary school, compared to 57 per cent of men.

In 2003-04, at the university undergraduate level, women accounted for 59 per cent of all registrants. Women students had a very slight majority of 52 per cent at the master's level. Men outnumbered women in doctoral programs, where men accounted for 54 per cent of the registrations.

Participation in PSE rises with family income. Those with estimated family earnings of $80,000 or higher were most likely (at 83 per cent) to pursue PSE, compared to about 66 per cent of those with family incomes between $55,000 and $80,000, and just over half of those with family incomes below $55,000. These numbers have remained relatively stable for the last decade, with some reduction in the number of students from middle-class families. Participation in PSE, especially university, is also influenced by the educational background of parents; 70 per cent of those 18 to 24 year olds whose parents had some postsecondary education also enrolled in postsecondary education, as opposed to 57 per cent of those whose parents had no education at the postsecondary level. Parental education is not as strong an influence for college students. Family income has more impact – 40 per cent of youth from low-income families enrolled in college compared to 60 per cent of those from high-income families.

Along with savings, earnings from employment, and support from families, many students use student loans, bursaries, and scholarships to pay for PSE costs. In the 2001-02 academic year, 26 per cent of students used repayable student loans and 29 per cent of students received non-repayable grants or scholarships. Not all students require a loan every year; over the three or four years of their undergraduate education about 50 per cent of students receive a loan at some time. In the graduating class of 2000, about one-half of college graduates and university graduates with bachelor degrees left school owing money for their education. On average, bachelor degree graduates with student debt owed about $20,000, and college graduates owed almost $13,000, with the debt mostly to government student loan programs.

The provinces and territories, working with the federal government, have all developed extensive student support mechanisms to provide increased access to higher education to those least able to pay and to reduce student debt on graduation. All jurisdictions in Canada offer a combination of loans, bursaries, scholarships, grants, and other assistance to students. Using the example of New Brunswick, in the school year 2007-08, full-time postsecondary students have access to the following loans and grants:

- Canada Student Loan Program
- New Brunswick Student Loan Program
- Canada Access Grant for Students from Low-income Families
- Canada Study Grant for Students with Dependents
- New Brunswick Bursary

- Canada Millennium Bursary
- Canada Study Grant for the Accommodation of Students with Permanent Disabilities
- Canada Study Grant for Female Doctoral Students

There is also a program of grants and loans for part-time students. In addition, New Brunswick has recently announced a one-time non-taxable grant of $2,000 for every full-time, first-year New Brunswick resident attending a provincial university, and it has removed the assessment of parental and spousal income from the calculation of provincial postsecondary financial assistance. Starting in tax year 2006, former students can benefit from the New Brunswick Tuition Tax Cash Back program, a tuition tax rebate equivalent to 50 per cent of eligible postsecondary tuition costs incurred after January 1, 2005, for individuals who have attended approved educational institutions. The tax rebate has an annual maximum of $2,000 and a lifetime maximum of $10,000. Similar packages of support are offered in each jurisdiction, with variations in the programs to reflect local needs.

Continuous improvements are being made to student support systems across the country. For example, in Prince Edward Island in 2008 every first-year Island student entering a provincially-funded postsecondary institution to attain a degree or a diploma will receive up to $2,000 from the George Coles Bursary. The provincial government is investing $2 million in this project.

Early Intervention

As children enter formal schooling, their willingness and readiness to learn can make a difference in their school performance. The results of the *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth* undertaken by Statistics Canada found a number of factors that were significant predictors for the readiness to learn of five-year-olds. Chief among these was higher household income. Activities in the child's household, high positive child-parent interaction, participation in organized sports, and lessons in physical activities and the arts were also linked to a greater readiness to learn.

A recent study for The Learning Partnership revealed that 25 to 30 per cent of children in the general population lack school readiness at age five. The provinces and territories have recognized the importance of supporting early development and education of children so that they are better prepared to learn, especially those from more vulnerable populations. The responsibility for early childhood education rests with the ministry or department of education in some jurisdictions; in others, it rests with social, family, or community services or other government ministry. In all the provinces and territories, the departments of education are responsible for the formal kindergarten program.

In April 2007, the Ministry of Education in British Columbia (BC) released a draft framework for early learning for children up to five years of age in order to stimulate dialogue with parents, early childhood educators, service providers, communities, and governments on the vision, principles, and areas of early learning that reflect their aspirations for young children. The document discusses how to support early learning and the key areas

of early learning – well-being and belonging, exploration and creativity, languages and literacies, and social responsibility and diversity. A special section looks at early learning for First Nation populations in British Columbia.

British Columbia offers the Strong Start BC Early Learning Centre, a free early learning program to promote language, physical, and social/emotional development. Located in schools and structured for preschool children accompanied by a parent or adult caregiver, the program provides the adults with opportunities to observe and practice activities that support early learning, as well as connect to other services offered by health authorities, community agencies, and other social service providers. In the 2008 Speech from the Throne, the BC government promised to add more than 300 additional Centres in the next two years. In addition, a new Early Childhood Learning Agency is to be established to assess the feasibility and costs of full school day kindergarten for five-year-olds, as well as feasibility studies for providing parents with the choice of day-long kindergarten for four-year-olds by 2010 and for three-year-olds by 2012.

When Kids Come First, a new plan for public education, was announced in New Brunswick in June 2007. One of its three goals stated that every child will arrive at kindergarten ready to learn. The commitments made in order to reach this goal include

- design and implement the I'm Ready to Learn Initiative to prepare children and their families for entry into kindergarten, including an outreach program, school readiness clinics, and an early language skills assessment
- ensure children who need a special education plan have one in place before entering kindergarten
- improve school-readiness through better collaboration with the Departments of Health and of Family and Community Services
- support provincial efforts to improve adult literacy

Other related commitments in this plan address issues of literacy, numeracy, cultural identity, linguistic growth, and safe and healthy schools.

The early childhood development system in Nunavut has established priorities for a comprehensive system. These include a home visiting program that features health promotion and support and early identification; a range of quality early learning and childcare programs, including toddler and preschool programs that focus on enhancing cultural identity and promoting strong Inuit language development (over 85 per cent of the population of Nunavut is Inuit); specialized services to enable children with special needs to reach their potential; and parent education and ongoing support to families and communities. Nunavut has introduced a community-based approach so that the programs are sensitive to local characteristics, provide parental choice, and build social cohesion.

In Saskatchewan, the Early Childhood Development Strategy is a major interdepartmental initiative of the provincial government to assist families in becoming independent, self-sufficient, and more capable of taking responsibility for the healthy development of their

children. *KidsFirst* is a part of the strategy that helps vulnerable families through assistance with child development, parenting, connecting to the community, early learning opportunities for children, and help with transportation, literacy, nutrition, and specialized counselling services. The Ministry of Education has a pre-kindergarten program that is a developmentally-appropriate program for vulnerable three and four year olds, with a focus on the healthy development of the whole child to lay the foundation for school success. Family members and caregivers are active participants in the program with opportunities to enhance their parenting skills and social and health supports.

One of the three priorities given to the Minister of Education by the Premier of Alberta in 2006 was exploring options to provide children with access to early learning opportunities. Early Childhood Services (ECS) provides educational programming for children who are as young as two and a half years old. Children identified with disabilities or delays are eligible for up to three years of ECS programming; gifted and talented children may also receive special programming. In addition, special funding is provided for English and French as second languages for children as young as three and a half years old to help build language skills. Learning outside the classroom is also supported through community-based programs for family literacy, early literacy, and Head Start programs.

In Manitoba, the Early Childhood Development Initiative is provided to assist school divisions to offer intersectoral services for preschoolers, in cooperation with parents, the community and Healthy Child Manitoba, to increase readiness for school entry. Projects include family literacy programs, parenting programs, toy lending, and home visits. The Early Start program provides a three-year home visiting program for families with children who have special social needs and are currently attending licensed day care, in order to enhance the children's readiness for school learning.

The Quebec government has launched a system-wide reform in education, beginning with the preschool and early primary years. A booklet was prepared to inform parents about the kindergarten program with its goals of teaching children to know themselves, to develop their personalities, to develop relationships with others, to gradually construct their autonomy, to nourish their taste for learning, and to experiment with various ways of working and learning. Early education has a triple mandate – to create a rite of passage that gives children a first taste of school, to foster the development of children and motivate them to explore all of their capacities, and to establish the social and cognitive bases for learning so that learning becomes a lifelong activity.

In the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, the Division of Early Learning was created in 2005 to focus on the learning needs of preschool children. The Division supports the Minister and fosters the coordination and development of comprehensive programs across all government departments and agencies that play a role in early childhood education. One such program is *KinderStart*, a transition to school program that consists of a series of eight one-hour orientation sessions for children and their parents/caregivers in the year prior to kindergarten entry. Community projects include early literacy and reading initiatives as well as parenting skills.

In Ontario, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services provides Best Start, a program that ensures that children in Ontario are ready to learn by the time they start grade one. Best Start focuses on early learning and child care services and healthy development during a child's first years by offering a range of services to support families with children, such as:

- Healthy Babies Healthy Children
- infant hearing programs
- speech and language therapy for children who need extra help
- more opportunities for high quality, affordable early learning and child care
- services for children who are blind or have low vision

As in many other jurisdictions, Ontario offers culturally appropriate early intervention and prevention services especially for Aboriginal children. The programs include pre- and post-natal screening and assessment, home visiting, and service coordination.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development of Prince Edward Island, in partnership with the Early Childhood Development Association, issues a booklet to assist parents when choosing an early childhood centre. While all licensed centres are regulated for staffing requirements, health, safety, fire, emergency, daily program schedule, nutrition, and administration, the booklet helps with defining a child=s needs, the types and characteristics of a good child care program, and questions a parent should ask, as well as other information such as where to call if there are concerns about the Child Care Subsidy Program. Prince Edward Island provides an extra year of kindergarten for children who are identified as needing this service, through a transition planning process which involves specialists working with the child, the family, school board representatives, and the kindergarten staff. An Early Childhood Resource Team is working with the licensed early childhood sector to enhance curriculum, program delivery, and parental engagement in early childhood and kindergarten programs. Various programs and resources are available to support children and families, such as home visiting, public health nursing, provincial screening programs, and specialists such as speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists.

In Yukon, the major early intervention programs include the introduction of full-day kindergarten in 2006 and the Reading Recovery program, in which students in grade one with reading difficulties are provided with targeted one-on-one teaching. All Yukon schools have been providing free education with access to kindergarten from age four for a number of years. As well, the Books for Babies program continues through the general hospital, at-risk kindergarten students are identified through a screening profile, and more early reading books have been developed in cooperation with First Nations.

In the Northwest Territories, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment prepared a strategic plan for 2005-15 that gives priority to programs that establish a strong foundation for learning. The actions include increasing access to and support for programs with an emphasis on developing guidelines for programs and monitoring their quality and effectiveness. An increase in the skills of early childhood educators is planned through

greater certification requirements and enhanced professional development. In addition, a checklist is provided for parents outlining the requirements in terms of staffing, the opportunities for social growth and development, and health and safety issues of a good child care centre.

Through the Canadian Rural Partnership, the Government of Canada is helping address the challenges of improving literacy skills in rural children through an initiative called Tiny Pencils. It has been adopted in a number of provinces. Once a week, parents and preschool children get together to do crafts, play games, read, and participate in activities aimed at building self-esteem, problem-solving, and developing social skills. Both parents and children benefit, as parents also build their self-esteem and social skills and become more involved in the community. The federal government also funds Aboriginal Head Start to enhance the development and school readiness of Indian, Métis, and Inuit children living in urban centres and large northern communities across Canada, as well as First Nations children living on reserve.

The strategies, programs, policies, and extent of early intervention and learning service vary among the jurisdictions. However every province and territory has recognized the importance of supporting families so that children can develop to the very best of their capacities and enter the classroom ready to learn.

Learning Outcomes

Overall Canadian student perform well on international tests, but educators are concerned about those who are falling behind. The Canadian Education Association publication, *Public Education in Canada: Facts, Trends and Attitudes 2007,* states that reform agendas in public education have centred on government commitments to greater accountability and improved student achievement. Consequently, among a variety of initiatives, many provinces and territories have

- established some form of standardized, province-wide student achievement tests
- implemented province-wide school and/or district improvement initiatives, commonly focused on student achievement in mathematics and literacy
- developed or revised curriculum policies to support standardized learning outcomes

These reforms share common areas of focus, but are implemented in very different ways across the country. The following examples illustrate the variety of ways that the provinces and territories have worked to improve their measurement, understanding, and support of student achievement.

Fifteen year old students in the jurisdictions across Canada participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2006. The primary focus of the 2006 study was science, with a secondary focus on mathematics and reading. As in the 2000 and 2003 PISA assessments, Canadian students had a top-tier ranking among the 57 countries involved in the

study. Although there were provincial differences in performance level among the students, all provinces performed at or above the OECD average in science, mathematics, and reading. There were no gender differences in combined science performance; however, boys and girls performed well in different areas of the test. Boys outperformed girls in mathematics, but only by a small point score. Girls outperformed boys in reading.

On a pan-Canadian level, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada conducts the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) to assess 13 year old students in mathematics, science, and reading. The program is designed to complement existing assessments in each province and territory, focusing on similar skills in science, mathematics, and reading to help determine whether students across Canada reach similar levels of performance at about the same age.

In 2005, the government of Nova Scotia introduced *Learning for Life II: Brighter Futures Together*, a four-year plan to improve the academic performance and health of students. Among the plan's highlights were commitments for literacy, special-needs students, smaller class sizes, new teaching resources, and a new program to help those at risk of dropping out. A report on progress in 2006-07 and an action plan for 2007-08 were recently released. Among the attributes tracked were the setting of higher standards for learning and teaching and for acknowledging student achievement; programs for special education and for helping more students succeed; and measuring and reporting on success. As part of this latter goal, new grade specific assessments have been developed, tested, and implemented, a *Minister's Report to Parents* is being prepared, graduate surveys have been undertaken, and a school board accountability review has been developed and will be pilot tested. In November 2007, education partners met at the Forum on Student Achievement to reflect on priorities and expectations for the education system.

In Prince Edward Island, the Premier's Task Force on Student Achievement was established in January 2005 to recommend ways to improve student achievement. The Task Force consulted extensively with educators and the public and submitted a report with 20 recommendations. The recommendations addressed issues in curriculum; student assessment; early childhood intervention; learning to read; student, parental, and community engagement; sustainable schools; use of instructional time; integrated services for children and youth; teacher training; Aboriginal education; trades strategy; educating the whole child; and monitoring and reporting progress. The inclusiveness of the recommendations reflected the multitude of factors that are seen as contributing to student achievement. In the area of assessment, a progress report on the Task Force recommendations highlights the development of standards to identify expectations for students, benchmarks to measure performance, and assessment tools to inform decision-making. In 2006-07, provincial assessments in grades 3 and 9 were introduced and the results are released so that parents and the public have access to this information at the school level.

The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) was developed through a collaborative partnership of the education community in 1999 and first implemented in all Alberta school authorities in 2000. The goal of this program is to improve student learning and performance by fostering initiatives that reflect the unique needs and circumstances of each school

authority. Cycle 1 (2000-03) created a model for collaboration, established accountability measures and criteria to provide evidence that the initiative is working, and set the stage for continuous improvement, Cycle 2 (2003-06) expanded the program to more teachers and learners, and integrated successful practices in the fields of instructional interventions, professional development, accountability, and administration. Cycle 3 (2006-09) emphasizes innovation and research, analysis of project outcomes, focussing of professional development, and expanding knowledge and information sharing. Among the many achievement of the AISI program has been improved student learning, the creation of a culture of continuous improvement, and a renewed focus on teaching and learning.

Each year, Alberta Education assesses how the province's education system is performing using a broad range of measures, including surveys of parents, teachers and students, student achievement on provincial tests and diploma exams, as well as student outcomes such as secondary school dropout and completion rates. The information on these measures is used by schools, school jurisdictions, and the province to determine if learning goals are being met, to develop and implement strategies to improve results, and to report to parents and communities. In a province –wide consultation in 2006 on secondary school completion, youth shared their views on why some youth leave school early and possible solutions.

The British Columbia government set out a plan to work with educators, students, and parents to ensure a high level of student achievement for every student in the province. The *Ministry of Education's 2007/08-2009/10 Service Plan* focuses on student achievement as one of its primary goals.   The measures for this success include secondary school completion rates and performance on pan-Canadian and international assessments such as PISA and PCAP. As in many jurisdictions, British Columbia has particular concerns with the secondary school completion rates of Aboriginal students and has created specific targets for this group, as well as extensive programs and agreements to support their achievement. Other measures that British Columbia has identified for improvement are the transition rate to postsecondary education and participation in industry training programs.

British Columbia provides access to a wide range of student achievement reports on the Ministry of Education web site. Among the available resource are: the results and participation rates from provincial examinations; assessments of foundation skills and pan-Canadian and international surveys; summaries of student achievement; graduation reports; grade-to-grade and graduate transition reports; number of students awards and scholarships; compilation of results in schools and school districts; and reports on student groups such as Aboriginal students and students with special needs.

As in other school systems across Canada, the Department of Education in Yukon mandates certain assessment programs aimed at providing objective, system-wide measures of achievement and growth. Beginning in the 1999-2000 school year, Yukon implemented an assessment plan for a comprehensive testing strategy that provides an effective evaluation of students' learning in the key areas of numeracy and literacy. Students are assessed at important transition points in their school careers. Development and implementation of assessments have been continuous; in 2006-07, mathematics and language arts in grades 3, 6, and 9 and a language proficiency index for grades 11 and 12 were introduced. An example

of the type of program aimed at improving student achievement is the Individual Learning Centre. Opened in 2005, the Centre provides a safe and flexible learning environment where secondary students who have dropped out of school can pick up their studies and complete their education.

The Ministry of Education in Saskatchewan, in partnership with the provincial education system and parents, has a number of key strategies to support enhanced learning outcomes for all children and youth. Three of particular note are

- The Curriculum Renewal Initiative focused on making the provincial curriculum more accessible, relevant, and results-oriented for teachers and students.
- The Assessment for Learning Program provides student achievement information from provincial tests to teachers to assist them in improving their instructional practice and students' learning outcomes.
- The Review and Renewal of Supports for Learning is a comprehensive review of the policies and processes in place to meet students' diverse learning needs and to address the barriers to learning success for many students.

Other recent Saskatchewan initiatives include the new accountability framework that aligns school division and provincial priorities, and the creation of a more efficient and effective governance structure for school divisions and councils to facilitate parent and community voices in planning and shared responsibility for learner outcomes.

The strategic plan for 2005-08 implemented by the Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sport in Quebec put forward the goals of renewing pre-school education and elementary and secondary teaching, as well as reinforcing technical, vocational, and continuing education. The plan of action outlines new conditions to support success, including the revision of curriculum and an increase in class time in the early grades, for arts, physical education, English as a second language mathematics, and language. The implementation of the policy concerning the evaluation of learning aims at better informing education communities about the possibilities available for adapting evaluation processes to enable students with special needs to demonstrate their competencies. As well, the curriculum for vocational and technical education has been revised and better articulated with the senior years of secondary school.

Among its many programs to support student achievement and evaluation of learning outcomes, Quebec has recently made significant changes to its report cards to make them easier to understand for both parents and students. The revisions include marks that are expressed as percentage for each competency evaluated and for each subject, a class average for each subject, and simplified competency statement. The Homework Assistance Program has received increased support for schools that wish to provide a homework assistance service for elementary students in order to maintain their interest in school. The program also aims at mobilizing the community, stimulating local initiatives to increase students' motivation with regard to their school work, improving relationships between parents and the school, and encouraging the community to take a greater interest in young people's success.

The Ontario Ministry of Education has introduced a number of initiatives to enhance and measure success. For example, the *Schools on the Move* initiative celebrates and connects schools that are making significant and sustained progress in student achievement. The goal is for schools to network with other schools that have similar backgrounds and challenges, in order to learn successful strategies for improving student learning in literacy and mathematics. Additionally, the Ontario Focused Intervention Partnership provides a range of supports for boards and schools in general and more intense support for low-performing and static schools. The Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat's student achievement officers work with board and school staff to analyze student achievement data, provide support, and monitor school progress and program impacts.

The Ontario government's mandate to reach every child and to bring about improvement for all students has led to the creation of the *School Effectiveness Framework*. This framework is designed to assist schools to assess their effectiveness against the research-based indicators in the framework, and then to plan for focused improvement. A team from each school board assesses a number of schools each year. This data enables boards to plan more strategically for the schools that are most in need.

The Ontario Education Quality and Accountability Office is an arm's-length agency of the government that conducts province-wide assessments of student achievement in grades 3, 6, 9, and 10. The Office has developed the *Education Quality Indicators Framework* to place student achievement in perspective by providing demographic and other key environmental information that can be used to interpret achievement scores in the context of the school, board, and province.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment in the Northwest Territories released *Building on Our Success*, a strategic plan for 2005-2015. One of its five goals concerns the education of children and youth, with the objectives of students achieving their potential and the establishment of a results-based education system. To help students achieve their potential, activities centre on involving the family and the community; focusing on language and culture, particularly Aboriginal language curriculum and resources; increasing the availability of student support; and expanding offerings in schools including full-day kindergarten and a wider choice of courses at the secondary level. Assessing system performance is a priority, including the collection of student performance information and reporting to the public on a regular basis.

The number one priority for the Manitoba Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth in its publication *Education Agenda for Student Success* has been improving outcomes, especially for less successful learners. Progress has been made on each of the major action lines:

- An annual report on educational achievement is being published
- The recommendations of the Manitoba Special Education Review were addressed in legislation, through extensive consultations, and in documents to guide parents, schools, and communities.

- Successful strategies to facilitate increased student success for Aboriginal learners have been shared through documents and information sessions. The success of Aboriginal students is an ongoing issue that continues to receive special funding and priority.
- An *English as an Additional Language Action Plan* is moving ahead to strengthen programming from kindergarten through secondary school.
- An action plan on equity and diversity was released in 2006.
- Curricular supports for effective practices were developed for teaching in multilevel classrooms and non-graded schools and for classroom-based formative assessment. The Department has developed support documents on formative assessment, involving the students in self-assessment and using the feedback from this process to enhance their learning. As well, the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (involving jurisdictions in the west and north of Canada), with Manitoba as the lead jurisdiction has issued a support document on formative assessment, with accompanying professional learning activities planned.

Clearly the improvement of learning outcomes is at the top of the agenda in every educational jurisdiction across Canada, guided by policies and detailed planning, supported through funding, resources, programs, and professional development, and assessed through a range of measures from international and pan-Canadian studies to board, school, and classroom-based tests.

Teacher Training, Recruitment, and Working Conditions

In 2005-06, Statistics Canada reported there were over 313,000 full-time equivalent educators working in school boards or districts in Canada. The term educators refers to all those with recognized teacher qualifications whether they are working as teachers, principals, counsellors or in other professional roles. Among the educators, 291,000 were teachers, 15,600 were school administrators, and 6,600 were pedagogical support staff. Almost all public school educators have four or five years of postsecondary education and all are licensed by the provincial and territorial departments of ministries of education.

Training

Pre-service training of teachers is available in every province and territory and largely undertaken by the universities. In the three northern territories, the colleges provide teacher training in cooperation with a university from one of the provinces. Re-design of teacher education programs is collaborative, involving the institutions, government, educational associations and professionals and, often, public consultations.

With an average annual tuition of $4,400 for an undergraduate degree at universities in Canada, students studying to become teachers face the same challenges as other students in terms of the cost of postsecondary education. Specific data on those graduating from faculties of education are not available but about half of university graduates in 2000 had debt of about $20,000.

Professional development for practicing teachers is shared among the departments or ministries of education, school boards, universities, teachers' associations and unions, and nongovernmental organizations with particular expertise.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment in the Northwest Territories included both pre-service and in-service education for teachers in its strategic plan for 2005-15 entitled *Building on Our Success*. The priority is to provide pre-employment and in-service professional development for educators and other school staff. Among the specific actions are

- identify key areas in which additional training is required to support the availability of staff
- work with education authorities and professional and employee representative organizations to design and implement pre-service training programs
- target improvement of the instructional skills for teachers and other staff that support student learning
- evaluate current in-service and professional development models and research alternatives
- maintain a teacher induction program for new teachers
- double the numbers of Aboriginal teachers, senior managers, and principals in the school system

With the overarching goal of improving the quality of public education in Nova Scotia, the government appointed a panel to review teacher education in the province. The panel looked at issues concerning the quality of teacher preparation, especially in regards to skill development in classroom management, program planning for students with special needs, differentiated instruction, diversity, conflict resolution, and year-long program planning. Teacher supply and demand, selection of candidates for the program, the student practicum, program length and delivery models, and communication and responsiveness to the changing needs of the classroom were all addressed in the *Report and Recommendations of the Review Panel on Teacher Education in Nova Scotia* released in December 2007. Of particular concern was the balance of graduates and hiring demands and how the various universities involved in teacher education respond to this.

According to the direction provided by the Quebec Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sport professional development is a joint venture that requires the participation of teachers, school principals, and the school commissions. Giving teachers a central role in determining their professional development needs respects the professional autonomy of teachers and promotes a culture of professional development within schools. Through the input of teaching staff, unique approaches have been developed, such as self-guided learning, training provided by colleagues, and participation in pedagogical productions.. In addition, the school commissions must prepare plans for ongoing professional development for their personnel which include training for intervention with students with special needs. The Ministry supports this by providing, on a regional basis, resources related among other things to the organization of training for teachers with special needs students.

In Ontario, over 85 per cent of all teachers participate in professional learning. Innovative leadership development programs have been delivered to school principals and web casts have been introduced so that educators can share their expertise with teachers and principals across Ontario. In 2005, Ontario introduced the New Teacher Induction Program as a full year of on-the-job training, mentoring, and assessment during teachers' first year on the job. The essential components include

- on the job training in areas such as classroom management, effective parent communication, and instructional strategies that address the learning and cultural needs of Aboriginal students, students at risk, special education students, and second-language learners
- mentoring for new teachers by experienced teachers
- orientation for all new teachers by the school and the school board

A study by the Ontario College of Teachers in 2007 revealed that the Induction Program was fully in place across the province and that new teachers reported that the support they are receiving is very helpful in the challenging early years in the profession.

In Yukon, the Department of Education, in conjunction with the Yukon Teachers' Association and the Retired Teachers' Association, uses both a mentoring and a collaborative approach for new teachers, giving priority to communities with high staff turnover, recognizing the difficulties sometimes involved in transition to these communities and the often overwhelming expectations placed on new teachers.

The Nunavut Teachers' Association has a Professional Improvement Committee that establishes all the policies and procedures dealing with professional improvement matters for its members. Funding is accessible to members for short-term assistance to complete certificate, non-certificate, and university courses. Each member is also entitled to five professional improvement days in an academic year.

The Department of Education in Prince Edward Island has recognized the new challenges facing teachers today, including students with literacy difficulties, students requiring special education services, new roles in career counselling, and classrooms with increasing cultural diversity and second language issues. To better fulfil the ensuing professional development needs, partnerships have been arranged between the University of Prince Edward Island and universities in two neighbouring provinces to provide appropriate courses and programs. Furthermore, the Department of Education, the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation, the University of Prince Edward Island, and the school boards have developed an Induction Program for beginning teachers, in which mentors are assigned to each new teacher and in-service training is provided to address first-year challenges. In 2008, the University of Prince Edward Island is offering a Master's of Education degree in Leadership and Learning with a focus on inclusive education, so that educators can learn various models, skills, and practices related to the education of students with differing needs.

One way in which the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation serves its members is through the provision of extensive resources to build professional development capacity and to directly respond to teachers' needs for information and support. Examples of the titles available are

Taking Your Place in the Professional Community: A Handbook for Beginning Teachers,
Transforming Professional Development, *Diversity in the Classroom Series* (seven titles),
and *Instructional Strategies Series* (18 titles). Other teacher federations and
ministries/departments of education offer similar access to books and other resources.

Technology often plays a central role in delivering professional training. The Newfoundland
and Labrador Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation prepares professional
development modules and resources for delivery via its multiple course delivery
mechanisms. In addition, the Department of Education partnered with the Newfoundland
and Labrador Teachers' Association and the province's university in the development and
delivery of professional development programs through a Virtual Teacher Centre — a Web-
based professional development centre for educators at all levels. As a result of this
partnership, educators have the option of participating in professional development activities
with colleagues from different schools and communities without the cost and time associated
with extensive travel.

In Manitoba, the *Strategic Technology-Assisted Professional Learning Environment*
(STAPLE) was introduced to expand the range of professional learning environments for
educators by researching, developing, and implementing integrated technology-assisted
professional learning models. STAPLE increases flexibility in accessing professional
learning opportunities, fosters reflection, improves mentoring and collaboration, offers
ongoing support, follow-up, and applications, and supports implementation of the curriculum
on a timely basis. So that teachers have the time to participate in the pilot, various
arrangements for release time and timetabling were adopted in different schools. The
STAPLE team received feedback on these methods to help define the scheduling and support
for teachers participating in on-line professional development. The pilot project was a
success and has now been extended to numerous disciplines and grade levels.

Recruitment

A 2001 study by Statistics Canada indicated that by 2006, there would be a surplus of
teachers in Canada, although the subject specialties and rural school challenges in
recruitment would continue. Several of the provinces and territories have undertaken studies
to look more closely at this phenomenon.

In 2003, Alberta Learning published the *Report of the Advisory Committee on Future
Teacher Supply and Demand in Alberta*. It was seen that Alberta would have a surplus of
teachers, with more graduates than teaching positions but that this surplus would not be
evenly distributed. By 2010, school superintendents predicted shortages in technology
education, human ecology, senior secondary school physics, chemistry, and pure and applied
mathematics, as well as French immersion. In addition, recruitment in northern Alberta,
especially in small, rural school divisions, was seen as a continuing challenge. In many other
areas, such as kindergarten teachers and elementary generalists, no recruitment difficulties
were anticipated. The factors that were most associated with hiring difficulties included the
number of qualified teachers with the required specialization, the characteristics of the

community in which the school is located, and the relative competitiveness of teacher salaries with industry salaries for individuals with specific specializations. The most effective strategies for attracting teachers were seen to be recruitment on university campuses, ensuring succession planning so that teachers in the jurisdiction can develop skills to fill the needs, and offering more attractive compensation programs. To retain teachers, professional development opportunities and induction and mentorship programs were considered the most important.

A 2003 report by the British Columbia Ministry of Education reached similar conclusions in reporting that there was not a general teacher shortage in BC; however, school districts were experiencing shortages and recruitment challenges in certain subjects and in some regions. Areas of shortage included industrial education, secondary school science and mathematics, French immersion, French, home economics, and elementary special education. Although much of the localized teacher shortage was due to retirements, teacher turnover was reported to be a serious issue in many rural communities.

The 2007 *Update Report on Teacher Supply and Demand* from Nova Scotia showed a significant growth in the number of teachers being certified each year. If this supply remained unchanged, there would be adequate supply to meet the overall demand; the concerns were an oversupply of teachers and the fact that the teacher availability is not evenly spread across the province. The potential shortages are in technology education, physics, physical education, fine arts, family studies, and French. Research concerning teacher recruitment in other parts of Canada was also included in the Nova Scotia study. The findings confirm the potential shortages in certain geographic regions, mainly rural and isolated, and in particular subject areas – the sciences, mathematics, French-language programming, French second language, and technology education.

In the Northwest Territories (NWT), one of the key teacher recruitment challenges is the recruitment of Aboriginal teachers. The goal of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is to have a teaching force representative of the overall population of the NWT, which is 50 per cent Aboriginal. In the school-aged population, 61 per cent are Aboriginal. In 2005, 14 per cent of the teaching staff was Aboriginal. In order to recruit Aboriginal teachers and serve the small communities, Aurora, the NWT College, began to offer its Teacher Education Program as a community-based program so that students could complete their teacher training closer to home. This was effective for impacting education in a single community or region over a relatively short period of time. After running this program for 10 years, Aurora College now provides the Teacher Education Program at three campuses.

Working Conditions

In 2004-05, the average level of remuneration for educators in public elementary and secondary schools in Canada stood at slightly less than $65,000, with Nunavut having the highest average level of remuneration at $107,000 reflecting of the high cost of living there. The average earnings of a full-time worker in Canada in 2004-05 were $48,000, about

$17,000 less than educators. This comparison does not make any allowances for educational requirements of the positions, levels of responsibilities, and other factors.

A 2005 pan-Canadian study by the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) revealed that, compared to 2001, teachers were working longer hours and the conditions under which they worked were making it increasingly difficult to maintain high quality learning environments for students. In addition to longer hours and higher workloads, over half of teachers reported that their class sizes had grown and that there had been an increase in the number of special-needs students in their classes in the past two years. The CTF expressed concern with the implications of these factors for the quality of children's learning conditions.

In the same year, the Ontario College of Teachers conducted its third annual survey of the profession to gauge teachers' assessments of the state of teaching and education in the province. Almost one-third of teachers reported that large class size was the biggest problem that confronted schools, while another 16 per cent stated that the integration of at-risk, immigrant, and special-needs students into classrooms was the biggest problem. The main problem cited by 14 per cent was student discipline and the same percentage listed lack of support staff.   Only one per cent chose teachers' salaries as the biggest problem.   In terms of initiatives most likely to improve student learning, teachers chose smaller classes, more literacy and numeracy programs, and increased assistance for at-risk, immigrant, and special-needs students.

A recent publication by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, *Teacher Working Conditions that Matter: Evidence for Change*, highlighted the fact the student success is directly dependent on how well teachers do their jobs. The study lists the conditions that make a difference:

- in the classroom – workload, class size, amount of paper work, and total work time
- in the school – sense of community, positive school atmosphere, appropriate resources and facilities, principal leadership style
- in the education system – appropriate professional development, a reasonable pace of change

In addition, the report indicated that teachers benefit from a significant degree of autonomy over classroom decisions, opportunities for teacher collaboration and small team work, adequate classroom preparation time, ongoing professional development, participation in school-level decisions, and a strategic approach to the demands for change that are made of teachers.

The ministries responsible for elementary and secondary education have been implementing funding and program initiatives to address these challenges. For example, the new vision for education in New Brunswick, *When Kids Come First*, contains a commitment to give educators the tools they need to innovate and lead. Among the specific actions are

- establish an Innovative Learning Fund that supports innovative teachers and school teams and encourages private sector and community participation
- create a Teachers' Virtual Resource Centre to provide new on-line opportunities for sharing best practices and professional development
- support new teaching ideas that challenge and energize gifted students
- develop a multi-year plan to create technology-enriched classrooms and invest in adaptive technologies to improve learning in diverse classrooms

An additional pan-Canadian factor in working conditions is the student-educator ratio. Between 1997-98 and 2004-05, the student-educator ratio in public elementary and secondary schools fell from 16.6 to 15.9. The general decline in the ratio is seen across all jurisdictions over this period. This signals the success of governments' strategies of investment in the reduction of class sizes, especially in the early grades.

A new approach to allocating teacher resources in Newfoundland and Labrador places the needs of children, teachers, and individual schools first in determining how teaching resources are distributed across the kindergarten through secondary school system. The March 2008 report *Education and Our Future: A Road Map to Innovation and Excellence* recommended an alternative to the old numeric formula for teacher allocation. The new system is based on the promise that regardless of where a student lives or how many students attend a particular school, all are entitled to equal access, quality education, and opportunities to learn. Focused on programming and teacher needs as well as reduced maximum class sizes from kindergarten to grade 9, teacher allocations are to be determined by the particular circumstances of individual classrooms and schools. The new teacher allocation model also includes a more generous allocation of specialist teachers, principals, assistant principals, and the creation of the instructional allocation officers to support student achievement, school leadership, and school development.

The Canadian Education Association 2007 survey, *Public Education in Canada: Facts, Trends and Attitudes*, measured public attitudes toward education. A significant finding was that Canadians in all regions share a high level of satisfaction with the jobs that teachers are doing in elementary and secondary schools and are consistently more satisfied with teachers' work than the school system in general. Overall, 70 per cent of Canadians agree that teachers are doing a good job.

The Role of the Education System in Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

It is well recognized in Canada that education is the foundation for the promotion of social cohesion and the employment success of individuals, as well the wealth of the nation in the knowledge-based globalized economy. Education can be a social equalizer that allows people to escape poverty and disadvantage. It is a basic tenet of all education systems in Canada that they are accessible and inclusive. Every child resident in one of the provinces or territories has the right to a free public education from the age of 5 or 6 until the age of 17 or 18 (the exact ages differ among the jurisdictions).

Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec have anti-poverty strategies in place that directly implicate education as a key component. The governments of Ontario and Nova Scotia are releasing anti-poverty strategies in 2008.

Newfoundland and Labrador issued *Reducing Poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador: Working towards a Solution* in 2005. Its comprehensive approach requires the participation of all orders of government, community-based groups, labour, education, and individuals. The paper underlined the reality that low levels of education are strongly related to low incomes and outlined initiatives in place and to be implemented that would encourage educational success for all. These included an emphasis on early childhood education, the improvement of graduation rates by enhanced services for students at risk, alternative courses and programs, and more support for families with older children still in the school system. In 2006, instructional grants to schools were increased to reduce education-related costs that parents were paying and eliminate school fees. Fees for school materials and participation in band and choir, consumable course materials, and for specific items required for particular classes such as recorders for music class have been eliminated. At the postsecondary level, tuition has been frozen and student financial assistance improved. The adult basic education curriculum and delivery methods were revised, preparatory programs for adult learners developed, and research undertaken to better understand the challenges they face.

In 2004, Quebec introduced *Reconciling Freedom and Social Justice*, the government *Action Plan to Combat Poverty and Reduce Social Exclusion*. Linked to this initiative, the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean Regional Committee for the Prevention of Early School Leaving was established. The Committee recognized the enormous economic impact, at the individual and regional level, of an elevated rate of school-leavers. Working with the widest spectrum of stakeholders – the youth themselves, their parents, teachers and the school systems, governments, unions, public health authorities, elected officials, and businesses – the Committee has been successful in reducing the number of school leavers and increasing the completion rates at all levels of education.

Nova Scotia has a Poverty Reduction Working Group that is collecting input on how to tackle poverty in Nova Scotia. Among its guiding principles are inclusion and diversity, equity and social and economic justice, and collaboration. Education is one of the partners seen as essential to the process. The Working Group is developing recommendations for poverty reduction and an implementation plan.

Many groups in society are more likely to suffer from poverty and social and economic exclusion. In Canada, this includes Aboriginal students, newly arrived immigrants, visible minorities, as well as those with special learning needs, and from lower income families. All the jurisdictions are working to reduce poverty and combat social exclusion, with the provision of education and training opportunities as a crucial strategy. Depending on the needs of the learners and the capacities of the jurisdictions, a comprehensive spectrum of programs, policies, and strategies is enacted to ensure that students from these groups have the same opportunities to learn and to graduate from all levels of education. These can include curriculum changes, assessment strategies, teacher professional development, specific funding programs, classroom integration strategies, integrated health and education

services, technological and distance delivery methods, student, family, and school financial support, community and parental involvement, school management approaches, and specialized course and program content.

Report Two in this document is focused on inclusive education and provides much more detail on the policies, experiences, and successes of the various jurisdictions in using education as a tool to combat poverty and social exclusion.

Conclusion

As education is the responsibility of the provinces and territories, the 13 education systems have a number of legal, policy, and priority similarities but each designs and delivers education that best responds to the needs of its populations. The priorities and issues in the report indicate the focus on providing the best possible education for every child – from early childhood through postsecondary education. The four themes in this report – access, early intervention, learner outcomes, and teacher training – are part of the ongoing education agendas across the country. Each jurisdiction has instituted responses to these and the other challenges of the education in the twenty-first century.

Report Two – Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future

Introduction

The guidelines for the preparation of this report define inclusive education as an approach that looks into how to transform education systems and other learning environments in order to respond to the diversity of learners. Quality education is therefore education that is inclusive as it aims at the full participation of all learners.

As stated in the introduction, the debates of the forty-eighth session of the International Conference on Education are organized around four sub-themes:

- approaches, scope, and content to broaden the understanding of the theory and the practice of inclusive education
- public policies to demonstrate the roles of governments in the development and implementation of policies on inclusive education
- systems, links, and transitions to create inclusive education systems to offer opportunities for life long learning
- learners' and teachers' support to foster a learning environment where teachers are equipped to meet the learners' diverse expectations and needs

Experiences, innovations, and best practices are to be used to illustrate how the Member States approach these key aspects of inclusive education.

In Canada, there is no federal department of education and no integrated national system of education. Within the federal system of shared power, Canada's Constitution Act of 1867 provides that "[I]n and for each province, the legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education."   In the 13 jurisdictions — 10 provinces and three territories — departments or ministries of education are responsible for the organization, delivery, and assessment of education at the elementary and secondary levels. The institutions in the postsecondary system have varying degrees of autonomy from provincial or territorial government control. In some jurisdictions, separate departments or ministries are responsible for elementary-secondary education and for postsecondary education and skills training. The schools for Registered Indian students living on reserves are funded by the federal government in accordance with the *Indian Act*.

Approaches, Scope, and Content

The guidelines for the preparation of this International Conference on Education report specify the four themes as stated above that will also guide the discussion at the conference. These themes move from the broadest examination of inclusive education at the legislative level to the much more specific look at unique programs and classroom approaches. In this first section, the spotlight is on the vision of inclusive education, the legal framework that supports this vision at the federal and provincial/territorial levels, and the challenges faced in

ensuring educational and social inclusion. A brief demographic profile of Canada provides a necessary context for the consideration of inclusive education in a pluralistic society.

The Vision

The vision of inclusive education can be said to be conceptualized in two complementary ways in the provinces and territories in Canada. The first is within the framework of human rights legislation and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* which provide a solid legal framework to the principle that all individuals should have equal opportunities. Within provincial and territorial legislation and practice, inclusive education is also understood as the special programs, services, funding, and policies that are put in place to support those students who may be the most vulnerable or who would benefit from additional attention and approaches.

The Legal Framework

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments in Canada have established a solid legal framework that integrates a collection of laws and policies that support inclusion. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* clearly states that "[e]very individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability". It further ensures that this guarantee of rights "does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability".

The *Citizenship Act* provides that all Canadians, whether by birth or by choice, are entitled to the same rights, powers, and privileges and are subject to the same obligations, duties, and liabilities.

The *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* provides that the "Government of Canada recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada".

The *Canadian Human Rights Act* was put in place to give effect to the principle that all individuals should have equal opportunities. In this Act, discrimination is prohibited on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability, and conviction for which a pardon has been granted. In defining the discriminatory practices in the provision of goods, services, facilities, or accommodation, the *Act* states that it is illegal to deny, or deny access to, any such good, service, facility, or accommodation to any individual or to differentiate adversely in relation to any individual. Access to education is included in this prohibition.

In a 2003 visit to Canada, the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Discrimination praised Canadians for embracing diversity and for having strong mechanisms to protect citizens from discrimination. He encouraged Canada to do more, however, through an action plan to combat racism. In 2005, the Government of Canada released *A Canada for All: Canada's Action Plan against Racism.* The Plan has six key priorities:

- assisting victims and groups vulnerable to racism and related forms of discrimination
- developing forward-looking approaches to promote diversity and combat racism
- strengthening the role of civil society
- strengthening regional and international cooperation
- educating children and youth on diversity and anti-racism
- countering hate and bias

The government of Canada is working with civil society, employers, associations, and the justice system to deliver results reported on in the *Annual Report on the Operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act*.

Every jurisdiction has a Human Rights Commission or Fair Practices Office, with its own legislation and procedures to combat exclusion. For example in Prince Edward Island, the *Human Rights Act* defines the grounds of discrimination as being age, colour, race, ethnic or national origin, criminal conviction, having laid a complaint or given evidence/assistance under the *Human Rights Act*, political belief, sexual orientation, association, creed or religion, family and marital status, physical and mental disability including addiction, sex including sexual harassment and pregnancy, and source of income. The protected areas include services and facilities available to the public, such as attending school.

Quebec's *Charte des droits et libertés de la personne* (*Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*) recognizes not only the rights of all those living in Quebec, but also explicitly refers to the rights of children and adolescents, including the right to education. The Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (Commission for Human Rights and Youth Protection) is also responsible for the *Loi sur la protection de la jeunesse (Youth Protection Act)* and the *Loi sur le système de justice pénale pour les adolescents (Youth Criminal Justice Act)*, which guarantee that youth who are in need of protection or accused of committing a crime are entitled to adequate educational, health, and social services.

The Web site for the Human Rights Research and Education Centre provides links to all of the Human Rights Commissions in Canada, as well as databases and publications. The Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies (CASHRA) is the national association of the government agencies in Canada charged with administering provincial and territorial human right legislation. CASHRA's goals include fostering collaboration among its members and serving as a national voice on human right issues of common concern. The 2008 CASHRA National Forum has as its theme "defining a right based framework:

advancing inclusion of students with disabilities", examined in the context of human rights law. Both the Canadian Education Association and the Canadian Teachers' Federation are involved in this event.

The Frameworks in Education

The education act or school act in each jurisdiction specifies who is entitles to attend school. Beyond that many jurisdictions have clauses in or dedicated legislation and directives that state a more specific context for inclusive education.

In March 2006, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment in the Northwest Territories (NWT) issued a *Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling*. The basic principle underlying this Directive is that all children are unique and capable and all have a fundamental right to participate in education programs in the regular classroom. The NWT respects the view of the *World Declaration on Education for All* that "every person ... shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs". The vision of inclusive schooling comprises

- a belief that all children belong and every child can make a valued contribution
- an understanding that every child is unique, all children can learn and with support, teacher can teach all students
- a commitment to respect diversity and provide all children with equal access to education opportunities
- inclusive education is not a synonym for special education or only about disabilities

The principles reflected in the *Education Act* for Nunavut include the statement that public education should be inclusive such that those who require additional support and resources are provided with them and that the education system should be based on Inuit societal values and the principles and concepts of Inuit Quajimajatuqangit. Among these concepts are several that reinforce inclusive education:

- Inuuqatigiitsiarniq – respecting others, relationships and caring for people
- Tunnganarniq – fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming and inclusive
- Pijitsirniq – serving and providing for family or community or both
- Aajiiqatigiinniq – decision making through discussion and consensus

The clause referring specifically to inclusive education in Nunavut reiterates that a student is entitled to such reasonable necessary adjustments to the education program and to such reasonable necessary support as are required to meet his or her learning needs and to achieve appropriate curriculum outcomes.

Attention is paid to the issue of the diversity and ensuring that the education provided is fair and equitable. The document, *Diversity in B.C. Schools: A Framework*, revised in 2004, helps the British Columbia school boards and schools meet their obligations under the

legislation that addresses human rights and discrimination. The *Framework* provides guidelines for establishing policies, strategies, and initiatives to honour diversity and promote human rights, prevent discrimination, harassment and violence, and respond to incidents of discrimination, harassment, or violence as they occur. The conditions that the school system works to create are

- equitable access to and equitable participation in quality education for all students
- school cultures that value diversity and respond to the diverse social and cultural needs of the communities they serve
- school cultures that promote understanding of others and respect for all
- learning and working environments that are safe and welcoming, free from discrimination, harassment, and violence
- decision-making processes that give a voice to all the members of the school community
- policies and practices that promote fair and equitable treatment

The Challenges

In the Canadian context, a number of groups are the most at risk of exclusion:

- Aboriginal students
- students with physical, emotional, mental and learning challenges
- newly arrived immigrant students
- visible minority students
- students from lower socio-economic groups

Serving this wide range of students is the primary challenge. The scope of the needs and the limitations of the funding available to meet them limit the resources and services that can be supplied. Each government devotes a considerable percentage of its education budget, and often funds from other departments as well, to providing the best possible educational access and achievement opportunities but the demands often outstrip the available finances.

As the examples provided in this report indicate, educators and administrators are creative and dedicated in determining optimal ways to support the principles and practice of inclusive education. However, with a variety of students needing special attention, curriculum, assessment, tutoring, parental and community support – each in this or her individual way – it is not possible that each can be completely satisfied. Teachers find themselves with diverse classrooms including learners with weak skills in the language of the classroom, with special learning needs, on the cusp of dropping out, without the cultural understanding of how classrooms and schools operate, and other challenges. The teachers can be pushed and pulled in a multitude of directions. Although professional development, teaching aides, and other supports are offered, the inclusive classroom presents a more complex teaching and learning environment. The Canadian Teachers' Federation has expressed a concern that teachers are not able to spend enough time with the students who do not require special attention. Teachers have also stated that inclusive classrooms are one of the greatest challenges they face.

An additional challenge is the establishment of limits to the principle of inclusion so that one or two children do not hinder the learning of others due to their specific requirements. Parents are anxious that their children be part of the regular classroom settings and schools, school boards, and governments are often hard-pressed to meet these requests.

The rate of educational change and the resulting inclusion of new materials and new goals in the curriculum require considerable effort on the part of the departments of education, the teachers, and the administrators. New curriculum that reflects wider perspectives and the experiences of different people, assessment strategies that comprise special learning capacities and new measurement techniques, and shared responsibility with parents and community groups for education all are recognized as enhancements to the education systems. However, they all require time and attention – often in short supply in the busy life of schools and classrooms.

The following pages provide examples of some of the policies, programs, and systems that the provinces and territories have adopted to further the goal of inclusive education. It is important to recall that this is only a small sample of the multitude of efforts across the country – for every example included, there are many, many more initiatives underway.

A Demographic Overview

A brief look at the population of Canada provides some context for the information on inclusive education.

Canada is a multicultural and multiethnic country where immigration plays a dominant role in demographic growth. The 2006 Census enumerated over six million foreign-born people in Canada – 19.8 per cent of the population. Between 2001 and 2006, Canada's foreign-born population increased by 13.6 per cent, four times higher than the growth rate for the Canadian-born population in that same period. Recent immigrants born in Asia (including the Middle East) made up the largest portion (58.3 per cent) of newcomers to Canada; Europe was the source of the second largest group at 16 per cent; Central and South America and the Caribbean accounted for just over 10 per cent; and Africa for the same percentage. A majority of the foreign-born population reported a mother-tongue other than French or English.

Canadians reported more than 200 languages in response to the 2006 census question on mother tongue. The list includes languages that have long been associated with immigration to Canada, such as German, Italian, Ukrainian, Dutch, and Polish. However, between 2001 and 2006, language groups from Asia and the Middle East recorded the highest increases, including the Chinese languages, Punjabi, Arabic, Urdu, Tagalog, and Tamil. In 2006, nearly 20 per cent of the population were allophones, meaning that they reported mother tongues other than Canada's two official languages of French and English. Just over one-fifth of the population speak French most of the time at home; while two-thirds of the population speaks English most often at home.

According to the 2006 census, a total of 1,172,790 people identified themselves as a member of at least one of the three Aboriginal groups – North American Indians or First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, representing almost 4 per cent of the population. Of particular significance for education, almost half of the Aboriginal population consists of children and youth aged 24 and under, compared with 31 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population. The census recorded nearly 60 different Aboriginal languages spoken by First Nations peoples in Canada.

Each wave of immigration to Canada has increased the ethnocultural diversity of the nation's population. In fact, more than 200 different ethnic origins were reported in the 2006 census. In contrast, just about 25 different ethnic groups were recorded in Canada in the 1901 census. Ethnic origin refers to the ethnic or cultural origins of the respondent's ancestors. The most frequently reported origins in 2006, either alone or with other origins, were Canadian, English, Scottish, Irish, German, Italian, Chinese, North American Indian, and Ukrainian. Nearly seventy per cent of immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006 settled in three census metropolitan areas – Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal.

More than five million people in Canada identified themselves as members of visible minority groups, accounting for 16.2 per cent of the population overall. Visible minorities are defined as persons, other than Aboriginal persons, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. It is important to note that many visible minorities have been part of Canadian society for many generations. The visible minority population had grown steadily over the past 25 years – in 1981, there were an estimated 1.1 million visible minorities representing about 4.7 per cent of the population. The growth of the visible minority population was due largely to the increasing number of recent immigrants from non-European countries. The largest visible minority groups are South Asians and Chinese, accounting for about 45 per cent of the visible minority population. The third largest visible minority group was Black, followed by Filipinos, Latin Americans, Arabs, Southeast Asians, West Asians, Koreans, and Japanese.

In 2006, nearly 25 million people, or more than four-fifths of Canadians, were living in urban areas; 45 per cent of the population lives in six metropolitan areas.

It is within this context of a pluralistic, urban society that Canadian educators, government officials, nongovernmental organizations, and civil society tackle the ongoing challenges of inclusive education.

Public Policies

The second of the major themes outlined for reporting on and the conference discussion of inclusive education highlights the dimensions of exclusion, with questions of the indicators and data used to inform policy development and decision making. In the Canadian context, the groups considered most vulnerable to exclusion are Aboriginal students, students with physical, emotional, mental and learning challenges, newly arrived immigrant students, visible minority students, and students from lower socio-economic groups. The educational

reforms that have been put in place in the jurisdictions are described – the broad scope, long-term programs that encompass multiple levels of education and numerous aspects of the systems. The majority of these reforms involve public consultation and/or the direct involvement of the communities directly affected and their results influence curriculum, delivery methods, management and educational leadership, issues of language and culture, assessment and accountability, and policy.

Dimensions of Exclusion

As evidenced above with the numbers relating the very high percentage of children in Canada who are attending school, the challenge is not inclusion in the system as much as exclusion from successful completion of secondary school and transition to the work force and/or postsecondary education. From early childhood education through university graduation, the attention of elected officials and educators is on providing equal access to quality education.

Each jurisdiction collects data on its student populations, with additional attention to its more vulnerable groups. A few examples of pan-Canadian and provincial data on some of the groups noted above are provided to demonstrate some aspects of the dimension of exclusion from academic success.

Historical discrimination against First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and policies of assimilation and forced attendance at residential schools have left a deep legacy of mistrust, resentment, and a population that continues to struggle with academic achievement. Provinces and territories have worked with First nations, Métis, and Inuit communities to develop innovative solutions and programs and some progress has been made. However, the educational attainment of Aboriginal students remains one of the greatest challenges in education across Canada.

A recent study by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, *Aboriginal Peoples and Postsecondary Education in Canada*, provided a statistical overview of the highest level of schooling achieved by Aboriginal people and by the total population aged 15 and older, based on the 2001 census.

Table One Highest Level of Schooling – 15 and older	Less than secondary school	Secondary school graduation	Some PSE No certificate	Non-university postsecondary education	University postsecondary education
Total Population 2001	31%	14%	11%	28%	15%
Aboriginal Population 2001	48%	10%	13%	25%	4%

The statistics concerning highest level of education achieved were also provided for those aged 20 to 24.

Table Two Highest Level of Schooling – 20-24	Less than secondary school	Secondary school graduation	Some PSE No certificate	Non-university postsecondary education	University postsecondary education
Total Population 2001	16%	15%	29%	28%	11%
Aboriginal Population 2001	43%	16%	21%	17%	2%

The key message of these numbers is that, in both age groups, a very high percentage of Aboriginal students are not completing secondary school, almost half of the population over 15 years of age and over 40 per cent of those aged between 20 and 24. On the more positive side, the percentage of the Aboriginal population over 15 with secondary school completion as their highest level of education is very close to that of the total population and it is higher for those aged between 20 and 24. For non-university postsecondary education, which includes technical schools, colleges, and trade schools, the percentages are similar for those in the total population and the Aboriginal populations over 15 years of age, but lower for Aboriginals in the 20-24 age group. University completion rates are low for both age groups of Aboriginal students.

International, pan-Canadian, and provincial tests have looked at the educational achievement levels of children of immigrants. The 17 country OECD 2003 Programme for International Student Assessment analyzed performance in mathematics by status – differentiating between native-born populations for all 17 participating countries in the OECD study, compared to that of second-generation and first-generation immigrants, all at 15 years of age.

Table 3 – Performance in Mathematics – Aged 15	Native-born	Second-generation Immigrants	First-generation Immigrants
	Mean Score	Mean Score	Mean Score
Canada	537	543	530
Average for 17 OECD countries	523	483	475

These scores indicate that second-generation students are out-performing native-born students and first-generation immigrants are performing at almost the same level, and that all three groups are out-performing the average for the 17 OECD countries in the study.

In an October 2004 report, Statistics Canada reported on the performance of children of immigrants in schools. Although Canadian-born children of immigrants were more likely to start school with less-developed reading, writing, and mathematics skills than their classmates with Canadian-born parents, the gap between the two groups disappeared before the end of elementary school. Statistics Canada attributed this positive outcome to the efforts of school communities, the children, and their parents.

Educational Reforms

Over the past decade, each of the provinces and territories has been revising its educational programs to respond to new needs for inclusion in education and in society. Some of the

reforms addressed the whole of the education system, while others were more specifically focused on groups more likely to suffer from exclusion.

The 2007 vision for education in New Brunswick, *When Kids Come First*, demonstrates a clear commitment to inclusive education as demonstrated in its three goals – that every child will arrive at kindergarten ready to learn, will leave grade 5 having mastered the tools to learn of reading, writing and numeracy, and will graduate from secondary school having had the opportunity to discover personal strengths and what he or she loves doing. In parallel to commitments to early childhood education and literacy, numeracy, and science learning, the Department of Education also made specific commitments to inclusive education. The clarification, definition, and promotion of the goals of inclusive education, minimizing class composition issues, determining core services, reviewing the funding formula, and specific efforts regarding autism and learning disabilities are among the many targets that have been established.

The North West Territories (NWT) Department of Education, Culture and Employment's *Strategic Plan for 2005-15* outlines priorities and actions to address their particular educational challenges, including a graduation rate of about 45 per cent. By focusing on language and culture, especially concerning Aboriginal language curriculum and resources, increasing the availability of student support, and expanding course offerings in schools, the NWT aims to make the school system more inclusive in that all students are given a chance to succeed. Determining children's needs and addressing them at an early age and throughout their educational careers, conducting Student Needs Assessments, implementing the priority areas arising from these assessments, and completing a review of small secondary schools with the goal of defining best approaches to programming and funding are all directed at better serving the groups who are vulnerable to exclusion.

In Saskatchewan, School^{PLUS} officially became a policy direction of government when *Securing Saskatchewan's Future, Ensuring the Well Being and Educational Success of Saskatchewan's Children and Youth: Provincial Response - Role of the School Task Force Final Report*, was released in February 2002. It is a province-wide initiative led by Ministry of Education and the provincial education system that promotes learning success and well-being for every child and young person. It envisions a province where every school is actively improving student outcomes through the delivery of a strong learning program and serving as a centre for social, health and other services for children and their families. School^{PLUS} is a broad-based, long-term change based on principles of shared responsibility, holistic approaches, equity and excellence, accountability, and continuous improvement and sustainability. It is built on a foundation of effective practices. School^{PLUS} schools share a number of characteristics; they are

- are welcoming, caring and respectful
- actively engage youth, families and communities
- focus on providing every student with access to high quality learning opportunities,
- reaching out to those who have left the school system

- are centres of integrated supports for children, youth and families to strengthen both educational success and well-being
- support effective transitions into and through the education system, and to post-secondary education and the labour market
- use resources available to them such as enhanced technology and e-learning

The Education Reform Project in Yukon involved the Yukon Government and the Council of Yukon First Nations in a review that addressed the gap between First Nations and non-First Nations student outcomes, defined the essential characteristics of an educational system that meets the needs of all and ensures that students can participate successfully in work, postsecondary education, training, and lifelong learning, and worked to increase the participation of First Nations in schools and in the education decision-making processes. Through extensive consultations, research, and reviews, the Education Reform Project team identified four areas that are essential to meet these goals:

- a workable and inclusive model of public school governance
- the decentralization of decision making and the empowerment of school councils and communities
- a strategy to address Aboriginal language revitalization and retention initiatives to address the social and community aspects of Yukoners' educational needs
- initiatives to address the social and community aspects of Yukoners' educational needs

The recommendations in the Yukon report reflect this wide-ranging approach to inclusive education as they relate to:

- the context for education and its governance and curriculum
- First Nations in terms of languages, students, administrators, and rural to urban transition
- community issues such as literacy, early childhood education, and substance abuse
- support for teachers and administrators including leadership, evaluation, professional development, research, and teaching social values
- support for students including nutrition, technology, and program choice
- programming such as apprenticeship and trades and experiential education

The goal of the long-term education reform in Quebec is the promotion of success for all students. Begun in 2000, the reform process was put in place to increase the graduation rate and to revise the main programs of study which had not been thoroughly reviewed in 25 years. .   At this same time, the policy concerning educational integration was also reviewed to support educators in creating learning conditions that encourage the success of students with special learning needs. In the same spirit, the most recent plan of action for the Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports, launched in June 2008, highlighted 21 measures to support students with disabilities and those at risk of not succeeding. In addition, in order to make learning more stimulating and more applicable to real life, new education paths such as applied general education and employment –oriented training have been introduced. Recent

improvements have also focused on the facilitation of communication of students' results to parents through more easily understood report cards and better teaching of French in elementary and secondary schools. A steering committee made up of the government officials, teachers, parents, school administrators, and representatives of school boards, private schools, and universities, tracks the implementation of the changes and reports to the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport with recommendations for improvements. It also develops permanent mechanisms to assess and monitor and make adjustments.

In 2003, the Ontario government introduced its strategy, *Student Success/Learning to 18*, with the goal of increasing secondary school graduation and engaging youth in structured learning until the age of 18 or graduation. This strategy is motivated by a belief that every student deserves a good outcome from his or her education, that the outcome should be the best fit possible for each student's potential, willingness, and capacity for further learning, and that all students should have a core of common knowledge, skills, and values. The Student Success Strategy was introduced in three phases, beginning with leadership capacity at the school board level, then leadership at the school level, and the third phase of new and varied learning opportunities for students.

The centrepiece of the third phase of the Ontario strategy was the establishment of a graduation rate target of 85 per cent. To reach this, several student success strategies were implemented:

- Revised diploma requirements to include experiential learning opportunities as possible compulsory credits
- an innovative method of credit recovery
- new programs were added including dual credits for secondary school and college or apprenticeship training, and Specialist High Skill Majors which enable students to build a foundation of sector-focussed knowledge and skills to suit their interests while meeting diploma requirements
- Student Success Leaders, Teachers, and Teams were introduced in secondary schools, and professional development was implemented to facilitate transitions planning between elementary and secondary school.

Accompanying this was an increased focus on tracking students and their performance through the system – attention which resulted in better understanding of some of the sub-populations such as the lowest performing students and schools, special-needs students, and ethno-racial-cultural groups. Various reforms that respond to the needs of these groups have been integrated into the education system, including an Aboriginal framework, initiatives for English language learners, and urban and rural school projects for potential dropouts.

The *Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy* recognized that adult learning must be inclusive in its provision of literacy, upgrading, adult basic education, and certifiable courses and programs that supply individuals with the knowledge and skills they need to move into more skilled areas of the workforce. The strategy states that actions undertaken by the government to combat poverty and social exclusion can only have lasting effects if the skills of the

population – especially the skills of those with the least training – are improved. The goals and objectives of the strategy clearly reflect a very broad understanding of inclusive education and the efforts that are necessary to ensure that those most vulnerable to exclusion are provided with appropriate resources and programs. For example, under the goal of engaging the adult learner, the objectives emphasize the need to ensure that Inuit languages are the core of adult learning, to develop programs that link traditional lifestyles and skills with income earning activities, and to restructure vocational, apprenticeship and trades programming and promote them as viable career options. The promotion of learner success involves the inclusion of communities in planning and development, the reduction of systemic barriers, and the provision of improved financial and resource support for student excellence. Other goals focus on accessibility and quality.

The Alberta Commission on Learning reported in 2003 with 95 recommendations that covered all aspects of the education system – learning readiness, school improvements, inclusive education, student achievement, technology environments, teachers and school leaders, and governance. Since then, the government has accepted and acted on 87 of the recommendations, including all of those related to ensuring success for every child. The education of First Nations and Métis students was the focus of the inclusive education recommendations, as well as special-needs, gifted, and second-language students. The strategies adopted include parental roles in First Nations schools, early identification of Aboriginal students at risk, school governance models, Aboriginal language and cultural programs, and Aboriginal involvement in the development of curriculum and learning resources. For special-needs students, the changes included the expansion of early assessment and intervention, training for teaching assistants, and providing supports for the development and implementation of individual program plans.

Aboriginal educational achievement has been highlighted as one of the priorities for all educational jurisdictions. The British Columbia (BC) strategy includes the development of Aboriginal content for the kindergarten to grade 12 curricula and the negotiation of Aboriginal education enhancement agreements. As of March 2008, thirty-six school districts has signed agreements, aimed at building a new relationship with First Nations and closing the gap in education and economic opportunities.   The goals of the agreement signed in March 2008 with the Comox Valley school district serves as an example of the content:

- increase the involvement of Aboriginal families, community, and elders
- expand early intervention services, including all-day Aboriginal kindergarten programs
- increase the number of Aboriginal administrators, teachers, and support staff within the school district
- enhance opportunities for Aboriginal students for leadership programs and work experience within Aboriginal agencies

In addition, the BC First Nations and the governments of BC and Canada negotiated the *First Nations Jurisdiction over Education Act*, which became law in 2006. The negotiations began with the elementary and secondary system and so the initial phase is the jurisdiction over on-

reserve, elementary and secondary First Nations schools. The next phases will focus on early childhood development and then the postsecondary system.

The Manitoba *K-S4 Education Agenda for Student Success, 2002-2006* provided priorities for education in Manitoba, with the first priority being improving outcomes for all learners and especially for those who are less successful. One of the initiatives of the Manitoba Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth addressed the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse students and communities. Consultations were held from 2003 to 2005, resulting in *Belonging, Learning and Growing: Kindergarten to Grade 12 Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity*. The Action Plan covers 2006-08, with diversity and equity priorities in the renewal of provincial policies, launching of an informational campaign, development or renewal of curriculum for Aboriginal and international languages, and the enhancement of safe school initiatives including the integration of anti-racism and anti-bias elements.

In July 2007, the Nova Scotia *Minister's Review of Services for Students with Special Needs: Review Committee Report and Recommendations* was submitted.   The review committee positioned its role as a review of the status of inclusive schooling in Nova Scotia, with inclusion defined as an attitude and value system that promotes the basic right of all students to receive appropriate and quality educational programming and services in the company of their peers.   Within the geographic, demographic, and fiscal realities of the province, the review committee findings and recommendations related to building the capacity of public schools to reach the goals of inclusive schooling. In December 2007, the Minister of Education responded to the 31 recommendations, with commitments to:

- update the Special Education Policy
- develop a learning disabilities strategy
- identify additional programming options, materials, and resources to support the teaching of life skills for students with special needs
- implement integrated services schools in cooperation with the Child and Youth Social Policy Committee
- continue to fund priority pilot projects in areas such as supporting students with behavioural needs and effective transitioning for students with special needs
- work closely with boards to identify ongoing professional development opportunities focused on special education and/or inclusive schooling as priority areas

The Prince Edward Island Department of Education issued a *Minister's Directive on Special Education* in 2001. The Directive makes reference to the provision of a continuum of support, which is a range of programs, settings, materials, and services of additional curriculum, adaptations, or modifications, or changes in teaching methodology and/or evaluation and/or support from school staff that accommodate various levels of support within public schools for students with assessed special education needs. It also specified that inclusionary practice is the values system which holds that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in their education. The practice of inclusion transcends the idea of physical location, and incorporates basic values that promote participation, friendship, and belonging.

The 2005 *Student Achievement Action Plan* in Prince Edward Island recommended that the provincial government lead the way in identifying children with learning disabilities as well as those who may be at risk academically and socially. A committee of representatives from the Departments of Education, Health, Early Childhood, and Social Services and Seniors, the Office of the Attorney General, school boards, the Literacy Alliance, and Learning Disabilities PEI was given the task of developing a strategy to address the needs of individuals with learning disabilities from birth through adulthood. The *Learning Disabilities Strategy* was accepted by government in February 2008. The strategy delivery model consists of universal screenings, a systematic approach to intervention with a continuum of options, and ongoing progress evaluations. It also focuses on the human resources required for implementation.

In December 2007, the Minister of Education in Newfoundland and Labrador announced substantive and immediate changes to improve the delivery of special education programming in the elementary and secondary school system. The changes were based on the recommendations of the *Focusing on Students – The ISSP and Pathways Commission Report* which looked at the workload, the volume of paperwork, and the roles of teachers, parents, and administrators in the model of special education. The ISSP is the Individual Support Services Planning Process for each child seen as being at risk and Pathways provides the framework for an ISSP team to describe and implement the accommodations, curriculum modifications, additional programming, and supports the individual student requires. Key actions stemming from the report include a reduction in the amount of administrative work required of teachers, the development of alternate courses and curriculum, reviewing the roles of educational psychologists and guidance counsellors, and increasing training and professional development in the application of the models.

The Centrale des syndicats du Québec, which represents some 145,000 members including about 100,000 educational system personnel, sent a submission to the Culture Commission consultation on the document *Towards a Government Policy on Combating Racism and Discrimination*.   They focused on the role that education can play in making a number of comments to the Commission:

- request that the government support more fully the schools in Quebec in their efforts in intercultural education and support a wider participation of parents from various cultural communities in the life of the schools
- recommend that the Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports, along with the Commission for Human rights and Youth protection, institute a policy that clarifies the notion of reasonable accommodation

Systems, Links, and Transitions

The third section focuses more closely on specific programs that are designed to address the needs of one or more of the groups that receive special attention to encourage their educational inclusion and success. A lengthy list of facilitators of inclusive education is

followed by descriptions of programs, services and supports for Aboriginal, special needs students and other vulnerable groups.

Facilitators of Inclusive Education

The facilitators of inclusive education are found throughout this paper as the legislation, policies, reforms, programs, funding initiatives, and teaching and learning innovations of the jurisdictions are recounted. Among the actions that facilitate inclusive education in Canada are

- policies and legislation that specify the underlying legal and value systems
- educational reforms that address the entire system in applying the principles of inclusive education
- teacher support and training
- adequate funding for supports and services
- safe and caring schools
- inclusive environments in schools and classrooms
- policy and practice that are based in research of the phenomenon of exclusion and the populations most likely to experience it
- financial support for postsecondary students and those in adult education programs
- collection and analysis of data relevant to inclusive education and student achievement and access
- support for teacher and school innovation
- sharing of best practices across schools boards, jurisdictions, and on a pan-Canadian basis
- involvement of parents and communities in the design and delivery of education
- alternative programs and achievement measures
- specific programs to match the needs and capacities of individual learners
- comprehensive services that involve education, health, social services, income support, community groups, and other appropriate partners
- attraction and retention strategies for teaching staff in postsecondary education
- curriculum that respects and reflects a diversity of experience, cultures and values
- programs of early intervention that support learning for the child and the family
- resources, equipment, technology, and other supports for teachers and students
- resources for parents and caregivers so that they can support their children's education
- programs that address the needs of students who are at risk of dropping out or failing their programs
- attention to crucial points of education such as the transition from elementary to secondary school and from secondary school to the work force and/or postsecondary education

The policies and practices of inclusive education are integrated into every aspect of educational thinking and planning.

Measures to Make the Systems More Inclusive

The preceding sections have detailed the legislative, policy, and system wide reforms that are integral to the provision of inclusive education. In this section of the paper, key programs and funding initiatives are highlighted. Some of these programs relate to a specific group more vulnerable to exclusion. In Canada, Aboriginal education has been established as a priority by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and every jurisdiction has policies and resources in place to foster academic achievement of Aboriginal students. Special-needs students, newly arrived immigrants, and visible minorities also benefit from special programs. Grants for schools and teachers encourage innovation in reaching vulnerable students and government programs provide financial support to postsecondary and adult learners, especially those from lower-income families.

For the government of Saskatchewan, First Nations and Métis education is a priority as Saskatchewan is the province with the second highest proportion of First Nations and Métis population, at almost 15 per cent. By 2016, approximately 45 per cent of the children entering kindergarten will be of First Nations or Métis ancestry. The government frames its actions within a moral imperative to significantly improve learning outcomes; an economic imperative to bring more First Nations and Métis peoples into the labour market; and a historical imperative to respect treaty obligations. Within Saskatchewan Learning, the goals outlined in the *Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee Action Plan* include:

- All students achieve well-being and learning success.
- Cultural identity and diversity are affirmed in the learning process.
- Teaching and learning are guided by Indigenous knowledge, research, and best practices
- Learning environments foster respect of self and others.
- Every school is a part of a larger learning community.
- The leadership of the provincial education system is shared through co-management and co-governance.

The Advisory Committee makes recommendations to the Minister of Education for change at the school level. Their areas of focus have been cultural affirmation and school climate, shared decision making, core curriculum implementation and ongoing renewal, and lifelong learning. Aboriginal content has been introduced throughout the Saskatchewan curriculum for the benefit of all students.

In 2007, the Ontario government's Ontario Aboriginal Education Strategy was launched with the release of the *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework*, which serves as the foundation for delivering quality education to all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students in Ontario. The framework included plans to:

- improve literacy and numeracy skills
- increase the number of Aboriginal staff working in school boards and schools
- encourage more parents to get involved in their children's education

- further integrate Aboriginal content and perspectives throughout the Ontario curriculum to increase knowledge and awareness among all students

The government is investing to support capacity-building efforts within school boards and build partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organizations. The government has also funded Aboriginal student-focused student success projects, Alternative Secondary School programs in Native Friendship Centres, and teacher training on Aboriginal perspectives in the revised elementary and secondary curriculum. In addition, Ontario provides targeted funding to school boards to support Native Language and Native Studies and programs that assist Native students.
Under the Reaching Higher Plan for Postsecondary Education announced in 2005, the government has committed to providing funding to support programs and initiatives at colleges to improve access to and success in postsecondary education for Aboriginal learners. Focus has been placed on programs to enhance academic achievement and targeted Aboriginal programming in such fields as health, human resources, and teacher education.

In the budget for 2007-08, the government of Yukon has substantively increased its support for First Nations Education. Over 25 per cent of the population of Yukon is Aboriginal. The new funding supports the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program, Aboriginal language teachers in Yukon schools, First Nations curriculum and resources, cultural enhancement funding for schools, First Nations Elders in the Schools programs, First Nation orientation for teachers, and support for the language centre and the education support staff of the Council of Yukon First Nations.

In the Northwest Territories (NWT), with slightly more than 50 per cent of the population made up of Aboriginal peoples, parents have an expectation that schools will celebrate and support the cultural heritage of Aboriginal students as well as enhance their language skills. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment has developed Aboriginal language curriculum and the *Aboriginal Language and Culture-based Education Directive* to broaden the understanding of Aboriginal cultures of the NWT. The majority of the communities in the NWT offer Aboriginal language programs. The emphasis is on oral language instruction in the early grades, with reading and writing being introduced in grades 4 to 6. Aboriginal cultures are integrated into school programs through the curriculum and through components of courses in Outdoor Education, Northern Studies, and Career and Technology Studies.

Inclusion of special-needs students in regular classrooms is, to varying degrees, part of the educational policy in every jurisdiction in Canada, along with provision for support of their needs and capabilities. The Alberta government implemented Student Health (formerly known as the Student Health Initiative) in 1999. Student Health is a province-wide joint endeavour of Alberta Education, Health and Wellness, and Children's Services. These provincial government partners work collaboratively to support local partnerships to strengthen the province's collective capacity to assist students registered in school programs who have special health needs, including physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, neurological disorders, sensory impairments, medical conditions, and/or emotional and behavioural disabilities. Through the Student Health initiative, school authorities, regional health authorities, child and family service authorities, and other stakeholders are better able

to more effectively support these students and enable them to be successful in the school system. They offer such services as occupational, physical, respiratory or speech language therapy, nursing services, audiology, and emotional and behavioural services at school. Students, teachers, and parents have seen the benefits of this integrated system with its enhanced funding and focus on innovative delivery of services to students learning and living across the province.

In Yukon, students with special needs are educated, as far as is practicable, in the least restrictive and most enabling environment. In practice, this means that these students are educated in the regular classrooms with appropriate program modifications to meet their needs. The Department of Education provides leadership and support through policy development, teacher resources, and block funding to schools and the school board. Yukon schools develop school-based programs to address the educational needs of all students. When inclusion is not possible, a small number of specialized resource programs provide alternative environments for students who are unable to profit from education in more traditional settings, including the following:

- resource programs for students with intellectual impairments such that life-skills programming is required
- programs for students with multiple handicaps
- resource programs for students with severe emotional/behavioural difficulties
- the educational component for students in the Young Offenders Facility operated by Youth Services for young people in secure custody

Additional funding was provided and greater collaboration among government departments was encouraged so that all students at risk of not succeeding could be served.

The last few years have seen an increase in the inclusion of special-needs students in classrooms, in the provision of differentiated programming with options for delivery of curriculum, in the allocation of resources as more flexible block funding, in the inclusion of parents and students in the planning and decision making, and in improvements in the academic performance of special-needs students. However, the challenges also remain significant. More students are being diagnosed as having special needs, and the calls for increased resources are escalating. The recruitment and retention of qualified staff present ongoing problems, especially in rural and isolated schools. Teachers continue to struggle with the demands of inclusive classrooms and the extra demands this makes on their attention and time. Providing consistent programs and formats for tracking progress, focusing on the needs of the students and their education rather than the disabilities, and responding to the expectations of parents and caregivers are major issues that the provinces and territories face in the delivery of education for special-needs students.

Integrating immigrant children into the existing education systems of the provinces and territories involves establishing policies embodying the principles of diversity, equity, and multicultural education as part of the daily classroom and school environment, as well as

adapting the curriculum and providing teacher supports that address students' real needs, especially for language learning.

In Quebec, the Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports introduced numerous initiatives to support the integration of immigrant students into the education system. The 1998 *Policy of School Integration and Intercultural Education*, which was accompanied by a Plan of Action, included programs and various financial resources to improve the services for immigrant students. Among the key features were the focus on French learning; innovations in welcoming students and integrating them into schools; special aid for those who arrived faced with serious delays in their educational progress; partnerships among the schools, the families, and the communities; and intercultural exchange and respect in order to learn to live together in a pluralistic society. The Ministry allocated additional funds to school commissions that welcomed a large number of immigrant children in order to ensure organizational and pedagogical capacity, through such activities as professional development for teachers and the development of tools for teaching and assessment. Funding was also allocated to the program for the teaching of heritage languages so that the students could improve their knowledge of the languages and cultures of their countries of origin. Seventeen languages were taught as part of this program in 2006–07. Under the Ethnic Language Program, the Ministry awards credits for approved studies by students who take language courses offered by ethnic associations.

To address curriculum issues, the departments of education in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador work together in the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training. In such documents as *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum for High School* and *Foundation for the Atlantic Arts Education Curriculum*, the inclusion of ethnicity and diversity and the teaching of English as a second language are integral parts of the curriculum. Newly arrived immigrant students are given intensive language education. These students are also included in mainstream classrooms where they learn English as well as the subject matter. For this reason, all teachers are encouraged to be aware of the needs of immigrant students and to use teaching strategies, resources, and practices that respond to the diversity of the classroom.

Although many visible-minority students are achieving at high levels, not all are. The departments of education in the provinces and territories have developed specific educational responses to their needs and situations. In Nova Scotia, for example, the Department of Education has set up the Council on African-Canadian Education as part of the *Education Act* to promote the rights and interests of African-Nova Scotians by providing recommendations to the Minister on programs and services in public schools and on adult education. Nova Scotia has had a Black population since the 1780s when about 3,000 Black persons came to Nova Scotia as a direct result of the American Revolution. Research has shown that some of the needs of the more recent African-Canadian immigrants differ from those of the communities of long historical vintage. To explore this more fully, the Department of Education commissioned a series of research studies, one of which probed the education and training needs of African Canadian immigrants in Nova Scotia. The recommendations included greater collaboration between the established population and the immigrant groups.

Recently, university scholarships and postsecondary awards have been increased for African-Nova Scotians to improve postsecondary accessibility and opportunity.

Children of immigrant and of visible minority parents often face challenges in school because they can be the victims of harassment, of racial slurs, and of bullying. While they are not the only victims, they often are particular targets.

Manitoba, like many other jurisdictions, has initiated a Safe and Caring Schools Initiative that resulted in the *Safe School Charter*, which requires all schools to have appropriate and current safety policies that include a code of conduct and an emergency response plan. Related legislation, the *Appropriate Educational Programming Act*, includes regulations that affect the discipline and safety of students. The Manitoba Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth encourages a whole school approach to safety and belonging that includes the community. Among the departmental initiatives are brochures and documents for families, communities, and schools, websites for students, parents, and educators on personal safety, violence and bullying prevention, assistance and consultation, and professional development opportunities for educators. In 2004, Manitoba made it law that schools must ensure safe and caring environments for all students.

Research is essential to the understanding of vulnerable populations and to the development of responses and solutions. Quebec has created a research fund that is dedicated to academic perseverance and success. Each year a number of projects are funded to explore the factors that encourage and discourage persistence in school, as well as interventions are successful in supporting achievement. A program of support for research and development related to educational integration is also financed by the Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports. It has two components: the first supports innovations in integration supported by research and the second focuses on pedagogical developments and knowledge acquisition concerning information and communication technologies.

For students from lower income families, access to postsecondary education can be limited for financial reasons. Every jurisdiction, in cooperation with the federal government, offers a combination of loans, bursaries, scholarships, grants, and other assistance to students. In many jurisdictions, university tuition has been frozen for a number of years. To use the example of Prince Edward Island, students have access to the Canada Student Loan Program (CSLP), the Prince Edward Island Student Loan program, and student loans for part-time students. In addition, there are Island Student Awards, interest relief programs, debt reduction grants, community service bursaries, and bursaries from the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (CMSF). In addition to providing loans to 350,000 students annually and paying the interest while they are in school, the Government of Canada provides non-repayable study grants for PSE students with permanent disabilities, part-time students, women in certain doctoral programs, and students with dependents. The CMSF's mandate is expiring after the 2008-09 fiscal year. The federal government announced a new Canada Student Grant Program to replace the $350 million in annual funding provided by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

Similar packages of support are offered in each jurisdiction, and the provinces and territories supplement these programs through a variety of initiatives. The Government of Nunavut has established *Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students* to ensure that financial need is not a barrier to postsecondary education. For qualified Nunavut residents, the Government provides a basic grant to cover tuition and fees, plus a travel grant to the location of the program. (Nunavut is the large territory west of Hudson Bay in northern Canada, and many of its postsecondary students attend programs in the southern provinces.) Inuit students may also receive allowances for monthly living expenses and learning materials. The Department of Education provides student loans to be repaid after graduation at an interest rate set below the prime interest rate.

Some jurisdictions have brought in targeted grants and programs. Increasing access by rural and northern students is the goal of a 2005 Manitoba initiative that provides students from rural and northern communities with bursaries and scholarships to attend PSE. The British Columbia Government also introduced a loan-reduction program by which students can have their loans reduced by successfully completing their studies. For high-demand professions such as doctors and nurses, the loans can be forgiven if they agree to practise in under-served areas. A student access guarantee has been introduced in Ontario to ensure that all qualified students in need have access to the resources necessary for their tuition, books, and mandatory fees. The program is targeted at students from working families so that they have access based on their ability to learn and not their ability to pay.

The Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française (Canadian Association for French Language Education) has issued a document hat follows on the discussions and debates at its September 2007 conference. The document, Réflexion sur la diversité culturelle au sein des écoles francophones au Canada (Reflection on the cultural diversity in Francophone schools in Canada) presents the key issues concerning educational intervention in the construction of cultural identity, with points for discussion, debate, development , and evaluation in schools and communities. In the spring 2008 issue of its journal Éducation and

francophonie, Canadian and international experts provide analysis, reflections, theories, and research results on the reduction of inequalities related to ethnicity and the impact that social status has on educational practices in dealing with multicultural communities.

The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation and the European Access Network are organizing an international comparative conference on early interventions and post-secondary transition programs and services designed to increase participation rates in colleges, universities, and technical institutes by under-represented groups.

In May 2008, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) released the report *Opportunities for Everyone: Programs and services for disadvantaged and low skilled learners offered at colleges and institutions.* The focus was on learners who may be marginalized, unemployed or employed in low-wage jobs, lacking secondary school completion, or under-prepared for postsecondary level programs at colleges and institutes. The study included a review of existing research and resources as well as interviews and survey responses from 52 colleges and institutes across Canada. The reports presents a process model for effective programs and service delivery for disadvantaged and low-skilled learners, which lists the full range of support services offered to students in colleges. Not ever college offers all of these services; each institute provides the services best suited to its learners and within the possibilities of its funding:

- academic, personal, financial, and diversity and anti-discrimination counselling
- tutoring and/or peer tutoring
- Aboriginal-specific services (gathering places, Elders)
- mature student services and associations
- daycare
- financial assistance information
- emergency financial assistance
- student mentorship
- health and mental health services
- career and employment counselling
- work placements and internships
- case manager services for personal contact and regular support
- immigrant-specific services
- social worker services
- leaves of absences for health and family reasons
- English and French second language services
- job search support
- job coaches and mentors
- transportation support
- support to find housing
- stress management skills
- learning skills development
- accommodation for physical and learning disabilities
- proactive orientation approaches, including with spouse or parents

The ACCC report provides extensive information on the promising practices and lessons learned among colleges and institutes, including issues of recruitment and promotion, the barriers faced by disadvantaged learners, the variety of assessment services, support services, education and training programs – including literacy and basic skills, adult upgrading and adult basic education, college preparatory courses, programs specifically for learners with disabilities or special needs, English and French second language programs, career and employment preparation – funding sources and funding challenges for the institutions and the learners, and institutional policies and structures.   The main lessons learned included:

- More individualized services must be provided that account for learners' life experiences and the barriers they face that make participation in education programs and retraining difficult
- The success of programs for this client group depends on a strong, long-term commitment to providing the mix of support services and tailored programs that best address the needs of particular groups of disadvantaged learners.
- The expected increase in demands for this type of programming means the colleges and institutes will have to develop more programs that combine literacy, adult upgrading, and postsecondary courses, as well as tie in employment readiness training and the required support services.
- The delivery of support services must be more proactive to engage the learners at the beginning of their programs and follow through to facilitate their transition to the world of work.
- The necessity of continuing to work with community partners such as literacy organizations, community-service agencies, nongovernmental organizations, immigrant serving agencies, First Nations Bands and Aboriginal organizations, school boards, business and industry, provincial and territorial programs, community-based learning and literacy councils and the Chambers of Commerce.

The challenge of inclusive education remains the matching of the increasing needs and demands with available funding and classroom time to dedicate to solutions.

Learners and Teachers

The final component of the report on the integration of inclusive education into the education systems across Canada focuses on the schools and the classrooms, detailing the resources and programs provided for the teachers and learners. These include new approaches to teaching and learning provided by the ministries of education or innovative projects devised by teachers; curriculum designed to respond to the needs of at-risk groups; resources and supports offered to teachers in their classrooms; and school and learning environments that foster learning for all. Most of the projects highlighted in this section focus on one particular segment of the at-risk population.

New Approaches

Innovations made by the teachers and school teams are often the most effective as they reflect the realities of the immediate environment. The creativity of teachers is supported in every jurisdiction. For example, New Brunswick has introduced the Innovative Learning Fund to supply funding for projects aimed at enhancing and engaging student learning. The projects are linked with the commitments made in *When Kids Come First*, the New Brunswick education strategy described earlier in this document. Funding has been awarded to initiatives that focus of improving the learning opportunities for vulnerable students – such as by twinning students who are experiencing difficulties in literacy with older, gifted students, by linking gifted and struggling students through a combination of First Nations outdoor traditions and related classroom themes, by having at-risk learners improve their organization skills though the creation of how-to videos, and by developing differentiated mathematics activities to be assessed for effectiveness and shared with other teachers.

The Ontario Ministry of Education has released a booklet for parents and students on *More Ways to Succeed in High School*. It outlines the multiple programs that have been put in place to provide alternatives and supports for students in secondary school. Among the opportunities are:

- expanded co-operative education so that students can experience hands-on learning, try career possibilities, and see the relevance of classroom learning
- new courses in technical and technological programs and expanded course offerings on-line
- training for teachers and principals with new ideas and approaches for helping student graduate from secondary school
- dual credit programs that offer credit in both secondary school and postsecondary education or apprenticeship training
- Specialist High Skills Majors that let Grade 11 and 12 students focus on a career path that matches their skills and interests, whether they are heading to apprenticeship training, college, university, or the workplace
- programs to help students move from elementary to secondary school
- teams in every secondary school made up of the principal, guidance counsellor, and teachers to provide extra attention and support for students when needed

In Yukon, the Department of Education has set up programs for two groups of vulnerable learners who require special attention. The Teen Parent Program provides flexible education and support to pregnant tens and teen parents so that they can finish secondary school. The students can attend regular classes or follow correspondence courses. The program also teaches students how to care for their children, plan and prepare healthy meals, manage their money, and plan their futures. Daycare, counselling services, transportation, and health guidance are available. A second initiative is for young offenders so that incarcerated youth can continue to have access to educational opportunities. Both education and life skill instruction are offered at the young offender facility. As well, Yukon has invested in computer networks and video conferencing technology so that Yukon students have the highest level of Internet connectivity in Canada. Through videoconferencing technologies, students can participate in a course at the same time as students in the classroom with the live teacher, take part in virtual fieldtrips, and see guest speakers from around the world.

With many small communities spread across its vast land mass, the Northwest Territories made a commitment to extend the grade levels offered in small communities. This was in response to a large number of students not moving beyond grade 9 as it meant leaving their home community. Almost all communities now offer grade 12 and enrolment numbers have increased. The schools also develop partnerships with outside agencies in the communities to support youth and adults to access a range of programs and to develop knowledge and skills in specialty areas. Distance education has greatly facilitated the expansion of senior secondary classes as on-line courses provide options that could never otherwise be provided in small communities.

The most recent Memorandum of Agreement with the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation included a Letter of Understanding on Class Composition. In this, a special fund of $200,000 per school year for the next three school years was established to address the diverse needs of the Island students who require special services and programming. To this end, a provincial committee is to establish guidelines and procedures for the administration of this fund, to give direction on accessing support, and to review and approve project applications from educators. The outcome is expected to be many thoughtful and creative initiatives being carried out in Island schools to the benefit of students and staff alike.

In communities across Canada, individuals, family members, educators, and organizations are actively promoting inclusive education. Provincial and territorial Associations for Community Living provide workshops, consultations, summer institutes and other events. The Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) is a Canada-wide association, a federation of 10 provincial and three territorial associations comprised of 420 local associations and over 40,000 members, committed to the rights of individuals with intellectual disabilities. In 2004, the CACL held a National Summit on Inclusive Education. The themes of the discussion encompassed the need for a shared vision, effective instructional practices, partnerships, teamwork and collaboration among stakeholders, advocacy, legislation, policy and guidelines, professional development, and effective resource allocation and use. Many teachers and education official took part in the summit.

Research always plays an important role in advancing teaching and learning. The Centre for Inclusive Education at the University of Western Ontario is a research association composed of faculty members, research associates, and graduate students that encourages collaborative investigations of theories and practices in an effort to enhance the educational opportunities of all students with exceptionalities.

Curriculum

Among the most effective methods of combating exclusion is the development of curriculum that reflects the experiences of the vulnerable groups and that corresponds to their particular learning styles and strengths. Experiencing themselves as part of the curriculum content can have a positive impact on marginalized learners.

The teaching of Aboriginal languages and cultures is part of classrooms across Canada. In 2007, the Manitoba Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth issued *Kindergarten to Grade 12 Aboriginal Languages and Culture: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes*. Both Elders and Aboriginal youth were integral parts of the development of the document. The Framework is grounded in a traditional Aboriginal world view that guides Aboriginal peoples in reclaiming, revitalizing, maintaining and preserving their languages and cultures. It provides a focus and direction for student learning outcomes that standardize learning experiences regarding the teaching of Aboriginal languages and cultures. The document begins with comments from Aboriginal Elders and youth related to language and culture learning.

Changes and enhancements to the curriculum can also be directed at encouraging behaviours and beliefs congruent with inclusive systems of education. In 2008, the Quebec Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports implemented a new ethics and religious culture program in elementary and secondary schools. Both the ethics and religious portions of the program are related to the values of inclusive education, as the students:

- recognize different ways of viewing life, relationships with others, and the place and role of human beings in the world
- reflect on values (freedom, equity, equality, justice, respect, integrity, etc.) and social prescriptions (laws, rules, regulations, etc)
- take a reflective position with respect to problem situations in which different values are at stake or choices have to be made
- make choices based on the common good, get involved, and act towards others autonomously and responsibly
- become open to religious diversity and develop attitudes of respect, tolerance, and openness towards it

Others changes, such as those that Nunavut is introducing, reflect the specific life experiences of the students. In Grade 8, Nunavut students will study the pre-Dorset and Thule people using a CD-ROM developed in partnership with Inuit Heritage Trust. For grade 12 students, a module on the Nunavut Lands Claims Agreement is being developed. A grade 10 science course will include Nuulluni Qaujisarniq science camp modules, developed in collaboration with the Department of Sustainable Resources.

Some students find their education in traditional secondary schools and services does not respond to their needs. To encourage these students to continue and complete their education, Alberta Learning provides funding for Outreach Programs. The programs use a variety of approaches to meet the individual needs of students, as well as offer personal and career counselling, conflict resolution and anger management techniques, time management and study skills, parenting skills, and learning strategies. With a focus on at-risk students, the programs serve:

- students who have failed in secondary school, been otherwise unsuccessful in school, or dropped out
- adults who want to complete their secondary school diplomas

- students who have been or are involved with drugs, criminal behaviour, and/or sexual abuse
- students who have been bullied or who, for other reasons, find learning difficult in large classrooms and schools
- student who have had discipline problems and/or been expelled from junior or senior secondary school
- students facing mental or physical health issues
- students who have literacy challenges or whose critical thinking capacities are limited
- students in grade 12 who have only a few credits to complete
- students who are working and can not fit a regular secondary school program into their lives

Assessment practices are closely tied to curriculum. In British Columbia, standards for all students, including students with special needs, are developed with high but appropriate expectations for student achievement. Students with special needs are expected to achieve most, some, or all of the provincial curriculum outcomes with special support. In situations where the student may not be achieving in relation to the standard curriculum expectation, the student's progress reports are expected to contain written comments on what the student is able to do, the areas in which the student requires further attention of development, the ways of supporting the students in his or her learning, and the progress of the student in relation to the goals in his or her Individual Education Plan. If appropriate, comments may also be provided on ways to enable the student to demonstrate his or her learning and the time period required to enable the student the show such learning. These processes are outlined in the revised 2006 *Policy on Special Education* from the BC Ministry of Education.

The curriculum documents, resources, textbooks and other material used in the classroom have an impact on inclusion as well. Curriculum documents in Manitoba have been developed to incorporate a number of basic components into all learning, including Aboriginal perspectives, human diversity, gender fairness, and anti-racist/anti-bias education. Aboriginal perspectives are included to enhance learning for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students with information about the accomplishments, cultural heritage, and experiences since before European settlement. Human diversity learning reflects the mosaic of people in Manitoba and fosters intercultural understanding and harmony. Teaching, learning, assessment, and resources support gender fairness by being accessible, relevant, interesting, appropriate, and challenging to both male and female students. An anti-bias and anti-racism educational approach is characterized as critical so that students can experience learning in a safe environment that welcomes diversity and challenges discrimination and bias.

The responsibility for reviewing learning resources lies with the provincial and territorial ministries and departments of education. The ministries often work together as regions

on this, such as through the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP). Resources are evaluated for consistency with curriculum content, relevance and balance, current methodologies, bias and inclusiveness, and appropriate format. An important component of the WNCP review, for example is the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives.

Teachers

Teacher training, recruitment and working conditions have been discussed in the first report. Under this heading, a few examples of the resources, equipment and support teachers receive to facilitate them in their work in inclusive classrooms are provided.

In 2007, a specially constituted Commission in Newfoundland and Labrador examined the teacher allocation model. In the report, *Education and Our Future: A Road Map to Innovation and Excellence*, recommendations were made to increase the number of student resource teachers as the consultations had brought forward concerns about the adequacy of the number of teachers for students with learning exceptionalities. Specific areas of concern were the need for remedial services, literacy and numeracy instruction, classroom disruption, and various administrative or support issues.   The Government is reviewing the recommendation of the report with the aim of providing the best possible educational opportunities for all learners.

Assistive Technology for Learning refers to the devices, media, and services used in learning environments to overcome barriers so that students with physical, sensory, cognitive, speech, learning, or behavioural special needs can actively engage in learning and achieve their individual learning goals. Alberta Learning has made the devices and media available to students as well as provided services that are necessary to make the devices work functionally for the students. These services can include knowledge and expertise about the student, evaluation of the tools, training for the educators and the students, and strategies for implementing the devices.

Teachers often find that understanding the experiences of other teachers can improve their own practice. School boards and ministries of education encourage these exchanges through publications, seminars, professional exchanges, web sites and other strategies. For example, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment in the Northwest Territories published *Promising Practices: Ideas that Work in Northern Secondary Classrooms*. The practices, many of which apply to vulnerable learners, are drawn from teaching and learning strategies, program and student support, administration, school spirit and climate, and school in the community/the community in the school.

Early learning of basic skills is essential for ongoing educational success. The Ministry of Education in British Columbia funded a three-year initiative called the Early Numeracy project with the goal of enhancing numeracy learning for the youngest learners, especially those at risk in the area of mathematics. The development team was composed of teachers and led by a leading academic. The assessment items and instructional materials developed are being used in a number of school divisions. Four tools for teachers were created:

- *Assessing Early Numeracy* – a selection of assessment items that teachers can use to determine numeracy strengths and weaknesses
- *Supporting Early Numeracy* – helpful suggestions on ways to address early difficulties in numeracy through small group interventions
- *Whole Group Follow-up* – complements the above tool by focusing on interventions for the whole class
- *Math for Families* – a resource guide for parents to use at home to help develop their children's math skills

Teaching in an inclusive classroom may involve particular challenges in responding to student behaviour. The Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training have stated that teachers have the responsibility to provide education to all students and the right to teach in a peaceful climate, conducive to the learning of all students. To facilitate this, the Council has published *Meeting Behavioural Challenges: Creating Safe and Caring Learning Environments: A Staff Professional Development Resource*. The document was developed to provide the theory and understanding around behavioural challenges and a workbook to facilitate the whole school planning required for the implementation of a school-wide positive behavioural interventions and supports.

Faculties of Education in Ontario are making tremendous efforts to improve the quality of teacher education provided to Aboriginal candidates through the development of new programs. The faculties are infusing Aboriginal context and issues into the curriculum so that all teacher candidates are prepared to deal with Aboriginal students in their classrooms. In addition, the faculties are focussing more on the needs of inner-city schools.

In 2005, the Canadian Teachers' Federation hosted a three-day conference on Building Inclusive Schools: A Search for Solutions which explored four key strands – the Aboriginal voice in education, gender orientation, racism, and children with learning difficulties. Follow-up events were held in Nova Scotia in 2006 on The Language of Equity and in Manitoba in 2007 on Diversity, Democracy, Dignity – Fostering World Rights in Our Local Schools. Through events such as these, teachers are exposed to wider discussions on the theory and practice of inclusive education and share their experiences with colleagues.

School principals and supervisory officials are also committed to inclusive education. For example, the 2008 Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association theme for its 2008 annual conference is Promoting Inclusivity in Public Education.

School and Learning Environments

In order to learn, students need safe, supportive and healthy environments.

The social, economic, and cultural conditions that define disadvantaged areas increase the risk of academic failure and social or behavioural difficulties. Since 1997, the Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports in Quebec had targeted its interventions in the Montreal region, given the concentration of poverty in the city's schools. Beginning in 2002 with the program, *New Approaches, New Solutions (Agir Autrement)*, the Ministry has provided

supplementary funding to secondary schools throughout Quebec with concentrated numbers of students from disadvantaged areas, so that practices could be adapted at both school and classroom levels to ensure greater success and decrease the academic gap these students often experience. In each school, following careful analysis, procedures are developed that respond to school priorities identified by the school team and partners regarding intervention and conditions for achievement. In 2007-08, this program has been extended to elementary schools throughout Quebec with students from the most disadvantaged socioeconomic milieu.

Bullying in school can interfere with learning, especially for students seen as different or vulnerable. Saskatchewan Learning's *Caring and Respectful Schools Initiative* provides the conceptual framework for strengthening schools as caring, respectful, and safe learning environments where all children and youth have the right to an education free from all forms of bullying and violence. This initiative suggests curriculum and resources to strengthen students' personal and social development and offers information on effective prevention and intervention strategies for dealing with bullying, harassment, aggression, and violence. Bullying, within the context of a caring and respectful school, is addressed through a curricular focus on the personal and social development of students and a continuum of community-wide prevention and early intervention services and supports. In August 2006, Saskatchewan Learning released the publication *Caring and Respectful Schools: Bullying Prevention: A Model Policy* to assist schools and communities in strengthening their current policies and practices to prevent bullying. The model policy provides key components of an effective bullying prevention policy, background information to consider when developing or strengthening a policy in this area, and sample language where appropriate.

In 2007, the Ontario Ministry of Education addressed the issue of bullying and suspension and expulsions by setting up policies that strike a balance between more effectively combining discipline with opportunities for students to continue their education. At the same time, the Ministry announced additional funding for initiatives to make schools safer, including:

- programs to prevent different kinds of bullying, including cyber-bullying
- bullying prevention training for teachers and principals
- security access devices for elementary schools to help staff better monitor visitors and limit points of access into schools
- Internet safety programs
- partnerships with parents, police, and community groups to provide services such as Kids Help Phone and Kids Internet Safety Alliance

Nutrition plays an important role in learning and schools have a role through the food they supply on site, nutrition education, and the creation of a supportive atmosphere for healthy choices. Nova Scotia has released the *Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools*. The policy includes directives related to students who may be vulnerable, including those challenged by poverty or medical conditions requiring special dietary considerations. The directives state that students and parents are to be made aware of

breakfast, lunch and snack programs that are offered at minimal or no cost and are accessible to all students in a non-stigmatizing fashion. Schools will also work with parents so that staff and volunteers are aware of any food-related chronic diseases or severe allergies, as well as ensuring adherence to all provincial and federal standards for food services.

School and classroom environments must mirror the principles being taught in the classrooms, so that welcoming, inclusive, safe, secure, and healthy environments are as important for learning as the programs and resources are.

Conclusion

The flow of the report from the broad framework of legislation and policy that protect and define the equal rights of individuals and access to public education, through the wide ranging educational reforms, to the specific programs developed for the most vulnerable groups, to the description of the activities in schools and classrooms has stressed the comprehensiveness of the belief in and services to provide inclusive education in the educational jurisdictions in Canada. The approaches are not add-ons or occasional efforts but integral to the design and delivery of education at all levels.

This is not a claim for perfect systems – as many challenges remain in ensuring that all those educated in the provinces and territories are able to succeed and flourish. But the principle of educational inclusiveness is firmly implanted throughout the education systems and officials, educators, parents, and partners are working diligently to improve the educational experience and achievement of all and every student in Canada.

Appendix A – Sources Used for the Preparation of the Reports

Provincial and Territorial Education Department and Ministry Web Sites

Alberta Advanced Education and Technology
http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/

Alberta Education
http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/

British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education
http://www.gov.bc.ca/aved/

British Columbia Ministry of Education
http://www.gov.bc.ca/bced/

Manitoba Department of Advanced Education and Literacy
http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/

Manitoba Department of Education, Citizenship and Youth
http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/

New Brunswick Department of Education
http://www.gnb.ca/0000/index-e.asp

New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
http://www.gnb.ca/0105/index-e.asp

Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education
http://www.gov.nl.ca/edu/

Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment
http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca

Nova Scotia Department of Education
http://www.ednet.ns.ca/

Nunavut Department of Education
http://www.gov.nu.ca/education/eng/

Ontario Ministry of Education
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/

Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/

Prince Edward Island Department of Education
http://www.gov.pe.ca/education/

Quebec Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports
http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/

Saskatchewan Advanced Education and Employment
http://www.aee.gov.sk.ca

Saskatchewan Learning
http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/

Yukon Department of Education
http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/

Pan-Canadian Links

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
www.cmec.ca

Canadian Commission for UNESCO
www.unesco.ca

Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials
www.cicic.ca

Statistics Canada
www.statcan.ca

Association Web Sites

Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française (Canadian Association for French
Language Education)
www.acelf.ca

Association of Canadian Community Colleges
www.accc.ca

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
www.aucc.ca

Canadian Association for Community Living
www.cacl.ca

Canadian Education Association
www.cea-ace.ca

Canadian Teachers' Federation
www.ctf-fce.ca

Central des syndicats du Québec
www.education.csq.qc.net

Centre for Inclusive Education
www.edu.uwo.ca

Educational Teachers' Federation of Ontario
www.etfo.ca

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Appendix B – Map of Canada

The attached map is from Natural Resources Canada.

The reproduction in this report is not an official version of the map, nor has it been made in affiliation with or with the endorsement of Natural Resources Canada.