

Diversity and Equity
in Education

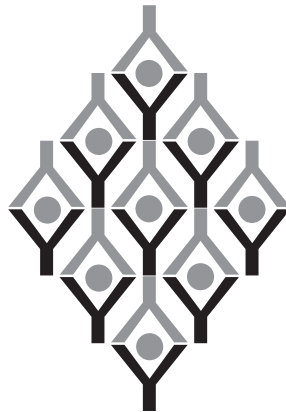
**An Action Plan for
Ethnocultural Equity**

For Consultation
October 2003

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INTRODUCTION

Manitoba K-S4 Education Agenda for Student Success, 2002- 2006

The *Manitoba K-S4 Education Agenda for Student Success, 2002-2006* (hereinafter referred to as the Education Agenda) provides a set of priorities for education in Manitoba. It is the basis for communicating actions to be taken to improve Manitoba's education system. The first priority of the Education Agenda is improving outcomes for all learners and especially for those who are less successful. Manitoba Education and Youth recognizes that to achieve this goal we need to address the needs of our linguistically and culturally diverse students and communities more effectively. For this reason, this initiative, *Diversity and Equity in Education: An Action Plan for Ethnocultural Equity*, was launched in the summer of 2002 as one of the actions under the Education Agenda, Priority 1.

Multicultural Education in Manitoba

Manitoba Education and Youth has had a long-term commitment to addressing the issues of diversity and equity. In the early 1980s, Manitoba initiated its first efforts to create schooling that is more inclusive. ESL programming and support, enhancements in Heritage language education, and a number of multicultural education initiatives were launched. The Department's vision and hopes for creating a more inclusive school system were captured in the 1992 policy document *Multicultural Education: A Policy for the 1990s*. Manitoba was one of the first provinces to have such a policy and it has guided our work to date.

In the period following the release of the policy, the Department focused its attention on promoting and supporting antiracism education initiatives in schools and classrooms. Since 1996 we have worked hard to make our curricula more inclusive and responsive to our diverse student population. The social studies curriculum development process, which included the participation of a Cultural Advisory Committee, is one example of our recent efforts to ensure that the voices of all of Manitoba's people are heard in the Manitoba curriculum. The Cultural Advisory Committee comprised representatives from various community and cultural organizations, representing a cross-section of Manitoba's diverse cultural and linguistic groups. The committee was instrumental in the development of the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol and Manitoba social studies curriculum frameworks. In addition, Francophone and Aboriginal peoples were involved as full participants from the onset of the social studies curriculum development process.

**Re-energizing Our
Commitment and
Charting a New
Course**

While Manitoba has made some meaningful progress in building a more inclusive school system and improving the educational opportunities for a broader range of learners, we have more work to do in ensuring all students have an equitable opportunity to experience success. Through the Education Agenda, we intend to develop a comprehensive and meaningful action plan that will help build schools that are committed to social justice, equality, democratic government, equitable economic opportunity for all, intellectual freedom, environmental protection, and human rights.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The main purpose of this paper is to provide a basis for discussion and dialogue with community and partner organizations on the Department's current and future directions concerning diversity and ethnocultural equity. The intent of the consultations is to develop a provincial action plan that will lead to improved educational outcomes for all learners. This paper is composed of two parts: the first discusses some important concepts and provides other relevant information; the second proposes a multi-year action plan that would further ethnocultural equity in Manitoba.

DIVERSITY AND EQUITY – IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

The concepts defined below are the Department's working definitions and are ideas that provide a framework of core beliefs that inform our thinking and actions.

Diversity encompasses all the ways in which human beings are both similar and different. It means understanding and accepting the uniqueness of all individuals as well as respecting their differences. It is ultimately about acceptance and respect for difference.

Equity is a concept that flows directly from our concern for equality and social justice in a democratic society. Educational equity refers most broadly to a condition of fairness with respect to educational opportunities, access, and outcomes for all people. Departmental initiatives towards equity are intended to remove barriers to equality by identifying and eliminating discriminatory policies and practices.

The use of these two terms together signals the importance of departmental initiatives towards building acceptance and respect for human differences and eliminating systemic barriers and impediments to educational equity, both in policy and practice.

Principles

The following principles have informed our thinking about diversity and equity.

- Respect for diversity is essential for the education system to meet the needs of all learners.
- All students and families must have equitable opportunities to participate fully in the education system in Manitoba. To achieve this, the removal of systemic and institutional barriers is essential.
- Communication and collaboration throughout the whole system are key to the achievement of goals.
- To be effective, diversity and equity education policies and initiatives must be well developed, meaningful, inclusive, and collaborative.
- Leadership and monitoring of progress are critical for the successful implementation of a diversity and equity strategy.

Goals

Our efforts to achieve outcomes that are more equitable for linguistically and culturally diverse students have the following goals. To ensure that:

- All students have the opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of school life in an inclusive and affirming manner.
- All students experience culturally and personally relevant learning that engages them and encourages a sense of community and belonging that promotes socially responsible behaviour and action.
- All students become knowledgeable about human diversity, the multicultural nature of Canada, and Aboriginal peoples, both their history and contemporary lifestyles and aspirations.
- All students, regardless of origin or gender, complete their secondary education and access post-secondary education and training that will enable them to flourish and participate fully in the community and in the workplace.

