

PLANNING AND PRIORITIES

SCHOOL AND SCHOOL DIVISION

2003/2004 AND 2004/2005 PROVINCIAL REPORT

Effective planning and reporting contribute to successful student learning. All schools and school divisions in Manitoba develop annual public plans and reports. Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (MECY) reviews school and division priorities to help guide its own planning. This provincial report summarizes information from the 2003/04 and 2004/05 reports by schools and divisions and identifies planning trends across Manitoba.

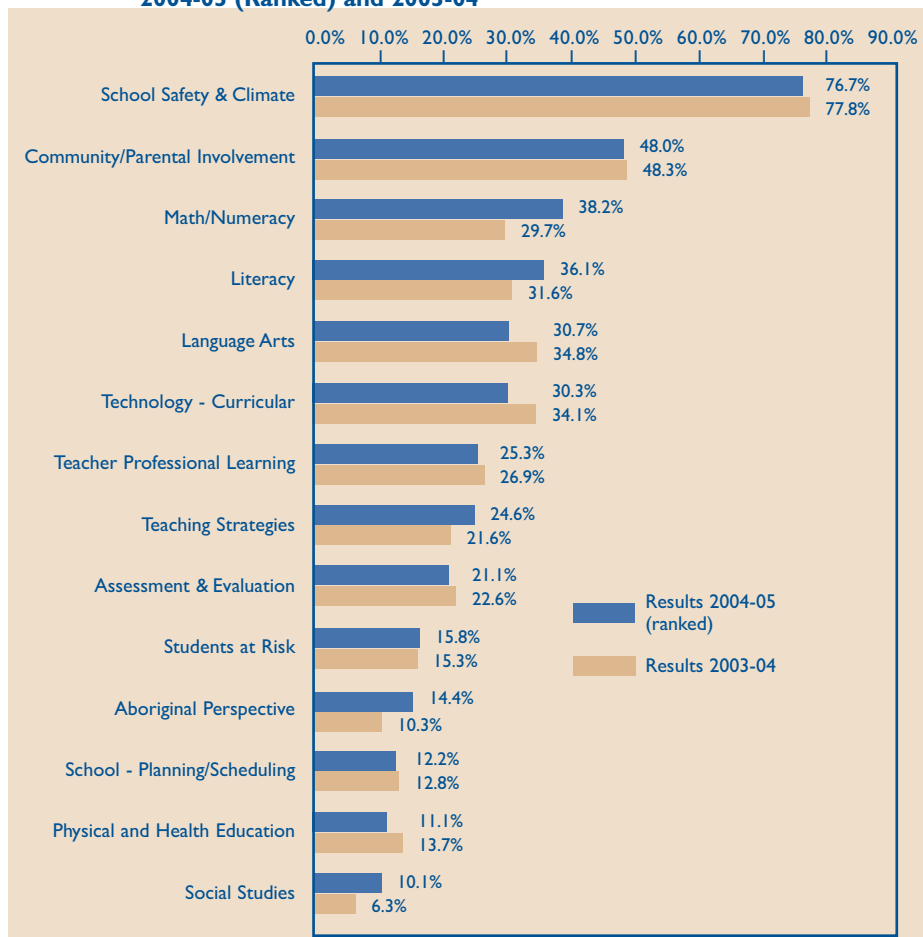
SCHOOL PLANNING PRIORITIES FOR 2003/04 AND 2004/05

School planning involves school staff, students, families and community members working together to promote school improvement. Effective planning starts with a long-term perspective, often three to five years. The school community uses many sources to answer the question: "What are our shared priorities for improvement?" The result is a short list of target

areas everyone agrees to work on and action plans are written. They address the priorities and include methods to monitor progress.

While some school plans are more detailed than others, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth requests that all school plans indicate their priorities and some major parts of their action plans. MECY also requests that schools present annual written reports on progress to their school communities.

Figure 1 - Manitoba Priorities Identified by Schools for 2004-05 (Ranked) and 2003-04



Priority Areas Identified by Schools

The provincial summary of priorities is an important indicator of what is important to schools and guides MECY in developing its priorities. Figure 1 shows the most frequently reported priorities for the past two years, 2003/04 and 2004/05.

Figure 1 indicates the following trends:

- The most frequently identified priorities remained relatively consistent, especially the top five: **school safety and climate, community/parental involvement, literacy, language arts and mathematics.**
- **School safety and climate** include reactive and proactive responses to social and behavioural issues. Increasingly, schools are taking a proactive approach by teaching student appropriate behaviour and values.

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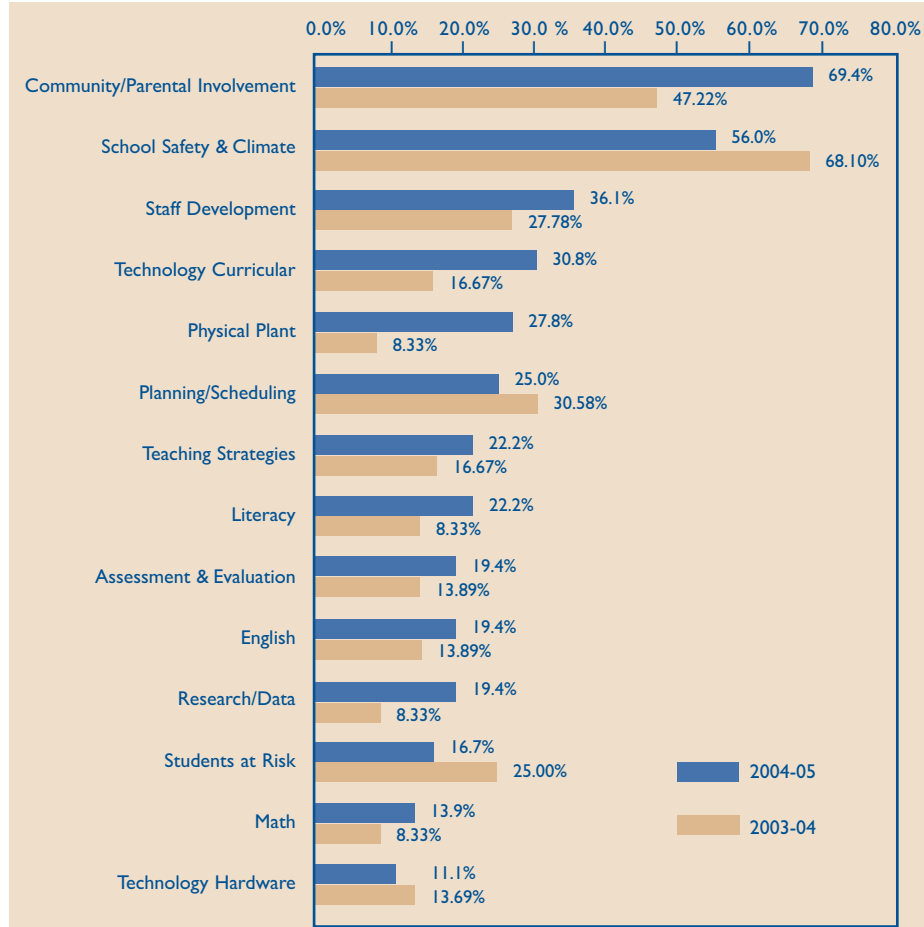
- **Community and parental involvement** remains a high priority across the province, for schools, divisions and MECY. All recognize the positive effects of parents and schools working together to improve student learning.
- When **language arts** included the **literacy** category (as in 2002/03), the combined category would have been included more frequently as a priority (over 60 per cent).
- The **mathematics** category increased in frequency over the past few years. One reason might be that MECY introduced an Early Numeracy Grant for 2004/05.
- **Aboriginal perspectives** has increased as a priority each year as more schools specify goals for Aboriginal students. This parallels department priorities and initiatives.
- Schools continue to place a high priority on **staff development (teacher professional development and teaching strategies)**. Almost half the schools list priorities in these two areas and many include professional learning as part of other categories.

Along with the most frequently reported priorities, some schools (less than 10 percent) also identified special needs/individual education plans (IEPs), physical plant, enrolment /attendance, student leadership opportunities, technology / hardware, French and cultural linguistic identity. MECY also has similar data from 2002/03.

Over the past few years, schools have generally identified a smaller number of priorities and have continued work on specific areas. This reflects effective practices in educational change – focusing on specific topics over longer periods usually improves student learning.

Reports indicate that school priorities align closely with the six provincial priority areas.

Figure 2 - Summary of School Division Priority Areas for 2004-05 & 2003-04



SCHOOL DIVISION PLANNING PRIORITIES FOR 2003/04 AND 2004/05

Figure 2 shows the priority areas that were targeted by more than 10 per cent of school divisions for the two years.

School divisions also plan with and report to their communities. Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth reviews two planning component priorities – general divisional and student services. Student services include resource teaching, special education and counselling. During 2003/04, School Division Reports were optional with 28 out of 38 divisions providing them. Student Services Reports were received from all divisions for both years. Consultants from MECY's Program and Student Services Branch reviewed the reports and compiled this summary.

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The rest of the priorities list included: special needs / individual education plans (IEPs), student leadership, science, Aboriginal perspectives, physical and health education, social studies, career development, increasing course options, increasing enrolment, and French. Less than 10 per cent of the school divisions identified any one of those areas.

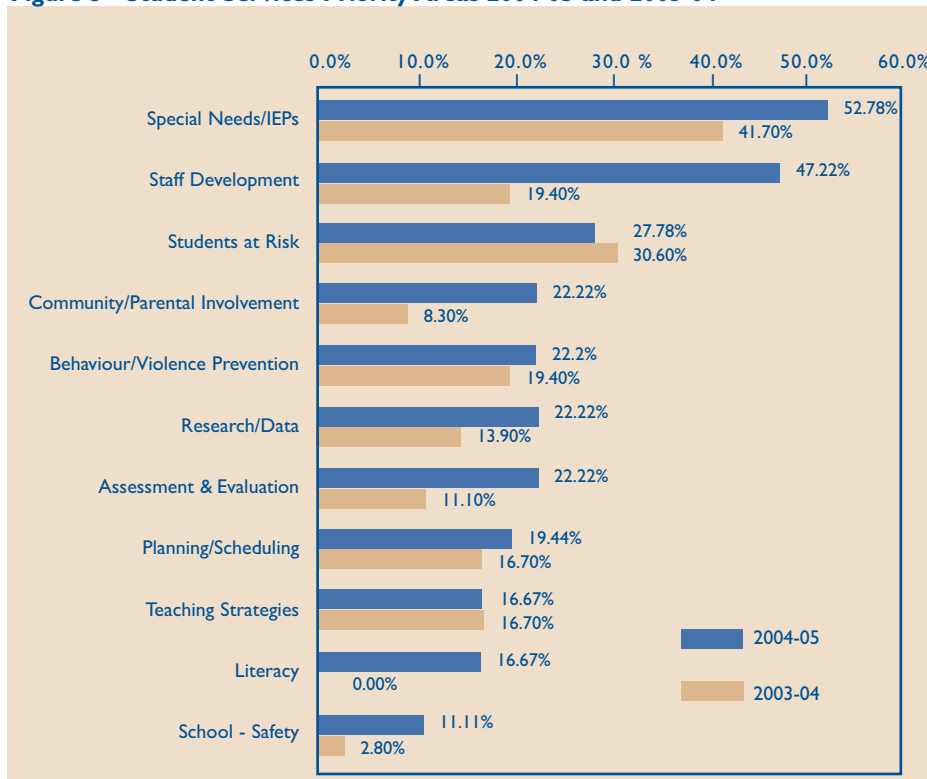
While there are only two years of data, some patterns appear:

- **Community / parental involvement** is a frequent and increasing priority over the two years, identified by almost 70 per cent of the divisions in 2004/05. Both schools and school divisions see this as a significant priority. Department supports in this area (ex: Building Student Success with Aboriginal Parents, Community Schools

Partnership Initiative, parent support documents) are consistent with this priority.

- **School safety and climate** are high priorities in both years. There has been increasing focus on proactive approaches and school divisions encouraging the teaching of positive behaviour. This change is consistent with current educational research.
- **Staff development** and **planning/scheduling** have remained relatively frequent priorities over both years.
- **Technology** use for teaching, **physical plant** issues and **literacy** all showed significant gains in frequency as priorities in 2004/05 followed closely by the use of **research and data**.
- Significant declines from one year to the next occurred for **hiring and retention**, **transitions** and **finance/budget**.

Figure 3 - Student Services Priority Areas 2004-05 and 2003-04



REPORTED PRIORITIES FOR STUDENT SERVICES IN 2003/04 AND 2004/05

Figure 3 shows student services priorities frequently identified by school divisions during 2003/04 and 2004/05.

This list of priority areas is narrower than for schools and school divisions since student services has a narrower focus. Special needs/individual education plans was the most frequent priority area reported. It is probably the largest component of student services in most school divisions. Staff development initiatives showed a 25 per cent increase over the previous year. Students at risk was listed as a priority in about 30 per cent of Student Services Plans. The increase in literacy is probably the result of the change to tracking literacy separately from language arts in 2004/05. When combined, the areas of behaviour and school safety showed an increase over 2003/04, suggesting that more initiatives are being planned to address these concerns.

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The appropriate educational programming *Amendment to the Public Schools Act* became law in November 2005. It may have some affect on these annual reports on student services. While this review collects data only in broad categories, school divisions already report an impressive array of flexible, responsive student services.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth recently improved its own planning to more formally take its partners' priorities into consideration. In its 2005 process, the department consid-

ered recommendations from provincial organizations that represent parents, teachers, school trustees, superintendents and secretary-treasurers. It also reviewed the priorities reported by schools and divisions. As it does its own planning, MECY will continue to take into account the priorities of others.

MECY emphasizes collaboration to improve and strengthen school and division planning. It will continue to provide information, support and learning opportunities for improved planning at all levels. It will also work with all partners to improve planning processes together and provide relevant professional learning opportunities in 2005/06.

A copy of this report is on our website at
<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/speced/pie/index.htm>