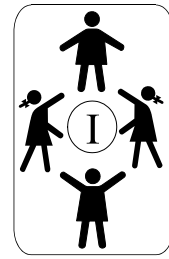


CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION to the SPECIAL EDUCATION REVIEW



A. BACKGROUND

For purposes of The Manitoba Special Education Review, “**special education**” refers to the many programs and services designated to serve students whose characteristics, educational needs and strengths cannot be properly addressed through regular curriculum and services alone. These students include, but are not limited to, those with physical disabilities, chronic health problems, learning disabilities, severe behaviour disorders, as well as gifted students. (See Appendix A for a Glossary of terms used in this report.)

1. SPECIAL EDUCATION IN MANITOBA

Special education programming was introduced in Manitoba about 30 years ago. In 1967, the Manitoba government enacted legislation that required schools to program for students with special needs. In 1989, Manitoba Education and Training published Special Education in Manitoba: Policy and Procedural Guidelines for Education of Students with Special Needs in the Public School System (August 1989) which outlined the policy and procedural guidelines related to special education. Since the publication of this document there has been increasing attention to the inclusion of children with special needs in schools and classrooms in their local communities.

2. THE MANITOBA SPECIAL EDUCATION REVIEW

The policy and procedural guidelines for special education had not undergone any revision or updating since it was released in 1989. Considering the changes that have occurred in education over the last decade and the call for increased intersectoral cooperation to deliver services to children, a review of special education was timely and needed.

In January 1995, the provincial government announced The Manitoba Special Education Review. Credit should be given to the Manitoba government for undertaking a review which was bound to show that some policies and practices would require updating and improvement.

The **purpose** of The Manitoba Special Education Review was to make recommendations that would form the basis for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of education and school-based services for children who require special education in order to strengthen learning opportunities and outcomes. The Review was designed to obtain information on the application, appropriateness, effectiveness and use of special education policies, programs, services and resources.

Five goals were established for the Review by Manitoba Education and Training. The goals were to:

1. “identify all special education programs and services provided by school divisions and districts throughout the province;
2. determine the effectiveness of provincial special education policies in achieving desired student outcomes;
3. determine the quality and cost-effectiveness of special education programs in the province in promoting the optimal intellectual, emotional, and social development of students and achieving desired student outcomes;
4. determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the current provincial funding formulas in meeting the intent of the provincial policy directions in special education; and
5. determine the impact of intersectoral integration of special education services on student outcomes.”

The **Areas of Inquiry** are based on the Parameters of the Review as originally articulated by Manitoba Education and Training. (The “Parameters of the Review” are found in Appendix B.) The five Areas of Inquiry paralleled the Review goals to a great extent. The Areas of Inquiry were publically available and widely circulated during the Review. They served as a means of maintaining focus for the Review.

1. Identification of Special Education Programs and Services
2. Examination of Special Education Policies, Practices and Procedures
3. Assessment of the Quality and Cost Effectiveness of Special Education Programs
4. Examination of the Strengths and Limitations of Costs and Funding Models
5. Examination of Intersectoral Planning in Relation to Special Education

The Review had **three major components** that, in combination, addressed all the Areas of Inquiry:

- < a review of existing programs, policies, and practices (including legal and financial aspects);
- < a comprehensive consultation process; and
- < structured data collection in the form of case studies in 12 school divisions/districts.

The Review was conducted over a 20 month period. A Steering Committee provided overall leadership and direction for the Review. Proactive Information Services Inc., a Manitoba-based social research company specializing in educational evaluation, conducted the Review.

The results of the Review are contained in this document. Chapter II presents the key results, discussion and analysis, as well as recommendations in relation to the Areas of Inquiry. Chapter III provides a detailed description of how the Review process was constructed and conducted. This is followed by a series of chapters that provide the supporting documentation for the Review. In most cases these chapters provide the descriptive information that forms the basis for the analysis and recommendations contained in Chapter II.

B. REVIEW ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. SPECIAL EDUCATION REVIEW STEERING COMMITTEE

The Manitoba Special Education Review Steering Committee was struck by the Minister of Education and Training. The Steering Committee was comprised of: government representatives from Manitoba Education and Training and the Manitoba Children and Youth Secretariat; a teacher representing the Manitoba Teachers' Society; two members at large, one of whom who is a parent with special needs children. A list of Steering Committee members is found at the beginning of this document.

The role of the Special Education Review Steering Committee was to provide overall leadership and direction for the Review. This role included evaluating the Review Workplan and monitoring its implementation to ensure that the purpose and goals of the Review were fulfilled. The Steering Committee was to ensure that the Review was conducted in a fair and valid manner. The Steering Committee had the opportunity to review a draft of the final report, pose questions and make suggestions for purposes of clarity and readability, but was not given the authority to make changes to the recommendations arising from the Review findings.

A Technical Support Committee (comprised of key staff persons from Manitoba Education and Training) served as an information broker and assisted the consultant in obtaining access to existing data.

2. THE CONSULTANT - PROACTIVE INFORMATION SERVICES INC.

Proactive Information Services Inc. was responsible for the overall planning, development and implementation of The Manitoba Special Education Review process. Specific responsibilities of Proactive included: the preparation of a detailed workplan; a review of existing policies, practices, funding models and legal issues; consultation with the educational community and related stakeholders; data collection, analysis and interpretation; as well as, the preparation of a final report. Proactive was charged with drawing conclusions and making recommendations based on the results of the Review.

C. CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONDUCTING THE REVIEW

Certain assumptions and factors constitute important context for Review findings. This section of the document we will present:

- < the assumptions on which the Review process and methodology were based;
- < the factors affecting the Review process; and
- < by-products of the Review process.

1. ASSUMPTIONS

As previously stated, the purpose of the Review was to make recommendations that would form the basis for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of education and school-based services for children who require special education supports. A positive impact on outcomes for special education students was the ultimate goal. In considering the ultimate goal, we operated on a set of assumptions and beliefs that would guide the Review.

- a. The sole purpose of the Review was to improve educational programming and services for students with special learning needs, so that these children would benefit in the future.
- b. The Review was designed not only to find ways to improve the current delivery of programming and services, but also to highlight selected good practices that exist throughout Manitoba, as well as those identified in other jurisdictions.
- c. The Review was structured to address the five Areas of Inquiry. No one Area of Inquiry was intended to take precedence over the others.
- d. The Review assumed that those individuals involved in the delivery of special education services and programs care about the children they serve and are working with the best interests of these children at heart.
- e. The Review would be conducted in as open, collaborative and a consultative manner as possible.

- f. The Review would be sensitive to the personal situations of children with special learning needs, their families and caregivers and would take this into account in all data collection.
- g. Consultation with the educational community and other stakeholders would be as broadly based and as comprehensive as possible. We believed it was necessary to provide diverse opportunities so that all pertinent information, opinions and personal stories could “go into the record”.
- h. The Review process assumed that existing networks and organizations would be an effective and cost-effective way to advertise the Review and to invite people into the consultation process.
- i. The Review would be grounded in the real experiences of children, their families, educators, and other service providers. Therefore, in addition to a consultation process, the Review had to find a way to collect information systematically on the realities of special education across the province, including the realities from a student’s point of view. We wanted the Review to be research-based and to provide opportunities for widespread (but likely self-selective) participation.
- j. No Review results would be released prior to the Final Report. The Steering Committee did not want to be party to preliminary findings as they did not want to influence, nor to be seen to influence, the recommendations arising from the Review. Therefore, we would not discuss emerging trends nor initial results with any party.
- k. The Review would follow a predetermined plan. However, in an undertaking of this magnitude there is often the need for flexibility. While there were certain aspects that were immutable, we would be flexible if it furthered the goals of the Review. For example, school schedules and the unexpected events that happen in schools had to be taken into account when conducting the case studies.

2. FACTORS

As with any study, the Review has certain factors that had an impact on the Review process.

- a. The Review was conducted within a specified timeframe announced in September 1996. It was introduced as a 18 month to two year review process. Therefore, the Final Report was due in the fall of 1998. Proactive Information Services Inc. was hired in March 1997. Both the consultant and the Steering Committee felt it was important to adhere to the original timeline as closely as possible given the large volume of information generated by the Review. The bulk of the Review was conducted during the 1997-98 school year with the report being completed in December 1998.
- b. The total budget Proactive received for the Review was \$146,000. All activities, including items such as travel and advertising, had to be paid for out of this amount. As with any study, there are likely other things that could have been included had the budget been larger (for example, case studies in more communities or a school by school inventory of programs). As the consultant, we attempted to do as much as we could within the budget and use innovative rather than expensive ways to publicize the Review (for example, the cooperation of organizations in informing their members about the Review), thus leaving more of the budget for actual consultation and data collection.
- c. The case studies are the systematic data collection component of the Review. The cases were selected to represent the diversity of situations found across the province. The populations included in the case studies were not chosen to be statistically generalizable samples and should not be viewed as such. However, the consistency in themes and issues that emerged across the province reassured us as to the reliability of the major findings.
- d. In April 1998, a number of changes to the administration of provincial special education funding were released by Manitoba Education and Training. These changes were not made in response to any findings or information arising from The Manitoba Special Education Review process, but rather to respond to some long-standing issues. The release of these changes came a week before the deadline for submissions, while the case studies were still being conducted. Therefore, some people had the opportunity to respond to the changes, while others did not.
- e. It should be recognized that the financial analysis of the province-wide data addresses Function 200-Exceptional and was not intended as a

comprehensive review of educational finance in Manitoba. Changes in the format of the financial reporting by the Province in 1992-93 limits any comparison at the Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education (FRAME) program (sub-function) level prior to that date. Furthermore, it should be recognized that FRAME was not established as a tool for cost benefit or cost effectiveness analysis.

- f. The Annual Division Action Plans (ADAPs), while they provided us with some information on programs and services across the province, cannot be viewed as the definitive data source from which to create an inventory of all special education programs and services in Manitoba. From the information available, we can provide a picture of the types and variety of programs and services that exist, however, it does not constitute a complete, nor a completely current record.
- g. Neither schools nor school divisions/districts systematically and comprehensively collect data or student learning outcomes in relation to program or specific interventions.

3. BY-PRODUCTS OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

In conducting the Review there were some unexpected and positive outcomes of the process. The two most obvious demonstrate people's need to network, as well as the high interest people had in the Review.

- < Networking and Information Exchange at the Community Forums - At many of the Forums parents connected with other parents, representatives of community agencies, or educators who provided new information or contacts to the parents of special needs students. Discussions often continued after the completion of the session, with names and contact information being exchanged. While some of this networking is to be expected, the frequency with which this occurred was unanticipated.
- < Local Reviews of Special Education - Many school divisions/districts conducted their own "mini Reviews". These included everything from parent focus groups, surveys of parents, student focus groups, community meetings, and the creation of broad-based committees to address the issues raised by the Review. Given this local participation

it is difficult to determine how many people across the province were either directly or indirectly involved with The Manitoba Special Education Review process. However, it does demonstrate the high interest that existed in issues related to students with special learning needs.

