

Early Years Assessment Consultation Summary

What We Heard

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Date of Consultation

March 2, 2023

Contact Information

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Consultation Participants

- Superintendents of School Divisions
- School Division Senior Administrators
- Manitoba Association of School Superintendents

Overview

Our Children's Success: Manitoba's Future—Report of the Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K to 12) Education made several recommendations relating to Early Years assessments and the importance of supporting early childhood interventions and strategies for children with learning needs. In response to the Commission's report, *Manitoba's K to 12 Education Action Plan* committed to introducing consistent Early Years assessments, focusing on children entering Kindergarten and students who have experienced disrupted learning.

On March 2, 2023, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning hosted a consultation with school division senior administrators on Early Years assessment tools used in Manitoba. The objectives of the consultation were to

- Build a shared understanding of the current state of Early Years assessment tools being used in Manitoba.
- Understand the needs of schools, school divisions, the department of Education and Early Childhood Learning, other provincial departments, and external stakeholders in relation to Early Years assessment data.
- Envision a future state where there is consistent Early Years assessment that meets system needs province-wide.

The consultation included presentations on the Early Development Instrument currently used in Manitoba to provide census level data on early childhood development that informs system-level planning. The consultation also included a presentation from The Learning Bar on the Early Years Evaluation—an Early Years assessment tool implemented by 40 per cent of Manitoba school divisions that provides classroom teachers with real time data to inform student learning needs as well as school- and division-level planning. The consultation concluded with in-depth discussions among school division administrators on the Early Years assessments used in their divisions, the strengths and limitations of tools, the keys to successful implementation, and the ways in which data is used across the system.

TOPIC 1: Early Years Assessment Tools Currently Used in Manitoba: What Are They? What Do They Assess?

General Themes of What We Heard

- School divisions are using a variety of assessment tools to assess early years numeracy, literacy, fine/gross motor skills, phonological awareness, domains of early childhood development, reading and writing, and social and behavioural skills.
- The most commonly used assessment tools discussed by school divisions were the Early Years Evaluation – Teacher Assessment and Direct Assessment and the Early Development Indicator (which is implemented province-wide), as well as a number of divisional assessment tools.
- Many divisions reported using specific literacy assessment tools or phonetic screening tools. The most common literacy assessment tools used were Fountas and Pinnell, as well as the Observational Survey.
- There were fewer numeracy tools identified by school divisions, with the most common being divisionally developed math assessments and the Manitoba Rural Learning Consortium's Numeracy Achievement Program.
- While school divisions reported using Early Development Indicator data to inform planning at the school- and division-level, most did not indicate that it was used to support planning at the classroom level.

TOPIC 2: Strengths and Limitations of Assessment Tools and Keys to Successful Implementation

General Themes of What We Heard

- School divisions identified a number of challenges or limitations with implementing assessment tools. These included: the time required for implementation and finding substitutes for when teachers need to be out of the classroom, the cost, the consistency in implementation and teacher training, the lack of staff to collect and organize data, and the concern that some tools do not meet cultural needs within their communities.
- When discussing strengths of assessment tools, almost all divisions made comments that assessment tools are most impactful when they provide immediate feedback that can be used by teachers and schools to inform teaching, programming, and planning.
- Another commonly noted important strength of an assessment tool was its ability to be easily implemented by teachers, with clear instructional materials.

- Other strengths of assessment tools identified by divisions were their ability to assess across all child development domains, align with provincial curriculum, be divisionally developed and respond to local needs, and be incorporated into the report card.
- Divisions noted that Early Years assessments are successfully implemented when there is commitment or 'buy-in' from teachers on the benefits of the tool, there is consistent and supportive training, there is sufficient funding and substitutes are available, and the data is shared throughout schools and divisions with purpose.

TOPIC 3: How Is Data Used?

General Themes of What We Heard

- Divisions provided many responses to the question regarding how data is used that speak to the diverse depth and breadth of data use throughout the system.
- Classroom Level: Data informs planning of instruction, responsive teaching, class profiles, resource allocation, and intervention supports.
- School Level: Data informs the allocation of resources, professional development plans, school goals and priorities, and classroom profiles.
- Division Level: Data informs budget decisions, staffing decisions, development of inter-agency relationships, school and community planning, and best assessment practices.

TOPIC 4: The Early Years Evaluation—Teacher Assessment

General Themes of What We Heard

- Almost 40 per cent of school divisions in Manitoba currently use The Learning Bar's Early Years Evaluation—Teacher Assessment (EYE-TA), with many others indicating that they would like to implement the tool, but have limited resources to do so.
- When asked by the department if they would implement the EYE-TA should Manitoba procure provincial licensing of the tool, thirty school divisions stated they would, five stated they would not, and two were undecided.
- Divisions using the EYE-TA consistently identified the value of having real-time, student-specific data to enable identification of learning needs and inform responsive teaching.

- Divisions reported that the EYE-TA is easy to use and provides strong tools and information for teachers.
- Some divisions shared that they use EYE-TA parent/caregiver reports as their Kindergarten report cards, while others indicated that they share report resources with parents/caregivers at different times of the year. Parent/caregiver EYE-TA reports are available in 21 languages.

Conclusion

The consultation held with school division senior administrators provided a comprehensive overview of the current state of Early Years assessments in Manitoba. Through the discussions on the strengths of assessment tools and the keys to successful implementation, as well as specific feedback on the EYE-TA, it was clear that provincial support of the EYE-TA across Manitoba was strongly favoured. In June 2023, the Minister of Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning announced that Manitoba will invest in the provincial implementation of the EYE-TA for three years, beginning in the 2023/2024 school year. The EYE-TA can be implemented in both English and French.

The department will assess the impact of this initiative in school divisions that implement the tool over three years. This will inform future decisions on the use of the EYE-TA, including possible consideration for full province-wide implementation.

All school divisions who opt in to provincial implementation will have access to training for Kindergarten teachers, teacher resources, paid annual divisional licensing fee and per student assessment fees, data summary reports, and advanced professional learning for teachers and school division staff. Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning will receive EYE-TA data from The Learning Bar for all participating school divisions, which will become part of Manitoba's *Data and Performance Measurement Framework*.