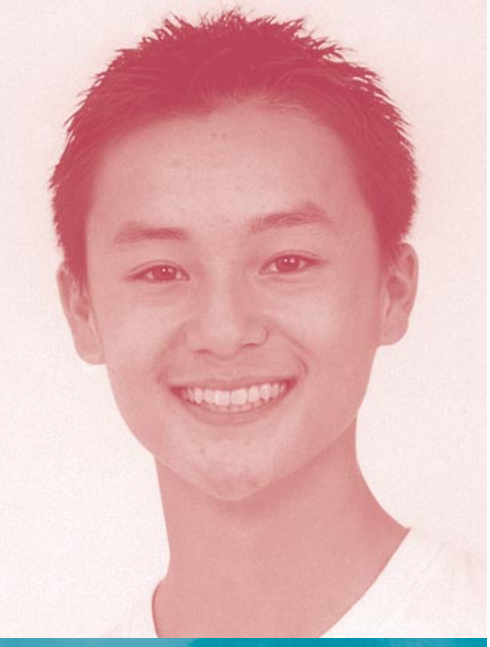
MANITOBA K-S4



Education Agenda for Student Success

2002-2006

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth

AUGUST 2002

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MANITOBA K–S4 EDUCATION AGENDA FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

The *Manitoba K–S4 Education Agenda for Student Success* provides a set of priorities for education in Manitoba. It is the basis for communicating actions to be taken to improve the province's education system.

This document reflects Manitoba Education, Training and Youth's priorities and was developed through broad consultation with students, parents, teachers, administrators, school board members and other community representatives.

The *Manitoba K–S4 Education Agenda for Student Success* will help educators to focus on accountability, openness, responsiveness, partnership, consultation and research. It highlights six priorities to be addressed during the next four years. These priorities support work already being done in schools throughout the province. They include:

- *Improving outcomes especially for less successful learners*—It is important for an education system to seek better outcomes for all students but it is vitally important to focus attention on those who are not succeeding. In the absence of academic success, students lack the skills needed to secure relevant training and employment and to participate fully as citizens. Initiatives are being implemented to address this issue.
- *Strengthening links among schools, families and communities*—Throughout a child's schooling and life, family involvement has been shown to be an essential component for success. In order to support this priority, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth is working to improve collaboration among families, schools and communities.
- *Strengthening school planning and reporting*—To be effective, schools should have meaningful, clearly stated goals and a process for monitoring and reporting on progress made towards achieving these goals. A collaborative initiative is now underway to support planning and reporting processes for schools and divisions.
- *Improving professional learning opportunities for educators*—As demands on schools and teachers change, educators require opportunities to maintain and improve their skills. The professional development needs are recognized by Manitoba Education, Training and Youth and creative approaches for delivery and information sharing are being explored.

- *Strengthening pathways among secondary schools, post-secondary education and work*—Schools need to be well connected to post-secondary education and labour market options. Manitoba Education, Training and Youth is implementing a number of actions that will improve transitions for students between high school and post-secondary education and employment.
- *Linking policy and practice to research and evidence*—Education policy and practice at all levels should be based on research findings and linked to student learning results. Initiatives are being implemented to help strengthen these links.

The Department has initiated a number of actions in support of all six priorities. These include:

- Distribution of the research and information on promising programs and appropriate practice related to each of the six priorities.
- Information to schools and the public about successful initiatives in Manitoba and elsewhere on each priority.
- Support for the development of education networks to work together on the six priority actions.

Dialogue and actions resulting from the *Manitoba K–S4 Education Agenda for Student Success* builds on the excellent work already taking place across the province by educators, families, students, communities, and Manitoba Education, Training and Youth.

INTRODUCTION

The *Manitoba K–S4 Education Agenda for Student Success* articulates a set of priorities to guide the work of Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, divisions and schools. The Agenda represents a collaborative effort on the part of all education partners to strengthen programs and improve practices for the benefit of children and their families.

Presented here:

- Why the Agenda is important;
- What the research tells us;
- Development of the Agenda; and
- Actions underway to advance student success.

IMPORTANCE OF AN AGENDA FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Our school system is serving Manitoba children and families well. Educational levels are increasing and the rate of young people finishing high school is on the rise. The average skill level of young people is higher than in the past and more people are enrolling in post-secondary education. An adult education system is in place for those people wanting to continue their education. Teachers are better qualified than ever before and many are engaged in various forms of ongoing learning. As well, public education now devotes attention to greater inclusion of students with special needs and others experiencing difficulty in their learning. Schools are more aware of the need to reach out to families in order to respond appropriately to the diverse needs of learners.

Much is being accomplished. Yet, these achievements should not lead to complacency regarding the future. As educational levels increase, so do the demands for heightened access, inclusion and expanded opportunities for learning. There are a considerable number of issues and challenges that can only be addressed through school change initiatives.

- Too many students still do not attain sufficiently high levels of achievement to participate fully in the community. As education becomes more important to individuals and communities, we cannot allow large numbers of people to go through life without reasonable levels of education and credentials. Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, visible minorities, and less educated adults are among the groups whose current educational status is least satisfactory;

- Parents and families are critical to students' educational success. Increasing population diversity, a better educated—and therefore more demanding—population and significant changes in factors such as gender roles and family structures all create challenges for schools;
- The public has expanded access to knowledge through both formal and informal means creating more pressure to recognize informal and prior learning experience;
- Skill demands in the workplace, and a continuously changing labour market, affect education and training needs, especially for young people. Different skills may be required for effective participation in the economy and society; and
- More community groups want to have a role in setting the direction of education and training in Manitoba, creating pressures for inclusive and participatory decision-making processes.

These factors have a combined impact that will necessitate changes in schools. Successful school change requires the participation of students, families, school staff and the broader community. Government has an important role in setting direction and bringing people together but real and lasting success requires the efforts of all.

The main resources we have to work with in education are the hearts and minds of those in and around our schools—students, teachers, parents, staff, school board members and others in the community. Engaging people in a positive process should be done in ways respectful of everyone who participates. Educators and communities genuinely want our students to succeed. The challenge is to work together to find ways of increasing student success. That is what the *Manitoba K–S4 Education Agenda for Student Success* is about.

WHAT THE RESEARCH TELLS US

Current education research served as the foundation upon which the K–S4 Agenda was developed. We learned from the literature that school improvement efforts do contribute to advancing student success. Learner outcomes improve through the training and talent of teachers, what goes on in the classrooms and the overall culture and atmosphere of schools. Academic skills, assignments, experience and professional development are significant dimensions for teachers. In the classroom, course content, pedagogy, technology and class size and composition make a difference. School leadership, goals, professional community, discipline and the learning environment are school-wide factors that influence student success.

Every child has the capacity to succeed in school and life. Research shows that certain school characteristics promote success regardless of student backgrounds.[1] Successful schools are student-centred, academically rich, have a positive school climate, foster collegial interaction and have extensive staff development. These schools demonstrate shared leadership and foster creative problem-solving involving parents and the community.[2]

a) Advancing Student Success

Research emphasizes that the single largest factor affecting academic growth of student populations is the effectiveness of individual classroom teachers. Lower-achieving students are the first to benefit as teacher effectiveness improves.[3] Less successful learners benefit from additional supporting factors such as time spent on learning, opportunities to meet learning goals and quality of teaching.[4] Improving learner outcomes for these students requires a clearer understanding of the meaning of student success and the active development of change processes to have a positive impact on student achievement. Changes in instructional practice and in the culture of teaching involve stronger collaborative relationships among students, teachers and other partners.[5] Classroom practices to improve outcomes include differentiated learning, linking prior knowledge to new learning, collaboration to encourage students to work together and the advancement of authentic assessment practices. Focusing on higher order thinking skills benefits not only advanced students but also those in need of more basic skills.

Student success is also linked to the support and involvement of the broader community. Research, professional judgement and practical experience all show that fostering family and community involvement in schools contributes to healthy development in children, youth and a better quality of neighbourhood life for all community members.[6]

1 Levin, B. (1995). Poverty and education. *Education Canada. 35*(2), 28–35.

2 Levine, D. U. & Lezotte, L. W. (1990). *Unusually effective schools: A review and analysis of research and practice.* Madison, WI: National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED330032).

3 Stoll, L. & Fink, D. (1996). *Changing our schools: Linking school effectiveness and school improvement.* Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.

4 Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). *The right to learn: A blueprint for creating schools that work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

5 Fullan, M. G. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depth of educational reform.* London: Falmer Press.

6 Maeroff, G. I. (1998). *Altered destinies: Making life better for schoolchildren in need*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

b) Schools, Families and Communities

When schools are able to foster a sense of community, promote ways to advance equity and voice and increase participation through their partnerships, students benefit.[7] Teachers are often more willing to work with others when that involvement increases the flow of resources to schools and classrooms. Community partners make practical contributions with minimum cost to the schools by bringing in services and support. Creating family centres in unused space or providing a consistent source of trained volunteers are two examples. Effective school communities have the capacity to produce multiple positive effects on students and families.[8]

What parents do in the home to support and improve their child's development in school is critical to student success. Improved communication between home and school, homework support and the development of common approaches to conflict resolution are examples.[9] Schools too, have assets that can benefit families and communities such as sharing facilities, materials, equipment, purchasing power, employment opportunities, and programs. Partners in education should view their partnerships as "two way streets" with schools giving to their communities, as well as receiving support.

Research into school quality shows that some schools do better than others at helping students to learn because they have found ways to engage parents and others in community development through capacity building.[10] There is convincing evidence that community schools are important vehicles for school improvement.[11] They provide opportunities for communities to work together at the local school level to address barriers to student success. Community schools can affect not only educational outcomes but other outcomes as well, such as improved social behaviour and healthy youth development, better family functioning and parental involvement, access to support services, enhanced school climate, family and neighbourhood life.[12]

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7 Oakes, J. & Lipton, M. (1990). *Making the best of schools: A handbook for parents, teachers and policymakers*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

8 Dryfoos, J.G. (2000, June). *Evaluation of community schools: Findings to date*. Retrieved April 15, 2002 from http://www.communityschools.org/evaluation/evalcontents.html

9 Epstein, J. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *76*(9), 701–712.

10 Kretzmann, J. P. & McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets*. Chicago: ACTA Publications.

11 Sergiovanni, T. (1994). *Building community in schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

12 Blank, M. J., Bruner, C., Chang, H. & Potapchuk, W. (1996). Coordinating federal technical assistance to comprehensive community initiatives: A report on the *'Together We Can'* initiative. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership.

c) School Planning

More is accomplished when schools, families and communities plan together to build effective school communities. There is growing interest on the part of many people for an expanded role in shaping the institutions that affect their lives. School planning and reporting should include school staff, parents, community members and students in structured decision-making processes.[13] Strengthening planning and reporting requires schools and divisions to set priorities, measure progress and use results to improve education for students. The key to effective planning is the linkage and alignment of school plans with school division and provincial level planning.

An important trend in public education is an increasing requirement for consultation and collaboration with the expectation that such approaches will foster capacity at the local school level. It is important for schools and divisions to gather and use data to plan appropriately and involve the broader community in discussions about student success and school improvement.[14] There is a need to rethink research methodology, data collection and evaluation strategies to ensure a good fit between the thinking behind school planning and the ability to put these ideas into practice. Using results to plan improvements is an essential element in the development of successful schools.

Research points to the distinction between school effectiveness that is based largely on results in achievement tests and school success that includes broader goals and processes.[15] Student achievement is an important component of a good school but every school is unique and planning should reflect the individual needs of those who spend so much of their time there.[16] School planning builds a sense of common purpose among school staff, parents, students and community engaging in processes intended to change school practices to improve student outcomes.[17] Students succeed when educators and parents build stronger relationships with one another creating more opportunities for students to develop competence and more settings in which learners flourish.[18]

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13 Levin, B. R. & Riffel, J. A. (1997). *Schools and the changing world: Struggling toward the future*. London: Falmer Press.

14 Lewington, J. & Orpwood, G. (1993). *Overdue assignment: Taking responsibility for Canada's schools*. Toronto, ON: Wiley.

15 Sergiovanni, T. (1992). *Moral leadership: Getting to the heart of school improvement*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

16 King, A. J. C. & Peart, M. J. (1990). *The good school: Strategies for making secondary schools effective*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

17 Earl, L. & Lee, L. (1998). *Evaluation of the Manitoba School Improvement Program*. Winnipeg, MB: Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation.

18 Comer, J. P., Haynes, N. M., Joyner, E. T. & Ben-Avie, M. (1996). *Rallying the whole village: The Comer process of reforming education.* New York: Teachers College Press.

d) Professional Development

Students learn more from teachers who have strong academic skills and classroom teaching experience, are teaching in the field in which they are trained, and who participate in high quality professional development programs.[19] Professional development can be built into school planning with learning focused on the development of team building, conflict management and collaborative planning skills. Teachers should be able to learn about instructional and assessment methods that directly relate to student achievement. Improved student learning for all or most students requires improving teacher learning for all or most teachers.[20]

There has been a fundamental shift in what children learn and how they are taught.[21] Teachers have to be prepared to implement classroom practices that focus not only on content but also on skills, strategies and opportunities for active learning. Professional development should provide a theoretical understanding of new concepts through demonstrations and opportunities for practice with teachers working in teams for sharing, observation and peer coaching. It is important that teacher learning opportunities be research-based and supplement teachers' existing strategies, not replace them.[22]

There is a need to transform teaching approaches and to place more emphasis on student understanding and applicability of knowledge. Without appropriate training, some teachers continue to use a model of teaching that emphasizes memorizing facts in the absence of a deeper understanding of subject knowledge.[23] Teachers need opportunities to learn more about the subjects they teach and how students learn those subjects. Professional development resources aimed at gearing these learning opportunities for teachers should focus on what students are learning and what is being assessed.[24] Schools that foster ongoing teacher learning are better places for students to learn. Indeed, the school as a community of learners provides a context for everyone's lifelong growth.[25]

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19 Darling-Hammond, L. (1994). *Professional development schools: Schools for developing a profession*. New York: Teachers College Press.

20 Fullan, M. G. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform.* London: Falmer Press.

21 Gardner, H. (1991). *The unschooled mind: How children think and how schools should teach.* New York: Basic Books.

22 Elmore, R. F., Peterson, P. L., & McCarthey, S. J. (1996). *Restructuring in the classroom: Teaching, learning, and school organization.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

23 Kohn, A. (1998). *What to look for in a classroom and other essays* . San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

24 Stoll, L. & Fink, D. (1996). *Changing our schools: Linking school effectiveness and school improvement*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.

25 Barth, R. S. (1990). *Improving schools from within: Teachers, parents, and principals can make the difference.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

e) Learner Transitions

How students perform academically is key to successful transitions from early, middle and secondary years into post-secondary education and work.[26] There is significant evidence that secondary schools can do more to help students with these transitions.[27] Early school leaving and completion of compulsory education without the acquisition of skills needed for employment are poor educational outcomes. Successful transitions require school commitment, with the support and involvement of their community, to develop shared vision, goals and strategies to support learner success. Academic preparation, opportunities for career exploration and work experience all contribute to successful transitions.

It is important to monitor the extent to which students have access to educational pathways and how they progress through different levels of education. We know that the higher the family income of high school graduates, the more likely they are to enrol in post-secondary education but there are many other factors besides lack of financial resources that affect successful transitions. The percentage of high school completers who enrol in post-secondary education in the fall immediately after high school is influenced by the accessibility of higher education and the value the high school completer places on post-secondary education compared with other pursuits.[28] Students whose parents discuss schools and colleges are more likely to enrol in post-secondary programs. High school graduates with lower skill levels are less likely to enrol in post-secondary programs.

Effective programs for preventing failure begin early and continue throughout the early, middle and senior years. Building on students' personal and cultural assets contributes to student success at key development points. Varied approaches such as dual credits, work education, apprenticeship programs and employability portfolios can support entry to work or post-secondary education. Successful transitions reflect other important factors such as the efforts students put into their learning, the choices they make as they proceed through the system and the quality of the institutions they attend.

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26 Sizer, T. R. (1992). *Horace's school: Redesigning the American high school*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

27 Charner, I., Fraser, B. S., Hubbard, S., Rogers, A. & Horne, R. (1995). Reforms of the school to work transition: Findings, implications and challenges. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *77*(1), 58–60.

28 Human Resources Development Canada. (2002, June). *Knowledge matters: Skills and learning for Canadians*. Retrieved July 15, 2002 from http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/sp-ps/sl-ca/doc/report.shtml

f) Education Research

Research is a vehicle for understanding education issues and also for developing viable strategies to address them. Educational research examines schools and schooling in terms of relationships, teacher interaction with students, leadership, processes, allocation and use of resources and organizational arrangements to find out what affects students learning and in what ways. Research into these practical issues is helpful in identifying which of the many options are related to successful outcomes.

Educational research recognizes that measures of student success and school effectiveness extend beyond high test scores. Learner success has much more to do with gaining a real understanding of ideas and a developing a keen interest in learning. Concern for these outcomes suggests that there is a need to be clear about what is meant by "effective" and whether or not the effects are short or long term, low or high level.[29]

Successful school improvement requires a results-oriented process. The foundation for results involves meaningful teamwork, clear measurable outcomes, and the continuous collection and analysis of data.[30] A great deal of information available at the local school and division levels, from assessment results to attendance data, can be linked to school improvement efforts. Monitoring and interpreting this data is important in tracking the effects of change efforts. To do this requires time for teachers to work and reflect together. When schools focus on the implications of available data, they may find evidence that challenges existing perceptions of success or find discrepancies that raise questions about what is happening and why.

A challenge for schools is how to use data and evidence to determine value-added measures that will demonstrate increased student achievement and school improvement outcomes.[31] A further challenge is how to involve the whole school community in efforts to link research to practice giving administrators, teachers, parents, students and community members an opportunity for shared inquiry.[32] Much is learned from research on effective practice. It is important that schools are aware of, and use relevant research and evidence in their efforts to build effective school communities.

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29 Kohn, A. (1998). *What to look for in the classroom: And other essays* . San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

30 Schmoker, M. (1996). *Results: The key to continuous school improvement.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

31 Pipho, C. (1998). The value-added side of standards. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *79*(5), 341–342.

32 Elmore, R. F., Peterson, P. L. & McCarthey, S. J. (1996). *Restructuring in the classroom: Teaching, learning and school organization.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE K–S4 AGENDA

Government began consultation on the K–S4 Agenda in the 2000–2001 school year. Minister Drew Caldwell outlined six priorities in a letter sent to education partners in July 2000. These priorities are to:

1. improve outcomes especially for less successful learners;
2. strengthen links among schools, families and communities;
3. strengthen school planning and reporting;
4. improve professional learning opportunities for educators;
5. strengthen pathways among secondary schools, post-secondary education and work; and
6. link policy and practice to research and evidence.

These priorities were selected because:

- They build on research and evidence about how to improve our schools and contribute to improved student success. The priorities are consistent with the overall goals of Manitoba Education, Training and Youth and Manitoba Advanced Education to improve learner outcomes, expand the range of people served, integrate and support knowledge and skill development, increase the capacity across institutions and the community to support learning, and build upon partnerships within and across the education and training sectors;
- They complement the work already being done in many schools, in post-secondary education, in the Manitoba Training Strategy, as well as in other provincial initiatives such as Healthy Child Manitoba, Lighthouse Programs and Neighbourhoods Alive; and
- They foster collaboration among education partners both within and across school districts. Provincial priorities should recognize differences in local circumstances, and recognize the potential contributions of students, parents and communities as well as teachers, support staff and administrators.

Each of the priorities is intended to guide our future work by building on past successes and stretching our capacities to achieve even more.

Developments in 2001

In March 2001, the Department released a discussion paper titled *An Education Agenda: Kindergarten to Senior 4.* This was followed by seven regional sessions. For these meetings, school divisions were invited to send teams that included students, parents, teachers, administrators, school board members and other community representatives. At these meetings, there was discussion of the Agenda as well as local concerns and initiatives related to the priorities. More than 400 people participated in this consultation process.

Regional sessions culminated in a provincial conference in May 2001. Over 250 people from across the province came together to talk about public education. About half of those present had also attended a regional meeting, while the other half included not only educators but also a wide variety of people from business, community groups, faculties of education, universities and colleges and others with an interest in education.

In October 2001, the Minister met with trustees, superintendents, teachers, parents and students. All of these discussions helped to build consensus on the content and direction of the Agenda.

Developments in 2002

In 2002, the Department continued to work closely with school divisions to embed the priorities into school and division planning processes with a clear focus on student outcomes. The Department's website has been redesigned to provide comprehensive information on the status and plans for each of the priorities. On May 11, 2002, a provincial conference on *K–S4 Agenda: Building Effective School Communities* was sponsored by the Department with over 150 Manitobans participating in a discussion of the six priorities and celebrating the many excellent initiatives taking place in our schools and school divisions.

ACTIONS TO PROMOTE STUDENT SUCCESS

The six priorities of the K–S4 Agenda are inter-related. Improved learning opportunities for educators help to improve outcomes for all students, particularly less successful learners. School planning and reporting help to strengthen connections between home, school and community. Improved transitions from secondary to post-secondary education and work provide students with greater opportunities for continued success in their adult lives. Across the priorities, there is a continual need to consider the research and make decisions about programs based on evidence of what works.

Over the past year, the Department has identified concrete actions to advance each of the priorities. Currently there are 27 actions being undertaken to promote student success. As schools, divisions and communities articulate and pursue their own actions related to the six priorities, the work of all partners will create an enhanced education system for all Manitobans.

PRIORITY 1: IMPROVED OUTCOMES ESPECIALLY FOR LESS SUCCESSFUL LEARNERS

While it is important to look at better outcomes for all students, it is especially important to focus attention on those who are currently not succeeding. Less successful learners are socially and economically disenfranchised. In the absence of academic success, students lack the skills needed to secure relevant training and employment, and to participate fully as citizens. As a consequence, the costs to the individual and society as a whole are significant.

Across Manitoba, a number of initiatives are underway to address these issues. Schools, divisions and community organizations have formed partnerships to support pre-school, school-age and adult learning and literacy. Provincial curricula continues to provide effective instructional strategies and assessment approaches. A variety of field-based initiatives are positively influencing the readiness of young children for school, literacy levels and the school climate in which children learn. For example, Strong Beginnings in Assiniboine South School Division, Better Beginnings Pre-School Project in Swan Valley School Division, Literacy Links Program in St. James-Assiniboia School Division and Grand Rapids School Initiatives in Frontier School Division.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth is implementing the following actions:

1. An annual report on student achievement will be released to the public. A variety of province-based indicators will be presented with the content of each report being reflective of collaborative data collection efforts across Manitoba schools and divisions. A draft outline of the first report has been shared with the field, with release expected in Fall 2002. This report could also serve as a model for school and division outcome reporting.
2. Recommendations of *The Manitoba Special Education Review* (1999) are being implemented to support school personnel to best address the needs of struggling learners. Legislation is being introduced in 2002, while a pilot project on special needs funding and accountability has already been initiated, and a policy handbook related to special needs education has been sent to all school divisions.

3. Information on successful strategies to increase success for Aboriginal learners is being shared. An *Aboriginal Perspectives* document for curriculum developers to assist integration into all curricula is being developed. The Aboriginal Academic Achievement (AAA) grant supports family involvement, high school graduation rates and educator expectations. The Department works with many partners creating opportunities to share appropriate practice related to the education of Aboriginal children.

4. Policy and programming with respect to English as a Second Language (ESL) is being reviewed. A consultation process with partners has been initiated, and a survey of schools has been conducted to obtain timely information on ESL programming. The program review report will be released in early Fall 2002 with consultations to follow.

5. An action plan on equity and diversity is being developed. A draft of this plan, focused on concrete and achievable actions, will be circulated for comment in Fall 2002.

PRIORITY 2: STRENGTHENING LINKS AMONG SCHOOLS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Parents and families are children's first teachers, and as such they set the foundation from which children grow and continue to learn. Throughout a child's schooling and life in general, family involvement has been shown to be an essential component to facilitate success. Communities also contribute to children's physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive well-being, all of which are important features for healthy growth. Collaboration among families, the school, and the community improves the learning successes of all students.

In order to support this priority, collaboration among families, the school, community services and the Department has been increasing. The Department continues to fund the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, maintains links with various community agencies to support pre-school children and students with special needs, and encourages community use of schools. Additionally, the Department continues to provide learning opportunities for parents and other family members through workshops, information sessions and reporting. A number of school divisions and individual schools have opened their doors to the community through unique community school initiatives, mentorship programs and inviting community members into the schools to provide insights and knowledge to complement the professional skills of educators. For example: Advancing Community Schools in Seven Oaks School Division, Towards Cultural Restoration—Healing and Community in Mystery Lake School District, Citizens in Education in Brandon School Division, Arthur Meighen Mentorship Program in Portage la Prairie School Division.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth is implementing the following actions:

6. The Department is providing print and online materials for parents and the public that describe what students are learning in various grades and subjects. In consultation with the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, content is being developed for the K–8 and S1–S4 English, French Immersion and Français programs. Materials will be posted on the Department's website starting in September 2002 with print copies to follow.

7. Information is being provided to schools about effective communication strategies that engage parents in the education of their children. In partnership with the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, information sessions are being delivered on a pilot basis throughout the province. An information binder is being developed for parents and communities for receipt and use of updated information on a continuous basis from the Department.

8. Professional development is being enhanced with respect to parental and community involvement in the school and supporting learning activities in the home. A bibliography of articles related to parent involvement has been developed and is currently being distributed to parents and educators as a pilot initiative. In Fall 2002, a needs evaluation will be held with stakeholder groups, and professional development sessions will be held for teachers and parents related to parental and community involvement.

9. In consultation with educators and parents, support materials related to conflict resolution are being developed for schools, families and communities. A resource guide on commonly asked questions will be made available to the field in the 2002–2003 school year with other support documents to follow.

PRIORITY 3: STRENGTHENING SCHOOL PLANNING AND REPORTING

Schools are most successful when they have meaningful, clearly stated goals and a process for monitoring and reporting on the progress being made towards the achievement of these goals. Teachers, students, families and communities must participate in this process if it is to succeed.

Over the past year, tremendous strides have been taken by schools and school divisions to enhance their planning process. The Department has sponsored a variety of planning workshops, with many schools and divisions formally initiating planning processes in partnership with their respective communities. *Planning for Outcomes* has been generally accepted as a viable and needed focus. Many schools have already taken the initiative to identify how their goals relate to the Department's six priorities.

This action exemplifies the growing sense of connection across all our initiatives. In many school divisions, for example, a collaborative process with parents, students, staff and the Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP) has been created to explore positive ways of collecting and using data to better inform school improvement. Manitoba Education, Training and Youth is implementing the following actions:

10. School plans are to focus on improving learners' success and furthering the six priorities. Regional workshops on *Planning for Outcomes* have been held across the province. As a second phase, workshops on "outcomes evaluation" are being developed for regional sessions in the 2002–2003 school year.

11. Information-exchange is being facilitated on effective school and division planning. A template for reporting on school plans was developed and sent to all school divisions for implementation in the 2002–2003 school year. Each November, the Department will review school plans and provide feedback to the field on issues that might help future planning cycles.

12. Schools and divisions will be expected to report publicly on a range of student success measures. A discussion paper on the value and use of school-based indicators to support school planning has been distributed to the field. The reporting of school-based indicators is intended to complement the Department's annual report on student achievement.

PRIORITY 4: IMPROVING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATORS

Teachers have an enormous impact on how well students learn. As demands on schools and teachers change, educators must have the opportunity to maintain and improve their skills so that they can best meet the needs of students and communities.

In order to enhance the opportunities for teacher professional development, the Department, Faculties of Education, school divisions, educational associations, and individual schools are jointly and independently seeking alternative approaches. Priority topics for professional development such as subject areas, school environment issues, socio-economic conditions and student assessment are being noted and alternative approaches for delivery and information sharing are being explored.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth is implementing the following actions:

13. Professional development is being focused on key areas of instructional practice, assessment of learning, differentiated instruction, working with high needs schools and communities. Department consultants are working with stakeholder organizations to improve learning opportunities for educators.

14. An online website for teachers that highlights good practice and research relating to professional development priorities is being developed. Criteria are being articulated for what constitutes "good practice and research" and material gathered so the site can be made available in 2002–2003.

15. New formats for professional development such as teacher networks, online learning, mentoring and self-study are being developed. The Department has initiated work on a delivery model using Web CT software, while also holding stakeholder focus group sessions to discuss alternative opportunities. In 2002–2003, an online professional learning pilot will be conducted with middle years teachers.

16. Professional development is being strengthened for school leaders including the review of qualifications and credentials. The Department is supporting the work of its partners in education now studying the training and certification qualifications of administrators.

PRIORITY 5: STRENGTHENING PATHWAYS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOLS, POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND WORK

Many young people work while attending high school. After high school, students go on to work or additional education or both. In order to make these transitions as effective as possible, schools need to be well connected to post-secondary education and labour market options.

There are a number of school and school division projects that are successfully facilitating smooth transitions for students between high school, post-secondary education and employment. Some examples include the Career Exploration Cooperative in Portage la Prairie School Division, the MAHRCC Aerospace Partnership with Winnipeg School Division, the Supporting Teen Parents in Maintaining their Educational Paths in Rhineland School Division, the Real Game series implemented in many schools across the province, and the partnership between Children of the Earth High School and University of Winnipeg. A variety of other initiatives and programs have been in existence for many years that continue to provide students with opportunities to link their high school studies with their career aspirations such as Career Days, Science Fairs and locally developed Manitoba Prospects and High Demand Occupation reports.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth is implementing the following actions:

17. Employability skills credentials that would complement the high school diploma are being explored. Such an approach would involve prior learning assessment and recognition.

18. Information is being shared about school-initiated courses to assist students in career exploration and to address local labour market conditions. Online registration of school-initiated courses is in preparation and will be available in Fall 2002.

19. Assistance is being provided to schools to enable all secondary school students to develop a portfolio of skills linked to lifelong learning and employment. Students in many high schools in Manitoba already prepare portfolios as part of their program. The Department is reviewing the various approaches to portfolio development as a basis for province-wide implementation in 2003–2004.

20. Articulation between secondary and post-secondary education is being enhanced through joint programming, the awarding of dual credits, offering challenge for credit, and increasing distance learning opportunities, including Campus Manitoba. The Department has been partnering with school divisions on the development of online distance education courses, and consultation is taking place with universities and colleges related to distance learning options. A community service option and challenge for credit will be implemented in 2002–2003.

PRIORITY 6: LINKING POLICY AND PRACTICE TO RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE

Education policy development and practice should be based on research findings and linked to student learning results. The best available evidence from Manitoba and beyond should be used to inform what happens in our school system.

Over the past couple of years, a number of initiatives have been introduced in Manitoba schools that link policy and practice to research and evidence. The Grade 3 Assessment process, the MSIP, and the Understanding Early Years (UEY) program in Winnipeg School Division are all examples of the use of school-based data to inform school practice.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth is implementing the following actions:

21. The Department's website is being linked to research organizations in Canada and beyond. Research links to key national and international research sites will be available in Fall 2002.

22. Partnership research is being supported among universities, school divisions, schools and the Department.

23. Assistance to schools and divisions is being provided on research and evaluation techniques. In 2002–2003, the Department will sponsor research forums, symposia and workshops related to provincial research priorities and interests. Approaches to improve data collection and information exchange that support research activities are being developed.

24. Evaluation of policies and practices is being improved. On an annual basis, the Department has started to identify and conduct formal evaluations of programs and policies through a consultative approach with the field.

Overall Actions

In addition to each of the specific six priorities, the Department has initiated a number of actions that are intended to support all six priorities:

25. The Department is distributing research and information on promising programs and good practice to Manitoba schools and public. The *Manitoba K–S4 Education Agenda for Student Success* website has been launched in both English and French.

26. Schools and the public are being informed about successful initiatives in Manitoba and elsewhere on each priority. The Agenda website will feature information on good practice in schools with an emphasis on Manitoba examples beginning in 2002–2003.

27. The Department will support the development of networks of educators and others who want to work together on the six priority actions. A review of communication technology is being conducted to determine means of facilitating collaboration among educators on the six priorities. In the 2002–2003 school year, specific topics will be identified to initiate discussion among educators.

CONCLUSION

The *Manitoba K–S4 Education Agenda for Student Success* provides guidelines to allow everyone interested in public education to work together to make our schools as good as they can be. While the basic priorities are set, there will need to be continued discussion of how best to make them work. Changes can and will be made to the specific actions if it appears that such changes will best help us work together to realize our goals. There is also room for alternative approaches to the priorities at local school and division levels provided that these approaches are developed through community dialogue.

Educational change is itself a process of learning, so we will need to evaluate our efforts, to keep what is effective and to change what is not. The Department will also issue regular public updates on the Agenda so that all educational partners can be aware of the status of the priority actions and subsequent outcomes. The Department is committed to an open dialogue with educational partners to ensure that we work together for the benefit of students, families and communities.