December 1994

The Honourable Dave Cooke
Minister of Education and Training

Dear Mr. Minister:

It is with a sense of great hope for the future of the young people of Ontario that we respectfully submit to you the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Learning.

Very sincerely yours,

Monique Bégin
Co-chair

Gerald Caplan
Co-chair

Manisha Bharti
Commissioner

Avis Glaze
Commissioner

Raf DiCecco
Executive Director

Dave Murphy
Commissioner

WHEREAS the Government of Ontario, in support of its commitment to economic renewal and social justice, has identified the need to set new directions in education to ensure that Ontario youth are well-prepared for the challenges of the 21st century, and

WHEREAS Ontario's public and separate school systems are under continuing pressure to respond to the impact of new technologies and a changing social and economic milieu, and
WHEREAS Ontario residents expect high standards in elementary and secondary education and deserve appropriate measures of accountability, relevant curriculum content to meet the needs of students and society, improved retention rates, effective links to work and higher education, an effective and efficient system of education and increased levels of public involvement in education, and

WHEREAS the Government of Ontario believes that it is in the public interest that ample opportunity be provided for full public participation in the consideration of matters related to the delivery of elementary and secondary education in Ontario, and

WHEREAS pursuant to section 2 of the Public Inquiries Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter P.41, whenever the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers it expedient to cause inquiry to be made concerning any matter that he declares to be a matter of public concern, and the inquiry is not regulated by any special law, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by commission, appoint one or more persons to conduct the inquiry, and

WHEREAS the Lieutenant Governor in Council deems it expedient to cause inquiry to be made into education concerns and has concluded that this can best be achieved by means of a public inquiry instituted pursuant to the provisions of the Public Inquiries Act;

NOW THEREFORE, pursuant to the provisions of the Public Inquiries Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter P.41, a commission be issued appointing Gerald Caplan, Monique Bégin, Msgr. Dennis Murphy, Avis Glaze and Manisha Bharti commissioners under the designation the Royal Commission on Learning ("Commission"), and appointing Gerald Caplan and Monique Bégin Co-chairs of the Commission, such Commission to present a vision and action plan to guide Ontario's reform of elementary and secondary education and for such purpose to study and report upon the matters set out as follows:

**Shared Vision**

- What are the values and principles that should guide the education of Ontario's elementary and secondary school students?
- What are the key goals of Ontario's elementary and secondary school system and who are its clients?
- How are strong partnerships in education ensured?

**Program**

- What knowledge, skills and values do elementary and secondary students need to prepare them for the future?
- How, and by whom, should this body of skills, knowledge and values be developed to fulfill the specific mandate of all publicly funded school systems?
- How should the curriculum in elementary and secondary schools be organized and delivered?
- What is the best way to ensure that more students graduate from secondary
What is the best way to help students make effective transitions into school and from school to work/community life, further education or training?

How should teachers be prepared for and supported in their new roles and responsibilities to meet the needs of all students? Who should be responsible for teacher education, both before and throughout a teacher's career?

What is the best way to ensure continuous quality improvement?

**Accountability**

- What standards should be set for all elementary and secondary students and how and by whom should they be set?
- How should students be evaluated?
- How should student progress be reported?
- How should schools and programs be evaluated?
- To whom should progress be reported and for what purpose?
- Who should be accountable for results achieved in education?

**Education Governance (within the constitutional and Charter rights in education)**

- What should be the respective roles and responsibilities of the partners in education, e.g., students, parents, teachers, school boards, the community, and the Ministry of Education and Training?
- What accountability mechanisms should exist to ensure that roles are respected and responsibilities met?
- What is the most effective, efficient organizational structure for elementary and secondary education in Ontario?
- What models exist for French language governance within such a structure?

AND FURTHER that the Commission is empowered to request oral submissions and written briefs from any person or organization in the conduct of its enquiries and to engage persons with special knowledge in the matters heretofore mentioned to cause research papers to be prepared in areas of research considered essential to the Commission to formulate its recommendations;

AND FURTHER that the Commission hold public hearings in locations to be determined by the Commission for the purpose of receiving public input into the matters under consideration;

AND FURTHER that all Government Ministries, Boards, Agencies and Commissions assist the Commission to the fullest extent in order that the Commission may carry out its duties and functions, and that the Commission shall have authority to engage such counsel, expert technical advisors, investigators and other staff as the Commission deems proper, at rates of remuneration to be approved by Management Board of Cabinet, in order that a complete and comprehensive report may be prepared and submitted to the Minister of Education and Training;

AND FURTHER that the Commission make interim reports to the Minister of
Education and Training at times agreed to by the Commission and the Minister;
AND FURTHER that the Commission make its final report to the Minister of
Education and Training; as soon as practicable but not later than the 31st day of
December 1994 recommending such changes in the laws, policies, and procedures
as in the opinion of the Commission are necessary and desirable to improve the
efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and accountability of education in Ontario.

Staff List

Executive Director*
Raffaella (Raf) Di Cecco

Research
Suzanne Ziegler
Nancy Watson
Julie Lindhout
Wayne Burnett
Anne-Marie Caron-Réaume
Burle Summers
Brian McGowan
George Bedard

Administration
Robert Graham
Naldray Callender
Mildred Stedman
Elizabeth Sinclair
Michael Tansey
Selwyn Hicks
Suzanne Tomosvary
Melanie Hoskins
Nadia Temple

Other Services
Communications
Crosbie Communications
Design
Public Good
French Version
Francine Watkins, Gérard Godbout, QualiT
Project Manager
Patricia McCuaig
Copy Editing
Dennis Mills
Production
Leslie Smart & Associates Limited, Mojo & Hunter
Sound Production/Interpretation
Adcom Presentation Group, Taschereau Vincent
Photography
Their way into the future

Our schools will never be perfect. Yet our striving as Ontarians requires that they be better than they have been. Like no other social institution, our schools hold the promise of a way into the future for us all.

It is still dark most mornings at 7:15 as Nelson climbs aboard the big yellow bus. His destination is a Grade 7 classroom at King George school in Northwestern Ontario.

His parents have already left for work, his father to the papermill, his mother to her job as a teller in a local bank. Nelson's breakfast has been prepared by his widowed grandmother, who lives across the street. This morning, as is often the case, he has been deeply impressed by the wisdom of this serene, and to him, wonderful woman. She has such an easy certainty about life. But as Nelson and his friends travel along a northern road made bumpy with frost boils, their chatter betrays little of this same confidence and certainty.

Nelson has heard his parents discuss the possible closing of the mill and what this will do to their financial future. Today he and a few of his native classmates will be presenting a project on their culture, religion, and the history of Native peoples before the arrival of the Europeans. The reception they can expect from the rest of the class remains a question.

Already some of Nelson's classmates are skipping a lot of school. And, although he is a good student, he is beginning to wonder what the future holds for him. Like many Grade 7 students he finds the curriculum to be somewhat repetitious and of little relevance to the rest of his life. Nelson has obvious athletic talents and is the star of his hockey team. Sports and fitness magazines are his favourite reading. Recently this has led him to become interested in all of the forces and mechanics involved in body movements - what the scientists call kinesiology.

At school, however, he receives scant encouragement for these interests and little in the line of reward for the effort he puts forth. He is increasingly bored by it all. As far as he can see, high school doesn't hold out much hope for anything better, although there is a hockey team there that he would like to play for.

As Nelson begins his daily journey to school, Sally kisses her mother good-bye in...
Toronto, where it is 8:15. She will catch the bus and subway to the spanking new Arts Academy that she has chosen. There she specializes in drama. One of the things Sally notices is that her teachers, who have also chosen this high school, are as excited as she is about their school and their forthcoming production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.*

As Sally heads out the door, her mother is less excited. She and her husband miss the support of the community that was so much part of their life in Saskatchewan. Their high-rise seems to breed anonymity, and even the people in their local church seem cold and distant. Despite two incomes - her secretarial wages and her husband's salary with a security firm - she wonders whether they can meet even the minimal needs of Sally and her two younger brothers. She worries about Sally's casual attitude towards sex, the number of her daughter's friends who have become pregnant, the ever-present threat of AIDS, and the constant news reports about the level of drug use and violence in the teenage world.

But as Sally climbs onto the bus that will take her on the first stage of her daily trip to school, she feels that she is already launched upon a career in the world of entertainment. Not only the English and drama courses, but even the courses she takes in history and social science seem related to her ambitions.

**Annette has but a 15-minute** walk each morning to École Notre-Dame, an elementary school in Eastern Ontario. Her backpack carries both her school books and her lunch - no-one will be home until after 5:30 in the afternoon. She meets Chantal, an immigrant from Senegal, and Jean-Paul on her way, and despite the admonitions of her parents and teachers, they discuss in English the previous night's episode of *Star Trek.*

Annette's parents have moved to this part of the province so that she can be immersed in a culture, language, and a religious faith on which they place great value. In the evening, however, they feel too tired after work to follow Annette's school career with her. From Annette's report card, they suspect that their daughter isn't reading as well as her Grade 4 classmates. The teacher seems reassuring, but recent newspaper articles have spoken of how reading deficits often go unremedied in the schools. Perhaps they will have to see the teacher, maybe next week ... They wonder sometimes if the financial and material good of the family has come to overshadow all their other family values. As Annette continues on to school, she has little sense that the shape of her future has been touched already by some ambiguity.

**For the last two months Patrick** has been proudly heading out to school in Windsor at the wheel of his recently purchased '69 Mustang. Twenty hours of work a week at a local fast-food outlet provided the down payment and continues to assure enough money for insurance, gas, and repairs. Most of the repairs he has managed himself. His friends recognize that he is a whiz at anything mechanical. Although an "A" student in his earlier years at school, Patrick doesn't do well at school now. He is often too tired to concentrate after a night's work.

He is fascinated by the technology that is used to diagnose motors and other car components, and he spends hours at auto shows. The school guidance counsellor
doesn't seem much interested in Patrick's entusiasms, nor is she able to find a workplace spot where he could follow up his interests more closely. Most of her interest seems to be in those students who are planning to go to university - and, at least at first blush, Patrick doesn't seem to fit that mold. He has been in high school for three and a half years, and he remains uncertain about his future plans.

There is little uncertainty in Maggie's mind as she heads out to cross the city to the alternative school where she began four months ago. At 27, she finds herself excited for the first time about going to school. As a single parent with a three-year-old daughter, she was devastated when she lost her factory job a year ago. Now, as an adult student, she is taking upgrading courses that are preparing her for the field of medical technology, which has always been her dream.

A program tailored to her specific family and academic needs has been worked out. The school provides on-site daycare for her daughter, and she has surprised herself and her teachers by quickly finishing the first requisite math and chemistry courses in her program.

As we turn the corner to the twenty-first century, Nelson, Sally, Annette, Patrick, and Maggie set out each morning for school in the space age, and in an age of increasingly fragile families. They go into a world of high tech and desperate economic times, as members of a generation that witnesses medical miracles and the ravages of AIDS. Essential to their way into the future is the way in which they will be educated in Ontario's schools. Their journey is the journey of us all - of all citizens of Ontario. Their future is our future, and it depends in no small part on how we educate them.

Preface

Talk about your lifelong learning. For two people whose obsessions, over lo these many decades, have included a mastery of new areas of public policy, the past 20 months have been the equivalent of winning a lottery. We have had the privilege of being able to immerse ourselves in an issue in which neither of us pretended any great recent expertise, about which party politics did not impose particular ideological constraints, and around which there swirls great public controversy. What a treat! We are grateful to whoever decided to choose us for this singular opportunity.

In an eventful year and two-thirds, two aspects of our experiences are perhaps most notable. First is the unexpected lack of consensus that we found to exist in Ontario on just about every aspect of the education system. As we moved around Ontario, we discovered passion, concern, knowledge, myths, commitment, grandstanding - indeed, just about everything but agreement. Ontarians disagreed about what the major problems were and they disagreed about what the solutions were.

Which brings us to our second main observation. To be perfectly honest, when we finished our public hearings we could not conceive how we could find common ground. There was no reason to believe that the five members of the Commission,
who were virtual strangers to each other the day we first came together, would not reflect the lack of consensus that existed in the public at large. Yet we ended with a unanimous report. If the argument of our study - that we have the capacity to forge an excellent education system provides grounds for optimism, as we believe it does, then the fact of our unanimity should offer hope that Ontarians might, just might, be able to reach agreement on what its education system should be as we leap across the threshold towards the mystique of the 21st century.

But it was not easy for us and it will not be easy for Ontarians. We were five tough-minded individuals, each with certain concerns that mattered to her or him far more than to the others. Sometimes we persuaded our colleagues of the indispensability of the word or phrase or recommendation we could simply not live without; at other times, each of us somehow learned to live without. Each of us gave up something, a price we consciously chose to pay to achieve the greater goal of a report that was realistic, balanced, and eminently implementable.

If we can do it, why can't Ontario? In the end, we believe our real achievement was being able to tap into the common hopes and desires that ran deep beneath the surface of so many apparently conflicting positions. Obviously we could not adopt every suggestion of every submission. No-one can. It cannot be done. But as two long-time political veterans who have no illusions about how the game is played, we think we honoured - and were able to reconcile - the best ideas of just about every player in the system without ignoring the interests of any of them. If each is prepared to see it this way, to see their glass as half-full rather than half-empty, to show the same flexibility as the Commission itself, we'll be well on the road to building our better education system.

As people with some familiarity with such matters, it seems to us that we were also notable in the history of commissions in Canada and the provinces for another reason: with a relatively modest research staff and secretariat, we were truly creatures of our time in learning how to work smarter with small resources. And we are on time!

Our fellow Commissioners threw themselves into their work with gusto and dedication, and to say we five functioned as complete equals through every long, arduous step of the way would not exaggerate the process one whit.

As for our staff, their commitment and devotion could hardly have been greater. They worked impossible hours, were prodigiously productive and superhumanly efficient, and it is literally unimaginable what would have happened to us without them. They own this report as much as the five whose names appear as commissioners, and our gratitude to them is boundless.

It is normally invidious to single out individuals for special mention in these prefaces. But the two of us have broken customs before, and this is surely an appropriate place to do so again. We're certain neither Dennis Murphy nor Avis Glaze - to whom we owe a huge debt of thanks for their significant contribution - will feel neglected if we make special mention here of our colleague, Manisha Bharti. During the course of our work, friends invariably asked whether Manisha was as good as her reputation suggested. Our answer, invariably, was "Better". We
witnessed her steady growth from 17 to 19. We would like to think she learned something from us; certainly we learned enormously from her. It should be sufficient to say that, on top of her other contributions, the title of this report is due entirely to her.

Finally, not to record here our specific debt to Raffaella Di Cecco, our executive director, would simply be a rank injustice. It is entirely possible that this report could have been concluded without either of us; it could not have been done without Raf, whose talents, sensibilities and insights seemed unlimited. Thank you, Raf; when Manisha becomes Prime Minister, one of us will recommend you as Chief of Staff (if only we knew the party affiliation of either of you), or Clerk of the Privy Council (depending on which of us, if either, have the remotest influence at that time).

Monique Bégin Gerald Caplan

Acknowledgments

Members and staff of the Royal Commission on Learning gratefully acknowledge the help of the thousands of people parents, students, educators, representatives of groups across Ontario - who shared their views, who offered advice, and whose experiences helped clarify the issues before us. By participating in the crucial debate on education, they contributed to the life of the province, now and in the future.

We extend personal thanks to the schools: the principals, teachers, support staff and the many students who assisted us during the hearings. Their hospitality and enthusiasm made our job easier and more pleasurable.

We wish to extend our special thanks to the wonderful youth volunteers who enabled us to hear from and spend time with many students and young people who normally are never seen by those studying education.

We are indebted to Dr. Roberta Bondar for her assistance as the Commission's special advisor in science.

ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
© Copyright 1994, Queen's Printer for Ontario
Dear Mr. Minister:

It is with a sense of great hope for the future of the young people of Ontario that we respectfully submit to you the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Learning.

Very sincerely yours,

Monique Bégin
Co-chair

The Honourable Dave Cooke
Minister of Education and Training

WHEREAS the Government of Ontario, in support of its commitment to economic renewal and social justice, has identified the need to set new directions in education to ensure that Ontario youth are well-prepared for the challenges of the 21st century, and

WHEREAS Ontario's public and separate school systems are under continuing pressure to respond to the impact of new technologies and a changing social and economic milieu, and

WHEREAS Ontario residents expect high standards in elementary and secondary education and deserve
appropriate measures of accountability, relevant curriculum content to meet the needs of students and society, improved retention rates, effective links to work and higher education, an effective and efficient system of education and increased levels of public involvement in education, and

WHEREAS the Government of Ontario believes that it is in the public interest that ample opportunity be provided for full public participation in the consideration of matters related to the delivery of elementary and secondary education in Ontario, and

WHEREAS pursuant to section 2 of the Public Inquiries Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter P.41, whenever the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers it expedient to cause inquiry to be made concerning any matter that he declares to be a matter of public concern, and the inquiry is not regulated by any special law, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by commission, appoint one or more persons to conduct the inquiry, and

WHEREAS the Lieutenant Governor in Council deems it expedient to cause inquiry to be made into education concerns and has concluded that this can best be achieved by means of a public inquiry instituted pursuant to the provisions of the Public Inquiries Act;

NOW THEREFORE, pursuant to the provisions of the Public Inquiries Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter P.41, a commission be issued appointing Gerald Caplan, Monique Bégin, Msgr. Dennis Murphy, Avis Glaze and Manisha Bharti commissioners under the designation the Royal Commission on Learning ("Commission"), and appointing Gerald Caplan and Monique Bégin Co-chairs of the Commission, such Commission to present a vision and action plan to guide Ontario's reform of elementary and secondary education and for such purpose to study and report upon the matters set out as follows:

Shared Vision

● What are the values and principles that should guide the education of Ontario's elementary and secondary school students?
● What are the key goals of Ontario's elementary and secondary school system and who are its clients?
● How are strong partnerships in education ensured?

Program

● What knowledge, skills and values do elementary and secondary students need to prepare them for the future?
● How, and by whom, should this body of skills, knowledge and values be developed to fulfill the specific mandate of all publicly funded school systems?
● How should the curriculum in elementary and secondary schools be organized and delivered?
● What is the best way to ensure that more students graduate from secondary school?
● What is the best way to help students make effective transitions into school and from school to work/community life, further education or training?
● How should teachers be prepared for and supported in their new roles and responsibilities to meet the needs of all students? Who should be responsible for teacher education, both before and throughout a teacher's career?
● What is the best way to ensure continuous quality improvement?
Accountability

- What standards should be set for all elementary and secondary students and how and by whom should they be set?
- How should students be evaluated?
- How should student progress be reported?
- How should schools and programs be evaluated?
- To whom should progress be reported and for what purpose?
- Who should be accountable for results achieved in education?

Education Governance (within the constitutional and Charter rights in education)

- What should be the respective roles and responsibilities of the partners in education, e.g., students, parents, teachers, school boards, the community, and the Ministry of Education and Training?
- What accountability mechanisms should exist to ensure that roles are respected and responsibilities met?
- What is the most effective, efficient organizational structure for elementary and secondary education in Ontario?
- What models exist for French language governance within such a structure?

AND FURTHER that the Commission is empowered to request oral submissions and written briefs from any person or organization in the conduct of its enquiries and to engage persons with special knowledge in the matters heretofore mentioned to cause research papers to be prepared in areas of research considered essential to the Commission to formulate its recommendations;

AND FURTHER that the Commission hold public hearings in locations to be determined by the Commission for the purpose of receiving public input into the matters under consideration;

AND FURTHER that all Government Ministries, Boards, Agencies and Commissions assist the Commission to the fullest extent in order that the Commission may carry out its duties and functions, and that the Commission shall have authority to engage such counsel, expert technical advisors, investigators and other staff as the Commission deems proper, at rates of remuneration to be approved by Management Board of Cabinet, in order that a complete and comprehensive report may be prepared and submitted to the Minister of Education and Training;

AND FURTHER that the Commission make interim reports to the Minister of Education and Training at times agreed to by the Commission and the Minister;

AND FURTHER that the Commission make its final report to the Minister of Education and Training; as soon as practicable but not later than the 31st day of December 1994 recommending such changes in the laws, policies, and procedures as in the opinion of the Commission are necessary and desirable to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and accountability of education in Ontario.
**Staff List**

**Executive Director***
Raffaella (Raf) Di Cecco

**Research**
Suzanne Ziegler  
Nancy Watson  
Julie Lindhout  
Wayne Burnett  
Anne-Marie Caron-Réaueme  
Burle Summers  
Brian McGowan  
George Bedard

**Administration**
Robert Graham  
Naldra Callender  
Mildred Stedman  
Elizabeth Sinclair  
Michael Tansey  
Selwyn Hicks  
Suzanne Tomosvary  
Melanie Hoskins  
Nadine Temple  
Maureen Davis  
Steven Fisher  
Lucy Dotto  
Basanti Singh  
Marc Lalonde

**Other Services**

**Communications**
Crosbie Communications

**Design**
Public Good

**French Version**
Francine Watkins, Gérard Godbout, QualiT

**Project Manager**
Patricia McCuaig

**Copy Editing**
Dennis Mills

**Production**
Leslie Smart & Associates Limited, Mojo & Hunter

**Sound Production/Interpretation**
Adcom Presentation Group, Taschereau Vincent

**Photography**
Ruth Kaplan, Al Weinberg,  
Special Events/Media Production,  
North York Board of Education,  
The Stock Library
Their way into the future

Our schools will never be perfect. Yet our striving as Ontarians requires that they be better than they have been. Like no other social institution, our schools hold the promise of a way into the future for us all.

It is still dark most mornings at 7:15 as Nelson climbs aboard the big yellow bus. His destination is a Grade 7 classroom at King George school in Northwestern Ontario.

His parents have already left for work, his father to the papermill, his mother to her job as a teller in a local bank. Nelson's breakfast has been prepared by his widowed grandmother, who lives across the street. This morning, as is often the case, he has been deeply impressed by the wisdom of this serene, and to him, wonderful woman. She has such an easy certainty about life. But as Nelson and his friends travel along a northern road made bumpy with frost boils, their chatter betrays little of this same confidence and certainty.

Nelson has heard his parents discuss the possible closing of the mill and what this will do to their financial future. Today he and a few of his native classmates will be presenting a project on their culture, religion, and the history of Native peoples before the arrival of the Europeans. The reception they can expect from the rest of the class remains a question.

Already some of Nelson's classmates are skipping a lot of school. And, although he is a good student, he is beginning to wonder what the future holds for him. Like many Grade 7 students he finds the curriculum to be somewhat repetitious and of little relevance to the rest of his life. Nelson has obvious athletic talents and is the star of his hockey team. Sports and fitness magazines are his favourite reading. Recently this has led him to become interested in all of the forces and mechanics involved in body movements - what the scientists call kinesiology.

At school, however, he receives scant encouragement for these interests and little in the line of reward for the effort he puts forth. He is increasingly bored by it all. As far as he can see, high school doesn't hold out much hope for anything better, although there is a hockey team there that he would like to play for.

As Nelson begins his daily journey to school, Sally kisses her mother good-bye in Toronto, where it is 8:15. She will catch the bus and subway to the spanking new Arts Academy that she has chosen. There she specializes in drama. One of the things Sally notices is that her teachers, who have also chosen this high school, are as excited as she is about their school and their forthcoming production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.

As Sally heads out the door, her mother is less excited. She and her husband miss the support of the community that was so much part of their life in Saskatchewan. Their high-rise seems to breed anonymity, and even the people in their local church seem cold and distant. Despite two incomes - her
secretarial wages and her husband's salary with a security firm - she wonders whether they can meet even the minimal needs of Sally and her two younger brothers. She worries about Sally's casual attitude towards sex, the number of her daughter's friends who have become pregnant, the ever-present threat of AIDS, and the constant news reports about the level of drug use and violence in the teenage world.

But as Sally climbs onto the bus that will take her on the first stage of her daily trip to school, she feels that she is already launched upon a career in the world of entertainment. Not only the English and drama courses, but even the courses she takes in history and social science seem related to her ambitions.

Annette has but a 15-minute walk each morning to École Notre-Dame, an elementary school in Eastern Ontario. Her backpack carries both her school books and her lunch - no-one will be home until after 5:30 in the afternoon. She meets Chantal, an immigrant from Senegal, and Jean-Paul on her way, and despite the admonitions of her parents and teachers, they discuss in English the previous night's episode of Star Trek.

Annette's parents have moved to this part of the province so that she can be immersed in a culture, language, and a religious faith on which they place great value. In the evening, however, they feel too tired after work to follow Annette's school career with her. From Annette's report card, they suspect that their daughter isn't reading as well as her Grade 4 classmates. The teacher seems reassuring, but recent newspaper articles have spoken of how reading deficits often go unremedied in the schools. Perhaps they will have to see the teacher, maybe next week ... They wonder sometimes if the financial and material good of the family has come to overshadow all their other family values. As Annette continues on to school, she has little sense that the shape of her future has been touched already by some ambiguity.

For the last two months Patrick has been proudly heading out to school in Windsor at the wheel of his recently purchased '69 Mustang. Twenty hours of work a week at a local fast-food outlet provided the down payment and continues to assure enough money for insurance, gas, and repairs. Most of the repairs he has managed himself. His friends recognize that he is a whiz at anything mechanical. Although an "A" student in his earlier years at school, Patrick doesn't do well at school now. He is often too tired to concentrate after a night's work.

He is fascinated by the technology that is used to diagnose motors and other car components, and he spends hours at auto shows. The school guidance counsellor doesn't seem much interested in Patrick's enthusiasms, nor is she able to find a workplace spot where he could follow up his interests more closely. Most of her interest seems to be in those students who are planning to go to university - and, at least at first blush, Patrick doesn't seem to fit that mold. He has been in high school for three and a half years, and he remains uncertain about his future plans.

There is little uncertainty in Maggie's mind as she heads out to cross the city to the alternative school where she began four months ago. At 27, she finds herself excited for the first time about going to school. As a single parent with a three-year-old daughter, she was devastated when she lost her factory job a year ago. Now, as an adult student, she is taking upgrading courses that are preparing her for the field of medical technology, which has always been her dream.

A program tailored to her specific family and academic needs has been worked out. The school provides on-site daycare for her daughter, and she has surprised herself and her teachers by quickly finishing the first requisite math and chemistry courses in her program.

As we turn the corner to the twenty-first century, Nelson, Sally, Annette, Patrick, and Maggie set out
each morning for school in the space age, and in an age of increasingly fragile families. They go into a world of high tech and desperate economic times, as members of a generation that witnesses medical miracles and the ravages of AIDS. Essential to their way into the future is the way in which they will be educated in Ontario's schools. Their journey is the journey of us all - of all citizens of Ontario. Their future is our future, and it depends in no small part on how we educate them.

Preface

Talk about your lifelong learning. For two people whose obsessions, over lo these many decades, have included a mastery of new areas of public policy, the past 20 months have been the equivalent of winning a lottery. We have had the privilege of being able to immerse ourselves in an issue in which neither of us pretended any great recent expertise, about which party politics did not impose particular ideological constraints, and around which there swirls great public controversy. What a treat! We are grateful to whoever decided to choose us for this singular opportunity.

In an eventful year and two-thirds, two aspects of our experiences are perhaps most notable. First is the unexpected lack of consensus that we found to exist in Ontario on just about every aspect of the education system. As we moved around Ontario, we discovered passion, concern, knowledge, myths, commitment, grandstanding - indeed, just about everything but agreement. Ontarians disagreed about what the major problems were and they disagreed about what the solutions were.

Which brings us to our second main observation. To be perfectly honest, when we finished our public hearings we could not conceive how we could find common ground. There was no reason to believe that the five members of the Commission, who were virtual strangers to each other the day we first came together, would not reflect the lack of consensus that existed in the public at large. Yet we ended with a unanimous report. If the argument of our study - that we have the capacity to forge an excellent education system provides grounds for optimism, as we believe it does, then the fact of our unanimity should offer hope that Ontarians might, just might, be able to reach agreement on what its education system should be as we leap across the threshold towards the mystique of the 21st century.

But it was not easy for us and it will not be easy for Ontarians. We were five tough-minded individuals, each with certain concerns that mattered to her or him far more than to the others. Sometimes we persuaded our colleagues of the indispensability of the word or phrase or recommendation we could simply not live without; at other times, each of us somehow learned to live without. Each of us gave up something, a price we consciously chose to pay to achieve the greater goal of a report that was realistic, balanced, and eminently implementable.

If we can do it, why can't Ontario? In the end, we believe our real achievement was being able to tap into the common hopes and desires that ran deep beneath the surface of so many apparently conflicting positions. Obviously we could not adopt every suggestion of every submission. No-one can. It cannot be done. But as two long-time political veterans who have no illusions about how the game is played, we think we honoured - and were able to reconcile - the best ideas of just about every player in the system without ignoring the interests of any of them. If each is prepared to see it this way, to see their glass as half-full rather than half-empty, to show the same flexibility as the Commission itself, we'll be well on the road to building our better education system.
As people with some familiarity with such matters, it seems to us that we were also notable in the history of commissions in Canada and the provinces for another reason: with a relatively modest research staff and secretariat, we were truly creatures of our time in learning how to work smarter with small resources. And we are on time!

Our fellow Commissioners threw themselves into their work with gusto and dedication, and to say we five functioned as complete equals through every long, arduous step of the way would not exaggerate the process one whit.

As for our staff, their commitment and devotion could hardly have been greater. They worked impossible hours, were prodigiously productive and superhumanly efficient, and it is literally unimaginable what would have happened to us without them. They own this report as much as the five whose names appear as commissioners, and our gratitude to them is boundless.

It is normally invidious to single out individuals for special mention in these prefaces. But the two of us have broken customs before, and this is surely an appropriate place to do so again. We're certain neither Dennis Murphy nor Avis Glaze - to whom we owe a huge debt of thanks for their significant contribution - will feel neglected if we make special mention here of our colleague, Manisha Bharti. During the course of our work, friends invariably asked whether Manisha was as good as her reputation suggested. Our answer, invariably, was "Better". We witnessed her steady growth from 17 to 19. We would like to think she learned something from us; certainly we learned enormously from her. It should be sufficient to say that, on top of her other contributions, the title of this report is due entirely to her.

Finally, not to record here our specific debt to Raffaella Di Cecco, our executive director, would simply be a rank injustice. It is entirely possible that this report could have been concluded without either of us; it could not have been done without Raf, whose talents, sensibilities and insights seemed unlimited. Thank you, Raf; when Manisha becomes Prime Minister, one of us will recommend you as Chief of Staff (if only we knew the party affiliation of either of you), or Clerk of the Privy Council (depending on which of us, if either, have the remotest influence at that time).

Monique Bégin  Gerald Caplan

Acknowledgments

Members and staff of the Royal Commission on Learning gratefully acknowledge the help of the thousands of people parents, students, educators, representatives of groups across Ontario - who shared their views, who offered advice, and whose experiences helped clarify the issues before us. By participating in the crucial debate on education, they contributed to the life of the province, now and in the future.

We extend personal thanks to the schools: the principals, teachers, support staff and the many students who assisted us during the hearings. Their hospitality and enthusiasm made our job easier and more pleasurable.

We wish to extend our special thanks to the wonderful youth volunteers who enabled us to hear from and spend time with many students and young people who normally are never seen by those studying
education.

We are indebted to Dr. Roberta Bondar for her assistance as the Commission's special advisor in science.

ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
© Copyright 1994, Queen's Printer for Ontario
Table of Contents

Volume I: Mandate, Context, Issues

Introduction to the Report

A climate of uncertainty
Some recent history of educational change and reform
Improving Ontario’s schools
News, both good and bad
Our way into the future
The curriculum
Making change happen

Chapter 1: The Royal Commission on Learning

Public consultation
Experts and research
Commissioners' meetings

Chapter 2: Education and Society

Education in Ontario: A brief history
More recent educational history
Reflecting on change
Ontario: Picture of the province
Ontario's changing economy
Demographic factors
Values and knowledge
Educational statistics for Ontario
Some indicators of how we are doing
Costs of education
A national and international context for educational reform

Chapter 3: People's Voices

The purposes of education and curriculum issues
Teaching and teacher education
Assessment and accountability
Organization of education (governance)
Public concerns and the Commission's mandate

Chapter 4: Purposes of Education

The issues
Sharpening the focus: A set of purposes
Schools in the broader community: A framework
Primary and shared responsibilities
Chapter 5: What Is Learning?
What do we know about how learning happens?
Learning for life: The importance of early learning
Informal to formal learning: The transition from home to school

Chapter 6: What Is Teaching?
Characteristics of good teaching
Good teachers in their schools
Conclusion

Volume II: Learning - Our Vision for Schools

Introduction to Volume II
Key issues
Strategies for improvement: A learning system that focuses on the learner and on literacies

Chapter 7: The Learner from Birth to Age 6: The Transition from Home to School
The learner from birth to age 3: The literacies curriculum home and care
The learner from age 3 to 6: The literacy curriculum in a school setting

Chapter 8: The Learner from Age 6 to 15: Our Common Curriculum
The transition to compulsory schooling
The foundation: The essential elements of the elementary curriculum
Core subjects
Continuity in curriculum and learning, Grades 1-6
The transition to adolescence: Special consideration of the needs of learners from age 12 to 15
The curriculum as the basis of a learning system through Grade 9

Chapter 9: The Learner from Age 15 to 18: Further Education and Specialization Years
The current context of secondary education in Ontario
Suggestions for reorganizing the secondary school

Chapter 10: Supports for Learning: Special Needs and Special Opportunities
Supports for some students
Supports for learning for all students

Chapter 11: Evaluating Achievement
Student assessment: What people told us
The recent history of student assessment in Ontario
Assessing individual students
Large-scale assessment of student achievement and the effectiveness of school programs
Conclusion
Conclusion: What We Have Said about the Learning System

Volume II Recommendations

Volume III: The Educators

Chapter 12: The Educators
   Section A: Professional issues
   Section B: Teacher education
   Section C: Evaluating performance
   Section D: Leadership

Volume III: Recommendations

Volume IV: Making It Happen

Introduction to Volume IV

Chapter 13: Learning, Teaching, and Information Technology
   A new environment
   Possibilities and concerns
   Information technology's contribution to learning
   Making it happen
   On-line: Learning it on the grapevine
   Other instructional technologies
   Realizing the potential
   Conclusion

Chapter 14: Community Education: Alliances for Learning
   The problem: Expansion of the role of schools
   Our response: Creating communities of concern
   A local focus for community education
   Supporting and sustaining a diversity of models
   Barriers to community education: Recognizing them and removing them
   Community education: Making it happen
   Setting a timeline for action
   Conclusion

Chapter 15: Constitutional Issues
   The Roman Catholic education system
   Learning in French: Rights, needs, and barriers
   Aboriginal peoples
   Conclusion

Chapter 16: Equity Considerations
   Religious minorities
   Language, ethno-cultural, and racial minorities
Chapter 17: Organizing Education: Power and Decision-Making
Stakeholders and power
The players
Allocating and exercising decision-making powers
Conclusion

Chapter 18: Funding
Historical context
Education funding in Ontario
Current concerns
Conclusion

Chapter 19: The Accountability of the System
Accountability in education: What does it involve?
Who is accountable?
Indicators of quality
Assessment agency
Accountability and consistency
Conclusion

Chapter 20: Implementing the Reforms
Previous reports
The change process: How educational change happens
What about the Commission? What do we hope our work will achieve?
Engines or levers for change
What actions are needed?
An implementation commission
Other support for implementation
Provincial actions
Suggested short-term actions for the provincial government and for the Ministry: 1995-96
Actions by other stakeholders
Cost issues
A call to action
Implementation responsibilities
Appendix 1: Action Plan for Government
Appendix 2: Action Plan for Education Stakeholders

For the Love of Learning: Recommendations
Introduction to the Report

The first task of any body brought together to study a matter of intense public interest and controversy is to recognize the climate in which it will operate, the history and dimensions of the issues it will have to define and address, and the concerns and needs of the people it has been created to serve.

This is particularly true when the subject is education. It is education, after all, that touches each of us at one time or another in our lives, and that, more than most things, can intimately and directly limit, or help create, our future. Few public institutions matter more to the destiny of the ten million people of this province. Therefore, we set about our work determined to explore, to the greatest degree possible, the way the education system operates, and to find out how it could operate better.

A climate of uncertainty

Like all organizations, our Commission operated within a particular time, and our deliberations were inevitably influenced by the context of unsettling truths around us.

- Our society is characterized by turbulence, creating widespread uncertainty and anxiety. Canadians fear a future of diminished opportunity, and expect public institutions to deal with this acute concern.
- Our economic system is changing, while technology is advancing at a geometrically accelerating pace.
- The fallout from those related phenomena includes the prospect of a large core of permanently unemployed and underemployed men and women, of younger people in particular, and of considerable confusion about the future of work.
- In the current political climate, and for the foreseeable future, projects requiring vast new public funding will be seen as impractical. The operative cliche is that it is possible to work smarter, doing even more with even less.
- The composition of Canada's population is changing dramatically, not least in Ontario and, above all, in southern Ontario. Each year, we become an increasingly diverse nation, but our institutions often fail to reflect that diversity.
- There is a sense that traditional social institutions have been breaking down, and that the family, as well as community and religious organizations, are no longer able to instil personal and ethical values in successive generations of
Despite uncertainty about common values, large segments of the population are not content to live in a society that has no identifiable values. At the same time, and for a variety of reasons, Canadians have been losing faith in their public institutions. As a result, they have been demanding that these operate more openly, involve more citizen participation, and become more explicitly accountable to the public at large.

Schools necessarily reflect - at least to some extent - the societies in which they operate. Therefore, it is not surprising that today's education system feels shaky, unsure, lacking in self-confidence, and struggling with a mandate that is increasingly uncertain and whose purposes are no longer self-evident. Not only is that the background against which the Commission operated, it was the reason the Commission was established.

Like so many other institutions, schools are finding it enormously difficult to cope with the never-ending change that swirls around and through them. Small wonder that educators are anxious - and sometimes discouraged - by responsibilities heaped on an already overburdened system that has neither the resources nor the capacity to cope. Small wonder that the public is dissatisfied with an education system it keeps turning to as society's best, last hope in meeting the challenges that lie ahead - whatever those challenges may be. It is inevitable that schools are then criticized for not being up to the task of rescuing a floundering society. As, indeed, they are not. As, indeed, they cannot be.

Members of the Commission became increasingly aware that it would be no easy task to meet the expectations of the many people who insisted that our job was to articulate a consensus on the purposes and practices of education in Ontario. As will repeatedly be made clear in the pages of this report, ours is an educational system of endless diversity: in the nature of the student body; in the prescriptions for remedying its various inadequacies; in the large numbers of troubled young men and women it must serve; in the formidable responsibilities it carries; as well as in people's lofty expectations of it.

Without doubt, the system exists in an era of extreme anxiety about what the future holds for Ontario's children, as well as of stress related to our apparent need to be "competitive" in a ruthless globalized economy. It must meet often-unacknowledged limitations that constrain the possibilities of real change - all this in the face of an extraordinary level of disagreement, even among the learned, about how either good teaching or good learning actually happens.

It would be flattering, to the Commission and to the entire province, if we had been able to devise a formula for a school system that would meet everyone's approval and banish all problems, actual and perceived. While we believe that we have come remarkably close to a new vision of an educational system that meets many of the central hopes and desires of most of Ontario's citizens, we have no illusions that we will satisfy everyone.
Some recent history of educational change and reform

For decades, substantial numbers of Ontarians, along with people in much of the rest of the world, have complained that their schools are failing to produce properly educated young people. Our esteemed predecessors of the past half-century - the much-neglected Hope Commission of 1950 and the much-distorted Hall-Dennis committee of 1968 - were eloquent in reporting the disenchantment of so many people.

It is useful to recall that the Hope commission did its work during an era when Ontario had standardized departmental exams for Grades 11, 12, and 13, as well as a carefully prescribed Grade 13 curriculum, used uniformly across the province. It is also worth remembering that those "good old days" were a time when, of all students beginning school life, only two-thirds would enter high school and, of those, only 13 percent would graduate; of that meagre number, only four in a hundred would enter university. Yet the Hope commission said it was

disquieted by the common complaint that the graduates of our schools have often failed to attain an acceptable standard of English...

University and secondary school teachers complain that their students are unable to express ideas, either orally or in writing, in lucid, accurate, and fluent English. The criticism is echoed by employers who complain bitterly that young persons make errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and cannot express themselves logically and clearly in speaking.

Royal Commission on Education in Ontario, 1950

Plus ca change ..., as echoed in Living and Learning, the Hall-Dennis report of 1968:

Today, on every side, there is heard a growing demand for a fresh look at education in Ontario. The Committee was told of inflexible programs, outdated curricular [sic], unrealistic regulations, regimented organization, and mistaken aims of education. We heard from alienated students, frustrated teachers, irate parents and concerned educators. Many public organizations and private individuals have told us of their growing discontent and lack of confidence in a system which, in their opinion, has become outmoded and is failing those it exists to serve.

At the time it was released, Living and Learning was greeted with a great deal of enthusiasm and, as one of our presenters noted, was even "perceived as an instrument of emancipation from the confining, restrictive, suffocating practices of the past."

Four years after Hall-Dennis, Douglas Myers, then a professor of education history at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, pointed out that in the 1960s, "education seemed to permeate all other social and political issues. It was a major growth industry, [becoming] the largest single budget item in the public sector." But by 1972, as Myers makes clear, the atmosphere was already one of "disenchantment and scepticism."
... plus c'est pareil. The Hope report was buried without comment or action, while only two-thirds of Hall and Dennis's recommendations were dealt with at all by the government that had appointed them. Some were implemented only in part, and fully a third were never addressed - despite which, many people have scapegoated the report for all the alleged failures of Ontario schooling in the past quarter century.

We have tried to learn from the experiences of our distinguished predecessors, and have included a final chapter on how our recommendations can be implemented, in order to save this report from the unkind fate that befell theirs.

But the search for excellence is by no means restricted to Ontario: it has been a universal pursuit. Even those systems we love to envy, such as those in Germany and Japan, are anxiously being re-examined. In fact, there are few jurisdictions in the industrialized world that have not agonizingly appraised and re-appraised their school systems over the past five decades - as is evident in the scores and scores of reports we examined.

Virtually all jurisdictions have tinkered and toyed with various aspects of their education systems, and just about every one is back at the drawing board at this very moment. In the United States, permanent education reform has become big business, not least because yesterday's panaceas have become today's problems at least until tomorrow, when those old panaceas will be resurrected.

Given these and other complex realities, we began our work cautiously, aware of the pitfalls on all sides. But we finish the task with great excitement, believing that we have fashioned a compelling, practical vision of an effective learning culture. We are persuaded that if the recommendations we make are approached in a spirit of good will by the many stakeholders in Ontario who care about improving learning, that goal will be achieved.

**Improving Ontario's schools**

Having examined how Ontario's education system evolved to its present state, we were ready to learn how it could be improved. As part of this lesson, we looked at the nature of the process of change itself, and at how basic rules of change and innovation were frequently ignored or breached in the past.

In the first place, it would be prudent to remember that not all change is progress. It should also be said plainly, right at the outset, that the education system is notoriously difficult to change: a vast bureaucratic institution, almost by definition, it shifts only slowly and under very intense pressure. After all, in a province of ten million people, a system that requires more than 100,000 teachers and innumerable other grown-ups to maintain working-day control of some two million Ontario children cannot be turned around easily.

It is slowed further by the conflicting pressures placed on decision makers by countless stakeholders seeking to change some part of the system in their own interest, but coveting maintenance of the status quo for anyone else. This is true of parents, trustees, administrators, business groups, universities, teachers and
In considering how change happens in the education system, we found recent Ontario experience highly illuminating. In the early 1980s, the Conservative government of the day initiated major reviews of several key aspects of education, and began implementing substantial changes. No sooner had it been ejected from power, its recent reforms barely begun, than the new Liberal government started its own re-appraisals and changes. These, too, were only in the initial stages of the lengthy process of implementation when the new NDP government began putting its own stamp on schools in Ontario. Such changes simply reflect each government's confidence that it could and can improve on the work, not to say repair the damage, of its predecessors.

Alas, the process of serious change does not happen that way, and democratically elected governments have an obligation to understand the consequences of their actions. Changes that serve to bewilder families, demoralize teachers, confuse students, and alienate the community seem a rather excessive price to pay in the hot pursuit of education reform.

Whether better schools are really the key to Ontario's competitiveness in a harsh, new world seems to us debatable, at best. But surely a destabilized education system can be guaranteed not to help. If major efforts at reform are to be undertaken seriously, they must be planned meticulously, and must respond realistically to the dynamics of institutional and bureaucratic change.

**News, both good and bad**

We had the distinct advantage, as Commissioners, of hearing from thousands of our fellow citizens both within and outside the education establishment. We had long sessions with specialists on all aspects of learning, and examined much of the voluminous mountains of research that are ceaselessly being generated around the world. We visited a goodly number of schools, and saw, across Ontario, many classrooms and many schools where learning of the most exciting, creative kind is already under way, where an attempt to cope with our astonishing times is being achieved. We have been delighted by schools in which youngsters were not only learning to know and to think, they were loving every moment of it. This report contains some of those stories, in the hope that they will inspire others to do even better.

We believe that, as a result, we emerged with a quite balanced overview of the present system and its future. It may be that ours is the era of the educational crises that so many generations before us feared they were facing; it is impossible to envision a time when huge new resources will be available to deal with the maladies the system faces, but there is a very real sense that social problems will not decline, putting even greater strains on schools. This Commission celebrates the rainbow that Canada has become, but we acknowledge that this increasing diversity adds new dimensions to the work of the school system.
Fears of permanent unemployment or, at best, underemployment, will continue to create anxiety for parents and students alike. Many people will continue to look to schools for vocational salvation, while the incessant pressure to be "competitive" will add to the tensions that afflict every part of the learning process. Technological change comes hurtling at us with such speed that it seems impossible to guess what tomorrow will demand and - more specifically for the Commission's purposes - how to prepare young people, and many not-so-young people, to cope with whatever it is that lies ahead.

Characterized by bureaucratic structures right out of the automobile assembly lines - with the same kinds of mass production techniques, work specialization, fragmented programs, standardized procedures, hierarchical authority, and compliant workers - our schools, miraculously and with remarkable effectiveness, have taken us through this century. But it seems unrealistic to believe that, without change, they can handle the challenges of the next. What has been acceptable, if not always outstanding, is now in real danger of failing unless it is dramatically re-shaped.

It is clear to us that neither now nor in the past have schools been the disasters some critics claim, or the triumphs some defenders insist they are. And we acknowledge that even if every one of our recommendations were scrupulously implemented, the same might well be true 25 years from now.

There are, in fact, many good reasons why schools will always disappoint to some degree or other. The fact is that there are no scientific solutions to the education crisis as, we confess frankly, some of us innocently believed when we began this assignment.

First and foremost, schools are human enterprises attempting to develop and shape human minds and spirits, with all the imperfections and imprecisions that implies. While we agree that this is an era of scientific miracles and that the growth in knowledge is exponential, to this very moment, the world's leading experts - using all their passionate, erudite convictions - disagree on the way the human personality develops and how the mind learns. Nor should we disregard the diverse personal and collective value systems within which this process takes place.

Any school child who watched last night's television news can attest that, too often, there is little relationship between knowledge and wisdom. Given the fallibility of all human-made institutions, it is hard to fathom why schools, of all the precarious and fragile enterprises possible, are expected to be flawless, superior to all our other frail undertakings.

As society transfers ever-greater burdens and responsibilities to the education system, should we be particularly disappointed or surprised when it doesn't succeed where families, or communities, or social agencies, or religious organizations have failed?

Yet, in the name of realism, even as the Commission urges modest expectations, we find ourselves, at the end of our task, filled with a surprising but gratifying optimism about the enormous possibilities the future can offer - not will, but can - because success is by no means inevitable.
Our way into the future

We turn now to the key conclusions we have reached, the recommendations we believe are necessary, and suggest how they can be implemented most effectively and efficiently.

In seeking the best learning system possible for Ontario, we are not singling out or recommending any one of the countless reform thrusts and movements that are the rage in educational systems across the developed world - whether outcome-based education, site-based management, reading recovery, phonemic awareness, effective schools, amalgamation of boards of education, authentic assessment, or the like. In fact, we have avoided certain terms because their meaning has been so clouded by disagreement or misunderstanding that we consider them to have been rendered useless; child-based learning, restructuring, and constructivism are good examples. It is obvious to us that if these, or a legion of others, were the panaceas many people believe are just waiting to be found, the world would already have discovered them.

It has been said that there is a simple solution to every complex problem - and that solution is invariably wrong. Magic buttons don't exist; magic buttons aren't real.

Almost every kind of reform has been ringingly endorsed and soundly condemned, in about equal measure and on the basis of equally serious research. While we single out and praise aspects of certain of these movements (not all, but some) - all change, it is worth repeating, is not progress - none seems to us to have the kind of paramount importance on which reform can be achieved.

Nonetheless, this Commission is confident that a high-quality, effective, lifelong learning system is a realistic possibility for this province. It can be done!

But - and it is a very substantial but - four key partners in the learning system must be willing to transform their roles and the relationships among them, if the system is to function as we are convinced it can. Those partners are the students, the teachers, the students' families, and the community. To use an increasingly familiar phrase, their roles must be re-invented.

Rather than simply basing our hopes on the more conventional tools of school reform, such as testing, remedial programs, or acceleration, we have concluded that there is a different approach to change, one that has a greater chance of success.

Because the traditional prescriptions never seem to result in significant change, we believe a value-added approach is called for. We see four driving forces as essential to major transformation of the system, to support key partners in playing the new roles we have suggested for them, and to drive the other reforms we recommend. Whether we call them "pillars" forming the foundation of a revamped system, "engines" that drive it, or "levers" that open it to greater forces, we are clear about their part in transforming the system.

The four engines are as follows: early childhood education, teacher development, information technology, and community education. That does not mean, of course, that we have nothing to say on the usual subjects: as readers will see, we offer
recommendations on just about everything that impinges on the community's ability to make schools excellent learning institutions.

However, none of those recommendations is new: each of the changes we propose has been tried in one jurisdiction or another, yet major positive change has not resulted. But we have concluded that a new, value-added force is necessary to make these recommendations achievable - one that, by its own momentum, can drive or move the process of change and that has an impact on the role of the education system's key partners. The four engines constitute that driving force.

**Early childhood education**

The first engine is early schooling, beginning at the age of 3. Children who come through a carefully planned process of early education gain enormously in competence, coping skills, and positive attitudes to learning. Excellent early childhood education enhances their understanding of the value and centrality of formal learning; it expands teachers' expectations of children's capacities and parents' expectations of teachers' one-on-one involvement with their children. Recent research shows that children, both those who are privileged and those who are disadvantaged, benefit from high-quality early schooling of this kind.

**Teacher development**

The second engine is the education and training of teachers. Their competence and self-confidence as learners, as professionals, as instructors, and as guides for their students would increase dramatically if they were part of a greatly improved process of initial preparation and on-going development.

It is axiomatic that you can't teach what you don't know, and if there are to be significant changes in curriculum and organization, there will have to be teacher support for the initiatives and for professional in-service. In the desire to change organizational structures and curriculum programs, we must not forget that education still involves individual teachers working with students, and getting them excited about learning. This human relationship is the essence of our schools, and the best place to focus our energies.

**Information technology**

Third, we have come to believe that both students and teachers would be more receptive to the entire learning process if information technology is integrated into, and seen as an essential part of, teaching and learning strategies. The new technology is not a substitute for teachers; used intelligently and guided by thoroughly prepared teachers, however, it is capable of re-shaping the traditional nature of both learning and teaching.

A study entitled *Prisoners of Time*, published in 1994 by the American National Education Commission on Time and Learning, underscores the potentially liberating aspect of technology-enhanced learning:

> The true promise of technology lies in the classroom. Technology makes it possible for today's schools to escape the assembly-line mentality of the factory model school. With emerging hardware and
software, educators can personalize learning. Instead of the lock-step of lecture and laboratory, computers and other new telecommunications technologies make it possible for students to move at their own pace. Effective learning technologies have already demonstrated their ability to pique student interest and increase motivation, encouraging students not only to spend more of their own time in learning but also to be more deeply involved in what they are doing.

Community education

Finally, the entire learning process would be enormously strengthened if schools became genuinely community-based institutions. The school is part of the community, and the community includes the school. That is why it is imperative that social agencies, community and religious organizations, local businesses and trade unions, and community colleges and universities share the load, particularly the non-academic load, that has been thrust on our schools.

Such alliances would allow teachers to focus on their central tasks, namely teaching and learning, and to address the issues of curriculum overload and system over-extension. Community alliances would give the school access to resources, expertise, and services that would help in educating the greatest number of students, and would give the community a vital role in the life of its school.

In fact, we can go even further and assert that unless the concept of partnerships stops being mere conference-hall rhetoric and becomes part of the new reality of the education system, it is unreasonable to expect schools to meet their present, let alone their future, responsibilities.

We are convinced that these four engines or levers are the sine qua non of the system of the future. Together, they constitute a set of dynamic and interlocking forces with the synergy to propel reconstruction of the present system.

These engines or levers are intended to drive the crucial series of curricular changes that are at the heart of our proposed reforms. They are described in Volume II of this report, Learning: Our Vision for Schools. In it, we recommend what we have termed a curriculum for "literacies."

The curriculum

Having immediately posited the fundamental necessity of developing reading and writing literacy, and having described it as the first task of schooling, we have deliberately broadened the meaning of "literacy." We have insisted that in addition to skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, there must be literacy in the areas of science, group and interpersonal skills and values, and computer technology. The reader will quickly recognize our conviction that effective schools will surely develop in most young people a high level of dexterity and a deep level of comprehension across a variety of subject areas.

The school program we envisage begins at age 3 as an option, and becomes compulsory at age 6. It is a long-range learning plan, lasting through various
academic and personal transitions, that provides each child with ever-increasing personal involvement, guidance, and career counselling from an interested educator. It goes into operation the day the child enters school and continues until the day that child graduates.

The plan is based on the human dimension of the learning system above all, on students and teachers working productively together; families reinforcing the significance of what goes on in schools; teachers acting on the assumption that the family is an integral part of a student's school life; and the local and professional community sharing some of the increasingly onerous burdens that schools are being called on to carry.

It is a plan which insists that all teachers, parents, and students share clearly articulated definitions of what students are expected to achieve at various stages of their schooling. And, because the community is an essential partner in the learning system, we envisage that it, too, must be informed about the degree of effectiveness with which schools are educating our young people.

**Making change happen**

How will these changes come to pass? The essence of the Commission's understanding of complex change is that it can happen only with direction and support from both the bottom up and the top down. Government to household, household to government, and with the many elements in between - all must work together if the system is to be transformed.

We are neither naifs nor bleeding hearts. We understand perfectly well that what we are prescribing will not happen easily. None of our four "engines," nor the vision they are meant to drive and support, is the simple solution the world has longed for these many decades. On the contrary, ours is a complex, long-term project, and would have to overcome obstacles - some quite intractable. None of this can be implemented tomorrow, though aspects could be introduced the day after tomorrow and begin the change process almost immediately.

In fact, significant initiatives can be taken without orders from the Ministry of Education and Training: parents, teachers, principals, trustees, administrators, universities, faculties of education, business people, and community agencies - all could begin the change process with little delay.

Implementation itself must be done sensitively, recognizing that, if carried out heedlessly, it would further destabilize an already fragile and precarious system. Parents will be sceptical of major change unless they can see at least some immediate benefits. And, unless they are treated from the start as collaborators, teachers will resent yet another series of intrusions into their already harried lives.

While the entire reconstruction of the system would and must take many years, there have to be rapid, positive reforms, not just for their own sake but to convince the community that the effort is worth making. Entire new, credible public processes for monitoring and evaluating components of the changing system will have to be developed, to ensure that public accountability becomes a reality.
We do not minimize or disguise the challenge we are issuing. We stress that while each of the engines or levers is a driving force on its own, our vision will best be realized if all of them work in support one of the other. Children who don't have deeply motivated, caring, trained, experienced teachers are limited in what they can learn. Teachers whose students are not predisposed to learn, to embrace school as a welcome part of their lives, are limited in what they can teach. Schools with strategies that ignore the new information technologies are limited in their ability to make knowledge accessible and themselves relevant and interesting to future generations of children. And schools that are not organically connected to the communities, families, businesses, and health and social agencies around them are limited in their ability to cope with the needs of children.

In our view, the four engines or levers form a convincing strategy to assure the implementation of our vision of a better learning system. They hold the promise of overcoming great obstacles of alienated, distracted, passive youngsters; isolated, overburdened, unappreciated teachers; massive buildings that vividly reflect the way schools are cut off from both the real world outside their doors and the human communities around them.

Without these engines, our curriculum for literacies, and most of our other recommendations, will fail to shake up the system as it needs to be shaken. With them, and with their power to enhance and reinforce each other, significant changes can be made to education in Ontario - as this report shows. With them, we also believe, excellence and equity are possible.

As a human enterprise, no school system will ever be other than a work in progress. Like learning itself, school is both an end and a process. Nothing is neat and clean in human endeavours, and learning is among the most complex of those. Even with the best will in the world - and it would be unrealistic to believe that good will always prevails - humans build their institutions like themselves: imperfectly.

School, the seminal American educator John Dewey taught us long ago, is not only a preparation for life, it is life. *For the Love of Learning* promises no rose gardens, no panaceas, no utopias. But, on the basis of what we learned by listening to the people of Ontario in their thousands, absorbing the research literature and the lessons and experiences of others, we are convinced we can offer the possibility of significant progress. The people of Ontario, blessed in so many ways, have a good school system. On that solid base, if they have the will, they can now forge as successful a learning culture as the world has yet known. If they have the will.

ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
©Copyright 1994, Queens Printer for Ontario
Chapter 1: The Royal Commission on Learning

Fulfilling the mandate of this Royal Commission required a whole host of activities. We examined the studies of Ontario schools that had preceded our own. We pulled together some of the research on education that has been done in recent years by scholars around the world. We met across the table with a large number of people with special expertise in the areas that we were finding most problematic.

And above all, we listened to our fellow Ontarians. Not only did we spend three months in public meetings, hearing submissions right across the province, each of us also spent time inside a series of schools. We reached out to young people, both those who had done well in our education system and those who had done less well, so that we could hear their views first-hand. We made a point of locating and spending time with some parents who we knew would not be comfortable making formal presentations to us. We received thousands of written submissions either by post or e-mail, and many others on our voice-mail.

It wasn't always easy to discern consensus in the midst of all these voices. But they left no doubt about one thing: the citizens of this province are passionately interested in their education system.

On May 4, 1993, in response to increasing concern among educators, members of the public, and the Government of Ontario, the Honourable Dave Cooke, Minister of Education and Training, announced the establishment of the Royal Commission on Learning.

According to the Order in Council that created the Commission, the government had identified the need "to set new directions in education to ensure that Ontario youth are well prepared for the challenges of the 21st century." Our mandate was "to present a vision and action plan to guide Ontario's reform of elementary and secondary education."

The government identified four issues for us to consider: a coherent "vision" of the system, the educational programs of Ontario schools, the accountability for results, and the governance of the system.

Public consultation

Our first priority was to seek the views of the people of Ontario. We consulted with as many individuals and groups as possible, both in and outside the school system; we visited schools and acted on several outreach strategies; and we used the opportunities provided by the media and computer-based town-hall meetings to involve, and hear from, interested people who addressed the four issues - and much more.

Talking to people
We began by developing an information brochure, "Learning," which explained the task we had been given and invited people and groups to participate, listing a schedule of formal public hearings throughout the province.

We placed ads in local newspapers inviting people to our hearings. We issued press releases and discussed our mission with journalists, and had special mailouts for women's groups, ethno-cultural associations, and groups for the disabled. We reached thousands of people.

In the fall of 1993, for 12 weeks, 1,396 groups and individuals in 27 cities across the province made oral submissions. Parents, teachers, students, trustees, and school administrators came, as did representatives of the business community, francophone groups, multicultural organizations, aboriginal groups, unions, colleges, and universities. We also heard from, among others, librarians, social workers, police officers, doctors, and members of religious groups, and many others - with views they wanted to share. Most presenters also submitted written briefs to support their positions. Many presenters were passionate and articulate, knowledgeable and persuasive.

To get a better view of Ontario education today, we first spent a week in a number of schools and regularly, over subsequent months, visited other schools where interesting and innovative projects are under way.

**Media coverage**

During the 12 weeks of public hearings, we spoke hundreds of times to newspaper, radio, and television reporters and received widespread coverage in the media, engaging thousands of Ontarians in a crucial debate about the future of Ontario's education system.

Several of the public hearings were taped by local cable TV stations and rebroadcast across the province during the winter of 1993-94, and we participated in a number of television broadcasts devoted exclusively to the Royal Commission and its work.

The Baton Broadcasting System, an Ontario television network with stations in North Bay, Ottawa, Toronto, and Sudbury, made an hour of air-time available to the Commission for a call-in show that was seen by more than 100,000 viewers in December 1993, a short time after we completed our public hearings.

TVOntario and La Chaine Francaise also helped us involve more Ontarians in the issue by airing an "Education Summit" in January 1994. Commissioners participated in a number of panel discussions and other programs in English and in French during the week-long summit, reaching thousands more viewers. The French-language broadcasts were particularly helpful in bringing fresh points of view to the Commission on issues surrounding French-language education.

One newspaper article in particular, by Michael Valpy in the Globe and Mail (October 2, 1993), provoked widespread reaction. After he spent a week visiting schools in eastern Ontario with one of the Commission co-chairs, he wrote about "the 40 percent factor" - his estimate of the number of children who come to school each day with some non-academic disadvantage that impedes learning: poverty, abusive or indifferent parents, hunger, emotional anxiety, or something else. Valpy's article was often quoted during the hearings, in conversations with teachers and principals, and we saw it pinned up on numerous bulletin boards in the schools we visited.
Outreach

Intense public interest in education produced a flood of submissions: more than 1,500 written briefs and audio/video cassettes were received at the Commission's offices, and more than 350 individuals used our special 1-800 number to make oral submissions. In addition, more than 1,500 messages were posted to a special Royal Commission on Learning computer conference on TVOnline/ChaiNET, TVOntario's/La Chaine's prototype bulletin board.

The Commission also published two bilingual editions of Spotlight on Learning, to keep interested people up to date on the Commission's activities, and to explore some of the most pressing issues in the education community. Fifty thousand copies of each Spotlight were distributed across the province to education stakeholders, parents, and others.

In addition to the hearings - at which people came to talk to the Commission - we went out, individually or in small groups, to talk to people. We held meetings with immigrant groups, and with parents, staff, and teachers at schools, in communities as diverse as downtown Toronto and Moosonee; tele-conferenced with people in Timmins; and video-conferenced with people from the francophone ethno-cultural communities in Toronto and Ottawa.

As well as learning from students and student groups across Ontario, we broadened the Commission's reach by setting up kiosks in malls across the province. We chose malls because young people, especially, tend to congregate in them, so that we could hear opinions and discuss education with those who might not otherwise have participated. As a result, 1,200 people in Ottawa, Windsor, Sault Ste. Marie, and Toronto took the opportunity to share their views on education.

Under the direction of a youth outreach co-ordinator and a commissioner, a volunteer team was trained to meet with youth in schools and in such non-school environments as community centres and video arcades. Across the province, some students took the initiative, surveying large numbers of their peers, thereby giving us input from literally thousands of others.

Commissioners, staff, and volunteers also visited detention centres, jails, homes for pregnant teens, multi-service agencies, and cultural organizations in 36 meetings and focus groups.

Experts and research

Following the public hearings, the Commission consulted a broad range of experts in education: professors of education, child psychiatrists, psychologists, policy analysts, and others.

Throughout the Commission's existence, our research staff conducted an extensive review of relevant literature and studies. In addition, the Commission itself heard expert opinions, and commissioned policy papers in areas where we needed further information.

The Commissioners and research staff also met with educators from Ontario and from other Canadian provinces, as well as from the United States and other jurisdictions.
Commissioners' meetings

After the public consultation, talking to people, media coverage, outreach activities, hearing the opinions of experts, and pondering a mountain of research, we then set out on our next and most daunting task: to articulate what we saw and heard, debate among ourselves the many contentious and complex issues before us, and begin to translate our understandings, opinions, and convictions into this Report.

ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
©Copyright 1994, Queens Printer for Ontario
Chapter 2: Education and Society

Regarding Ryerson through our backward prism
We find no madness in his Methodism,
But see in all those works he left behind
The logic of his energetic mind.
The House he built remains - though renovated
By many hands, as previously related;
Some minister, concerned to waterproof,
Deciding that he needs to raise the roof
Whereafter his successor with disdain
Decides she ought to lower it again.
Yet still there stands the ever open door
And cross the threshold still the children pour.
The teachers still their expertise bestow
And still the generations come and go.
And on foundations that still stand secure
The House that Ryerson built will endure.

Hugh Oliver, from The House That Ryerson Built

In the next chapter, we record just some of the views of education in Ontario today that we heard; but first, we take a brief look over our shoulders, to see whether this is a unique moment in the history of education in Canada, or simply part of a recurring ebb and flow of issues and themes.

First, we begin with a brief history of Ontario's public education system, highlighting the architecture of "the house that Ryerson built." Second, we examine the more recent history of educational policy to find
out how the current system evolved. Third, we describe current socio-economic and demographic realities that affect the education system, and briefly examine funding. Fourth, we provide some descriptive statistics concerning the size and complexity of the Ontario school system as well as indicators of the state of the system. Finally, we look at the current national and international context for education reform.

Education in Ontario: A brief history

The history of schooling in Ontario has been written and rewritten many times and from many perspectives. As Professor Rebecca Coulter of the University of Western Ontario points out, the earliest histories (at least those written in English) document what was seen as the "glorious growth and progress of schooling,"(1) whereas some recent attempts take a more critical stance, exploring the ways in which schools have acted as agents of social control, and how they have operated to replicate class, language, ethnic, and gender relations. French-language historians have documented the development and struggles of schooling for the Franco-Ontarian community,(2) a topic that has been given little attention by English-language writers.

When Ontario's school system was being established, few doubted that religion and schooling belonged together. The Roman Catholic Church was instrumental in starting French-language education in the 17th century; in the 19th century, the Anglican Church, led by the Reverend Dr. John Strachan, who was president of the General Board of Education, established English-language instruction for small numbers of children in the settlement at York, with the emphasis on grammar schools for the preparation of potential leaders of the community. Other religious groups, Methodists especially, promoted the concept of a basic education for all the children in the colony.

Individual parents played a strong role in early education, securing the services of itinerant teachers, or choosing one of their own to drill their children in the three Rs. Often the impetus for this initiative came from the fourth R - religion with local ministers reminding their flocks (in a largely Protestant population) of their duty to ensure that their progeny could read, understand, and follow the Bible.

Parental attempts to secure a modicum of education for their children got a boost in 1816 when some limited provision was made for government assistance. Professor Willard Brehaut notes: "As this support movement was extended, evidence of greater public control began to appear. Throughout Ontario's history, as in that of other jurisdictions, public support and public control have tended to go hand-in-hand."(3)

The Common School Act

In the 1840s, the school system was shaped, to a considerable degree, by a series of school acts, beginning with the Common School Act of 1841, which doubled the size of government grants in aid of schools, and introduced compulsory taxes on property as a means of funding elementary schools. In the early 1840s, a General Board of Education was established for the province and consisted of the superintendent and six advisors. By the end of the 1840s, the stage had been set for the centralized administration of schools, with regulations covering organization, classification of teachers, and prescription of textbooks.

One Methodist adherent in particular was key in making a wider view of public education at least a
partial reality in his day: Egerton Ryerson, who served as Ontario's superintendent of education from 1844 until 1876. Ryerson was steadfast in his support of a public education system that had a distinctly Christian, but non-denominational, basis.

The Roman Catholic Church established the first English-language Roman Catholic class in Kingston in 1839. From the beginning, the question of separate schools engendered considerable political debate. The Scott Act of 1863 provided more formal recognition and support to Catholic education, allowing for the election of separate school trustees as well as legislative grants to separate schools. The Constitution Act, 1867, confirmed that all provisions in place for denominational schools at the time of Confederation would remain in force and could not be diminished.

Ryerson had rigorously opposed any extension of funding to Roman Catholic grammar (what we now know as secondary) schools, on the grounds that money given to denominational systems would undermine a strong public system. Grammar schools received some public support as early as 1807 but, despite Ryerson's intentions, did not come under effective public control until 1871.

**Compulsory and free**

For many years, attendance in public schools was not mandatory. School fees, problems of transportation and travel, and the necessity of children's sharing chores in a rural wilderness made regular school attendance difficult. Not until 1891 were children between the ages of 8 and 14 compelled to attend school with penalties for parents or guardians who did not comply with the law; in 1919, the age was extended to 16.

Elementary school fees were eliminated in 1871 and, with that move, a barrier to access to education fell; secondary school fees were not dropped until half a century later. Both initiatives were accompanied by greater provincial regulation of schooling in the form of compulsory attendance laws.

Compulsory attendance at both school levels brought with it the problem of how to change the curriculum to meet the needs of widening segments of society. *Because it was obvious that many children were neither able nor willing to follow the traditional academic program offered at the secondary school level, it became necessary to offer a variety of programs and courses to meet the needs of a vastly increased number. To this end, manual training, domestic science, and other courses were introduced and later, technical and vocational schools were established.*

However, one effect of this type of differentiated programming was that young people were being sorted according to their socio-economic origins, which prevented them from moving beyond them.

**Role and qualifications of teachers**

In 1850, when Ontario first adopted official standards for qualifying teachers, the requirements were minimal: candidates were expected to read, spell, write, and to have some knowledge of geography and the basic rules of grammar. The highly variable quality of teachers of the time had prompted Ryerson, in 1847, to establish the first "normal" school, located in Toronto, for the instruction of teachers in the common schools. Ottawa was the site of Ontario's second normal school, which opened in 1875. (The term "normal school" was used well into the 1950s, when it was changed to "teachers' college").

During the middle and late 1800s, the province also experimented with "county model schools" for
teacher training, which offered a lower standard of teacher certification; however, these were closed by 1907. Like the Ontario education system in general, teacher preparation of this period was characterized by strong central regulation. (6)

Manuals described in detail how normal school subjects were to be taught, and the provincial education department was also responsible for setting and marking final examinations for teacher candidates.

The organization and status of teaching was, for the most part, the result of work by the teachers' professional associations. Their importance was recognized by 1944, when the province enacted the Teaching Profession Act, granting teachers automatic membership in the Ontario Teachers' Federation and in one of its five affiliates. (Unlike those in some other provinces, the two Ontario associations for teachers in public English-language elementary schools are still split along gender lines.)

A growing system

The one-room schoolhouse was the model of Ontario education for generations, Ryerson's efforts to promote enlarged school areas notwithstanding. For generations local governance consisted of a three-man ("three fit and discreet men") board of trustees.

With an eye on efficiency and equality of opportunity, successive governments slowly developed larger administrative units, culminating in 1969 when the amalgamation of more than two thousand small school boards brought the number to slightly more than 190, most using the provincial county system as the administrative unit. It was at this point that the one-room schoolhouse, relic of Ontario's pioneer past, finally became part of history.

Curriculum and teaching methods

In the earliest days of education in the province, rote memorization, often of meaningless material, was commonplace. Teachers assigned a great deal but taught little until the advent of graded texts approved by the government, which permitted teachers to group students according to age and to their understanding of the texts being covered.

The curriculum of the pioneer school dealt with the three Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic) and a fourth R, religion: reading texts frequently used were the Bible and various religious tracts. With the introduction of standard texts, teaching and learning methods changed. Through his Journal of Education, Ryerson was a primary proponent of these new methods, and in 1851 he established the Educational Depository, which made teaching aids, books, and lesson guides available to schools and libraries.

In time, the Ministry centralized provincial curriculum and authorized texts through Circular 14, a list of textbooks approved for use in Ontario schools.

Education rights of the French-language minority

French-language schools in Ontario go back more than 300 years, to 1634, when a school for Native children was established in Huronia (the area around present-day Midland). Schools for the children of French settlers followed later in the century, beginning with a class in Fort Cataraqui (now Kingston) in 1676.

Until the late 19th century, French- and English-language schools were financed in the same way and enjoyed the same status. Because most were Roman Catholic, they were subject to the same rules and
restrictions as their English-language counterparts and received no funding past Grade 10.

Disputes about French-language instruction were a constant feature of Ontario education. Although the British North America Act provided protection for the rights of francophones, these rights proved to be somewhat fragile. Following Confederation and into the early years of the 20th century, the province curtailed the rights of Franco-Ontarians; as a minority group, they lacked the power exercised by the English-language majority.

When Regulation 17 was passed in 1912, restricting teaching in French to Grades 1 and 2, Franco-Ontarians immediately organized strong resistance, led by the Association canadienne-francaise de l'éducation de l'Ontario. Although in effect only until 1927, Regulation 17 was not repealed until 1944. This struggle was a defining event for the Franco-Ontarian community, providing it with an initial focus for demands for educational rights, and control over their own schools.

Questions of purpose

The debate about the purposes of schooling was born with the schools themselves. Was it training for work, for individual fulfilment, as a preparation for citizenship, to infuse a sense of patriotism, to support the Christian ethic, or simply because of the intrinsic value of a liberal education? Not only were there disagreements about purpose, but each of these distinct purposes was defined very differently at different times.

A researcher observes:

> Over the course of the last 150 years, the schools have been used for several purposes. In important senses, almost all people agree that schools are suitable places to build character, to engage in initiatives to improve the world, to teach citizenship and to prepare the young for work and life. The disagreements have arisen in debates, however mute, about what kind of character, what kind of social reform/justice, what form of citizenship, and what kind of work education. In seeking to achieve one or more of these purposes, the question has been whether we want to create young people who will fit seamlessly into the existing society or whether we want graduates who will challenge their world and work for change.(7)

Although sharing this general ambiguity of purposes relating to the wider goals of schooling, Roman Catholic and French-language schools have always had the specific purposes of maintaining religious and/or linguistic identities in the midst of a large majority of (until recently) Protestant and English-speaking people.

We turn now to recent educational policy in Ontario in order to understand how the publicly funded system has met the challenges of the past 30 years.

More recent educational history

Living and Learning: The Hall-Dennis report

In 1965, following a massive expansion of the school system, the Department of Education responded to the ferment about social and educational issues with the Hall-Dennis report, published in 1968. The report, vastly different from any previous government-sponsored document on education, sought to modernize the education system so that it would be able to address the needs of both the student as an
An academic commented at the time on this dual emphasis:

> This emphasis may be seen as an attempt to counterbalance two possible tendencies in education: the reflection of a collectivist view of man [sic], and the imposition of a single pattern of schooling (in manner and content) on all children, regardless of individual differences.\(^{(8)}\)

A contemporary commentator said that in the report, "the child and, to a large extent the teacher, occupy the centre of the stage, with the subjects, the administrators, and the experts relegated to supporting roles."\(^{(9)}\) Among the report's 258 recommendations were calls for a curriculum more closely related to students' experiences, a decrease in rote learning, and an increase in parental and community involvement in schools. Some of these recommendations remain controversial issues. Lloyd Dennis, co-chair of the Hall-Dennis Inquiry, believes key elements of the report were never treated seriously by the government of the day.

**Elementary schools**

As recently as 1967, Curriculum P1, J1, the Department of Education's key policy document for education in Grades 1 through 6, stated that the aims of education, first promulgated in 1937, were still applicable. It declared that "the schools of Ontario exist for the purpose of preparing children to live in a democratic society that bases its way of life upon the Christian ideal," and described the relationship of the individual to society as follows:

> From each individual a democratic society expects the finest service of which he is capable and a willingness to make sacrifices for the common welfare. It demands that he recognize and accept his responsibility to act not only in the interest of self but in the interest of all - Co-operation in a democratic group requires self-control, intelligent self-direction, and the ability to accept responsibility.\(^{(10)}\)

It went on to outline the "threelfold task" of the school: to help the child to understand the nature of the environment in which he or she lives; to lead the child "to choose and accept as his own those ideals of conduct and endeavour that a Christian and democratic society approves," and to assist the pupil to master the essential abilities for living in a modern society. The 1967 document did, however, point out that the Hall-Dennis report, anticipated the next year, might be expected to lead to major changes.

In 1975, the Ministry issued *The Formative Years*, and a support document, *Education in the Primary and Junior Divisions*, which gave teachers new directions for elementary education. It pointed out that:

> The experiences of these early years mould the child's attitudes to learning and provide the basic skills and impetus for his [sic] continuing progress - It is the policy of the Government of Ontario that every child have the opportunity to develop as completely as possible in the direction of his or her talents and needs.\(^{(11)}\)

In his introductory statement to *The Formative Years*, the then-Minister of Education, Thomas Wells, asked all teachers, administrators, trustees, and parents to "remember - always that the individual child in the classroom is the ultimate reason for the existence of our schools."

This concern about the individual was further emphasized in such statements as "the philosophical
commitment of our society [is] to the worth of the individual"; moreover, one of the major goals of education was described as to help each child "to develop and maintain confidence and a sense of self-worth." The document also said that, under a new policy, education should be conducted in a way that would not limit children's opportunities by sex-role stereotyping them.

The Formative Years also drew attention to the need for careful curriculum planning by individual teachers, by groups of teachers and by school staffs collectively, in order to ensure that the overall curriculum achieved a consistent focus and eliminated excessive repetition and overlap. It also pointed out that parents, as well as the children themselves, should be involved in the planning process in appropriate ways, and that supervisory officers and principals have a responsibility for providing leadership in planning.

The document outlined specific objectives in terms of providing children with "opportunities to acquire competence" in certain areas at the end of the Primary and Junior Divisions, rather than identifying outcomes or levels of competence to be achieved. In addition to objectives in language and mathematics that were listed for each division separately, it also identified objectives for areas such as music, drama, visual arts, physical education and health, science, and geography, which had been part of elementary education for some time, as well as new areas such as the individual and society, decision-making, values, perception and expression, and Canadian Studies, which clearly flowed from the recommendations of the Hall-Dennis report, Living and Learning.

The Formative Years and its support document continued to set the direction for elementary education until they were replaced by The Common Curriculum in 1993.

Secondary schools

For more than a hundred years, the debate about the formal education of adolescents has focused particularly on the best ways to bridge the last years of elementary and the early years of secondary school, the relevance of the curriculum to students with very different needs, and the extent to which schools and programs should be tailored to academic and vocational outcomes.

In the 1930s, experiments that involved combining Grades 7 and 8 (and, sometimes, 9 as well) into one organizational and administrative unit, in order to better serve the needs of adolescents, reached their peak. But political opposition from teacher federations, and the implications such groupings would have if funding of the separate school system were ever to be extended, forestalled this as a general model.

In 1950, the Department of Education directed school boards to create committees of teachers from Grades 7 to 10, to plan "local instructional programs for the Intermediate Division" but these were largely ineffective. In the 1950s, however, a limited number of junior high schools were established.

The 1961 Program of Study for Secondary Schools (named the "Robarts Plan") reorganized secondary education into three programs of equal status: arts and sciences; business and commerce; science, technology, and trades. Students were streamed into one of three options: a five-year program leading to university; a four-year program leading to entry into employment at the end of Grade 12, or to the new system of colleges of Applied Arts and Technology; and a two-year program designed for direct employment after age 16.

Robarts's successor as Minister of Education, William Davis, replaced the Robarts Plan with Circular H.S.1: Recommendations and Information for Secondary School Organization Leading to Certificates
and Diplomas 1969-70. It organized programs into four areas of study: communications, social sciences, pure and applied sciences, and arts, and gave students a wide choice of subjects.

The circular also introduced the system under which students are awarded a credit for each subject completed in a school year, allowing them to advance in that subject to the next year; any subjects failed must be repeated. This means that students are promoted in subjects, not grades. A certain number of credits had to be earned in order to attain a Grade 12 diploma, and an additional six credits for the Honours Graduation Grade 13 Diploma. In place of two-, four-, and five-year streams, subjects were organized at four levels of difficulty: advanced, general, basic, and modified.

A scant four years later, Secondary School Diploma Requirements H.S.1 1974-75 stipulated that there would be more compulsory credits (nine) and fewer student choices.

A paper by several researchers, looking back at Ontario education in the mid-1970s, points out that central control [had been] reasserted. The age of expansion was over. Issues of declining enrolment, reduction in the funding available for education, and an oversupply of teachers led to a mood of pessimism. (12)

That pessimism brought with it renewed criticism of secondary education and, in response, in April 1980 Minister of Education Bette Stephenson established the Secondary Education Review Project (SERP).

Based on the SERP report and on reaction to a Ministry response, The Renewal of Secondary Education (ROSE), in 1982 the Ministry released Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior Divisions (OSIS), to be implemented in 1984. It emphasized the need to improve the transition between elementary and secondary schools, and to encourage students to stay in school. It suggested that courses be offered at three (instead of four) levels of difficulty - basic, general, and advanced - and that they be designed specifically to meet the needs of students in basic and general classes, rather than offering watered-down versions of advanced-level courses.

In the mid-1980s Premier David Peterson was concerned about what he considered an unacceptably high drop-out rate for Ontario students. He commissioned George Radwanski, then an editor of the Toronto Star, to review the problem. Radwanski's report, the Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education, and the Issue of Dropouts, published in 1987, concluded that the education system had become irrelevant in an economy where the emphasis was shifting from manufacturing to services; moreover, many students were uninterested in what they were being taught at school, and they lacked appropriate skills and knowledge. (13)

He developed a series of recommendations designed to increase the percentage of students completing high school: early childhood education; province-wide standardized testing to identify learning needs; a shift to outcomes-based education; "destreaming" of high schools; and the abolition of the credit system in favour of a common core curriculum.

Though several of Radwanski's key recommendations were not implemented, the following changes have taken place since his report was released:

- Destreaming, under which all students are taught together rather than being separated according to their abilities, is now being implemented in Grade 9.
- The Ministry's Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9 (1993), initiated a province-wide discussion on outcomes-based education - in which the focus is on what is actually learned. The curriculum is
built around four areas - language; the arts; maths, science, and technology; and the self and society.

- A number of tests are being administered at provincial and national levels.

**Declining enrolments**

If the mid-1960s had been a time of new and challenging ideas, the mid-1970s were years of caution and retrenchment: in the wake of financial constraints imposed by the provincial government, school boards were forced to make difficult decisions about closing schools and laying off teachers.

Most school boards were facing the effects of the declining enrolments that resulted from the declining birth rate after the "baby boom."(14) In 1978, in *The Final Report of the Commission on Declining School Enrolments in Ontario*, Robert Jackson made clear how substantial the decline and its probable consequences would be on school organization, staffing, and funding. However, by the time the number of students in secondary schools began to drop, enrolment began to stabilize at the elementary level. Student numbers have remained stable for the last several years and are now projected to increase slightly over the next decade.

**Major legislation in the 1980s**

**Bill 82 and special education**

In 1980, Bill 82, which made school boards responsible for providing programs and services for students in need of special education, had a tremendous impact on schools. Many children who had previously been cared for or educated in other institutions or who had never gone to school, entered the school system. Many teachers had to develop new skills to deal with the needs of children they had not encountered previously. And many trustees, as well as school and board administrators, had to make provisions for large numbers of students whose educational needs they had not heretofore been required to meet.

A significant number of health and psycho-social service professionals became part of the school system. To some extent, the system also had to adjust to a much higher level of advocacy by parents and groups representing students with special needs.

**Bill 30 and extension of funding of Roman Catholic secondary schools**

In 1984, Premier Davis announced his government's intention to publicly fund Roman Catholic separate schools beyond Grade 10 to graduation level; two years later the legislation, Bill 30, was passed in the Legislature with the support of all three parties.

In 1984, Mr. Davis also announced that commissions were being established to report on implementation of the extended funding and on funding issues in general, as well as on the specific question of funding for private schools.

**Bill 75 and French-language governance**

In 1986, Bill 75 introduced legislation under which the Franco-Ontarian community was given responsibility for French-language education, although with limited decision-making powers. The French-language sections within existing school boards, with trustees specifically elected to them, have some measure of independence from both the anglophone public and the anglophone Roman Catholic
sections. In 1991, the report of the French Language Education Governance Advisory Group (also known as the Cousineau report) recommended criteria under which several French-language governance structures, including French-language school boards, would give the province's francophones full control of their own system. This report has not yet been implemented.

Financing education

In 1985, one of the commissions established by Premier Davis, and headed by H. Ian Macdonald, issued *The Report of the Commission on the Financing of Elementary and Secondary Education*. It examined the adequacy and distribution of school funding, both provincial and local, as well as such issues as fiscal accountability, and alternative methods of financing to overcome existing disparities and inequities. Its 54 recommendations were built on three principles: education is primarily a provincial responsibility; the quality of education should be maintained or enhanced; and the province should strive towards the goal of equal educational opportunity for all.

The commission recommended the sharing of commercial and industrial taxes by public and Roman Catholic boards in the same geographic area, further consolidation of public school boards, the creation of co-operative service units (e.g., shared busing or payroll systems), a review of programs and funding, and a system of province-wide collective bargaining for teachers.

While the recommendation that commercial and industrial taxes be shared is being implemented, certain issues (consolidation of school boards in some regions, for example) continue to be contentious. Other measures - including the idea of sharing busing, administrative purchasing, computer use, audio-visual resources, athletic facilities, and professional development activities - are being carried out by some boards and being investigated by others. The question of province-wide bargaining for teachers has not been pursued at all.(15)

Legislative reports

Between 1988 and 1990, the Select Committee on Education, an all-party group of members of the Legislature, prepared four reports, all of which attempted to grapple with a range of issues relating to education and broader social needs, reflecting concerns about such issues as race, language, family violence, and child abuse.(16)

The Committee also called for reforms to educational funding policies to make them simpler and more effective, and for smaller class sizes. In 1988, the Ministry stipulated that Grade 1 and 2 classes must not exceed 20 students, with the downsizing to be phased in over several years. The Ministry also established the Education-Finance Reform Project, to re-examine funding.

The Select Committee also considered issues related to early childhood education, including junior and senior kindergarten, the drop-out rate, and destreaming, and urged improvement of inter-ministerial co-ordination of policies and programs dealing with children. It also suggested that the Ministry work with faculties of education to restructure and enhance teacher training in regard to young children.

Premier's council

Two reports dealing with the apparent connection between education and the consequences of today's globalized economy were published by the Premier's Council, which includes representatives from business, labour, education, and community organizations. *Competing in the New Global Economy*
People and Skills in the New Global Economy (1990) consider Ontario's place in the world market, and attempt to analyze the policies needed to protect the province's relative prosperity. Like other similar documents, these take for granted a cause-and-effect relation between schooling and prosperity that, as we'll soon see, is asserted rather than demonstrated.

As well, a committee of the Premier's Council on Health, Well-Being, and Social Justice published a report, Yours, Mine, and Ours (1994) on children, including education issues as they relate to larger questions of children's healthy development and growth.

**Public funding to private schools**

The issue of extending public funding to private schools continues to be raised in the courts and hotly debated among groups and in the media. Although the Report of the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario (17) (the Shapiro Commission) recommended in 1985 that religious schools be allowed to apply for "associate" status with local school boards, the recommendation has not been adopted. Court challenges to current funding arrangements have been unsuccessful, most recently in an Ontario court decision handed down in July 1994.(18)

**Anti-racism and ethno-cultural equity initiatives**

In 1993, Bill 21 amended the Education Act to give the Minister power to have school boards develop anti-racism and ethno-cultural equity plans, which would require Ministerial approval, and then to implement those plans. In addition, the Ministry began to implement some of the education-related elements of Stephen Lewis's Report on Race Relations, including his recommendation that an assistant deputy minister for Anti-Racism, Equity, and Access be appointed.

**The significance of recent policy changes**

In order to place educational reform in its proper context, we need to look, however briefly, at the changes to educational policy in Ontario, particularly over the past eight to ten years. During that time, various governments have, among them, created a plethora of task forces and inquiries (some already mentioned), which recommended, among other changes, reducing class size in early grades, restructuring schooling to accommodate review and consultation at all levels, destreaming, implementation of anti-violence and anti-racist policies, and employment and pay equity. Recently, the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) identified four fundamental elements for setting policy: equity, excellence, accountability, and partnership.

Over the years, some recommendations have been transformed into policy, but these initiatives have not always been either consistent or carried into practice. As a result, they have often been perceived as somewhat random or unrelated, rather than as parts of a rational vision of what education should be. Many educators who spoke to the Commission said that policies are perceived as a patchwork rather than as a coherent framework for educating students.

The changes, combined with funding cuts, have created what some believe is a "war zone" between MET and many school boards. This is complicated by a sense that non-educators in government have taken the lead in making policy. School board trustees and administrators often feel that politicians and bureaucrats with little professional expertise have undue influence in this field, and the result has been a loss of confidence in the Ministry.
Reflecting on change

What began as an educational system for a privileged few has, over the years, become a system for the many - although there is clear evidence that those who enter it from privileged backgrounds still benefit most. Because schools matter so greatly in shaping the destiny of each child, they have always been the focus of intense, often unfriendly, attention. Criticisms of the system have always been abundant, and the targets of dissatisfaction have remained virtually the same over generations.

But the content of complaints has varied substantially, often depending on the mood of the moment: it was different in the self-satisfied 1950s compared with the rambunctious 1960s or the anxious 1990s. As well, there have been changing notions about child development, the nature of teaching and learning, as well as changes in political trends, fiscal priorities, student enrolments, teacher supply, and other issues. As a result, a core curriculum shifts to a system of streaming, with many options and, in time, goes back to destreaming and what is now called a common curriculum. Over time, teaching strategies also change: as the benefits of individualized attention are better understood, the emphasis shifts from rigid lesson plans to co-operative, small-group learning and other flexible concepts.

In this atmosphere, it is often difficult to distinguish between the latest fads, caprices, and political game-playing, and the reforms that are based on a thoughtful understanding of the most successful means to turn our students into literate citizens predisposed to remaining lifelong learners. It is a trap we hope this report has been able to avoid.

Our examination of historical trends and recent educational policy discussions and initiatives makes clear that some issues keep coming up in different forms in different eras, and are never fully resolved. Issues of the purposes of education and how secondary schooling should be organized are as current today as they were three generations ago. Other issues, however, are new, or at least becoming increasingly important; among them are the broader social needs of students, and recognition that equity issues have to be addressed in a much more substantive way.

They reflect the fact that Ontario's education system exists in a society that has, itself, undergone enormous change, particularly in the last 15 years, and that those changes have an impact on education. In Ontario, poverty, identified as a crucial factor in learning, has increased; immigration from the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East has brought larger populations of visible minorities to urban centres unprepared to deal with change; family structures have shifted dramatically, as has their role. Even a brief review shows how extensive the shifts have been in our society.

Ontario: Picture of the province

Today, as people struggle to comprehend and adapt to our post-modern age, with its focus on information as an economic resource, lifelong learning has become essential. Therefore, Ontario's education system must expand its reach to encompass toddlers as well as older adults. Most important, it must resolve fundamental questions about the roles that, realistically, it can play and the responsibilities it can hope to assume in today's complex, demanding social and economic climate.

All of this must be achieved in a province of astonishing contrasts. It holds more than a third of Canada's population, and its mix of populations mirrors the country's history and development. The province's ten million people live in Canada's major metropolis and in some of its biggest cities, as well as in thousands
of small villages and towns; in its northern reaches, tiny communities are surrounded by hundreds of thousands of hectares of unpopulated wilderness. The result is a province of enormous variety, geographically, climatically, historically, culturally, and socially.

Today's Ontario has little in common with the province that existed even three decades ago. In the past 20 years, immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and Africa have outnumbered those from traditional European sources. The manufacturing sector that was once the wellspring of Ontario's prosperity is declining, and service industries are expanding. Not only is everything changing, the pace of change is, itself, increasing. And there, squarely at the centre of change, stands the school system. There are several especially significant shifts that affect our schools. What follows is a short description of some of those factors.

**Ontario's changing economy**

**Unemployment**

The facts speak for themselves: between February 1990 and February 1991, approximately 260,000 jobs were lost in Ontario, many in the manufacturing sector. In that time, in the Greater Toronto Area alone, almost 10 percent of the employment base disappeared, more than three times the rate for Canada as a whole. (19) (However, in October 1994, the GTA recorded a growth in job creation for the first time since 1989.) Many smaller centres were particularly hard hit when the one or two companies on which they depended most heavily downsized, closed, or moved away.

In 1992, more than 10 percent of Ontario's adult population was receiving unemployment insurance or social assistance. (20) And there has been a disturbing decline in the economic well-being of families headed by people under the age of 35: their median income - the point at which half the population has a higher, and half a lower, income - has dropped 5 percent. For the first time in our collective memory, families no longer anticipate that their children will be better off than they are, and stories of the educated unemployed haunt both parents and children.

Social programs, of which public education is but one, frequently become targets for retrenchment when tax revenues fall and the costs of the social safety net escalate. Often, in these circumstances, the funding of one social program takes place at the expense of another.

**Poverty**

Of all the economic problems that affect the school system, none has a greater impact than poverty - and there is ample evidence that, in recent years, more and more school-aged Canadian and Ontario children have become impoverished.

In Ontario, the reality of poverty continues to cast dark shadows on many families. In 1992:

- 1,400,000 Ontario residents, 14 percent of the population, lived on low incomes;
- Of that percentage, almost a million were members of the province's 308,802 low-income families (the rest were single);
- These families accounted for more than 11 percent of all families in Ontario;
- 41 percent of low-income families were headed by sole-support parents, almost all of whom - 92 percent - were women;
● Of children under 18 living with their families, 16.2 percent lived in low-income families;
● More than half the children living in female-led, sole-support households were in low-income families, compared with only 10.2 percent of those living with both parents.(21)

Poverty has an impact on student achievement: according to a report of the Canadian Institute of Child Health, "Poor children are almost three times more likely to drop out of school early than non-poor youth."(22) Statistics for 1991 indicate that 13 percent of poor 16- and 17-year-olds dropped out of school, compared with 5 percent of children who were not poor. "Poverty," education professor Benjamin Levin points out, "is the enemy of education."(23)

The essence of poverty is that it is a vicious circle: poor children are more likely to be of low birth weight; low birth-weight children are more likely to have physical and developmental problems; children with physical and developmental problems are more likely to have difficulties in school; even when there are no such problems, many poor families are so overwhelmed with the miseries that come from being poor they cannot provide a home environment that supports school learning; children who do poorly in school are more likely to have employment problems.

Another vicious circle: when jobs are scarce, tax revenues decline. If parents are either dependent on social welfare or are working but poor, children become more needy. This puts added pressure on financially squeezed schools to provide physical, social, and emotional support for children who need help - at a time when the taxes that support schools are declining.

Are education and economic prosperity connected?

The link between the economy and the education system is problematic. Anxiety about an uncertain economy often translates into calls for schools to "do more," on the premise that a strong educational system is vital to the future.

There are two points of view: the first, and currently most dominant, is that education drives the economy - that our economic well-being is dependent on a well-educated workforce able to compete in the "new global economy."(24)

The other view rests on a different assumption: that economic health is not primarily dependent on the skills and knowledge of the workforce, but economic health does help create educational opportunities.(25)

Given these different points of departure, different economic futures are offered. According to the Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills Index, most future jobs will require the kinds of high-level skills and knowledge that were once necessary only for a few, high-end positions. But others see a "pear-shaped" economy in which the mass of jobs are in the low-level part of the service sector ("McJobs"), or in which many people will simply be unemployed.(26)

What is clear is that the service sector in Ontario has grown: it accounted for 65 percent of workers in 1981 and 72 percent in 1991,(27) with much of the increase in part-time work.(28)

Current Canadian research suggests that the greatest potential for growth is, paradoxically, both in well-paying professional occupations requiring relatively few people with high levels of education and in poorly paying service occupations requiring low levels of education and employing large numbers of
What are the implications for the education system of these figures and forecasts? Some researchers and policy analysts (Henry Levin in the United States, for example) suggest that unless a person has considerable education - at least at the university graduate level with some post-graduate work schooling is not related to increased income. Already, the growing number of people who have degrees has begun to devalue university credentials as a step to employment. Clearly, the educational system does not cause economic crises, and it cannot cure them.

On the basis of research and policy analysis, we have concluded that predictions about educational ties to the economic future are uncertain at best; it is difficult, if not impossible, to be sure which jobs will be available and which specific skills will be required. Although it seems reasonable to suggest that an increasing number of positions will require high-level technical and scientific training, it is entirely possible that the number of such jobs created by these new positions will be small.

Henry Levin's review of American research concludes that overall educational requirements in the year 2000 are likely to be quite similar to those today. But his is not the dominant voice being heard in either the U.S. or Canada. Although no-one can demonstrate how it would work in practice, many insist that school reform must be based on the needs of the economy whatever those turn out to be in a future that seems even harder to predict than usual.

Demographic factors

Before society can decide how to shape its schools, it needs to know who, exactly, will be in them; educational policies, after all, have to be built around people. Because most students are between 5 and 18 years of age (and, therefore, most probably living in families), it is important, as well, to consider the student, not in isolation, but in the family context. A key question for today's policy makers is: In what ways have '90s families changed from those of the 1960s and '70s?

The family

The majority (83 percent) of children in Ontario are being raised in two-parent families, but that number includes blended or recombined families. The "norm" may now be two working parents, or it could be a single-parent or other kinds of family arrangements that result from the greater number of divorces and remarriages in our society. We are only starting to understand the impact on schools of this shift in family structures and roles.

In addition to the fact that families are smaller and more likely to have come from other countries and other cultures, one of the most significant changes in the lives of people, whether Canadian-born or immigrant, is that more children today live in two-income families. Twenty years ago, only 30 percent of families with children under 19 years had two wage earners. By 1991, the number of dual-earner families had increased to 70 percent.

Just as the school year, with its long summer vacation, was shaped to Canada's agrarian economy, the school day was set up on the basis that a parent, almost always the mother, would be available as a full-time caregiver before and after school and, of course, during school holidays. The need of today's working parents for high-quality care is creating pressures for schools to expand their role, either directly or in partnership with community groups.
Emotional well-being

Many child advocates, mental health professionals, and educators observe that an unprecedented number of children have problems in their home lives, which makes coping at school more difficult.\(^{33}\)

Fertility rates

Because the most accurate predictor of future school needs is the number of babies born each year, the fact that we have gone from a "baby boom" to "baby bust" has had a considerable impact on our education system. The total fertility rate (the number of children a woman would have during her lifetime if she were to follow contemporary fertility patterns) dropped from 3.9 children in 1960 to a low of 1.65 in 1987 (although figures show that there has been a slight increase since, to 1.8 in 1990).

One reason for the decrease is that in the 1990s, Canadian women tend to wait longer to start their families: in 1961, the average age for a first-time mother was 23.5 years; in 1990 it was 26.4 years.\(^{34}\)

Immigration

Immigration is the second important factor affecting school enrolment: in 1991, 55 percent of Canadian immigrants (118,693 people) settled in Ontario. Of these, 72 percent settled in the Greater Toronto Area.\(^{35}\)

Immigration patterns have significantly changed the nature of the student population, especially in Toronto, the Ottawa-Carleton region, and generally in urban southern Ontario.

In 1972, nearly half of Ontario's immigrants came from Europe. However, by 1992, nearly 80 percent came from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. By 1991, almost 25 percent of Ontario's population, and almost 40 percent of those living in Metropolitan Toronto, were born outside Canada. (In the rest of the country, 16 percent of the population is foreign-born.)\(^{36}\)

Native peoples

There is a very different demographic pattern for aboriginal peoples living in Ontario, which has the greatest number of Native Canadians of any province or territory. In 1991, 12 percent were in the under-4 age group, compared with some 5.6 percent of Ontario's non-Native population. According to the 1991 Census of Canada, the aboriginal population of Ontario was 244,000.

The 128 First Nations and Bands profiled in the report Akwesasne to Wunnumin Lake have about 53 percent of the province's total aboriginal population, and 98 percent of the population living on reserves or on Crown land (as defined by the 1989 Indian Register); the majority of these have fewer than 500 residents.\(^{37}\)

Visible minorities

Statistics Canada estimates that in 1992, Ontario's population included 1,297,605 members of visible minority groups (13 percent of the provincial population).\(^{38}\) This accounts for more than half of all those people in Canada who are members of visible minorities, and it is both the highest percentage and largest number of any jurisdiction in the country. The population of visible minorities is highest in Toronto, accounting for a quarter of the people in Metropolitan Toronto and for more than three-quarters of all members of visible minorities in Ontario.\(^{39}\)
There are two other significant demographic groups that have an impact on the way schooling is organized: those Ontarians who identify themselves as Roman Catholics and/or francophones.

Approximately 5 percent of the people in this province identify themselves as francophone, and 5 percent of Ontario students are enrolled in French-language schools. Of these, four out of five are in Roman Catholic French schools; the rest are in public French schools. Some increase in the enrolment in French-language schools may reflect a growth in the number of parents who are exercising their constitutional right to have children educated in French at both elementary and secondary levels. Because the Charter extends the right to French-language education only to Canadian citizens, French-speaking immigrants and refugees who wish to educate their children in the French system must make application to admissions committees established under the Education Act.

Of the approximately 500,000 francophones in Ontario:
- two of three (66 percent) were born in Ontario (the same percentage as anglophones);
- one of four (25 percent) were born in Quebec, and five percent were born in another province (10 percent of anglophones were born in another province);
- 4 percent of francophones were born outside the country (25 percent of Ontario's population was born outside Canada).

Approximately 30 percent of people in Ontario identify themselves as Roman Catholic, a substantial increase in the past 10 or 15 years, due largely to immigration, initially from Mediterranean countries and, more recently, from Latin America and the Philippines; however, Roman Catholic immigration appears to have peaked, with more recent immigrants arriving from countries where other religions are more common.

Values and knowledge

One of the hallmarks of our post-industrial society is a fraying of any consensus about moral values, as well as about the relationship between values and education. In the last Canadian census, for example, the proportion of people who identified themselves as having no religious affiliation was 12.4 percent, a rise of more than five points since 1981.\(^\text{40}\)

As a result of our changing demographics and our decreased attachment to traditional social institutions, governments can no longer make assumptions about people's views on issues that, in the past, might have been expected to yield a measure of consensus.

Minority and marginalized groups are no longer willing to sit silently on society's lower rungs. Voices once missing or unheard now are being listened to - women, students, youth, people with disabilities, those with different sexual orientations, as well as minority religious, linguistic, racial, ethnic, and cultural groups.

The change in social attitudes and values has its parallel in swiftly evolving technology and communications. At a time when "the information superhighway" has become society's newest cliche, it may be useful to remember that only ten years ago, the microcomputer was a primitive and costly toy for a limited number of hobbyists. The speed of change since then is, itself, a cause of increased unease.
about the future, particularly on the part of young people and their families. Our society is seen by some as having lost its sense of certainty amid increasing doubts about the possibility of absolute values and universal truths. A great deal of "knowledge" is now treated, from a post-modern perspective, as uncertain, tentative, and changeable, rather than as definite, given, and permanent. (41)

Indeed, the very quantity of new information - the frequently referred-to knowledge explosion - is itself bewildering and destabilizing. We were told by the Ontario Library Association that every issue of the Sunday New York Times contains more information than was available to Shakespeare in his lifetime, and although it's not entirely clear who actually did the tallying, scale is the issue. When the amount of new information doubles every 20 minutes, or two years, or whatever, the criteria for being a literate or knowledgeable citizen are not self-evident. Nor, for that matter, is it easy to decide which few bits of this bottomless pit of information our children should have learned by the time they finish high school.

Educational statistics for Ontario

More than two million students (2,015,468), approximately 40 percent of Canada's total school population, were enrolled in elementary and secondary schools in Ontario in 1992-93. (42)

The elementary and secondary system encompasses both public secular and Roman Catholic school boards. As well, there is a parallel French-language education segment (both public and Roman Catholic). As of July 1, 1994, the number of public, separate, and French-language school boards is as follows: English-speaking public, 106; English-speaking Roman Catholic, 58; French-speaking public, 2; French-speaking Roman Catholic, 2.

Ontario's students are accommodated in more than five thousand schools, 3,958 elementary and 796 secondary, as well as in 397 education programs in care or correctional facilities and in nine schools operated by the Ministry of Education and Training. They are taught by 119,706 full-time teachers. The total cost of education is currently $14.542 billion, of which 77 percent is for salaries and benefits.

Of the more than two million students, 65 percent are in elementary school (from junior kindergarten to Grade 8), while 35 percent are enrolled in secondary schools (Grades 9 to 12/OAC). About 8 percent of the province's students are classified as in need of special education.

In 1992-93, there were 98,423 adult students in day schools, of whom 50,104 were between the ages of 19 and 21, while the rest were older. The province's adult education sector is expanding: the number of adult students (aged 19 or more) enrolled in day school has increased dramatically in the last decade. In 1980-81, there were 19,360 such learners; in 1991-92, the number was 85,706. In addition to adults returning to secondary school programs in 1992-93, approximately 105,000 Ontarians were enrolled in the Independent Learning Centre (correspondence) courses, 16,000 in adult literacy programs, and another 19,000 in the Ontario Basic Skills programs.

Continuing education courses are an important dimension of the publicly funded system, serving a student population that includes many adults. In 1992-3, for instance, there were approximately one million enrolments in these courses, most of which are given in the evening or during the summer.

As shown in Figure 1, the majority (69 percent) of Ontario students are enrolled in public English-language schools, while 26 percent are in Roman Catholic English schools. As previously noted, the remaining 5 percent are in French-language schools - 4 percent in Roman Catholic schools, and 1
percent in public French schools. Most French-language schools are currently governed by three or more trustees who form a French-language section within the larger boards. In most cases, these trustees are in the minority, but in eight Roman Catholic boards they form the majority. In nine boards with very low numbers of French-language students, French-language advisory committees still advise English-language board members on French-language programs for their students.

Table 1 shows the changes in enrolment in both Catholic and public secondary schools between 1985 and 1992 (the public funding of Roman Catholic schools beyond Grade 10 having begun in 1985).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Roman Catholic Secondary Enrolment</th>
<th>Public Secondary Enrolment</th>
<th>Total Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>66,840</td>
<td>535,964</td>
<td>602,804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>89,187</td>
<td>527,238</td>
<td>616,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>111,862</td>
<td>520,165</td>
<td>632,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>122,775</td>
<td>518,791</td>
<td>614,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>137,000</td>
<td>511,000</td>
<td>648,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>146,800</td>
<td>513,000</td>
<td>660,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>155,700</td>
<td>524,500</td>
<td>681,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>164,409</td>
<td>537,391</td>
<td>701,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the mid- to late-1980s, after a rather long period of declining enrolment, the number of students in Ontario's school system began to increase slowly. Now that the constitutional right of Franco-Ontarians to education in the French language has been recognized, there has been a marginal increase in the number of students in the Franco-Ontarian schools to 97,677 (see Table 2). In its analysis of demographic trends, the Ministry expects small increases in total enrolment to continue in elementary and secondary education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>67,298</td>
<td>70,627</td>
<td>69,790</td>
<td>69,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>28,959</td>
<td>26,473</td>
<td>27,043</td>
<td>28,394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96,257</td>
<td>97,100</td>
<td>96,833</td>
<td>97,677</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to those in the publicly funded system, 3.4 percent of Ontario's students were enrolled in independent schools, compared with 4.8 percent of all Canadian students in such schools.

Ontario has 119,706 full-time teachers, including educators not filling classroom teaching positions. Seven percent of these educators are principals or vice-principals; another 7 percent are unit heads; and 7 percent are guidance teachers or school librarians. In addition to the certificated teachers, approximately 50,000 other people support school programs; this includes psychologists, social workers, teaching assistants, bus drivers, secretaries, bookkeepers, and custodial staff.
Table 3 shows the distribution in 1992 of full-time teachers in Ontario.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public School Boards</td>
<td>50,216</td>
<td>35,476</td>
<td>85,692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13,976</td>
<td>20,943</td>
<td>34,919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36,240</td>
<td>14,533</td>
<td>50,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.C. School Boards</td>
<td>23,570</td>
<td>10,444</td>
<td>34,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5,290</td>
<td>5,583</td>
<td>10,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18,280</td>
<td>4,861</td>
<td>23,141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>73,786</td>
<td>45,920</td>
<td>119,706</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our teachers are, in the main, middle-aged (hardly surprising in a population that is itself greying); in fact, in 1992-93, about half the full-time teachers in Ontario had more than 16 years' teaching experience. However, that trend may have been modified recently by offers of attractive early-retirement packages; eligibility for such programs is usually based on a combination of age and years of experience.

Working on the assumption that today's teachers make retirement decisions similar to those made by their colleagues in the recent past, the Teachers' Pension Plan Board projects that approximately 16,000 teachers (about 13 percent of the teaching force) will retire over the next five years. This could change, of course, if such factors as retirement eligibility rules were altered.

The majority (74 percent) of elementary teachers (Grades JK to 8) are female. Current projections, based on the high percentage of women now entering the elementary teaching (especially for kindergarten to Grade 6 levels)(45) suggest that the existing ratio of women to men is unlikely to change substantially in the next decade. In spite of efforts to encourage more men to enter elementary school teaching, their presence is declining. In secondary schools, women now make up 42 percent of the teaching force, compared with only 30 percent a decade ago.

National data on teachers aged 30 and younger and on current enrolment in faculties of education(46) show a continuing increase in the proportion of women in both elementary and secondary programs. There is still a vast gap between the presence of women in teaching and in education's managerial ranks: the majority (68.9 percent) of principals and vice-principals are male. Hoping to change that situation, the Ministry in 1989 set a management positions target of 50 percent female by the year 2000.(47)

Although gender-related data are available, there is no consistent information of the proportion of teachers from minority ethnic, racial, or disabled groups. While such information is gathered by several individual school boards, it does not yet exist province-wide. Based on reported data, however, it is almost certain that disabled and minority persons are not represented among teachers and administrators according to their proportion in our larger society.
Some indicators of how we are doing

There are any number of ways in which to measure and describe school systems. These include the percentage of students who graduate; student performance on provincial, national, and international tests; participation rates (i.e., mean years of schooling) as compared with that in other countries; parent, student, and community "satisfaction"; the education level of teachers; comparative curricula; physical resources; educational and financial equity; and other factors.

Opinion surveys

While parents have some reservations about the governance of schools and about this country's ability to compete globally, they are generally satisfied with the education their children are receiving. According to surveys carried out by the polling company Environics in 1993, parent satisfaction in Ontario and in the rest of Canada increased from approximately 7 out of 10 (in 1990) to approximately 8 out of 10 (in 1993).(48)

However, when the Ninth OISE Survey 1992(49) asked parents what they thought about the overall quality of education in the past 10 years, 30 percent (an increase of 1 percent over 1990) said it had improved at the elementary level but, significantly, 42 percent thought it had deteriorated.

People tend to have slightly more favourable perceptions about elementary school education than about secondary education. Parents and the general public appeared to be satisfied with methods of teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic. In 1993, Environics found slightly more than four in ten Ontarians were "somewhat satisfied" and almost three in ten were "very satisfied" with the way students were being taught those basic skills.

Statistical analyses

According to the Organization for Economic and Co-operative Development (OECD) report, Education in OECD Countries,(50) in 1989-90, Canada had the highest percentage of 16-year-olds still in school (the mean level of education for Canadians is 12.3 years). Furthermore, Canada has a greater percentage of its population in higher education than any country other than the United States.

The OECD reported that more women than men were enrolled in universities in Canada in 1989-90, a figure supported by Education in Canada, published by Statistics Canada, which reported that 53 percent of undergraduates enrolled in Canadian universities in 1991-92 were women.(51)

Keith Newton(52) reported in 1992 that Canadian students are more likely to go on to post-secondary studies (45 to 50 percent) than young people in most other countries. Just over 13 percent of Ontarians hold university degrees, a higher percentage than in any other jurisdiction in Canada.(53)

In 1990-91, 77 percent of Ontario's 18-year-olds graduated from secondary school. However, these figures may still overestimate the drop-out rate, since they do not take into account difficulties in tracking students who transfer from board to board (and province to province), enrol at different times of the year, or re-enrol after a period of absence.(54)

Equity concerns

Jerry Paquette of the University of Western Ontario argues that Canada fails in educational fairness
because children of low socio-economic status are less likely than others to succeed in courses and programs that may lead to employment in today's difficult labour market.\textsuperscript{(55)}

There is no meaningful assessment of whether educational policies deal fairly with children of different racial and ethno-cultural backgrounds: only a few school boards systematically gather data on program participation by various groups; students' results are infrequently categorized by race or ethno-cultural origins. We have Toronto data, however, to indicate that some ethnic groups are not thriving in the system. It's too early to judge if certain policies - including employment equity and destreaming are correcting inequities.

\textit{Testing and assessment}

An Environics 1993 survey found that 7 out of 10 Canadians want nation-wide testing, although roughly half of all those questioned feel that such tests are unfair to children from non-Canadian backgrounds.

According to \textit{The Ninth OISE Survey}, 59 percent of people in Ontario in 1990 and 73 percent in 1992 believe that province-wide tests should be used to assess individual performance; the percentages were higher in relation to secondary school students.

Among Canadian jurisdictions, Ontario was noted, until recently, for placing less emphasis on province-wide assessments of student learning. While other provinces, particularly in the Canadian west, used Grade 12 subject examinations and other standardized assessments, Ontario relied almost completely on individual teacher assessments.

Under a policy instituted by the Ministry and begun in the 1993-94 school year, every student is now tested in Grade 9 for reading and writing; results in the reviews and the tests are reported in terms of percentages of students reaching certain levels, defined as "inadequate," "satisfactory," or "superior."

There seems to be no clear understanding yet, particularly by the media or the public, of the way these standards should be interpreted and judged. For instance, when the results of the Grade 9 reading and writing tests were announced on June 30, 1994, readers of the \textit{Globe and Mail} discovered that "Ontario students fail to shine," while those of the \textit{Toronto Star} learned that "Students make the grade."

In the absence of systematic and long-term provincial data, many people look to national and international achievement tests as a key indicator of how well the school system works. Most such tests focus on mathematics and science, primarily because these are easier than other subjects to assess across different cultures and languages. While it may disappoint those searching for clear-cut performance indicators, even these data are not as easily interpreted as many believe. For instance, in its 1992 report, \textit{A Lot to Learn: Education and Training in Canada} the now-defunct Economic Council of Canada claimed that international test results showed Canada's educational system in serious trouble. Many educational researchers disagree with this interpretation. Philip Nagy, of the Department of Measurement and Evaluation of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education,\textsuperscript{(57)} disputes many of the Council's claims, and gives several reasons why what he calls "horse-race" comparisons should be treated cautiously.
Costs of education

While the Royal Commission's primary mandate did not include financial issues, they cannot be ignored, particularly as they relate to accountability, excellence, and equity.

Any discussion of educational costs is controversial. For example, a strong area of contention between many critics and defenders of the system is Ontario's ranking in comparisons of educational costs. As is often the case, the answer depends on how the figures are calculated.

According to the Ministry, total education expenditures for elementary and secondary education totalled $14.542 billion in the 1992 calendar year. As shown in Figure 2, a little more than 50 percent of that was raised through municipal property taxes, while 43 percent was provincially funded. The small remaining amount came from such other sources as fees and federal payments.

Education expenditures

Salaries and benefits are the largest educational expenditure in Ontario (as they are in other jurisdictions), with salaries accounting for 77 percent of the total elementary and secondary budget. The other 23 percent is divided among capital expenditures (7 percent), supplies (6 percent), and student transportation (5 percent). The remaining 5 percent includes contributions to the Teachers' Pension Fund. Figure 3 shows this distribution of costs.

Cost comparisons

Although critics often suggest that Canada's educational system is too costly, comparisons with other industrialized countries show that it is neither the most nor the least expensive. While exact parallels are difficult because of the variety of calculations used, Canada spent, in total, 6.2 percent of its GDP on education in 1989,(58) which is less than Denmark (7 percent), Norway (7.4 percent), and Sweden (7.1 percent); the same as the Netherlands (6.2 percent); and more than the United Kingdom (4.7 percent), the United States (5.4 percent), Japan (4.7 percent, according to 1988 figures), and France (5.3 percent).

In 1989-90, among the ten provinces, Ontario had the highest level of per-pupil expenditures in Canada.(59) Table 4 shows the impact of our relative wealth in calculating various measures of educational costs: although Ontario spent more per capita than other provinces, education costs represented a lower proportion of GDP and of personal income than in most other provinces.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Expenditures on education $'000</th>
<th>GDP</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>Dollars per capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>$ 1,038,327</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>$1,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.E.I.</td>
<td>$ 193,792</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>$1,483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>$ 1,474,766</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>$1,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>$ 1,206,467</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>$1,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>$11,967,672</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>$1,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>$18,480,496</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>$1,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>$ 1,961,427</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>$1,801</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Surveys of public attitudes, carried out in 1992, showed that 28 percent of Ontarians favour increasing education expenditures at all levels, while 41 percent believe that, at the very least, funding should keep up with inflation.(61) Asked specifically about elementary and secondary education, 55 percent wanted to see more money spent, while 35 percent felt that expenditures should keep up with inflation. In the 1993 Environics survey, slightly more than half of all Canadians felt that not enough was being spent on education, while three in ten felt that the spending level was "just enough."

**Salaries**

Over the last 30 years, teacher salaries have improved greatly. While traditionally very meagre, they increased rapidly in Ontario in the 1970s and '80s, and slowly thereafter. By 1990-91, teachers' salaries in Ontario averaged $51,735, about 10 percent above the Canadian teacher average of $46,810.(62) Ontario's 1993 social contract legislation froze teachers' salaries (along with those of other public service employees) and reduced funding; some school boards closed on days for which employees were not paid.

**Pupil-educator ratio**

Another significant factor in calculating education costs is the ratio of pupils to teachers. While many would argue that having more teachers teaching fewer students is highly desirable, it is also more expensive. Because of uncertainty about the definition of a "teacher," Statistics Canada, rather than basing the figure on class size, now uses the term "pupil-educator ratio" (PER): the ratio of full-time pupils to all certified educators. (To be included, the "educator" must have a teaching certificate. Thus any board-level employee with a teaching certificate, including superintendents and consultants, would be included in PER.)

Today, there are slightly fewer pupils per educator in Ontario than the average for Canada as a whole. The ratio dropped from 18.3:1 in the 1980s to today's 15.3:1, compared with the Canadian average of 15.7 pupils per educator.(63) Most of the recent PER changes resulted from the provincial government's decision to lower Grades 1 and 2 class sizes to a maximum of 20 pupils. Other factors include expansion of special education programs and an increase in the number of administrators and consultants serving school boards. Recent social contract and funding cutbacks are changing this picture somewhat. Not only is the number of administrators and consultants being reduced, but the phasing in of class-size reductions in Grades 1 and 2 has also been slowed.

**Language programs**

**ESL/ESD: English-language schools**

The cost of programs that teach English as a second language or English skill development (ESL/ESD) affects educational expenditures; this is especially true in Ontario, because of the high percentage of newcomers who settle here, particularly in urban areas. The Carleton Board of Education reports that 46 percent of immigrants intending to settle in the Ottawa-Carleton region have no facility in either of Canada's official languages.(64) In 1991, public and Roman Catholic boards in Metro Toronto spent just over $70 million on ESL/ESD classes.
Programs equivalent to ESL/ESD - Actualisation linguistique en français (ALF) and Perfectionnement du français (PDF) - are for those who have no competence in French but are entitled, under the Charter of Rights, to French-language education, or are admitted by admissions committees. These programs are being offered for the first time in the 1994-95 school year.

**A national and international context for educational reform**

Major educational reform is in the air, not just in Ontario but across the country and around the world. Clearly, the many powerful factors that have coalesced to put educational change so high on Ontario's political agenda - economic and technological change, employment uncertainty, changing family structures - have had the same impact in every part of the developed world.

In the past few years, virtually all provinces have conducted major reviews of elementary and secondary schooling, and such countries as Britain and New Zealand, as well as many American states, have instituted changes, some of them quite radical, in the operations and governance of their educational systems.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the issues that have gained such currency and created such divisiveness in Ontario have remarkably similar parallels elsewhere. In many places, notably Alberta, the United States, and England, there is increasing tension between the forces of centralization at the national level and of decentralization favouring the individual school.(65)

The trend towards decentralized governance in Edmonton has favoured "school-based" or "school-site management" administration, which means less control at the board or government level and more at the school level. Even there, however, situations vary: in Edmonton, which was a pioneer in school-based management, principals make decisions that elsewhere in Canada are usually made by school boards. However, control of such broad policy matters as budgets, province-wide testing, and curriculum remain in the hands of the provincial government, while hiring, special services, and budget allocations are the responsibility of a reduced number of boards of education. Alberta Premier Klein's 1994 restructuring initiatives centralized Ministry control, while creating the option of parent councils.

In Dade County, Florida, the principal and teachers wield power previously available only to senior board administrators. In Chicago, England, New Zealand, and a few Australian states, parent or school councils - some elected, some appointed - make decisions at the school level. At the moment, parents in New Zealand, where there are no boards of education or local education authorities, appear to exercise the strongest and most direct control. However, it is important to note that these reforms have been relatively recent, most having been put in place within the last ten years, and the long-term effects on a range of educational indicators has yet to be assessed. But it would be fair to say that, so far, all of these initiatives have received distinctly mixed reviews.

In Canada in recent years, education policy-making has been most concerned with excellence and equity. On the other hand, shrinking education budgets and recessionary times have engendered a demand for accountability in delivering educational services. Because of these issues, combined with the anxiety of Canadians to stay competitive in today's globalized information-age economy, a number of provinces have commissioned studies on shaping education to deal with an uncertain future.
Both the New Brunswick Royal Commission on Education (1993) and the one in Newfoundland (1990)(66) questioned the wisdom of an "undiscriminating pursuit of training" when future employment opportunities are largely unknown.

Across the country, demands for standardization are apparently meant to ensure more readily measurable accountability. A number of provinces are developing indicator systems, while the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada (CMEC) is increasingly active in this area. The CMEC, for instance, has developed a national School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP), to assess how well 13- and 16-year-old students across Canada perform in mathematics, languages, and science.

The CMEC also plans to form study groups to examine the possibility of harmonizing curricula across Canada, while the various regions have begun curricula comparisons. The ministerial group has also initiated a project to describe and research policy issues related to distance education and open learning in Canada.

As reported by the CMEC,(67) the major provincial initiatives for elementary and secondary education in 1994 appear to be governance, accountability, student achievement and assessment measures, professional development, technology, student services, restructuring, curriculum, fiscal restraint, leadership and partnership, vocational and technical education, educational equity, violence prevention, de-streaming, parental involvement, efficiency, Indian and Metis education, and charter schools. This, by any criteria, is a remarkable list, reflecting the intense focus on education across Canada. Indeed, it is hard to see which areas are not being scrutinized. The most commonly cited initiatives are governance, accountability, student achievement and assessment, curriculum, and technical education. Violence-prevention measures were mentioned only by Ontario.

Despite all the studies, all the changes, all the reports, at least some of the items on each of those lists would be familiar to Bishop Strachan and Egerton Ryerson. But the longevity of Ontario's education concerns is not the issue: our ability to cope with the purposes and delivery of education, in terms appropriate to our own time, is what matters.

Endnotes (Chapter 2)


2. Examples of histories written by French-language historians include:

3. Willard Brehaut, "Trends in the History of Ontario Education," in Hugh Oliver, Mark Holmes, and
A more complete account of the history of the Roman Catholic school system is given in Chapter 14 of this report.


The reports are:


21. Statistics Canada, Survey of Consumer Finances, unpublished data, 1992, based on 1986 "Low Income Cut-offs" (LICOs). LICOs have been used by Statistics Canada for over twenty years. Statistics Canada does not define these as poverty lines, though they are often used this way by media and academia.


27. Ontario, Ministry of Education, "Demographics and Trends."


30. Levin, "Education and Jobs."


32. Vanier Institute of the Family, Profiling Canada's Families (Ottawa: Vanier Institute of the Family, 1994). All data on the family are from this source, unless otherwise noted.


34. Vanier Institute of the Family, Profiling Canada's Families, p. 57.

35. Ontario, Ministry of Finance, "Demographics Presentation."

36. Ontario, Ministry of Finance, "Demographics Presentation."


38. For the purposes of the Employment Equity Act, Statistics Canada defined "visible minority" as including "Blacks, Indo-Pakistanis, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, South East Asians, Filipinos, other Pacific Islanders, West Asians and Arabs, Latin Americans, and a multiple visible minority group for those who reported multiple ethnic origins, one or more of which was recognized as having visible minority status."

39. 1991 census data, quoted in Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology,
"Environmental Scan" (Toronto, 1994).

41. Hargreaves and Goodson, "Schools of the Future."
42. Unless otherwise noted, the statistics in this section are taken from Ontario, Ministry of Education and Training, Key Statistics, Elementary and Secondary Education, 1992-1993 (Toronto, in press).
45. A.J. King and M.J. Peart, Teachers in Canada: Their Work and Quality of Life (Ottawa: Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1992), p. 20.
46. King and Peart, Teachers in Canada, p. 21.
48. Environics Research Group, Focus Canada Report 1993 - 3 (Toronto, 1994), p. 75. This report is the source of all references to Environics survey data.
55. Paquette, "Recent Educational Policy-making," p. 32.
56. Economic Council of Canada, A Lot to Learn.
58. OECD, Education in OECD Countries, p. 111, Table 6.1.
59. Sale, School Funding Across Canada, p. 79.
60. Statistics Canada, Education in Canada, p. 234. These data include costs of post-secondary education.
63. Sale, School Funding Across Canada, p. 119.
65. Norman Henchey, "Our Common Vision: An Education of Quality" (keynote address to the First


ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
©Copyright 1994, Queens Printer for Ontario
Despite the cacophony of divergent interests, the public hearings are a useful tool to help the commissioners with their colossal challenge. The hearings put a human face on problems, provide a forum to float creative ideas, and give the commissioners a peek at the sort of complexities that elude academic study. For citizens the hearings are a chance to sound off, while becoming part of the solution... But, ultimately, resolving the intractable problems of modern schooling will demand of them still more; blessed with the patience of Job and the wisdom of Solomon, they may also require divine intervention...

The Ottawa Citizen, November 17, 1993

During the public hearings, many differing and distinct voices emerged, but we found that our various types of public consultation had one thing in common: each brought a truly astonishing range of opinions on educational issues. On almost any topic, we heard arguments full of conviction and logic. On very few issues, however, was there agreement even within a given group: there is neither a single, easily stated teachers' position on educational issues nor a consistent profile of parents' concerns and priorities.

What follows is not meant to be a complete record of every remark or suggestion made to the Commission, but rather a reflection of people's voices as they spoke with us during the hearings. The reader will find throughout the Report consistent references to the voices we heard.

The purposes of education and curriculum issues

The purpose and content of schooling, perhaps more than any other issue, demonstrates the breadth and passion of public opinion regarding education in Ontario. We were told repeatedly that our job was to clarify the purpose of education so that schools, teachers, and principals would have a clear mandate, and parents would know the system's expectations of them and their children.

One frequently heard opinion was that, at the moment, schools are taking on too much, or are being expected to take on too much.

There was a sense that in attempting to do everything, schools are not able to do anything excellently. This accounts for the common parental complaint that educational basics are being neglected. We frequently heard the call for schools to focus more on teaching reading, writing, and numeracy.

Many presenters saw a vital link between the quality of the education system and the health of the economy.
Many individuals and groups drew a clear distinction between the responsibilities of the family and those of the school. Others, however, particularly in the francophone and Roman Catholic communities, saw the school as acting in loco parentis and expect the values and traditions of the home to be supported by the school.

The second general view we heard concerning the purposes of education stressed the role of schools in moving society toward greater equity, and the need for the educational system to structure itself in ways that permit students from all backgrounds and with all levels of ability to have equivalent opportunities to succeed.

Many teachers, representatives of social agencies, and young people themselves told us that schools must do more to meet the social, physical, and emotional needs of students. Teenagers who had left school, developmentally handicapped students and their families, members of minority groups, and anti-violence advocates indicated that, at present, schools are not structured to respond to their concerns. They raised profound questions about the role of the school in responding to, and in some cases attempting to correct, problems in society at large.

Individuals and groups that underscored the role of the school in promoting social justice and equity were frequently critical of the perceived influence of the business community in shaping the agenda of public education.

Many presenters gave compelling reasons why certain subjects should be maintained or expanded within the curriculum; many stressed the value of liberal arts education in developing a well-rounded and informed individual. Groups from the Catholic school community identified an additional purpose of schooling for separate schools: instilling Catholic values throughout the curriculum.

Other religious groups asked for the same opportunity Roman Catholics enjoy to have publicly funded education imbued with their religious values.

Francophone presenters identified their vision of francophone education as a vital linguistic and cultural support for their community. Thus, francophone students spoke of the need for "animation culturelle" in their classes, in their school activities, and as a link to the community.

The degree of Ministry receptivity to their needs, as well as adequate representation and active participation within the Ministry, were issues in both the Catholic and French systems.

**Teaching and teacher education**

While there was broad agreement that teachers are the key to both excellence and effective reform in education, there was considerable difference of opinion about how to ensure quality teaching.

Many parents favour teacher-directed procedures or more use of systematic phonics in teaching beginning reading.

Many briefs said there is a need to expand ethno-cultural and racial diversity within the teaching profession, specifically by broadening admissions to faculties of education, and to support teachers in better ways to work in today's diverse environment.

Students value teachers who are warm, caring, empathetic, genuinely involved, and powerful motivators.
Some teachers are criticized as being burned-out, uncaring, and/or incompetent.

Students suggest some reasons - and perhaps some solutions - to the drop-out problem. Boredom is number one: while they say they don't expect to be entertained, students believe a teacher's ability to relate to them is a key to learning.

There were three major criticisms of the existing pre-service teacher-preparation programs: first, there was a pervasive sense that the current programs are not long enough to cover the necessary range of topics and to ensure the development of the practical skills that starting teachers require; second, the content of several existing programs was judged to lack relevance; and third, the classroom time that student teachers spend in schools was criticized as too short.

The francophone and Catholic communities had concerns about ensuring an adequate supply of appropriately qualified teachers for their schools. Catholic presenters frequently commented on the inadequate response from faculties of education to their requests for programs that would meet their system and curriculum needs.

Linked to academic achievement and adequate support for teaching and learning was the issue of additional training for French-language teachers. (Many have moved from areas, principally from Quebec, where French is the majority language, to Ontario, where, in the main, it is a minority language.)

There was considerable confusion about what could and should be expected of teachers in terms of meeting academic, social, and emotional needs. Teachers themselves reported feeling overwhelmed by conflicting expectations, and expressed concern about a lack of professional support.

**Assessment and accountability**

There was near consensus from those outside the system that more assessment of student learning, and more testing, are needed, and that greater attention should be paid to ensuring accountability.

We understood accountability to include fiscal responsibility on the part of trustees, and an assurance of program effectiveness from administrators. On the other hand, many educators seemed to be concerned that inappropriate assessment would be imposed on schools, and that this would interfere with learning.

Some students believe that standardized testing would curb inflation of marks, and some applying for university worry about how standards and marks compare across schools. At the same time, there are parents who are unsure how well their children are doing, and believe that standardized tests would give them better information.

Universities want some form of standardized assessment to deal with grade inflation and differing standards across schools.

Many submissions stressed the need to avoid gender, culture, race, and language biases in testing and assessment, whatever methodologies are developed and used. At the same time, some ethnic and racial minority groups expressed concern about the achievement levels of their children, and did support the need for better assessment.
Organization of education (governance)

The two main concerns expressed about the way education governance is organized centred on participation and effectiveness.

Parents, high school students, and a variety of advocacy groups wanted some role in making decisions about various aspects of schooling, including the focus of curriculum. When we discussed this issue further with certain people, however, it became clear that the essential problem was that they are frustrated with a system that does not recognize their concerns and that does not make them feel valued and welcome.

Many submissions raised questions and concerns about possible duplication of services, the existence of too many levels of bureaucracy, and ineffective use of resources. Such briefs came from education reform groups, business, and some parents, as well as from educators. Many called for reductions in the number of school boards and trustees.

Representatives from the Catholic and francophone communities asked for equal per-pupil funding, to give better support to school programs.

These groups were also concerned about any potential threat to the distinctive nature of their schools. To ensure that this would not happen, many francophones asked that the recommendations of an earlier document, the Report of the French Language Education Governance Advisory Group, (the "Cousineau report") be implemented.

Aboriginal groups were concerned about assuming self-governance of schooling on reserves, and having more voice in the education of their students in schools under the jurisdiction of school boards. They asked for learning materials that are more culturally appropriate, better ways of taking advantage of distance education in their remote communities, and anti-racist education to promote a more accurate understanding of their people throughout the publicly funded system.

A number of briefs indicated that communications between the Ministry and school boards are poor on several initiatives, and that some clarification of roles and responsibilities is needed.

Public concerns and the Commission's mandate

Underlying the concerns of all those who made submissions to the Commission is a distinct sense of unease and uncertainty about the educational system. People spoke about unclear purposes and overload; they questioned whether the material students were learning was necessary and important, whether they were learning it at an appropriate level, whether the system was equitable, and whether it was cost-effective. Many people made suggestions on these and other issues.

Although we listened to critics and supporters, inside and outside the system, and were moved by their concern and passion, what they suggested did not add up to a coherent plan for reform. Assuming otherwise would only lead to more fragmented solutions to isolated problems, or give the illusion that some perfect, imagined past can be replicated in an educational system at the end of the 20th century.

Instead, the need is to define learning systems for the future. Everything has changed: students, teachers, families, technology - society itself. How could the basic design of schools stay the same? Who would be
satisfied if they did?

In the other volumes of this report we set out the conclusions we reached about the way Ontario's education system should be shaped; we suggest, in broad terms, how that might be achieved; and how our recommendations could be implemented.

The next chapter of this report articulates the purposes of the school system, and how they relate to the mandates and practices of other social institutions. In Chapters 5 and 6 we consider what is known about how children and adolescents learn, and about good and effective teaching.
Chapter 4: Purposes of Education

In this chapter, we address the confusion around the appropriate purposes for Ontario schools, and attempt to clarify the focus for educators, parents, students, and community. We propose a set of purposes to guide Ontario schools, and develop a framework that places schools in the broader social context. We do not pretend that this set of purposes will satisfy everyone, but our framework responds to the issues raised in the public hearings and submissions as well as in professional and research literature.

The framework and suggested purposes are the foundation of our approach to learning, teaching, and curriculum, the basis for considering accountability and assessment, and the source of our suggestions around organizing education. Our position acknowledges and supports some diversity in what people want from our publicly funded schools. It gives some guidance, not only about what schools can be expected to do, but also, about the more contentious issue of what schools, or at least teachers, should not be expected to do. This seems necessary if we are to deal with the problems of focus and overload.

The issues

What should schools be for? As we noted in the previous chapter, the issue of purpose seemed to underlie many of the concerns raised in the public hearings and the submissions. A general feeling of unease accompanies much of the current discussion about education, a belief that schools may have lost the clear sense of purpose and direction that seemed to be characteristic of earlier eras. Expectations for schools are ever expanding, often contradictory, and frequently overwhelming.

In Chapter 2 we reviewed some of the societal changes that have led to the diffuse and often conflicting demands on schools. Concern about Canada's role in the global economy, a decline of confidence in all social institutions, increased pressures for high quality education for all students (especially those who have been disadvantaged in the past), changes in family structure and in the extent to which families can effectively support their children's development; all these factors have increased (and diversified) the pressures on schools.

Unless we address these profound demographic and social changes, many children may not achieve their potential, or what they learn may be irrelevant to their lives. In other words, if schooling is to make a difference in the lives of children, schools have a responsibility to review, critically, what they do in the light of changed social contexts.

North America has obviously moved far from the "common school" of the late 19th century and the earlier part of this century. In Ontario, the fact that schools are differentiated on the basis of language and religion is basic to any understanding of education in the province. While there are more similarities than differences, the "minority status," and consequently the protected constitutional rights, of Roman
Catholics and francophones in Ontario must be taken into account. We also have considerable variation in teaching strategies or organization of student learning across schools within each of the four components of the publicly funded system: public and separate, English and French.

We have, as well, a wide variety of voices demanding to be heard and responded to. As long as the economy was booming and the educational system was growing, the system seemed to respond to the demands of advocacy groups and of others by simply adding programs and policies. Now that resources are scarce, and education must compete with health and social welfare sectors for limited funding, programs and positions are often cut, but with little sense of unified purpose. The end result is a system increasingly characterized by distinct, and often competing, agendas.

When schools are pushed to meet so many agendas, there is a danger they will be diverted from their focus on teaching and learning. However, while there may be agreement that purposes are too vague, and that schools are increasingly expected to take on more and more, yet apparently with less and less in the way of resources, there is little agreement on how the situation should be clarified.

The best case for public education has always been that it is a common good: that everyone, ultimately, has a stake in education. Therefore, we start with the idea that publicly funded schools "exist to serve all children, not simply those with the loudest or most recent advocates."(1) At the same time, we articulate what people expect from their schools, and identify what schools do that makes them different from other institutions and agencies.

Although people often refer somewhat nostalgically to an earlier era in which educational issues were less contentious, Prof. Rebecca Coulter, in her paper written for the Royal Commission on Learning, points out that disagreements about purposes are not new:

The arguments about the purposes of schooling, for character formation, for social reform, for patriotism/nationalism and democratic citizenship, for economic prosperity, for vocational training or job training, persist in rather similar forms across the 19th and 20th centuries, as do the related critiques of those purposes.(2)

In the past, powerful groups and individuals found it easy to impose their views on the system, disregarding dissenting voices. The challenge now is to find common ground, and find ways of accommodating differences.

**Sharpening the focus: A set of purposes**

Given all the confusion and uncertainty about purposes, and given the need to be aware of both explicit and implicit purposes and functions of schools, what do we suggest to guide Ontario schools?

We believe it is important that there be a basic set of purposes for Ontario's schools, primarily to help schools and school boards make difficult choices. Given the current state of uncertainty about directions, the Commission proposes such a basic set, which we believe should guide decisions about priorities and about how various needs should be addressed. Agreement on key purposes will thus help in choosing among alternatives, and deciding which programs are most important. The list is as follows, with the first purpose, that of promoting intellectual growth, being the most central:

*Intellectual development*

Ensure high-level literacies, beginning with basic reading and writing skills, leading to increasing
knowledge, intellectual understanding, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking in a wide range of subjects;

**Learning to learn**

Foster a love of learning as the foundation for continuous lifelong learning, by nurturing the natural curiosity of students;

**Citizenship**

Prepare young people to participate in and contribute to life in a modern, diverse, and democratic society, and to respond knowledgeably, flexibly, and appropriately to changing social conditions, from the local to the more global level;

**Preparation for work/career development**

Prepare students for the transition from adolescence to adulthood, and from school to employment (meant as "general employability" rather than specific training);

**Instilling values**

Support and instill cultural, moral, and/or spiritual values. Personal and interpersonal values such as non-violence, anti-racism, honesty, and justice, individual responsibility, and service to the community are basic ones our society upholds.

These purposes must be pursued within a safe, supportive environment for students, which values and supports diversity of race, culture, class, gender, and physical or intellectual ability. We believe that school organization, staffing, and curriculum should be organized around these identified purposes, and accountability mechanisms should also flow from acceptance of these as the key purposes of the school system.

We stress that any discussion of purposes of schooling in Ontario must acknowledge the unique framework for publicly funded education in the province. Although English and French, public and separate components share common purposes, the Catholic and francophone components also have particular and explicit mandates. Franco-Ontarian schools are charged with developing and supporting not only the French language but also the French culture, within the minority context of dispersed Franco-Ontarian communities. Roman Catholic schools operate within a framework of the heritage and tradition of Roman Catholicism. The right of these groups to have their own schools and to determine priorities is constitutionally guaranteed.

It is important to emphasize that we see the first priority of schools to be the intellectual nurturing of students. When we speak of literacies, we do so meaning a program that starts with, but goes well beyond, basic skills, to include problem-solving and critical thinking. We believe that schooling should be enriching, challenging, and intellectually rewarding. We also believe that when efforts are spread too thinly, teachers and schools find it difficult to provide such experiences to students.

In this chapter, we are simply introducing what we believe are the purposes for Ontario schools. Throughout all the chapters of this report, we will be developing in more detail how we believe schools might achieve these purposes. Agreement on purposes provides the basis for identifying and pursuing priorities, with the understanding that the latter may vary from group to group, community to community, and even year to year, as contexts and conditions change. As we have pointed out, however, you can hardly agree on priorities unless you agree on purposes.
We acknowledge that the list of purposes we have given will be controversial for some people. Preparing young people for employment or career education, for instance, is rejected or minimized as a purpose of schooling by those who value a traditional liberal education for all, or who are concerned about schools serving the agendas of business. On the other hand, we know that for most students and parents, preparation for employment ranks high, and thus needs to be stated as an explicit purpose.

Even for those who can support the list, the apparent consensus may fade somewhat when we move to action. What happens when purposes conflict? For instance, if most available jobs are low-level, requiring few if any skills, does this mean that schools are excused from providing high-quality programs to all students? We would argue that the central or primary purpose is intellectual development, including high levels of literacy and numeracy, and that preparing young people to participate in life in a modern democratic society requires quality programs for all.

In any case, because we cannot predict in any precise sense which jobs will be available, or which jobs students might prefer, or what the characteristics of jobs will be over a long working life, we would argue that it is best to provide every student with a strong general education and an ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

**Schools in the broader community: A framework**

We believe it is vital to situate schools in the context of other social institutions in the broader community, such as the family, religious institutions, and community agencies. In a brief to the Commission, Daniel Keating, from the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, calls for looking at "education as a system, interconnected with other broad social systems and with fundamental processes of human development."

We link our statement of purposes with an assumption that schools are a key component of a healthy community and a healthy society. Such a community supports and fosters healthy human development. This is the approach of the recent report of the Premier's Council on Health, Well-Being, and Social Justice, called *Yours, Mine, and Ours*. To grow into healthy functioning adults, children need care and nurturing over a long period of time. Families and communities are responsible for providing the kinds of social environments that support the health and well-being of children; foster their increasing ability to cope with change, stress, and new experiences; and build their growing academic competence. The Premier's Council report calls for a revamping of communities' approaches to child-rearing responsibilities.

How are schools different from other social institutions? We argue that the community's responsibility to children focuses on all aspects of care and healthy development, and the entire community shares in this task. Within this social context, however, it seems clear that schools have a particular responsibility for children's learning and the development of competence. Schools have been given the responsibility for children's formal education, and are thus "learning communities." This is the primary responsibility we assign them.

Obviously all social institutions need to work together, more frequently and more effectively than in the past, to provide the best conditions for the healthy development and growth of children. Families, businesses, social and recreational agencies, religious institutions, community groups, including those representing the arts, schools - all must contribute to what is really a collective responsibility. The
particular responsibility of each institution will vary, however, depending on what facet of child development is involved.

Within such a framework, we believe it is possible for schools to do two things: first, have reasonable (but high) expectations for learning, and second, ensure that these expectations are met. We believe that schools can do more in terms of student learning, but only if they (and particularly teachers) are not expected to assume sole responsibility for building self-esteem; compensate for parental abuse, impoverished backgrounds, and nutritional deprivation; offer new models for solving conflicts; provide for physical exercise; and make the Ontario workforce more globally competitive. Teachers and principals have told us that they feel caught on the horns of a dilemma with regard to these two sets of contradictory demands: we must find a way of supporting the focus of teachers on what should be their top priority, student learning.

Primary and shared responsibilities

It is unreasonable to expect the schools to pick up the slack when families fall apart, religious institutions no longer attract the young, children are malnourished, drug addiction is rampant, prime-time television programs are vacuous and educationally bankrupt, and gang members, athletes, and narcissistic celebrities are the admired adolescent role models.(6)

John Goodlad

We are arguing that schools are differentiated from other social institutions dealing with children (such as families, summer camps, and social welfare agencies) by having responsibility for formal teaching and learning, and they serve commonly (but not universally) accepted purposes. We can also distinguish between what could be termed primary and shared responsibilities of schools. The primary responsibilities of schools are, according to our framework, related to high-level competence, what we are terming literacies of a cognitive or academic nature.

By speaking of shared responsibilities, we are not implying that they are of lesser importance. The ability to form and sustain healthy relationships, for instance, is critical for children, but we argue that developing this ability is not a primary purpose of schooling, although schools share in the responsibility. Families, community agencies, youth groups, religious organizations, and schools all have a role to play, with families probably playing the biggest role.

In discharging social responsibilities that must be shared with a broad spectrum of other groups and agencies within the community, we do assign to the school, and especially to the principal, a pivotal role in brokering the delivery of these other services to children. We also make what we believe is a necessary distinction between what schools and teachers are responsible for. Teachers, we believe, are essentially responsible for the primary purpose of the school, namely learning. Many others join with the school in accomplishing its shared or secondary purposes.

The Stormont Dundas and Glengarry County Board of Education, for instance, states in a recent report:

Schools cannot continually assume the responsibilities of society and hope to attain the high standards and expectations set by that same society in ... relationship to educational goals.(7)
This school board suggests that schools take lead roles in relation to reading, writing, and mathematics competencies that go beyond the basic skills, as well as use of information technology, analysis of data, and thinking skills. Other responsibilities, often now assumed by schools alone, are better shared with the community (including parents, social agencies, industries, and other community resources), because schools cannot do the job alone. If students are to understand advanced technology, for example, they will need opportunities to learn and work with business and industry.

Ensuring that students develop flexibility, eagerness to learn, and the ability to work in teams is a responsibility shared by schools, parents, and other community organizations, as are citizenship, social responsibility, leadership and initiative, and coping with change. In some cases, schools and community may share equally, while in others, family and community may take the lead.

**Linking purposes with responsibilities**

Looking back at our set of purposes, only the first one, intellectual development and ensuring high-level literacies, is primary. The rest are shared with parents, the religious organizations, and community groups. It remains our conviction, this being said, that teachers want to deal with their students with care and compassion. This means, at times, getting involved in individual counselling and giving special attention to children and adolescents living under difficult circumstances.

One of the reasons for trying to clarify purposes, and for distinguishing between exclusive and shared responsibilities, is to support a stronger and more focused sense of accountability in public education. If schools are responsible for everything, they are accountable for nothing. A clearer set of purposes will help schools focus their efforts and gather information about how well they are doing in achieving such purposes.

At the same time, it would be both foolish and irresponsible to ignore needs beyond academic learning; we are talking rather about a shift in emphasis. Teachers and schools must respond to students as human beings, with all the wonderful complexity this involves. Although the highest priority for teachers is to develop competence in literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, and so on, they do this within a rich community context. If no other persons or institutions are ready and able to pick up non-academic needs, schools can hardly ignore them, especially in the short term.

We argue, however, that such non-academic needs should not be the responsibility of teachers. Teachers need to be able to focus on what they are trained and prepared to do, that is, to teach, knowing that they and their students are well supported by others in the community. What we suggest is a focused strategy of building alliances with other persons and agencies who can work with schools. In other words, to meet a wide range of health, social, and emotional needs, and to prepare students for the world of work and for building families of their own, schools share responsibility with families, with business and labour, with health and social agencies, and with the rest of the community. And when families, for any number of reasons, are not able to provide the support needed, schools are among the other institutions that must work together to support young people and assist their families.

How can this be done without compromising the primary purposes of schools in the teaching/learning area? Teachers need to know that resources are available for students who need them, but teachers themselves are not usually the ones to provide such services directly. In many cases, community resources can be brought into the schools, and students can also be encouraged to move out into the
community. Such links will help with community awareness, with building knowledge about possible career and life choices, and with developing a variety of life skills in students. The strategies for building such alliances and partnerships will be developed throughout this report.

With regard to gender and ethno-cultural equity concerns, some of the questions are similar, but there is an important distinction: differences of gender, race, language, and culture are not deficits, and must not be treated as such. Rather, they represent different contexts, knowledge, and skills that children may bring to school, and if these are not acknowledged and valued by schools, children are likely to be less able to learn.

We believe that schools and teachers are responsible for providing supportive learning environments for all students. But again, if schools are to be able to deal sensitively and effectively with children from diverse backgrounds, they will do well to draw on additional resources to help. In this case, however, the most accessible and perhaps valuable resources may be those of the students themselves and their parents, supplemented by others in the community.

Although we are clarifying purposes, we are quick to acknowledge that this is a difficult and elusive task. In a diverse society like ours, it will not be easy to get agreement, even on general guidelines. In different contexts and different times, priorities will, and should, change. Judgments still need to be made, and disagreements will still be pervasive. The answers to the question "what are schools for?" will never lend themselves to easy agreement.

The hidden curriculum

In considering what schools are for, there is an important distinction between what people think schools ought to do and what they actually do. We have identified purposes that include developing literacies, preparing young people for life in a modern democratic society, and preparing them for productive work.

At a recent national consultation on education sponsored by the Council of Ministers of Education, Norman Henchey, the keynote speaker, pointed out that schools, from kindergarten through graduate schools, perform several functions that may not be officially acknowledged, among them the following: to socialize and control students; to "sort, sift and certify" students; to provide custodial care; to train in useful skills; and to use the implicit or hidden curriculum of rituals and relationships to prepare the young for the job market. Henchey's point is that schools do these things, and are expected to continue doing so, although such functions are not usually recognized in more deliberately stated purposes or goals of education.

Take an example so obvious we rarely stop to consider it. From the beginning of universal public education, and never more critically than today, schools have provided what Henchey calls custodial care to society; in plain language, they baby-sit our children. Heaven alone knows how working families would cope if schools did not look after children for a substantial portion of each weekday. No-one came to us to complain of this expenditure by the state; indeed, no-one mentioned it at all.

Sandro Contenta, the former education reporter for the Toronto Star, argues that the hidden curriculum in our schools teaches students submissiveness and passivity, because "submitting to the status quo is prized and rewarded." That this teaching is not deliberate and explicit often makes it more difficult to recognize and to change, in spite of the fact that it may fly in the face of statements of purpose that stress developing critical thinkers. In other words, the rhetoric of statements of vision or purpose may be quite
different from the reality of practice.

The same can be said of rote learning. Drilling by rote, a historian says, "required, above all, docility and obedience in the pupil, and in the teacher an ability to make punishment an imminent reality ... No occasion was given, if it could be avoided, for requiring the pupil to think."(10) In a somewhat modified form, this critique still resonates today. It has both intellectual and social consequences. It produces, as Harvard educator Howard Gardner has demonstrated, children with some knowledge but little understanding. It also contains clear messages about how the real world really works. "The separation of knowledge into sequential bits, the hierarchical flow of authority, the spoon-feeding of information: all of it preaches a tale where submitting to the status quo is prized and rewarded."(11)

Others say that the very process of repeatedly drilling students is a recipe for passivity, and wonder how such rigid and mechanistic techniques can produce the kind of creative young people with critical thinking skills that society claims it wants and needs to see. Getting the right answer becomes the be-all and end-all, while knowing how to solve a problem or apply learning takes a back seat.

But it must be said that for us the proper purpose of the school system is not to produce young women and men who are mostly characterized by deference, docility, passivity, or submissiveness. We want schools to develop students - all students - who are feisty, questioning, creative, imaginative, autonomous, and independent; and in the course of this report we will describe the kind of school system that we believe will achieve that exciting objective.

Another major but hidden contribution of schools is that they reinforce the belief that success in school is a relatively simple matter of merit. Those who are brighter, work harder, behave properly, and follow the rules, are the successful ones. That is, they will go on to university, and eventually to society's best paid and highest status jobs. By definition, then, those who don't make it have only their own moral and intellectual inadequacies to blame.

It is true that schools can make a crucial difference in helping a child overcome the deficits of a disadvantaged background, if they deliberately and systematically set out to do so. But not enough schools do so. The fact remains that study after study continues to show that while schools matter, the best indicator of success in school is the income and status of one's parents. Students who are streamed into the basic- and general-level high school programs, instead of the advanced, are disproportionately from non-professional backgrounds.

It is at least arguable that while educational success is substantially a function of chance - the luck of being born to certain parents in certain neighbourhoods - the role of the school system is to legitimize the process by making it appear that merit is the main determinant of such success. As one academic wryly says, "Statistically speaking, the best advice we can give to a poor child keen to get ahead through education is to choose richer parents".(12)

For the past quarter century, the Toronto Board of Education has been one of the few school districts in Canada to track regularly the background of its students. Its 1991 survey, for example, found that 92 percent of students whose parents were professionals ended up in the schools' university-bound programs, but only 60 percent of those whose parents were unskilled labourers did the same.(13)

There is also evidence that students in advanced-level classes are challenged academically in a way that is a world apart from the treatment given children in other levels. This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, for as Andrew Nikiforuk puts it, education's first maxim is "What you expect, you get."(14) If
little is expected, students aren't likely to work hard to master difficult concepts and subject matter, and in fact will be given few opportunities to do so.

This, then, is what in practice too many schools do, in spite of the best efforts of many devoted teachers and however much the rhetoric insists that merit and fairness are at play. This Commission, however, believes strongly that it is time rhetoric became reality, and many of our recommendations are aimed at giving all students, whatever their backgrounds, the same opportunity to make the most of the challenging schools we envisage.

What can be learned from this discussion of the hidden curriculum and these unacknowledged functions of schools? The danger of the hidden curriculum is that as long as it remains hidden, the assumptions and values on which it is based are not examined. It is argued, for instance, that the bureaucratic nature of the school system was appropriate when students were being prepared for a factory economy, in which most jobs required people to follow rules, learn a particular and unvarying sequence of skills, and fit into a hierarchical work structure. If, however, these are no longer the characteristics and skills needed for the world of the 21st century, schools have to change.

It is important to note that the hidden curriculum is usually the agenda of society, not just of the school. The challenge for schools is to become aware of society's expectations and their own practices, and then to socialize students into organizational life without stifling them, to foster creativity and critical thinking within a setting that balances the needs of the individual and the group. No discussion of purposes of education can afford to ignore the dangers of the hidden curriculum.

**Values**

Although we have not elaborated on all the purposes we propose, we want to say more about the teaching of values, because it is such an important issue. The role of schools in transmitting values is both complex and at times controversial, and we have had no easy time coming to grips with it. There is no such thing as value-free education. Sometimes values are taught explicitly, while in other cases, as we have seen, they are part of the hidden curriculum. Again, we suggest it is important for educators to be critically aware of the values they are transmitting, not least the inadvertent ones.

While many parents and educators want education to be based on a strong coherent set of values, there is less agreement on exactly what that set of values should be. For both the supporters of traditional education, as an example, and for those who are particularly concerned with inclusiveness and equity, values are a top priority. It is not always self-evident, however, that these two groups, or others, would agree on precisely which values schools are to be inculcating. Yet these are extreme positions. The question remains as to whether we have a centre that will hold.

Schools have the responsibility of helping students develop values related to the welfare of society. What happens, however, when good jobs become more problematic, as university admissions tighten up, as economic anxiety and technological uncertainty continue to cast their shadows, is that pressure to compete for individual success, for playing by whatever rules are required "to make it," becomes irresistible, and never mind what the Education Act says are the goals of the system.

Although these conflicting views were certainly well represented among those who spoke to us, there were also many students, teachers, parents, and trustees who spoke to us of schools that would both reflect and communicate attitudes of care and compassion, of trust, honesty, integrity, and of opposition
to violence and racism.

All this puts the members of this Commission in a peculiar quandary. We prove to be an old-fashioned group in certain respects. Not only do we love the world of learning, we happen to believe in certain traditional values.

_I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness:
Gas chambers built by learned engineers;
Children poisoned by educated physicians;
Infants killed by trained nurses; and
Women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates.
So, I am suspicious of education._

My request is:

_Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human._

A holocaust survivor

It should be unmistakably clear from this cri du coeur that we have the highest expectations of what we would love schools to accomplish.

We are convinced that, as difficult as it sometimes seems, and as incomplete as it will always be, a part of the task of schools must be to transmit to students some sense of honesty, truth, civility, social justice, and co-operation, and a determination to combat violence, racism, gender inequality, and environment degradation. Some of these values relate to personal morality, and others to social issues. We have no illusions that all our fellow Ontarians will agree with this list any more than we feel they will be unanimous in agreeing with all our other recommendations. But we do feel that the vast majority of Ontarians support these as values necessary for any kind of equitable and caring society. And we believe all schools in Ontario should seek to transmit them to their students.

When schools attempt to communicate values that students know are often ignored by the society around them, by different social institutions, including the schools themselves and the teachers within them, cynicism about and disrespect for the larger mission of the schools can easily result. We, however, have a higher regard than this for the majority of schools and teachers. Students will see their flaws and recognize their inconsistencies. Teachers are not gods, but, as we have said, they are our heroes, and we believe that in the general day-to-day life of schools they will reflect these basic values we have mentioned. To suggest that educators quit the field of values because both individuals and society fail to live up to them is a vision of despair that ultimately serves students not at all.

We should point out that implicit in the question of values are the views we transmit of our identity as Canadians. The issue is particularly sensitive at this turbulent point in our history, with the difficult quest for a renewed relationship with Quebec in the federation, the urgency of finding a new partnership with the aboriginal populations, and the diverse cultural input of newcomers from all over the world. We often feel that forces pulling us apart are stronger than those nurturing our cohesion as a country. Schools are the locus of many such cultural encounters and shocks.
Throughout our report we encourage the many wonderful initiatives and projects developed to foster the mutual respect and understanding so necessary in both Ontario and global societies. As part of this emphasis, we stress the celebration of our differences, especially as they should be reflected in the teaching of literature and history. In so doing, however, we do not intend to downgrade or diminish in any way the sense of pride, the identity, and the values that Canadians celebrate in the stories, the events, the practices, or heroes that give meaning to our heritage and tradition. They are an important part of our very roots. We need to nurture our roots, since without them, individuals and societies cannot grow. That, too, must be a purpose of schooling.

Schools may attempt to represent values - respect for knowledge, for example - to which society merely pays lip service - and the students know it. Benjamin Barber, writing in Harper's, illustrates the point with some quiz questions, including the following:

   A good way to prepare for a high-income career and acquire status in our society is
   a) win a slam-dunk contest
   b) take over a company and sell its assets
   c) start a successful rock band
   d) earn a professional degree
   e) become a kindergarten teacher...

   Familiarity with *Henry IV, Part II*, is likely to be of vital importance in
   a) planning a corporate take-over
   b) evaluating a budget cut in the Department of Education
   c) initiating a medical malpractice lawsuit
   d) writing an impressive job resume
   e) taking a test on what our 17-year-olds know. (15)

When schools attempt to communicate values that students know are routinely ignored by the society around them, cynicism about and disrespect for the larger mission of schools can easily result.

**Conclusion**

We start with the idea that publicly funded schools exist to serve all children, and we identify that what makes them different from other institutions and agencies is their responsibility for formal teaching and learning.

We propose a basic set of purposes focused on intellectual development, learning to learn, citizenship, preparation for work/career development, and instilling values. In addition, we acknowledge that within the unique framework for publicly funded education in Ontario, the Roman Catholic and francophone systems have particular mandates in addition to fulfilling the common set of purposes.

We also distinguish between the school's primary responsibility related to high-level competence and what we call literacies of a cognitive or academic nature, and the shared responsibility for the health and well-being of children in which the family, religious organizations, and a broad spectrum of other community agencies also have a role to play.

We discuss briefly the hidden curriculum, noting that it is usually the agenda of society, not just of the school. We believe that the assumptions and values on which this hidden curriculum is based need to be
examined, in order to ensure that what people think schools ought to do is what they actually do.

We stress certain values that we believe are necessary for any kind of equitable and caring society and we believe all schools in Ontario should seek to transmit them to their students. We emphasize that among these values are the views we transmit of our identity as Canadians. This must include both a celebration of our differences, and a sense of pride in the stories, events, practices, or heroes that give meaning to our heritage and tradition.

Endnotes (Chapter 4)


Chapter 5: What Is Learning?

So far, we have considered the history and context of education in Ontario and the major issues that underlie current debates about it, and we have attempted to articulate our sense of the purposes of schooling, which centre on learning and teaching. Before we can proceed to examine aspects of schooling in greater detail, and make recommendations to support and improve the province's formal elementary and secondary systems, we must describe more fully some basic principles of learning (and, in the next chapter, of teaching); these, after all, inform our recommendations about curriculum and teacher education. Our essential task is to envision and describe an education system that can best facilitate learning for students. But, first, there is the question of the nature of learning, and how it is nurtured and facilitated.

To learn, according to both Webster's and the Concise Oxford dictionaries, is to gain knowledge, understanding, or skill through study, instruction, or experience. Learning is the process of becoming able to comprehend or do, moving from lesser to greater competence. Human beings learn throughout their lives, but the process is especially obvious and accelerated early in life. While we learn constantly and everywhere, we define formal learning as the goal of education, which is institutionalized in schools. Learning in schools is the deliberately designed outcome of purposeful interactions. To some extent, what is to be learned in school has been predetermined by the larger society, by the educational authorities who represent it. In school, learning is not left to chance - the material to be learned is taught.

In recent decades, scholars have made considerable progress in understanding how learning occurs and how it can be promoted in schools, by:

- appreciating the value of motivation in learning, and the place of success and self-esteem as a learner in being motivated to learn;
- understanding the importance of sequencing what is to be learned, so that the learner builds on prior knowledge;
- making it clear that learners must reflect upon and think about what they already know and how it connects to other knowledge;
- being aware of the way interaction in pairs and groups facilitates learning.

All these are contributions of experimental science to the applied science of teaching for learning. In addition, experiments have revealed the importance of meta-cognitive strategies - thinking about thinking - as a way of taking learners to more complex levels of comprehension and competence.(1)

The education system must give high priority to doing precisely that. The results of provincial, national, and international testing show that Ontario students do reasonably well on measures of basic or lower-order skills and knowledge - in math, for example, facts about numbers and simple arithmetical
operations but appear to do less well on measures of higher-level skills, such as estimating and problem-solving.(2) Similarly, in tests of literacy, students in Ontario and other provinces tend to perform fairly strongly when decoding text and answering simple recall/comprehension questions, but many fall short in being able to synthesize, to infer, or to extend what they have read. (This same pattern is seen in Ontario's adult population.)(3)

It is these higher-level thinking skills we must strengthen, not simply teaching a specific body of knowledge, but teaching students to look at the connections between what they are learning and what they already know, and to build on it.

What do we know about how learning happens?

**Learning occurs from cradle to grave**

While education tends to be defined as a formal process, institutionalized in schools and other educational and training organizations, learning is both formal and informal, and is not limited to school. A classroom is only one example of a learning community. Learning begins long before kindergarten and continues long after graduation. It happens before school begins in the morning, and after the last bell rings. As all parents know, children start learning when they are born (if not before) and it would be very difficult - in fact, impossible - to stop them from doing so.

**Learning occurs with and without direct instruction**

While the learner may not be conscious of it, learning is always an active process; on the other hand, teaching may or may not be direct and deliberate. For example, most parents do not set out to teach the language used in the home, but children are immersed in it and learn to communicate in it during the first years of life.

Schools exist in order to help young people and adults acquire knowledge and skills not acquired instinctively, by osmosis or immersion; instead, schools use instruction so that students obtain access to oral and written expertise. What is deliberately taught at school is the formal curriculum; what may also be taught, although not deliberately, is what is usually called the "hidden" curriculum - the values, behaviours, attitudes, and information teachers and students communicate to one another, however unwittingly. There is, as well, the "missing" curriculum, which is what is not taught and, by implication, is not valued. (Whose voices are not heard in our histories? Whose pictures are not seen in our textbooks?)

The missing curriculum would include, as an example, a unit on 20th-century Canadian literature that made no mention of writers who are female, members of racial minorities, aboriginal or French-Canadian. The personal, negative message to students in those groups: good contemporary literature is not written by people like you. Native students might assume that a Canadian history that starts from the time of the European settlers was telling them their culture and history are not "Canadian." Other students may not notice what is missing or, having noticed it, may accept it uncritically. In either case, the students are being given a curriculum that is less inclusive and less rich than either reality or a good education system demands. It is difficult but essential to remember that students learn what they are taught, whether or not teaching is intentional.

Over time, students must learn to be self-rewarding and self-correcting if they are to continue to grow in
While they are students they must be able to depend on instructors for helpful and timely feedback. Errors must be pointed out, and youngsters must be reassured that occasional regression and forgetting are part of learning, and not a serious stumbling block or major failure. Not only must they know when an answer is wrong or inadequate, they must know why, so they can use that information for further learning. In their capacity to individualize feedback, as well as instruction, computers have the potential to become an important tool for self-assessment and self-correction.

The idea that we learn from our errors, and can hardly learn without them, is extraordinarily important, and it must be understood by teachers and conveyed to students. They must be encouraged to see learning as a process of continual improvement, rather than as a contest you either win or lose. This rather common-sense idea is not obvious to students, and there is ample evidence that many children develop a pattern of giving up when they don't succeed immediately. They first begin to falter after the early years in school because, while they were able to master the work easily, they did not develop the habit or expectation of having to improve - for example, they treat a first attempt at an essay or composition as the finished product, rather than as a draft.

**Learning depends on practice**

Learning is greatly dependent on practice. Knowledge is lost unless it is used and applied. Like instruction, practice may be deliberate or be a by-product of daily need and use. While initial instruction depends on a more knowledgeable other person, practice may be solitary (as in the piano practice that follows a lesson); or it may be shared with others focused on the same tasks (practising for a school play, for example), whether or not all of them have reached the same level of competence.

However, students seldom learn new ideas through practice and drill; rather, those exercises consolidate what they already know, and enable them to commit important principles to memory. Skills must be repeatedly reinforced through practice until they become automatic. The acquisition of new concepts or greater competence depends on thorough assimilation of previous knowledge, which is cumulative and grows from a solid base. Such fundamental codes as the alphabet and number systems, which are acquired through practice and application, are building blocks for everything that follows.

**Learning is a social process**

While we learn through such solitary activities as reading, listening, thinking, practising, and applying what we have learned, our essentially social and communicative nature as human beings enables us to profit from practising with others. In fact, we think and understand more rapidly when we work together, because of the link between talking and thinking, between explaining and understanding. Advances in understanding the social nature of learning have implications for the structure of learning opportunities, either in or out of the classroom. As sound theory and extensive research have shown, learning in small groups can be highly effective as long as individual and group responsibilities are clearly defined. Similarly, peer and cross-age tutoring can be powerful ways of extending a school's teaching and learning resources.
There is another sense in which learning is social: especially, but not exclusively among the young, it is embedded in the personal. Most learners, children in particular, respond to warm, caring teachers and the relationship with them acts as a strong motivator. Teachers should remember the maxim that "If they don't know you care, they don't care if they know" when they are reflecting on ways to create a context for classroom learning.

**Learning occurs most readily when learners want to learn**

Not only does learning depend on practice, it depends on motivation: people learn best and fastest when they feel a need to know something, and can see a clear reason for learning. While pain and fear can act as powerful motivators, in a normal social setting such as a classroom, positive motivators are clearly more effective than negative ones, rewards more productive than punishments.

There are two kinds of motivation: the first is intrinsic learning something because it is interesting and because the learner wants to know more or gain greater expertise. The second motivator is an external reward: a happy-face sticker at the top of the paper, an A on the assignment, the offer of a job. While students are not always highly motivated, teachers can expect they are most likely to perform best when they are convinced that assigned material is interesting, important, or useful to them, or when they have had some part in selecting it.\(^8\)

While both types of motivation may lead to learning, what we call the "love of learning" comes from intrinsic motivation. Rewards can help get students started at times, but research indicates that the reward should not become overly important to the learner: children who are motivated by concrete, short-term rewards (marks, etc.) are less likely to continue learning once the reward has been received.\(^9\) Because reward becomes the reason for learning, the only motivation for taking the next step is to receive the next reward. Teachers are responsible for evaluating students' progress, but they must be aware of the compelling disadvantages in strongly emphasizing marks as an end in themselves.

We must nurture curiosity, make learning interesting and challenging, and help youngsters, especially in their early years, to appreciate the challenges and pleasures of learning. Only then can we develop citizens with a sense of obligation to do their personal best, not merely for a mark or a pay cheque, but because they derive satisfaction from the challenge of working a problem through.

All of this is complicated by the fact that motivation-learning is a circular process. Motivated students learn more, but, in truth, more skilled and knowledgeable students are more motivated: students work hardest at their "best" subjects. Dull material indifferently taught is counterproductive to learning. However, the assumption that "fun" schooling will automatically increase learning is equally misguided. Students need to be motivated to accept challenges; they also need to be challenged to remain motivated. Nothing is more motivating than competence, and increasing competence is the essence of schooling. As students acquire competence, they perceive the power of knowledge, and are motivated to stretch themselves even more.

Most children come to school eager to learn, full of enthusiasm for the books, the pictures, and computers they see in the classroom, and are full of questions. Good teachers keep that eagerness alive and growing and help children and young people become increasingly competent.

**Learners have to know how to go on learning**

It would seem that students must be conscious of their own thinking processes before they are able to
solve new problems, problems that have more than one possible answer, or problems that call for critical inference and analysis. They must ask themselves key questions, and ask questions of their answers. In other words, if they are to become strong, independent, lifelong learners, students must become their own teachers.

While this depends, in part, on maturation - for example, young children are less able than adolescents to predict accurately how well they know or can do something - it is equally true that many students will never learn to examine their own thinking unless that skill is expressly taught. Most often this occurs when a teacher models "thinking about thinking" for students, and then has them practice by talking through the solution to a problem. One of the most effective methods is to put the learner in the position of teacher to another student.

As every teacher knows, there is no better way to find out whether you understand something than to try to teach it to someone else. After several such experiences, it becomes increasingly automatic for students to go through a process of self-examination, to ask themselves: "Did it work? How am I doing? Does this make sense?" Of course, learning cannot proceed unless it is based on a body of knowledge; you cannot ask "Does this make sense?" about a text written in a language you cannot read. The ability to examine your own thinking becomes useful only when there is a body of knowledge on which it can be used. But what large-scale assessments have shown is that students often have the knowledge, but not the generic thinking-about-thinking skills needed to get beyond the basics. Increasingly, educators have come to understand that anything less is inadequate.

We should set high standards for our children and be demanding of them in what we expect from their schoolwork ... We place too much emphasis on remediation, and too much emphasis on mastery. Instead, we need to reaffirm a commitment to excellence in our schools, in the way the corporate world has been doing. In practical terms, we need to expect more from our children ... more work ... is not [necessarily] more challenge ... We need to challenge children to the utmost, not only by giving them more work, but by giving them more difficult but also more meaningful work.(10)

Learning is different for different learners

The question of whether different people or groups learn differently is an old one, but the evidence is still largely theoretical. Thus, some educators suggest the reader who develops more slowly learns more readily by listening than by looking. But it is not clear whether they are describing students who have difficulty reading because they have not been well instructed or because they have some specific visual or learning disability, rather than because they are readers who have a different learning style.(11)

Others ascribe preferences in learning style or environment to differences in ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status, but it is unclear whether such differences are related to characteristics of the learners or of their situations.(12) It may be that the reason many female students prefer smaller groups or less competitive situations is that males, as has been well documented, tend to compete more successfully for teacher attention.(13)

While it is difficult to substantiate the belief that there are significant differences in fundamental ways of learning, it is certainly true that individuals have varied preferences for learning conditions: some want a quiet place to study, others insist that noise and surrounding activity are necessary. Some are more able to focus on and remember material if it is presented graphically, while others find images distracting.
Some learn better when they have more direction, others when they have less. If parents are willing to accommodate some of these differences (even among siblings), and judge according to results rather than on the basis of fixed ideas about proper learning, conflict can be avoided. Teachers, too, have to be inclusive and flexible in the way they help children learn, and in the diversity of the materials and approaches they use because such variety is likely to create a more successful context for learning.

While people vary in general intelligence, there is evidence that intelligence is multifaceted, that some people are more intelligent in one way of learning than another, and that they learn best when their strongest abilities are being engaged. Schools most readily reward linguistic and logical-mathematical kinds of intelligence (as do intelligence tests). Students whose most-developed abilities are spatial, musical, social, or kinetic (movement) are at a disadvantage in school, which typically under-utilizes these approaches to learning and knowing. The implication is that school curricula should be designed to engage all types of intelligences in order to provide equal access to learning for all students.

If (as some research suggests) these individual differences are quite marked, then schools, in order to carry out their primary mandate of making children literate and numerate, must also respond to the diverse abilities children have, using these abilities as routes by which children may gain understanding and competence with words and numbers. To do otherwise is to risk the opportunities many children could have for the success that depends so heavily on literacy and numeracy. The Commission's emphasis on society's need for literate and numerate learners in no way lessens its belief that these differences must be acknowledged.

There are barriers to learning

Although humans are natural learners, there is abundant evidence that the ability to learn is impeded by unfulfilled basic needs: for food, shelter, and well-being. People can learn when they are hungry, cold, or sick, but their ability and the rate at which they do so are severely impeded. This is equally true of young people who are poorly cared for or who are chronically frightened by violence or the threat of violence at home or at school, by sexual harassment, racism, homophobia, and other forms of bullying and persecution. Moreover, they are unlikely to taste academic success. For many children, poverty and disadvantage are strongly associated with learning problems and school failure; furthermore, many students know that unsafe schools cannot be good learning environments.

Another factor that can interfere with the ability to learn is a hostile or unsupportive socio-cultural environment. If the school offers little support in a student's home language or cultural heritage, if students do not see themselves reflected in the curriculum or among the teaching staff, they may be less motivated to learn, less confident in themselves as learners, and, therefore, less successful. Schools that acknowledge the missing curriculum by being sensitive to students' identities, and that clearly value diversity, eliminate what can be very powerful impediments to learning; they increase students' motivation to learn, and their confidence and success as learners. This is most likely to happen when the school is open to, and a working part of, its community; otherwise, the school itself can become part of the problem.

The importance of self-esteem in learning and achieving has been hotly debated. Some educators and parents see it as a prerequisite to school success, and the lack of it as a hurdle that must be overcome before learning can proceed.

In fact, there is evidence that self-esteem is both a cause and an effect of academic success. Many
children who do poorly in school have quite high self-esteem, according to standardized measures of personality, probably because they are doing well in other areas of life: parents accept them, they are popular with friends, they shine on skates, or whatever. Thus, it may be non-productive for teachers to focus principally on self-esteem as a way of increasing students' motivation. On the other hand, it is likely that success in schoolwork would encourage students to think of themselves as good at learning, which would enhance their sense of themselves as learners, which is crucial to their formal education.

The students who understand that part of what they learn, while not immediately useful, will be of future benefit, have a great advantage over those who depend heavily on the immediate environment - the teacher, the learning materials, the attitude of parents and of peers - for motivation. Students who think and act only in the present - and there are many of them - are easily distracted from schoolwork and are more likely to respond to what seems relevant and useful in the here-and-now rather than to promised rewards in a dim and uncertain future.

Community-based education, which takes students out of school and into workplaces and community agencies, and brings local business and professional people into the school, has the potential of connecting the school to real life. So does the use of computers, because technology impresses young people, and connects them to the larger and somehow more "real" world outside the school walls. The computer also offers students control over their own learning, which may help to reduce over-dependency on others and encourage them to be less passive learners.

Learning is also readily derailed by unsocial or anti-social behaviour in the classroom. To the degree that their inattentiveness disrupts the teacher's and the class's focus on the task at hand, easily distracted students may present a barrier to learning for others. In a classroom, an individual problem can quickly become a problem for the group.

Learning for life: The importance of early learning

It is likely that the most developmentally sensitive period for laying the groundwork of later competence and coping occurs during the infant's earliest social interactions, probably in the first two years of life. Basic habits of mind that guide how we interact with others, how we attend to the world, what we focus our attention on, and how we learn to deal with new situations, are shaped in the context of these key social relationships.(19)

While all children are learning from (or before) the day they are born, some arrive at school four, five, or six years later with significant learning advantages. While some of this is related to innate cognitive abilities, a great deal of it can be explained environmentally. Such negative influences as lack of stimulation are often associated with poverty and lack of parental understanding of how children develop. Positive factors include a strong literacy environment in the home: children are read to, see their parents read, and learn that what is written or read is important to daily life.

There are more subtle factors as well: we know, for example, that there is a relationship between the frequency and quality of parent-child conversations and the child's success in school in learning to read and write.(20) Parenting centres and high-quality child care can also positively affect children's success in school.(21)

Even more important to learning ability than the bond between child and teacher is that between child
and parent or other caretaker: it affects both competence and the ability to cope with, or withstand, stress. Perhaps the presence of a nurturing and dependable adult gives children the security needed if they are to feel safe to explore and experiment with the world around them. When children enter school, the connection between the most significant figures in their life - usually their parents - and the school becomes important. In fact, it is a crucial support to their ability to manage in the larger and more impersonal setting.(22) As well, as a nurturing adult, the teacher represents continuity for young children moving from the pre-school to the school experience.

Whatever their previous experience, all children come to school knowing, informally, a great deal about language, numbers, and physical objects. Formal schooling must build on the knowledge children bring with them. One of the basic principles of learning is that it proceeds in an orderly way, and is cumulative; an effective teacher - the parent, at home, and the classroom teacher, at school - helps the child to the next step, which depends on knowing what should come next. This is true for learners at all ages, but it is particularly crucial for getting youngsters off to a good start.

Informal to formal learning: The transition from home to school

What is different about school is not that it is a place for learning - which happens in the crib and in the kitchen as well as in the classroom. Two extremely important elements differentiate school from pre-school learning contexts.

First, although many parents deliberately teach such skills as counting or letter and word recognition, most learning at home is casual and non-directed and occurs through immersion in a social setting. In school, by contrast, classroom learning is intentional and directed by a professional teacher.

Second, learning in school takes place within a group of peers, instead of one-on-one or two-on-one. The transition to school is from solitary to group learning. Children who get high-quality, pre-school group care before they are old enough for school make the transition more easily and earlier, which gives them advantages as learners.(23)

Children arrive at school with different levels of preparedness to interact positively with others, to defer individual gratification, to focus attention, to follow instructions, and, in general, to profit from the classroom setting. Children who can achieve all this will grow in competence and in their ability to cope with frustration. By contrast, children who are less able than their peers to benefit from group learning face increasing frustration and diminishing levels of competence.

The challenge for teachers and other educators is to create a nurturing and supportive environment that is stimulating and challenging, where all children have the opportunity to become more competent. The home environment, which is such a strong influence in early childhood, continues to shape a child's progress throughout the years of formal education.

Without teaching to the lowest common denominator, the teacher must narrow the gap between the neediest children and those who have social, emotional, or intellectual advantages.

How can classrooms become learning communities? What are the best strategies for ensuring that most - not just many - students become successful school learners? What do we know about what works?

Active teaching and learning
Students and teachers must be actively involved in the learning process if the potential of the classroom as a context for cognitive and social development is to be realized. Passivity is as much an enemy of learning as it is of self-esteem and mental health. An excellent teacher is sensitive to each youngster's interests, achievements, and difficulties. Indeed, research shows that teachers who are most acutely aware of each student's response to a lesson or activity have the fewest problems of discipline and disruption.(24) Because they monitor the progress of each student, they know the kind of help each needs, and they provide it appropriately and can give an accurate assessment to a parent, another teacher, or to the student, leaving little doubt about the degree of progress being made and some sense of whether problems are temporary or serious.

Since learning is the enduring growth of competence, it is clear that teachers cannot force students to learn. To the extent that teachers create a supportive and challenging classroom and curriculum, they will find that most students willingly put forth effort to master new ideas and skills. On the other hand, if material is remote from students' interests, backgrounds, or experiences, if it is insufficiently challenging or beyond the students' level of development, or if students are afraid to make a mistake, their opportunities to learn will be severely curtailed. The resultant boredom and alienation may lead to disruptive behaviour that interferes with everyone's learning.

Exploiting the diversity of the group

An important clue to the best way of exploiting the learning context of the classroom is to capitalize on its uniqueness: unlike the family (but like most other work settings), it is organized around a relatively large group. While one-on-one tutoring is an extremely efficient (as well as extremely expensive) instructional mode, there are very distinct advantages to the group setting: the social nature of human learning makes each learner a potential teacher of peers, and social interaction a prime route to learning.(25) While it is truest for children before they become literate and can learn from print as well as from speech, it applies to learners of all ages.

In a classroom, students learn from the teacher and from one another. Teachers who understand the group's potential as a learning vehicle exploit the developmental diversity that is otherwise perceived as (and can, indeed, become) a barrier to learning. Helping a peer in school is excellent preparation for life, for home, for the community, and for work.

Collaborative learning may involve work with children of the same, or of different, ages. It encourages the less developed "learner" to see and reach for the next level of skill or understanding; it also helps the more developed "teacher," in the process of clarifying and explaining material to another person, understand it better.(26)

Extending the boundaries of the learning environment

When, under the teacher's strong leadership, these experiences are clearly related to the academic curriculum, community visits, workplace experiences, the presence of community members in the classroom - all extend the school's boundaries and show students the reality that learning is lifelong. Schools often give the implicit message that just the opposite is true: that all important learning takes place within their walls, and can be delivered only by teachers; to the degree they do that, schools become barriers to learning. Schools and teachers cannot possibly replicate the myriad opportunities for learning that exist outside their walls; moving beyond those walls extends learning and, by connecting the curriculum to valued people and valued settings, strengthens its meaning and impact.
Information technology is an increasingly powerful vehicle for enlarging students' learning opportunities; many schools are already connected to networks of information and thinking that lie beyond their own walls. Students are linking up with each other, across school, board, provincial, and national boundaries, sharing information, ideas, and interests. These endeavours force them to use and develop communication skills and to expand perspectives beyond the local school or neighbourhood.

Despite the enormous amount of information technology for learning that already exists, the field is still very young and will obviously be an increasingly powerful force in school education. The passivity that shuts out learning in general is an especially powerful disincentive for some students in conventional classrooms. In so far as technology is used interactively, it has the potential to motivate students and to be an especially effective learning tool, particularly for those who have difficulty with text and lecture formats. Computers can individualize curriculum and pacing, enabling students to work at their own best rate. Most of all, technology offers students access to a world of information, so that the work of learning clearly belongs to them - a world full of choice, decision-making, and the responsibility for asking as well as answering questions.

Creating a learning community that works

A school is a community of learners for teachers and students, and an effective classroom is a community of learners, in which the teacher functions as instructor, facilitator, and observer, and the students learn by listening, talking, helping others, and receiving help from others. Teachers, in observing and monitoring their students' progress and response to the curriculum, are also learners, just as students, in teacher-structured interactions, tutor one another. If school is preparation for life, it must be life-like, with everyone able to do some teaching and a lot of learning.

Endnotes (Chapter 5)

Chapter 6: What Is Teaching?

The central agent in the formal learning process and in the lives of students at school is the teacher. Well-educated and motivated teachers are the most vital component of high-quality education. Throughout their careers, teachers touch the lives of thousands of young people; without their commitment and participation, attempts to improve the school system are bound to fail.

"Learning is a full-blooded, human, social process, and so is teaching."

R.W. Connell, Schools and Social Justice

The quality of teaching is ultimately measured by its impact on students, in terms of what they learn and the degree to which they are engaged in the process: good teaching engages students in learning, and increases what they learn and what they achieve. Beyond helping students absorb the most easily measured learning, good teachers foster a love of learning and provide a supportive classroom atmosphere for all students. But what constitutes good teaching? What instructional approaches are effective? What are the characteristics needed in Ontario's teachers? Not only do people have different answers to these questions, they feel strongly about their views. A central issue in the current debates is what constitutes good teaching: there is no widespread agreement on what teachers should know and be able to do.

Teaching, unlike many other professions or occupations, has a long, informal tradition that sometimes seems at odds with what is happening in schools today. Most adults (and older children) have spent many years watching teachers at work, and often have unquestioned notions about teaching. When educators suggest, for instance, that learning is better understood as an "active construction of meaning" by the learner (as was done recently in the first version of The Common Curriculum), it is not surprising that the public may wonder if schools have been diverted from their proper focus. Powerful, traditional notions of teaching are then at odds with the "expert" notions.

Discussions about teaching are often framed as debates between opposing positions: child-centred versus teacher-directed, or student-centred versus subject-centred. According to the one position, teachers are to impart knowledge to students through direct, systematic instruction, focusing on skills and content. According to the other, teachers are to encourage children to take a more active role in developing their own knowledge, with less direct instruction on the part of the teacher. The educational pendulum seems to swing from one ideology to the other, with teachers, students - and, often, parents - getting hit as it sweeps by.

Such either/or choices, however, tend to misrepresent the complex nature of learning and teaching in the classroom: effective teachers use both approaches, as they direct student learning toward clear goals. Perhaps if accountability for results were to be more clearly established, much of the debate about
methods would be defused. The extent of student learning is surely the most relevant indicator of the worth of the teaching strategies used. Acceptance of reasonable, clearly stated standards, together with ongoing assessment of student learning, become important steps in this process.

**Characteristics of good teaching**

When people talk about teaching in schools, they are usually referring to intentional and specific teaching, although what is unintentional may be equally significant. In other words, the attitudes and values implicit in what teachers say and do are important, even if they are not articulated as part of the intended learning.

We see good teaching as characterized by five dimensions (with teachers displaying various strengths in each).(1) We are aware that listing the characteristics or factors required in good teaching risks sounding too clear-cut, when in fact teaching is complex, requiring judgment and sensitivity as well as knowledge and skill. We are also aware that not everyone may agree with our principles concerning what teachers should know and be able to do, and what personal qualities they should have.(2)

1. Teachers care about and are committed to students and their learning. They know enough about all their students to be able to decide how to teach them effectively.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach the material to students: in other words, they know how to make knowledge accessible to students.
4. Teachers do not always work in isolation; they learn from and collaborate with others, including students, colleagues, parents, and the community.
5. Teachers critically examine their own practice, and continue to learn throughout their careers.

**1. Teachers care about and are committed to students and their learning**

This is the most fundamental characteristic of good teaching. Children and adolescents need to be cared for, in the sense of being understood, respected, and recognized. Students thrive in settings where they are treated fairly and empathetically.(3) The teachers who make a difference, who are remembered by their students, are those who have made the commitment to students and to students' learning the basis of their professional lives. Such teachers know their students well, and celebrate the diverse capacities, interests, and ethno-cultural backgrounds that students bring to the classroom. They are committed to strong, humane values, and create classroom climates in which such values provide the foundation for students.

Academic goals, which are paramount for schools, are more likely to be achieved when students feel valued as persons. All students need care, and that is particularly true of those whose families, for whatever reasons, cannot provide sufficient support. It has been suggested that "caring is the very bedrock of all successful education."(4)

> **Being a teacher is not just a matter of having a body of knowledge and a capacity to control a classroom. That could be done by a computer with a cattle-prod. Just as important, being a teacher means being able to establish human relations with the people being taught.**

R.W. Connell, 1993
The commitment of teachers to their students' learning must also be emphasized: the teacher sets high expectations and tries a variety of methods to engage students in productive learning tasks. If students are not learning, good teachers do not blame them or look for scapegoats: they seek other approaches. In other words, they expect students to learn, and hold themselves and their students accountable. Caring, however fundamental it is, is not enough: what it provides is the underlying moral foundation on which to base professional practice.

2. **Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach the material to students: in other words, they know how to make knowledge accessible to students**

Everyone acknowledges that teachers must know and understand the material they are teaching. They must be able to approach issues from a variety of perspectives, and to plan several alternative paths to understanding basic concepts. It is not always clear, however, how much and what kind of subject knowledge is required. As one researcher noted:

*The evidence that knowledge of a subject is not enough to make a teacher is plain to anyone who has ever seen a Ph.D. in mathematics thoroughly confuse a freshman calculus class.*

Skilled teachers not only appreciate how students' prior understanding or misconceptions interfere with their learning, but can also intervene to overcome those difficulties. For instance, they can explain and demonstrate concepts in several different ways, so that students who have trouble with one approach may be better able to understand another path to learning.

Teachers need to be competent in a range of teaching strategies and methodologies. Because no one approach can be guaranteed to work with all students, teachers use their professional judgment to draw from a repertoire of possibilities, taking into account such student differences as diverse backgrounds and different rates of readiness for learning new material. Teachers who make the effort to use different modes of presentation and curriculum delivery such as direct instruction, co-operative small group learning, guided practice, cross-age tutoring, simulations, and student contracts, and who use a variety of instructional materials including text, graphic images, video, and audio tapes, are likely to reach more students than those who depend heavily on only one or two techniques.

The question of teaching methods is at the heart of several educational controversies. For example, the issue of "phonics" versus "whole language" as methods for teaching children to read has been the subject of intense public debate. Researchers and educators, however, have increasingly found a constructive middle ground between the rock of "whole language" and the hard place of "phonics," drawing from both approaches: the challenge now is for teachers to use this knowledge to launch all children into literacy. "Becoming literate means expanding our language...and becoming able to read and write this expanded language as fluently as we speak and hear it." 

Teachers must believe that all students can learn, must communicate this belief to students, and then commit themselves to working to helping students achieve success, most crucially by providing a demanding and academically challenging program. Although it may seem obvious, teachers, no matter how well meaning, who sometimes "make allowances" for minority or disadvantaged students, and expect less of them, will not help them learn.

Teachers must also be aware of the way children's language competence affects learning and their ability to give evidence of it. This is particularly important for teachers whose classes include students with limited proficiency in English or in French: teachers need to use their understanding to help students...
learn content, to think, and to communicate their knowledge to others.

Teachers can assist students from diverse backgrounds by providing connections that help them move from home to school. Such connections link students' life experiences to the kinds of instruction they receive in school, and thus help them make sense of their new learning. Teachers who understand and value what students bring to the classroom can build on students’ prior knowledge: for instance, when the teacher is discussing farms or agriculture, students from Africa or Latin America may make little sense of the usual references to Canadian crops and animals. A skilful teacher uses examples of crops and animals with which these students are familiar. Not only do they better understand the ideas being taught, but Canadian-born students learn from the experience of students from other countries. Without such supportive bridges, students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds may have difficulty grasping and making use of what is being taught.

3. Guided by clear goals, teachers organize and monitor student learning

Good teachers can say clearly what their goals are for student learning. They gather resources and plan lessons with those goals in mind, and they have a variety of ways of judging whether the goals are met. They do not ask students to participate in classroom activities without a clear sense of how such activities will bring them closer to specific learning goals.

Organizing learning also involves managing time in the classroom. The key objectives are to prevent disruptions, increase the time actually available for learning, and keep students engaged in the learning activities. This does not mean that well-managed classrooms are highly controlled or "run with an iron hand." On the contrary, when routines are well thought out, consistently maintained, and understood by students, classrooms may seem, to an observer, to almost run themselves. Managing student learning also involves making work both challenging and interesting. Although basic skills are critical, advanced and higher-level thinking skills can and should be taught at the same time.

In whole-class teaching, maintaining interest and challenging students means pacing work appropriately. In dealing with small groups, it means ensuring that each student is assigned a particular responsibility for completing the group task, so that no student is left idle or marginalized.

As well, teachers do not leave to chance the development of the skills students need in the classroom, for instance, for working together in groups. Taking turns, disagreeing in an agreeable manner, asking for others' views, and other processes of interaction should be explicitly taught. Of course, some children come to school with some of these skills, and may even use them without explicit instruction, but it would be counterproductive to rely on that being the case.

Another important aspect of teaching is that of reinforcing learning and giving students feedback so they can learn from past performance and continue to improve.

Learning is enhanced when students understand what is expected of them, get recognition for their work, learn about their errors and receive guidance in improving their performance. (8)

Monitoring how well students are learning is vital for successful teaching. Teachers need to be well informed about various assessment practices, and must flexibly and appropriately employ a range of measures. Observations of students in class, portfolios of their work, class discussion, and paper-and-pencil tests - all these are tools for evaluating student learning. Good teachers know that the
point of testing students is to improve and focus instruction, so all students can do well.

Good teachers also report progress fully and accurately to students and their parents. In doing so, they value clarity, avoiding "edubabble." Teachers give feedback to students (and, ideally, to parents as well) on an on-going basis, often informally. They also provide more formal feedback to both students and parents through report cards and student/teacher or parent/teacher conferences. (Our position on assessment and reporting is developed more fully in Chapter 11.)

4. Teachers do not always work in isolation; they learn from and collaborate with others, including students, colleagues, parents, and the community

Although effective teachers have probably always been able to reach beyond themselves and their classrooms to draw on resources, working collaboratively is now crucial if schools are to meet the needs of all children. The traditional isolation of the teacher is no longer adequate. Teachers increasingly recognize that there are many viewpoints and that they can draw on various resources to meet student learning needs. Teachers who successfully involve parents in their children's learning will reap rewards in terms of increased student success.

Teachers may work with their colleagues in various ways: for example, by team teaching, collaborative planning, curriculum development, or supporting new teachers. Teachers can learn from their colleagues, as they share insights, questions, techniques, and suggestions, in person or through electronic networking. Teachers who collaborate with one another in planning and delivering the program are also modeling for their students the importance of working and learning together.

Schools must become more open to parents, students, and the community. Teachers can work more closely with parents, involve students in making suggestions and choices about learning activities, and draw on the community where appropriate.

5. Teachers critically examine their own practice, and continue to learn throughout their careers

If there ever was a time when teachers could rely on established routines and methods of teaching, they can do no longer: now, they must be able to adapt to new demands and circumstances. Teachers look carefully at their own practices, learn about their students, and experiment with new ideas. With the rapid expansion of knowledge in many fields, teachers read widely and keep up with their profession.

At the same time, they recognize that they cannot look to research or to other practitioners for unambiguous prescriptions about how to teach: teaching is a complex and subtle activity, dependent on subject matter, student characteristics, and classroom context. The research on good or effective teaching can provide no more than general guidelines for real teachers in real classrooms. On-going judgments are called for as teachers "read" complex situations and improvise responses based on their knowledge and experience.

The availability of new technologies as vehicles for teaching and learning has also changed the nature of teaching. If they are to guide students effectively, teachers must become comfortable with this technology. All classrooms need computers, and all teachers and students need to become skilled at using them for a variety of tasks to reach a variety of goals.

_We need teachers for whom the science and technology of teaching is continually developing and for whom the job is fundamentally an art which they study, reflect on, and refine throughout their careers._(9)
If teachers are expected to continue to develop their expertise, they must have systematic opportunities to reflect, to learn, and to discuss issues with others.

These five principles, or characteristics, can be seen as a framework for teachers who are continuing to learn throughout their careers. Whereas very experienced and expert teachers can be characterized as having a high level of development in each dimension, newer teachers will be at an earlier stage, particularly in terms of the skills involved in managing and monitoring student learning, and in being able to work collaboratively with others beyond the classroom.

**Good teachers in their schools**

Teachers increasingly work, not only directly with students in the classroom, but in the broader school community, with colleagues, administrators, and parents. Good teachers, no matter how outstanding, do not exist in a vacuum. In Chapter 4, we argued that responsibilities must be clarified so that schools can meet student needs and maintain public confidence. We believe that teachers must focus primarily (but not exclusively) on developing academic competence, which we interpret as involving a range of literacies and numeracies, and that teachers and schools must work with others in the community to help meet important non-academic needs.

Good teaching, as described here, means that we are expecting a great deal from teachers. Such expectations are realistic only if teachers receive strong support in their schools, and if professional preparation and on-going professional development focus on the skills and knowledge that are vital to success.

Teachers are not alone in schools: principals and vice-principals have a critical role to play, and, as we emphasize throughout our report, so do other community agencies and resources.

**Conclusion**

We have stressed that the Commission sees teaching as complex, difficult, and supremely important. The five principles provide a vision of good teaching that can guide policy and practice in Ontario schools.

The role of teachers has changed over the past ten years. Teachers not only work directly with students in the classroom, but also, as part of their role as education professionals, contribute to and draw from the world beyond the classroom door, in the school and in the broader community. As we argue in Chapter 12, a renewed commitment to teacher education and professional support will be necessary to ensure that teachers are able to play their pivotal roles in our restructured school system; and we look in more depth at the kind of working environment that best supports good teaching and how teachers can take more responsibility for their profession. We examine how teachers and school administrators should be prepared, and how to provide the on-going professional development that can ensure the career-long learning that is part and parcel of life as an education professional.
Endnotes (Chapter 6)

1. National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, "What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do," in Toward High and Rigorous Standards for the Teaching Profession, 3rd edition (Detroit and Washington, DC: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1991). In developing our principles, we drew extensively on work by the National Board.

2. Some sources for further reading include:


4. Noddings, Challenge to Care in Schools, p. 27.


6. N.L. Gage, "What Do We Know about Teaching Effectiveness?" Phi Delta Kappan 6, no. 2 (1984): 87-93.


ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
©Copyright 1994, Queens Printer for Ontario
Volume II describes our priorities for learning, from early childhood through secondary school. The chapters include discussions of curriculum content and organization, supports for learning, and learning assessment.

In this volume, we describe a "curriculum for literacies," based on the idea and the ideal that schools can effectively lead most children and youth to a high level of skill, and a deep level of comprehension, across a variety of subject areas. A key recommendation occurs in Chapter 7: full-time education should be universally available for three- to five-year-olds. We see this as one of the four engines that can transform an adequate educational system to a superior one.

We define the curriculum, broadly, as an educational program beginning as an option at age 3, and compulsory at age 6. It is a program whose goals and content must be clear to teachers and parents, whose mutually reinforcing efforts on behalf of young learners are the absolutely essential underpinnings of this long-term learning plan. That is why, throughout the chapters on the education of pre-schoolers, children, and adolescents, we emphasize that clearly stated, written descriptions of what students are expected to learn must be available to parents as well as to teachers. We believe that the curriculum - what children should be learning, and at what level of mastery - must be clear to parents, so they can help at home, in appropriate ways, and so that their dialogue with teachers on the subject of their child's progress is that of well-informed, well-respected, and equally powerful partners. While we believe there is no substitute for direct parent-teacher communication in respect of students, we also think it is important - and have built relevant suggestions on the subject into our discussion - that student achievement be monitored regularly and publicly, so that the community as a whole can be informed about the achievements of its young, and the effectiveness of its schools.

If it is to help almost all students reach an acceptable level of understanding and performance, a curriculum must have considerable flexibility to accommodate individual differences in the rate at which skills, knowledge, and understanding are acquired. Educators are familiar with the argument that we should make knowledge and achievement the constant, and time the variable, instead of the reverse; that is, we should have similarly high goals for students, and let them achieve them at their own pace, instead of insisting that everyone learn whatever they can in a set period of time.

Despite the familiarity of the argument, very few schools really allow flexibility in learning time. Every student is expected to learn enough between September and
June - not too little and not too much - to be in the same "starting" position the following September. While it is understandable that neither parents nor bureaucrats are happy with extremely wide and non-standard fluctuations in learning time, we propose that much more thought be given to ways of helping students move faster, to avoid boredom, and to intensify targeted help for students having difficulties so they do not fall far behind. Such help, especially when it comes early in the child's career as a student, has the potential of reducing later failures, which are extremely costly to the individual and to society, in the short and the long term. We are aware that this kind of intense, targeted, "just-in-time" help is difficult to provide: it is labour intensive, hence expensive; but it is important to remember that the help that is given later, through special education and remediation programs, is also costly and and less likely to be effective.

As well, the immediate interventions require considerable flexibility on the part of the school, the student, and the family, all of whom have to manage schedules so that the student is not absent from the regular classroom for any significant time, and can keep moving ahead with peers even while getting help. However, this flexibility is perhaps more a matter of attitude than schedule. The reason why such solutions are not already implemented in most schools is possibly because they require both more flexible thinking and a different way of distributing scarce resources - from both inside and outside the school system. But the difficulty of realizing them does not mean that these solutions can be ignored. Everyone must make a much greater effort to facilitate them.

The following chapters also suggest that educators must look at their students' progress over time, in the same way parents do: not just a year at a time, but continuously. We believe that a student needs a teacher at school who has a continuing concern for her progress as long as she attends the school. We are recommending that a kind of "case management" be exercised on behalf of every student - moving from a more administrative to a more "hands-on" style, as students grow into adolescence and shift into "rotary" systems where contact with any one teacher is normally quite limited. With the transition to adolescence, the role of steward or advisor takes on an educational and career-planning emphasis, with student, teacher-advisor, and parents regularly reviewing the student's experience, progress, and goals. We also suggest that parents and educators be encouraged to understand curriculum as a continuum from pre-school to post-secondary education and training. In fact, our discussion of curriculum begins, not at Grade 1, but at birth.

Finally, many of our suggestions and recommendations for a strong curriculum speak to the interdependence between schools and other learning resources. There is no question that schools do not have a monopoly on knowledge, and that teachers cannot be human computers. Nor can they be expected to be artists, scientists, business people, technicians, physicians, and social workers. But students need exposure to others in those roles and more, in order to define the goals they want to work toward, and to appreciate the link between curriculum and their future. Thus we have a great deal to say about community-based career awareness and more formal career planning and education. Parents and teachers are the most essential "life supports" in the education of the young, but, ultimately, a solid support system
rests on a strong sense of community responsibility, which leads to a real sharing of resources devoted to the education of young people. We realize that what we are suggesting - a real sharing of the curriculum between educators and others - is a giant step beyond the occasional inter-agency collaboration or co-operative education program, and the like. However, we are convinced that it must happen. A solid curriculum rests on a belief by the whole of society that responsibility for supporting the education of young people belongs to us all, whether or not we have children in school. If that belief is to be acted on, government must be a facilitator, not a barrier, for concerted, not disparate, efforts.

We describe a curriculum that is rich, challenging, and inclusive, one that offers the possibility of developing all the talent we have and need in Ontario. But without dedicated and well-educated teachers, dedicated and well-informed parents, and a commitment from local communities and government to define themselves as resources for the learners who are our future, the best curriculum will be worth no more than the paper on which it is printed.

**Key issues**

The major issues around which the debate about education and educational reform centres were discussed earlier in this report. They include quality, focus, fairness, openness, and efficiency. All these are closely related to curriculum.

The central questions are how to ensure comprehensiveness and relevance while avoiding overloading the curriculum; how to make the curriculum responsive to new social concerns, such as the environment, health, etc., without vitiating its long-term purpose in the transmission of culture and values; how to provide for a diversity of offerings to meet the interests of diverse clienteles while ensuring coherence and focus.(1)

**Curriculum quality**

Quality questions are curriculum questions: Are students learning enough, learning the right things, learning them at the right time, or learning them well enough? Our considered response is that the key quality issue is embodied in the last of these, the "well enough" issue. While evidence from some of the national and international test comparisons suggests that our students could be learning more,(2) it suggests, across several subject areas, that our students could and should be learning better: they should have less superficial knowledge and understanding, and be better able to synthesize diverse information, infer from and extend information, and generalize and transfer knowledge from one context to another. Too many students cannot apply what they have "learned," and this shows in their relative weakness when dealing with more complex components of measures of literacy and numeracy. In other words, it is not as much a matter of more quantity as it is of quality - doing what is most important, and doing it thoroughly.

**Curriculum focus**

Another major issue around which concern and criticism of the educational system cluster is that of focus and coherence. Applied to curriculum, this is expressed as a
fear that schools are "all over the place," are trying to do too much, and, as a consequence, are doing too little really well. This is what is usually meant by the "overcrowded" curriculum, and often leads to the "back to the basics" call. This concern is most often expressed about the elementary school curriculum.

Is the teaching and learning of foundation skills being slighted, or are traditional core subjects being pushed aside by a multitude of other subjects that are part of the elementary school curriculum? In fact, most of the subjects presently prescribed have been part of the compulsory curriculum for a very long time - such subjects as language, math, science, music, history, French (or Anglais), geography, and physical education.

There are a few that were added more recently: the arts now include dance; and technology and business studies were not always taught in the earlier grades. And within such traditional subject areas as physical and health education, for example, additional topics have been added: AIDS education is now part of the health curriculum because the disease is so dangerous and the need for education for prevention is so urgent. Curriculum, like many other areas that are important and in which careers are spent, expands - it never shrinks. New topics are added, but there is never agreement on what no longer need be taught.

Teachers are also concerned that having to deal with a number of topics in a finite period tends to move them toward superficial coverage and over-dependence on methods that do not permit students to explore, question, try alternative solutions, and, in general, reach a real understanding, rather than a superficial familiarity useful only for short-term recall. It has often been said that it is too easy for curriculum to become a mile wide and an inch deep. Educational researchers looking at comparative international success rates observe that in countries where students excel in mathematics, for example, the math curriculum tends to be less extensive and more intensive, so that material is learned very well the first time, is thoroughly comprehended, not merely memorized, and does not have to be re-learned over and over again.

While teachers and parents may feel that the curriculum is overcrowded, in our opinion the array of subjects included in The Common Curriculum does not, by itself, make this inevitable. If course guidelines seem to mandate too much content, and do not suggest to teachers how to condense or integrate, then the curriculum will be overcrowded.

Teachers need a curriculum which is well defined and clear, with sequences of learner outcomes by subject area, illustrated by topics with examples, to ensure consistency and cumulative learning. Teachers need guides on taking apart a well-sequenced and cumulative curriculum, and on putting it back together.

We believe that well-written curriculum guidelines and support documents can show teachers how to enrich without adding on how, in effect, to accomplish more than one thing at a time. For example, teachers may perceive co-operative, small-group learning, which is a teaching and learning technique; anti-racist education, which is a focus on equity in the curriculum; and mastery of a body of knowledge - for example, the pre-European contact history of Canada - as three
different teaching "assignments." In fact, Canadian history is the content, and the topic naturally lends itself to informed discussions of culture, race, and racism in history. The co-operative small group is part of the process.

If the classroom is racially heterogeneous, and the small groups are structured to reflect that mix, if the teacher understands and has made sure that students understand the prerequisites for successful small-group work, the exercise will automatically become a piece of anti-racist education with a high potential for decreasing intolerance and barriers between groups. Such examples are an important part of curriculum support materials, and every effort should be made to facilitate teachers' knowledge of, and competence in, this kind of process/product curricular integration.

We think the real issue is not curriculum crowding but curriculum clarity. Both data and anecdotal evidence suggest that students are not overburdened - generally, the amount of homework they have is moderate to low by international standards. Their agendas do not appear to be overcrowded, though their teachers' well may be. We believe there is sufficient time in students' days and weeks for physical exercise and for learning the essentials of health, for example, without cutting into the time needed for the language, mathematics, or the arts and sciences curricula. We also think that the fitness and health curriculum could be delivered by people from the municipal recreation department, the public health department, and other community agencies, and that teachers would benefit from being able to put more time and focused thought into planning and delivering the academic curriculum.

It is essential that subjects and topics form some kind of meaningful whole or pattern, both at the level of an individual course, made up of component parts, and at the level of the program, made up of many courses over a year or over several years.

**Fairness and openness**

People ask about the curriculum: Is it constructed so that people with different strengths and paths to learning are equally well accommodated? Does it shut out or give greater advantage to certain groups of people or certain types of learners? Does it recognize and honour the cultures, languages, and histories of the school's students and their families, and of this country?

Phrases such as a "representative" or "pluralistic" curriculum are used to reflect this concern for fairness and inclusiveness. An authentic curriculum is inclusive, and it is also global in that it reflects a broad range of experiences and perspectives.(3)

A science curriculum, for example, which acknowledges only the contributions to science of men of European heritage is incomplete and therefore incorrect, leaving female and minority-group learners at a disadvantage. A curriculum on the history of railway building in Canada that does not reflect the role and the treatment of Chinese workers is also incomplete and incorrect, distorting what really happened. Similarly, there is every reason to ensure that the curriculum reflects the global village of which Ontario is a part. Over the course of a school career, students should have access to quality literature - not just Canadian, American, British, and
French, but that of many other countries.

Inclusiveness relates not only to curriculum per se, but to the issue of openness. In speaking to the Commission, many people made the point that they find the education system a closed one; that, although the public funds education, the public is not allowed "in." The culture of schools typically defines the curriculum as exclusively the province of educators, which parents and others may, at best, observe; they may make suggestions, but not seriously influence planning or delivery. Not surprisingly, parents often experience this as conflicting with their understanding of public education as democratic and inclusive, as well as with the schools' frequent assurances about the value of parental involvement for children's achievement.

Furthermore, interpreting the whole curriculum as necessarily the exclusive property of educators means that one of the most promising ways of "uncrowding" it is not pursued. On the one hand, teachers complain of being overburdened by having to cover a wide variety of topics and concerns that are essentially non-academic: drug education, for example, or health and safety. On the other hand, they cannot (or they believe they cannot) delegate some of these responsibilities to non-teachers.

We suggest that, on the contrary, there are many things schools and teachers should not necessarily do by themselves, or do alone, but which should and could still be available to students. If teachers are to focus on academic learning and on teaching so that students understand, if teachers are to develop truly literate learners, they must not be diverted by a multitude of important but non-academic issues. Teachers must, most certainly, care for and about their students as persons; if they do not, or if they seem not to, their effectiveness as teachers is extremely limited. Moreover, a student with serious personal problems that are not dealt with will not only be unable to learn well, but may prevent others from learning by acting disruptively or diverting the teacher's attention.

Fortunately, in specific curricular, as well as extra-curricular areas, there are others who might be available, whose training might be equally or even more suitable, and who might appropriately take on tasks that involve teaching, but need not directly involve teachers. While the potential of community alliances is discussed more fully in a later chapter of this report, its specific application to the curriculum is explored in this section. We refer to a few specific areas of the traditional curriculum that could be delivered by teachers, among others, but not necessarily or principally by teachers. We suggest that community alliances for delivering the broader curriculum can help schools become more focused and more inclusive, open, and responsive. Examples include health and fitness curricula, social skills curricula such as anti-violence and "peacemaker" programs, arts activities, and career education.

**Efficiency**

In Ontario, curriculum writing has been more decentralized than in other provinces. Like many of those we heard from, we see little benefit in the current duplication of effort that exists in developing curriculum that way. Local boards, as well as some
schools, are expected to do detailed curriculum planning and writing, in the absence of more centralized production of possible course units and sequences. We believe this function can be efficiently centralized, and done in a way that facilitates teachers’ work, allowing them to focus on teaching without constraining their professional development or creativity.

We recognize the validity of recent attempts by boards and the Ministry of Education and Training to share the work of each board among all boards (e.g., the Curriculum Clearing House), and encourage continuation of that effort, as a result of which many valuable resources have already been developed. But we think the time has come to centralize the development of new curriculum. We expect that this would lead to the use of fewer teacher resources within school boards for responsibilities that take them out of schools and classrooms.

In saying this, we do not intend to prohibit local efforts when boards or schools feel some compelling reason to make them; and the local curriculum option we propose could provide such a reason in some cases. But we do propose that the documents needed to supplement *The Common Curriculum* be developed centrally and disseminated to all boards and schools, and that the same rule apply to curriculum for the early years and for the specialization years.

In Chapter 5 (on learning) and in this volume, we make the case that the curriculum in Ontario's schools must be representative, inclusive, and academically honest and ambitious. In a system like the one we suggest, in which curriculum is developed provincially, the Ministry of Education and Training has a strong responsibility to make certain this focus is integrated into future curriculum development.

In 1993, the Legislature of Ontario passed Bill 21; among other provisions, it required school boards to establish anti-racism and ethno-cultural equity plans that would focus on such things as curriculum; student languages; guidance and counselling; and student evaluation, assessment, and placement. This means that each school board must develop policies in each area. We support the development of such policies, but are concerned about duplication in the preparation of curriculum and other materials and procedures that will result. We believe that curricular changes necessary to implement such new policies should and can be developed once, centrally, rather than a hundred times.

We note that, in his report on race relations, Stephen Lewis made similar suggestions. He recommended, for example, that the new Assistant Deputy Minister of Education for Anti-racism, Equity and Access "establish a strong monitoring mechanism to follow-up the implementation of multicultural and anti-racism policies in the School Boards of Ontario." He also suggested that the province's leaders "continue to pursue, with unrelenting tenacity, the revision of curriculum at every level of education, so that it fully reflects the profound multicultural changes in Ontario society."(4) We agree, and want to emphasize our strong belief that as a priority in its new responsibility for developing curriculum, the Ministry must ensure that all curriculum developed in Ontario is anti-racist, gender equitable, and representative of all people of Ontario.

In the section of this report dealing with governance and regulation of the
educational system, we recommend a procedure for the centralized creation of curriculum. It is our firm expectation that whoever the Ministry may appoint to carry out any particular piece of curriculum development will be able to draw on the rich human resources in curriculum that exist in Ontario's school system. This would ensure continued sensitivity to regional differences and to the needs of the francophone and Roman Catholic components of the school system. Their interests will be represented by the existing French-language team as well as the Roman Catholic education policy and program team whose creation we recommend.

When centralization of curriculum is discussed currently, the discussion often embraces the idea of a national curriculum. Formal education in Canada is and always has been governed provincially (and even aboriginal students on reserves follow provincial curricula). But the Commission heard from many people who advocate a national curriculum.

Over the last two years, the first national assessment program, organized by the Council of Ministers of Education, has been established, and we have begun to see inter-provincial co-operation in developing curriculum at the regional level. Whether this interprovincial co-operation will become a driving force in creating a national curriculum remains to be seen; certainly, it seems to have been possible to reach agreement on testing in spite of the lack of a uniform curriculum.

Whether or not it is possible for Canada to have a national curriculum is probably more a political than an educational question. At the practical, pedagogical level, it is certainly plausible. We do not expect that fundamental skills and core curricula would vary greatly from province to province. We believe that the public would support an interprovincial initiative to create a framework for a national curriculum, specifying expected outcomes for elementary and secondary education across Canada.

At the same time, we do not believe that a national curriculum means that students would learn more - only that there might be a greater sense of consistency and unified purpose in education. The quality of education and learning for Ontario's students does not depend on greater centralization at the national level.

In its 1992 report, Newfoundland's Royal Commission on Education(5) recommended that an examination be made of

\[
\text{the possibility of introducing a federal presence in education; in particular, the creation of a national office of education. Such an agency would address national goals for schooling, establish national standards for the collection of educational data, conduct national education assessments, and serve as a centre for the information on education research and improvements.}
\]

Unlike that Commission, we do not want to promote a constitutional debate about a move that might not do much to transform the quality of education in our province. But we applaud the intention of the Council of Ministers of Education to explore the possibility further. Such discussions would be welcomed by people who want greater consistency in educational goals and standards across Canada; we also recognize that some national activities could offer economies of scale.
Strategies for improvement: A learning system that focuses on the learner and on literacies

We are convinced that a learning system, emphasizing serious learning and more of it, is needed; and that it must really be a system, with a strong focus and purpose and strongly linked component parts. The curriculum should embody that focus and those goals, rather than allowing content unrelated to learning and literacies to "crowd" the curriculum.

How systematic is what we have now? To what extent does it focus on learners and learning? If we define sophisticated literacies not elementary knowledge and understanding of subjects - as our overall focus, how would the system have to change?

The system

Whether we choose to call formal education in Ontario a learning system, an education system, or a school system, we must ask whether it is a system at all. A system is a whole, not a collection of unconnected parts; it has purposes and goals that are consistent throughout. Do we have a system in education? The recent reorganization of three governmental departments education, colleges and universities, and skills development into the Ministry of Education and Training, makes it clear that such a system is the goal. But reorganization by itself does not a system make.

Formal education begins, as an option, at age 4; it is compulsory from age 6 to 16; and must be provided free to anyone through age 21. As well, an increasing number of adult students are also being educated in the public schools, at the discretion of local boards.

Thus there is, if not a cradle-to-grave provision for free public education, at least a continuum that occupies many years of the youth of all of our citizens, and that reaches out to adults.

Whether all parts of that system mesh is another question. Presumably, if we had clear agreement and indicators about what all adults in our society need to know, our universal education system would rest on a continuum of knowledge and skills learned in sequence. While there is no such explicit continuum, the formal curriculum of schools does reflect an assumed agreement about what should be learned, and when. Although the connections are not always clear or smooth, definite principles underlie what children and youth are expected to know and to do, based on an assumption that learning is cumulative.

But this assumed continuum is also characterized by transition points, and it is around these points that systemic continuity falters, that disconnectedness and disagreement about program are most likely to occur. These transition points are as follows: the transition to school (at what age? teaching what content?); the transition to adolescence (what must change at school because of changes in the situation of the learners?); and the transition to post-secondary education and work
In the last few years, educators have attempted to define curriculum in terms of results rather than content: the focus has moved from what is taught to what is learned. We are aware that there are pitfalls to this approach (which may convey an unrealistically linear view of learning), and that no single strategy can create perfect social consensus about what schools and education should be and how we evaluate their success. Nonetheless, we believe that the general idea of measuring the quality of the curriculum - by looking at its effects on what students learn - is sound. It gives momentum to the push for more and better student assessment, which we think is essentially healthy in a province that has collected very little information on student achievement (see Chapter 11). It can also contribute to a better-articulated learning system, one in which each level builds clearly on the one before it. Moreover, it challenges the practice of thinking of curriculum as something to be delivered in specified, uniform time units (e.g., a course is 110 hours in secondary school, no matter what the subject or who the students) rather than as bodies of knowledge and skills to be acquired.

As well, if we are interested in knowing what students have learned, rather than simply what they have been taught, our interest can encompass other learning experiences, outside the classroom. The system can recognize what we all know and appreciate - that learning happens in every setting, and that good learning is generalized from one situation to another.

A curriculum for literacies

In our opinion, nothing matters more to society or to individuals than learning. If schools are truly learning communities, schooling, by definition, will be enriching, challenging, and intellectually rewarding.

Reading, writing, and communicating are essential tools across all knowledge domains, and underlie mathematical, scientific, technological, and artistic literacy. But if education is meant to help learners become capable of understanding and adding to an array of knowledge that will enrich and improve their lives and the life of their communities, the fundamental need is for more than basic literacy. It is also for advanced, high-level literacies that enable people to continue to learn, not to be easily stuck when a new problem comes along.

We believe that most parents and members of the public want secondary school graduates to be "well educated," a term that includes both the notion of being well informed and of having intellectual skills. Being well informed signifies being conversant with bodies of knowledge - being well informed about literature, or art, or science; having intellectual skills suggests knowing how to organize information, frame questions, test an argument, generalize from specifics, and relate knowledge in one domain to that in another. Being well informed in an area and having
intellectual skills to apply to that information is what we mean by literacies.

Whether the topic is literature, painting, science, history, or mathematics, the literate person brings certain skills to it, including the ability to read efficiently and accurately. Although "reading" a painting or an experiment is different from reading a poem or a play, it is still reading. As well, literate persons express themselves accurately and not clumsily in writing, speaking, or in other forms of communication they may choose, including music, languages, or science.

Broadly defined, literacy is understood as being able to speak, read, write, and reason and to have sufficient knowledge of history, science, literature, art, and, increasingly, technology, to be able to hold or follow a conversation or argument that depends on prior exposure to facts and ideas. According to this definition, a person who could not write a letter that was both expressive and grammatically correct, or could not follow a science article in a newspaper and note whether it included unsupported assertions, or who could not understand a layperson's book about computers, or who did not know who Aristotle or Mahatma Ghandi was, or who did not know how to use a reference library or, increasingly, a computer, could not be called fully literate.

The common meaning of "literacy" is much narrower and more specific: it is learning to read and write, the first task of schooling, beginning in Grade 1. Educators now know that pre-school and kindergarten experiences, as well as the learning environment of a child's home, have strong effects on the quality and speed with which basic literacy is acquired in the primary grades, and this knowledge relates very directly to our recommendation concerning early childhood education. And much is known about how to ensure that all children can learn to read and write in those years.

Many parents, representatives of business, and other bodies told the Commission that they were concerned about whether Ontario's students are achieving satisfactory rates of literacy; many of their briefs focused on the early years of schooling, on basic literacy, and on the quantity and quality of instruction young children receive in reading and writing. There is wide consensus that the early years of school are critical to later success, and that literacy is the key to the whole. The matter can be more complex for children who come to school with a first language that is not the language of schooling, but the necessity of developing strong basic literacy skills, early, remains unchanged.

Basic literacy, achieved early, is the foundation for the higher literacies. Building a strong, early foundation will result in an upgraded curriculum at all grade levels, and in students who make greater progress in learning, in learning how to learn, and even, we fervently hope, in learning to love learning. As a result, their expectations and those of their teachers and parents would rise, and students' attainment levels with them. A stronger foundation in early literacy would also diminish the learning disadvantages some children bring with them to school, and is one of the best strategies for ensuring that the curriculum is built on standards that are appropriately high and attainable for most students. Ultimately, this is the best way to prevent later categorization by class, colour, and national origin, and to build an excellent and equitable education system.
We agree that literacy is the appropriate focus, as long as it does not stop at "basic" literacy. The literacy we believe children and adults need, and that schools should recognize as their primary goal, goes beyond basic to what we call the higher-level "literacies." Children must, of course, learn how to translate print into speech, and speech into print, and they must be able to demonstrate that they can do so.

But literacy goes beyond simple decoding, not only in language, but in all subjects. Real literacy means being able to go beyond factual recall, to the ability to be critical about what one is told or reads; literacy, to us, means having genuine understanding, so that what is learned does not depend just on rote memory, but is not easily forgotten and can be generalized and applied to new situations, so that it serves people throughout their lives.

We suggest that this higher-level literacy, also referred to as critical or higher-level thinking, involves the same cognitive skills applied to all subject areas. Therefore, we can speak not only of literacy in relation to learning and using language, but also of mathematical, scientific, technological, and artistic literacies. This higher-level literacy is closely linked to language, because language is inextricably linked to thought, no matter what the specific content of that thought.

*The teaching of language should aim for more than the achievement of linguistic competence; it should attempt to improve communication and critical thought.* (6)

**The literacies across the curriculum**

*There is a transition to life; there is another transition when a child starts formal schooling in Grade 1; there is a transition into adolescence; and another when a youth is getting ready to move out of the school system and has to make decisions about where to go from there.* (7)

In Chapters 7 through 9, we describe a "curriculum for literacies" in three stages, roughly corresponding to these three transition points or phases in human development. We find these transition points - the transition to formal schooling, to adolescence, and to work or career education - a useful framework for considering the development and needs of learners, and think of them as "learning transitions," because learning and total human development are inseparable. The developmental framework also underlines the reality that health, broadly defined and including emotional health, is a pre-condition for optimal learning.

The first learning transition is to life, and describes the cognitive development of the infant and toddler; the literacy curriculum for learners from birth to age 6 is discussed in Chapter 7. The next transition is to formal, compulsory education in school, and, about six years later, there is a third transition, the biological and social transition to adolescence. Both occur while children are in Grades 1 to 9, and we describe the literacies curriculum of these years as the "common curriculum," acknowledging that while the subjects in the curriculum, and its universality across all students, do not change as students enter adolescence, some of the organizational aspects of schooling, and the emphasis on future planning and decision-making do. Finally, there is the transition to adulthood - to independence,
choices about the future, employment, and family formation - what we call the transition to post-secondary life, describing that part of the literacy curriculum (in Chapter 9) as the "specialized curriculum."(8)

While the definition of literacies broadens and expands at each of these transitions, what remains constant is that it always focuses on enquiry, expression, and understanding; it is about the learner's growing capacity to deal intelligently with information.

---

**Endnotes (Introduction)**


8. We are using the term "common curriculum" to describe the curriculum of Grades 1-9 and "specialized curriculum" to describe the curriculum from Grades 10-12. We use these terms in preference to "elementary" and "secondary" for two reasons. First, this division is confusing, in that "elementary" will connote Grades 1-6 to some, 1-8 to many, and 1-9 to still others. Second, we think that the two terms suggest a degree of difference in curriculum and school organization that may be exaggerated to an undesirable degree.
Chapter 7: The Learner from Birth to Age 6: The Transition from Home to School

The "curriculum" of the home and of early childhood, although unwritten, has a profound impact on the child's likely success in mastering the curriculum of the school, and in becoming an accomplished learner. For that reason, our discussion of curriculum - what we want children to learn - begins not at age 6 and in Grade 1, or at age 4 and in junior kindergarten, but at birth.

The learner from birth to age 3: The literacies curriculum of home and care

There is increasingly strong evidence that the relationship between early experience and the later ability to learn (competence), which we touched on in Chapter 5, begins at birth. Recent research suggests that the interaction between environment and learning is intense from the very beginning of the infant's life, and may have far-reaching influence on later development. This means that healthy environments for young children must be supported and strengthened. Poverty, after all, is a major determinant in lowering the level of their health and competence. We agree with the Premier's Council on Health Strategy that reducing poverty levels must be an integral part of any intervention strategy.

Effective teachers and schools can offer children advantages, but they are probably not able to undo all the harm that poverty creates. Efforts to improve education that are not accompanied by programs to address life circumstances that handicap children early, and sometimes permanently, will never reach their goals. The equity question, which is most often raised when young people are in secondary school, must also be addressed in social policies and practices that have an impact on what happens before birth and in the first years of life.

Yours, Mine, and Ours, the report of the Children and Youth Project of the Premier's Council on Health, Well-Being, and Social Justice, points out that two key determinants of a child's successful transition to life are the health of the mother, and her comprehensive care before, during, and after pregnancy. Therefore, we agree with the project recommendations for a comprehensive range of health, social, and parent support services. Health services for mothers are inextricably linked to educational outcomes for their children. When programs, whether "health" or "education," are funded, policy makers badly shortchange society if they do not consider these links. The opposite of value added is money wasted. Later in this report we suggest mechanisms for ensuring that these links are created and are maintained. A few prototype programs exist; in Ontario there is the Better Beginnings, Better Future project, an umbrella for eight programs in different communities, all of which address the social, emotional, behavioral, physical, and cognitive development of children from birth to 8. These programs work with
children, families, schools, and communities, and are jointly funded by the Ministries of Community and Social Services, Health, and Education and Training, as well as the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and the Secretary of State. They are long-term (25-year) programs with built-in evaluation, and their goal is to help everyone in a community come together to raise healthy children. (2)

As mentioned earlier, the first determinant of a healthy child is the presence of a nurturing, consistent, and dependable caregiver, usually one or both parents or another adult who provides security, stimulation, and positive social interaction. The other is a supportive (and safe) community, which can facilitate parents' efforts and, if necessary, attempt to compensate for ineffective parenting. Teaching good parenting skills in advance is, of course, much more effective and efficient than having to intervene later. Communities support healthy babies and young children through policies that allow families to spend time together and provide good out-of-family settings for children who need them.

_Yours, Mine, and Ours_ recommended family-friendly policies in the workplace, to allow working parents flexibility, especially when their children are young - flexibility in hours, sick leave and parental leave, in part-time or at-home work (without diminishing benefits or career choices), and in flexible use of benefits. We view such family-friendly workplace policies as essential support for child care, and believe that governments should offer inducements and public recognition to employers, in order to encourage such policies.

One of the key determinants of school readiness is the amount of stimulation infants and young children receive in a nurturing environment. In a very real sense, the literacy curriculum of infancy and toddlerhood is the curriculum of the home. It is language- and speech-based, but also involves print. Children who are being readied for future learning (and, therefore, for school) are spoken and listened to; have their questions answered; are offered explanations; and are encouraged to try new words and ideas, to imagine, to guess, to estimate, to draw, and to observe. When they watch television, there is often a parent to mediate, either watching with the child or talking afterwards about what has been viewed.

While most parents are aware that babies and young children benefit from stimulation through language, many may not know how important it is and how simply and effectively it can be provided. Because parents are their children's first and most powerful teachers, a society committed to lifelong learning will support and encourage parents in that role, and remind them of the power and responsibility it entails.

Children who are developing strong literacy skills at home are being read to, and are watching others read and write. Children of parents who cannot read or write are less ready for school, because there is such a wide gap between the curriculum of home and school. Thus, parental literacy programs are a very significant component of an educational system that supports children's learning.

We are aware that services to support new parents may have to be integrated and delivered in a different way, that the balance between centralized and local authorities and the relationship between public and private sectors may have to change. We are aware, too, that concern about these kinds of changes prevented implementation of recommendations made in earlier reports. The many government departments with responsibility for children's health, welfare, and education, and the local agencies they fund operate under different legislation and regulations, making co-ordination and integration very awkward. We believe that if government does not provide leadership in these areas, and if public support for a stronger commitment to children's well-being is not made clear, we cannot expect any decline in the factors that put children at risk for life - low birth weight, neglect, and abuse; we cannot expect children who live with this level of risk to be ready for school. We must understand that these consequences,
which are universally deplored, follow from conditions that are obvious, and that we have the capacity to change. If we choose not to change them, we cannot be surprised that they continue to exist.

If we want to build a learning system, we must begin, not at age 6, but before birth. We must address issues of income and the health of mothers, so that newborns will be fully equipped to learn. After that, the essential need is to reach out to new parents with information and support for effective parenting. Policies that help parents to parent, to spend time with their children, to be nurturant, to become literate, and to provide a stimulating environment for the development of language and learning are a vital component of a learning system. Information, too, can make a difference, especially if it is widely disseminated. The Ministries of Education and Training and Community and Social Services could take joint responsibility for ensuring that all new parents have information and support in creating a stimulating home environment for children. Informative brochures could be delivered to parents in doctors' offices and clinics, in hospital maternity wards and birthing centres, in public and school libraries, and at parenting and child-care centres. As well, television, telephone (an 800 number across the province), and computer networks are media that reach out to parents.

As an example we suggest that the Ministries of Health, Community and Social Services and Education and Training collaborate with TVO/La Chaine Francaise to produce brief informational videos on stimulating home environments for infants and toddlers, showing the link to school readiness, and describing the availability of adult and family literacy courses. These tapes, in addition to being aired publicly on TVO/La Chaine and elsewhere (CBC, YTV) should be available at doctors' offices, pre-natal clinics, and maternity wards, as well as through public libraries and schools, for individual use and as components of parenting courses. Such information is only one example of a variety of child-care services and resources that should be available to parents.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services funds a number of parent resource centres that offer information and materials that assist parents and other caregivers. While these centres are sometimes located in schools and are often well used, it is not clear how strong a connection they have to schools. In our view, the two Ministries, Education and Training and Health, would enhance preparedness if they co-operated to help children with school readiness, and linked parents and schools before children enter the formal system. These and other recommendations in this report require inter-departmental co-operation in program development and delivery, and they are supported, later in the report, by a discussion and recommendations for implementing strategies that cross government departments.

**The learner from age 3 to 6: The literacy curriculum in a school setting**

At present, children arrive in Grade 1 at various stages of readiness, and with a wide range of prior knowledge and understanding, to learn in a group setting. The curriculum of pre-school or early education is a continuation of the curriculum of the home: the stress is on acquiring speaking and listening skills, increasing vocabulary, learning by observation and inquiry, developing the ability to communicate through writing and reading, and on learning in an environment which is both very stimulating and very nurturant. And, as at home, a great deal of learning occurs within the context of games and play. What can be added to the curriculum of the home, as a vital piece of school readiness, are the skills for learning in a group - what we might call "interpersonal literacy."

Many children, especially in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, are identified in Grade 1 as having a poor
prognosis for school success, and all too many of those do become unsuccessful students and eventual school failures. While some children categorized as at-risk are helped successfully to overcome early gaps and to progress with their peers, many others are not. Earlier education is one of the most promising tools in the struggle to help these children, and to overcome the handicap of lack of stimulation and development. Effective school readiness programs are known to make a substantial difference for children's ability to benefit from compulsory education at age 6. Thus, these programs are a very major response to the issue of inequitable outcomes of schooling.

Research on early learning has changed our understanding of what is appropriate for toddlers. We now know, for example, that children acquire number concepts in infancy, and that by age 3 there are substantial differences among children in their understanding of how to count and calculate. These result in very different degrees of readiness for learning in Grade 1, gaps that schools must work intensely and extensively to eliminate, and which, in fact, usually grow rather than shrink in the elementary years.

Although many children start school with a well-developed understanding [of the concept] of number ... not all children do so. In particular, when tests of conceptual knowledge were administered to groups of kindergarten children attending schools in low-income, inner city communities, [in Canada and the United States] a significant number have been unable to demonstrate the knowledge possessed by their middle-class peers.

The gap that develops among children between infancy and age 3 is the result of differences in environmental stimulation and emotional support in areas that affect the chances for later school success. We have known for some time that, by the time children begin Grade 1, variations in oral language, vocabulary, and comprehension are so great that it is difficult for teachers to narrow the distance between children who are more and less ready to learn in a formal setting. It is clear that, by and before age 4, the failure of a great many of our children to acquire knowledge and understanding will have serious consequences for their formal education.

There are a myriad of model programs for early childhood education, some operating in the child-care framework and others in the public education systems of various jurisdictions. Many have been evaluated on how well they prepare children for compulsory schooling.

One category is the full-day kindergarten for five-year-olds. In a 1989 review of studies that compared various effects of full-day and half-day kindergarten programs in the United States, almost two-thirds showed academic advantages for the full-day program. All the studies that focused on disadvantaged students reported significant differences in academic gains for those in the full-day program. Nine studies compared such social effects as classroom behaviour and attitude to school and only one favoured the half day. Staff and parent reactions to full-day programs were very positive.

A Toronto study of all-day kindergarten showed gains in language, attentiveness, and positive student-student and student-teacher interaction. A follow-up four years later found that students who had been in the all-day program had a lower rate of failure by Grade 4 than the comparison group.

An Ottawa-Carleton study conducted in the context of French-language education in a minority setting examined the impact of full-day kindergarten on the development of specific aspects of competence in French (reading readiness, oral vocabulary, and language use). After a year, all the children in full-day programs showed significantly greater gains in language development than those comparable children not in the program.
One of the groups for whom pre-school education could be most critical in Ontario is the Franco-Ontarian community and other francophone children. Assessments consistently show francophone students performing below anglophones in mathematics, science, and literacy/communication. Not only do Franco-Ontarians have, overall, a relatively low number of years of schooling; they also often have weak skills in French, and consequently real difficulty supporting their children's education when they have elected to send them to a francophone school.

At present, 85 percent of Ontario's four-year-olds and 99 percent of five-year-olds are enrolled in kindergarten programs, almost all half-day. While these are intended to stimulate children's curiosity and develop their language awareness and desire to learn, they are not defined as school readiness programs. As a result, they suffer some isolation from the rest of the curriculum, as well as a certain devaluing by those parents, teachers, and others who often view them as mere baby-sitting.

Although good pre-school education can benefit all children, much of the research on pre-kindergarten programs has focused on programs targeted to children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and who are likely to be at risk of later school failure. The most cited example in the educational research literature is the Perry Preschool Study, which has a very unusual longitudinal component - follow-up over 24 years. Children who, at the age of 3, participated in small groups in a well-designed pre-school program, based on a curriculum that emphasized thinking and learning skills and that included meals and health care as well as outreach to parents, have been followed to age 27. They came from an extremely poor neighbourhood in the state of Michigan, and they and a comparison group from the same area, who did not go to the pre-school, have been followed by researchers through the intervening years. The high school completion rate of the pre-school group was 71 percent, compared with 54 percent for the others.

After 24 years, the pre-school group was characterized by higher incomes, fewer children born outside marriage, lower arrest rates, and more home ownership. This study is cited so often because the long-term follow-up makes clear how much is saved, financially as well as socially, by effective early education. If the Perry alumni and the members of the comparison group continue to be followed, one would expect to see further differences in the next generation, whose early learning context is affected by their parents' levels of education and stability.(7)

The Perry follow-up data help to clarify the connection between high-quality education that begins early, and poverty: a strong start means a better chance of succeeding in school, which, in turn, means a better chance for a decent job, which means that the next generation does not grow up in poverty, does not need extra help to succeed in school, and so on.

Programs like Perry Preschool were designed for children from disadvantaged homes, those who have the most need, and stand to gain the most from good early education. They are exemplars of fairness and equity, of attempts to decrease the disadvantages borne by children who otherwise would be severely limited in their opportunities for later success in school and in life.

In some countries full-day public education begins at age 3 for all children, because the culture subscribes to the idea that all or most children will benefit from the group learning experience at that age. In such systems, early education serves goals of both equity and excellence; it is viewed as a head start for all, and a way of increasing opportunities for learning later on, by building a strong foundation.

Universal early education is not uncommon in Europe. In France, for example, the ecoles maternelles for three- to five-year-olds were established as a response to the perceived advantages of early education,
long before it became common for mothers of young children to enter the workforce. The école maternelle was not conceived as a child-care program and was not targeted at those living in poverty, but as part of universal, free, public education. The staff is led by teachers, and while the curriculum is tailored to the age of the children ("age appropriate"), the goals are academic and social preparation for primary school. According to a Toronto teacher quoted in the media:

*The world can look to France's preschool system the way it can look to Canada's health-care system: Despite its critics and the inevitable recession-induced financial strains, it's there and it works: Ninety-nine percent of French children, ages 3 to 5, are in preschool for free or for next to nothing ... The French take preschooling seriously ... It's not something done to and with kids alone; it's an integral part of the community ... it pays off financially ... It also pays off socially. Children who go through the preschool "don't have the difficulties" in later levels of school experienced by kids who don't go to pre-school ... Teachers alone don't determine what happens to a child. Local government is involved ... And the parents have their say too ... in North America ... it seems schools are left to the teachers and students. Here it's everybody. As a teacher, I can say it helps.* (8)

There is evidence that this is true: 1983 data from France indicate that, with each year of pre-school (one, two, or the maximum of three), the number of children who are required to repeat Grade 1 decreases, and this is true regardless of the parents' occupation. The gap between the children of the most and least skilled workers does not disappear, but, at each level, the children benefit. In 1980, the French Ministry of Education identified a sample of 20,000 sixth-graders and monitored their progress. Each year of pre-school enrollment increased the likelihood that a child would be promoted from sixth to seventh grade, and later follow-up showed this was also true at the high school level. (9)

A recent review of research on pre-school education in Britain, Sweden, and the United States concludes that

*the long-term educational benefits stem not from what children are specifically taught but from effects on children's attitude to learning, on their self esteem, and on their task orientation ... learning how to learn may be as important as the specifics of what is learned. The most lasting impact of early education appears to be children's aspirations for education and employment, motivations and school commitment. These are not moulded directly through experiences in the pre-school classroom but are indirect effects of children entering school with a learning orientation and beginning a "pupil career" with confidence. This enables them to avoid early school failure and placement in special education ... Early childhood education may be viewed as an innovative mental health strategy that affects risk and protective factors.* (10)

Early childhood education is an innovative educational strategy in North America, where the new demographics of families, and an understanding of the importance of early learning, have been ignored. Time and again, the Commission was told to learn from other countries, and early education is an area in which we found much to learn.

Because there is powerful evidence that early education alters the amount and kind of learning students engage in, and because this is most true for children whose potential is otherwise most likely to be unrealized, we believe early education is one of the most powerful engines for transforming our educational system. That is why one of the four major recommendations of this Commission is that a
school readiness program be created for three- to five-year-olds, closely modelled on that in France.

While we appreciate the need to proceed gradually, we are convinced that early childhood education must be part of public education, offered as an option for all three- to five-year-olds for the full day, with the option of a half-day schedule for those parents who may prefer it.

**Recommendation 1**

“We recommend that Early Childhood Education (ECE) be provided by all school boards to all children from 3 to 5 years of age whose parents/guardians choose to enrol them. ECE would gradually replace existing junior and senior kindergarten programs, and become a part of the public education system.

We note that a very similar recommendation was made by George Radwanski in his report to the Ontario Ministry of Education in 1987: "That all school boards in Ontario be required to provide universally available early childhood education in public and separate schools for children from the age of three." Radwanski concluded that such education should be universal rather than targeted at disadvantaged children for a number of reasons, and suggested that

*The need for deliberately provided early learning experiences and intellectual stimulation outside the home may no longer be limited to children from the most obviously disadvantaged households ... numerous children of non-needy and relatively well-educated parents are spending much of their time in sub-optimal care arrangements that do not provide the fullest opportunities for early development.(11)*

Although the reduced need for later remedial school programs, as well as for income support and correctional services, offers the promise of enormous savings, providing one and one-half extra years of education also involves an initial cost. Some monies will be recovered as the need to subsidize child care for low-income parents is eliminated. (There will be other economies in the system that will help to fund Early Childhood Education. For example, see Chapter 9 for a discussion of eliminating the fifth year of high school.)

For these reasons, as well as because it affords an opportunity to monitor and evaluate new programs, and because some schools currently lack the physical space to expand their programs, gradual phase-in would be sensible, initially providing funding for only a limited number of spaces, and looking at mandated province-wide delivery as being some years away.

**Recommendation 2**

“We recommend that the ECE program be phased in as space becomes available.

We do, however, wish to make a recommendation regarding priorities in funding because of the particular disadvantage suffered by the many children of Franco-Ontarian cultural background who do not have a strong home background in the French language.

**Recommendation 3**

“We recommend that, in the implementation of ECE, the provincial government give priority funding to French-language school units.

ECE classes would likely be served by teams headed by trained teachers, would include child-care
workers, and would emphasize cognitive and linguistic stimulation, socialization, and skills in learning in a group.

Our expectation that the costs of this program would be partially offset by less money spent on remedial and special education, and on other programs for those who now fail to thrive in school, is supported by evidence from well-designed child-care and early education programs.\(^{12}\) Extended daycare should be available (before and after the school day) on a cost-recovery (parental-fee) basis, with subsidies available (as at present) for low-income parents.

We have stressed the critical importance of Early Childhood Education for Ontario children, and we also insist that, despite its urgency, the recommendation we make is a longer-term one, and implementation of the program should proceed gradually. The question of existing and additional human resources needed to staff the ECE classes, of personnel training or retraining, of the issues of differentiated staffing provisions, of the portability of experience, and of educational backgrounds are but a few of the challenges of implementing ECE. Our thinking on this subject will be found in Chapter 12, where we discuss issues and concerns of educators as professionals.

In the same vein, we do not want to minimize the challenge posed by the space needed to accommodate ECE classes. Lots of work will be required to develop and design good detailed implementation of this key proposal of our report. But it would be very disappointing, and frankly only too facile, to hide behind such constraints to do nothing, or to turn them into insurmountable barriers prohibiting the implementation of a much-needed policy for our children.

Just as new parents need to know, even before their child is born, what constitutes a nurturant and stimulating environment for infants, so do parents of older pre-schoolers need to be able to obtain information on ways they can support growth in learning for three- to five-year-olds, irrespective of whether their children are enrolled in ECE. The Ministries of Education and Training and Community and Social Services would perform a useful service by making information widely available on healthy environments for learning for three- to five-year-olds. Information tailored to the home environment, describing ways of supporting learning for toddlers, whether or not they are enrolled in ECE, could be distributed very widely at schools and elsewhere.

It is clear that children flourish when the worlds in which they live intersect. They are supported if parents are familiar with the class, and teachers are familiar with the home, and, when before- and after-school programs are involved, the child-care and the teaching staffs know one another and are willing to work co-operatively.\(^{13}\)

Research supports the belief that these links have a positive effect on children. Home visits by teachers, for example, are a very effective vehicle for welcoming new children into school. Early childhood education programs that involve regular contact with parents tend to be among the most successful in the long term, and have shown benefits for younger siblings as well.\(^{14}\) Early involvement of parents in their child's education lays the foundation for a strong home-school link.

While excellent early education is an advantage for all children, those who, as early as age 3, show signs of learning or interpersonal problems will have the advantage of being identified and helped much earlier. Experience in primary classes in Ontario and elsewhere shows that teachers can identify such difficulties in young children,\(^{15}\) and in some cases, early remediation has been effective. To the extent that this identification and intervention takes place earlier in the child's life, it has the potential to be
more effective in the long term, including in the primary years when the fundamental literacies and numeracies are being acquired.

_The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9_, recently developed by the Ministry of Education and Training, specifies desired learning outcomes for students. The Ministry could usefully develop a similar set of desired learning outcomes for ECE, to make clear how the curriculum of the early years is connected to that of the primary years. The earliest outcomes described in _The Common Curriculum_ apply to the end of Grade 3; a parallel description should be created for the transition to Grade 1, indicating desired outcomes for literacy, numeracy, and interpersonal and group-learning skills.

As well, a developmental continuum that indicates stages of cognitive and social growth for children from birth to adolescence would be a real asset to all parents, teachers, and child-care workers, and would promote continuity and consistency among the home, daycare, and school.

**Recommendation 4**

“We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training develop a guide, suitable for parents, teachers, and other caregivers, outlining stages of learning (and desirable and expectable learner outcomes) from birth onwards, and that it link to the common core curriculum, beginning in Grade 1. This guide, which would include specific learner outcomes at age 6, would be used in developing the curriculum for the Early Childhood Education program.

Speaking generally, we would suggest that the outcomes of ECE should include both achievement and attitude-related elements, including a greater readiness to learn to read, a better sense of number and quantity, and better skills related to working with others, listening to directions, and helping others. Children should be both more mature, as a result of opportunities for social and emotional growth, and more learned, as a result of increased exposure to an environment that is rich with talk and print.

We note that research supports a carefully structured environment for young children, with considerable adult-child and child-child interaction. A recent study of exemplary kindergarten programs in Ontario found three basic components: play and problem solving, language and literacy, and social-emotional development.(16)

Play, structured or unstructured, is demonstrably related to problem solving, cognitive development, emerging literacy, and social and personal development. It is not, as sometimes it is assumed to be, a frivolous and purposeless use of time. The extensive literature on children's play documents the extent to which children at play are working on understanding and expanding language, as well as such concepts as cause and effect, patterns and categories, and other basics.(17) When teachers structure play so that children are confronted with new problems and new challenges, and observe it systematically, they have an optimal opportunity for both evaluating a child's level of development and building on it - to know what the next step is and help the child reach for it.

Over and above what would occur naturally as children mature, language development is a realistic and central component of early education; it depends on an active, purposeful, interaction of adults with children in the classroom. Number pattern and sense, too, are also reinforced by structured play and experiments.

Similarly, children's best social and emotional development depends on teachers' abilities to arrange positive peer experiences and prevent or interrupt negative ones.
Well-structured programs for young children must also be based on careful observation and monitoring of individual progress. Youngsters’ ability to use language varies considerably, as does their skill in carrying out tasks and interacting successfully with peers. The teacher’s role as child monitor and as program designer and redesigner is crucial, and she or he must be able to amplify or simplify tasks so that each child has opportunities to be challenged and to succeed. Those whose literacy develops earlier must have appropriately demanding tasks in order to move on.

In fact, research suggests that children from backgrounds where the language is other than that of the school may be more successful in school if they participate in pre-school or kindergarten programs that use their first language for instruction. In other words, a local school community might opt for ECE in Portuguese or Vietnamese; there is evidence that, when skills in their native language are more fully developed, children are likely to be more successful in English later. (See Chapter 10 for more discussion of transitional use of languages.)

There must be acknowledgment of the minority groups from which children come, in order to foster the child’s sense of self-worth. All educators must be sensitive to identity issues: in a study of both English- and French-language kindergartens, for example, an emphasis on their culture was identified as a key to French-language kindergarten programs for the Franco-Ontarian community. Its members want an educational milieu that counteracts the forces of assimilation by validating and supporting the non-dominant language and culture. Children in a French environment who have opportunities to use that language in different contexts and for different purposes are building a solid base for conceptual development, as well as a positive personal and cultural identity. All children benefit from the opportunity to build a positive personal and cultural identity.

One of the best ways to honour all children’s identities, and at the same time to strengthen home-school and school-community ties, is to bring parents and other community members into the school as valued helpers and resources; it is also useful to take children out to see and participate in diverse community and work settings in the neighbourhood. Such community-based curriculum, while simple and enjoyable, offers a multitude of benefits by combining community studies, career awareness, and neighbourhood safety. (There may have to be additional planning and organization for community-based curriculum in municipalities with few activities, programs, and resources in French.)

Early Childhood Education is one way of creating learning contexts for young children. There are others for those who will not be participating in ECE but will be cared for at home; the network of support and education described in the section on birth to age 3 must continue, along with parent-friendly policies in the workplace, and the informational outreach suggested earlier. Some schools already operate drop-in centres for parents and others who care for young children; and some of these centres are located elsewhere in communities. Parenting courses and adult and family literacy courses are offered, through both schools and community agencies. School libraries can also be available to parents of young children, especially if an older child already attends school. Public libraries offer resources for children and parents in many languages.

In the following pages, we build on the idea of a learning system that is continuous from age 3 through secondary school, and is based on the belief that children can know and do much more by the time they are adolescents than is now the case. That concept rests on the fundamental premise that, having entered compulsory schooling with the advantages of Early Childhood Education, children will be predisposed to become literate and numerate in the primary grades. An early start - whether at home, at school, or
ideally, both - will enable teachers and students to embark on the common curriculum with high expectations.

Endnotes (Chapter 7)

1. See, for example:


15. See, for example:
   - A.E. Virgin and P. Crawford, *A Study of Kindergarten Teachers' Predictions of Their Pupils' Subsequent Performance and the Effects of an Intervention Program at the Grade 1 Level* (North York, ON: North York Board of Education, 1974).


The advantage of an excellent Early Childhood Education for children aged 3 to 5 is that, when children begin compulsory schooling at age 6, they will have been prepared to learn during these first three years. There is widespread agreement that the foundation of a good education is laid down in these years, and that the success a child experiences in acquiring literacy and numeracy at this stage is an accurate indicator of long-term success. If, when they begin Grade 1, children are disposed to learn, are able to concentrate, know how to learn in a group, and have high expectations of themselves as students, the probability of creating a learning community in each classroom becomes much greater.

The transition to compulsory schooling

At present, teachers attempt to establish a learning community despite the fact that every classroom includes some children who are unable to take turns, wait for the teacher's attention, or absorb the information being offered. While a sound program in the early years does not guarantee that every child will be perfectly ready for formal learning, it will go a long way toward ensuring that they are more ready, socially and cognitively.

The child who is ready to learn needs skilled and nurturing teachers who have clear ideas about what children should learn, and a variety of solid strategies for helping them do it.

As the report *Yours, Mine, and Ours* points out: "Children need positive social interaction as their thinking and language competencies develop."(1) This is as true at school as at home: young children depend on teachers to be warm, supportive adults and to facilitate safe and positive peer interaction. Without a sense of safety, it is very difficult for youngsters to pay attention to learning tasks.

Students and teachers must know what the learning goals and expectations are. The curriculum should be a plan, shared by all teachers, that describes where they are attempting to lead students, and the sequence in which they will do so. Annual and long-term goals and expectations must be clear to teachers and students and to parents whose support and help in the overall plan is crucial to its success. We cannot be surprised by confusion and dissatisfaction about what students need to know whether they learn it well enough and are well prepared for the future - if we are not clear about what we expect them to learn, what the learning outcomes are, how we will know they have learned it, and what the standards of acceptable attainment are. Moreover, teachers must have clear guidelines about what is essential and what is not and must be prepared for, and supported in, their work. A common curriculum, commonly described and understood, and with well-defined standards, is the essential underpinning of publicly supported schools.
This chapter is divided into five parts. The first four deal with curriculum components and the supports at the school and community level that are necessary for effective curriculum implementation for children and young adolescents, from Grade 1 to Grade 9 inclusively: that is, what needs to be in place in order for all or almost all students to learn what we agree they should.

The last part concerns curriculum organization and development, and deals with some principles that we think will support effectiveness, efficiency, and equity.

We are suggesting that curriculum guidelines should recognize the primacy of certain skills, and that teachers, in the early grades especially, should emphasize and carefully monitor the acquisition by all students of these foundation skills, within the context of an integrated curriculum.

Because of the emphasis we put on the early acquisition of foundation skills within the context of a core curriculum, the first half of this chapter appears to stress the early years (Grades 1 to 3), although much of what we say applies equally to the whole of the common curriculum, Grades 1 to 9.

Some definitions:
"common curriculum": a curriculum that defines what students of a particular age will study.

"The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9": a document released by the Ministry of Education and Training in 1993, which defines a common curriculum of about 15 subjects organized into four integrated "strands," which comprise the whole of the curriculum for all students for all of the nine years.

"foundation skills": as defined in this report are literacy/communication skills, numeracy/problem solving, group learning and interpersonal skills and values, scientific literacy, and computer literacy. While these foundation skills are represented in particular subjects within the common curriculum, such as English/Francais, mathematics, and science, they are also fundamental in most other subject areas.

"core curriculum": all the subjects taught within the common curriculum in addition to the foundation skills.

The foundation: The essential elements of the elementary curriculum

Children begin compulsory education in Grade 1, in the year they reach age 6. For the next nine years, their curriculum is prescribed according to The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9 released by the Ministry of Education and Training in 1993.(2) The basic curriculum plan for those grades, it was being revised while this report was being prepared, and is expected to be revised periodically.

The curriculum is presented as four integrated strands: language; the arts; math, science, and technology; and a catch-all, self and society, which includes social studies, business studies, family studies, guidance, and physical and health education. The Common Curriculum describes what students should know and be able to do by the end of Grades 3, 6, and 9, across a range of subject areas. The curriculum is termed "common" because it applies to all students, and accounts for all or most of their learning time during the school day.

The Common Curriculum does not give priority to any particular subjects. It seems to us, however, that some skills really are grounding for further learning; they include the traditional basics - literacy and numeracy - as well as the "new basics" group learning and interpersonal skills and values, scientific
literacy, and computer literacy. Therefore, it is reasonable to ask primary and junior grade (1 to 6) teachers to concentrate on helping students achieve competency in these five areas.

We are not suggesting that these skills be taught without context, or that the context is not important to the learning. We know that best practice does not entail teaching "basic skills" first and "thinking skills" afterwards. Rather, children must be focused on both form and meaning from the beginning, so they understand that reading and arithmetic are supposed to make sense; if the word makes no sense in the sentence, or the answer does not fit the problem, the child must question it and try again. Teaching children how to estimate answers in arithmetic is an example of teaching for meaning, and of giving students the skill to question, and if appropriate, correct a specific response.

A child would have a very firm educational foundation if, by the end of Grade 3, he or she was well able to learn from print; could apply a basic understanding of arithmetic to the kinds of problems that might be encountered in appropriate school projects (constructing, measuring, drawing, graphing, etc.); knew the kinds of questions to ask to test an idea or an argument; and was capable of knowing how and when to ask for help, offer help to others, and work independently or collaboratively.

Young children are not equipped to learn from abstraction, and it is essential that both verbal and quantitative skills be learned through the concrete; that is why arts and hands-on science and other kinds of "projects" are so important. These applied areas of curriculum act to motivate young students, giving them reasons to read, write, compute, and think. Like adults, children need to know the purpose of learning, and a concrete outcome - a chart, a picture, a tower, a play or a debate provides that purpose, whether for reading, writing, measuring, calculating, or co-operating.

Acknowledging the existence of priorities in Grades 1 to 3, literacy, numeracy, group learning and interpersonal skills, as well as an introduction to scientific reasoning gives a focus to the common curriculum in these foundation years. While other subject areas can and must be used to make the abstract concrete, and to enrich children's exposure and experience, "covering" an extensive list of topics or outcomes in myriad subject areas should not be the teacher's agenda. (The other "new basic," computer literacy, should also begin in the primary grades but will probably be developed most after Grade 3.)

In the junior grades (4 to 6), there is a similar need to teach and review the skills required for working together, which are essential for optimal learning. And while basic literacy is most intensely acquired before Grade 4, junior grade teachers must be able to diagnose their students' literacy levels quickly and accurately; they have to know the language and cognitive development continuum so that they can "scaffold" learning for each student - know what the next step is and how to help the youngster achieve it, as well as how to use peers and others to support a learning environment.

The emphasis on numeracy must continue, as students' knowledge of the fundamental arithmetic operations is being extended and consolidated. Scientific literacy should be increasingly emphasized and computer literacy should become a focus.

The fact that these generic skills - communication, problem-solving, group learning and interpersonal relationships and values, scientific and analytic thinking, and computer technology - are acquired continuously as the child develops is illustrated by a recent draft document produced by the College Standards and Accreditation Council of Ontario. It describes communications, mathematics, group learning and interpersonal skills, analytic skills, and technological literacy as the generic skills around
which learning outcomes must be organized at the college level.

We believe that if teachers and parents are to know how well students are acquiring these skills, clear standards must be developed for each skill. At present, the standards for mathematics have been set out; they are in draft form for language. We believe that, in addition, they should be established for science, computer literacy, and group learning and interpersonal skills and values. We suggest that the Ministry of Education and Training use the expertise of professional educators to create and assist in field testing standards in these areas.

**Recommendation 5**

*We recommend that learner outcomes in language, mathematics, science, computer literacy, and group learning/interpersonal skills and values be clearly described by the Ministry of Education and Training from pre-Grade 1 through the completion of secondary school, and that these be linked with the work of the College Standards and Accreditation Council, as well as universities; and that clearly written standards, similar in intent to those available in mathematics and language (numeracy and literacy), also be developed in the other three areas.*

These standards should be used as guides by teachers for regularly monitoring and assessing students, using a variety of strategies, including performance and portfolio review (see Chapter 11).

The following is a description of our concept of each of these fundamental skills areas.

**Literacy/communications skills**

With or without Early Childhood Education, the primary school grades are correctly seen as laying the foundation of the child's education. In the minds of parents and public, these grades are, above all, about learning to read and write. Parents are right: nothing is more related to a student's success in school (and few acquired abilities are more fundamental to life opportunities) than reading and understanding what is read.

Unless there is a solid foundation, laid down early, students face a long, hard struggle to gain what they should already have. Far too many do not succeed in that effort. All teachers must be capable of finding the student's level of literacy development and raising it, or early literacy gains can be lost. The most critical moment comes early, in Grades 1 and 2.

Basic literacy is not complete by the end of Grade 3, and the ability to read and communicate effectively is acquired and enhanced over many years. If students do not continue to develop their abilities to think and to read, their early learning becomes entirely inadequate.

We should understand literacy as the ability to speak, listen, read, and write well enough to deal with any situation in adult life requiring this most fundamental competency. Becoming literate involves expanding the oral language children bring with them to school (vocabulary, sentence length, grammatical structures) and enabling them to use printed language as effectively as spoken language.

While the public tends to take speaking and listening skills for granted because, unlike reading and writing, they begin to develop long before school begins, employers and educators know that the ability to take direction from the spoken word and to communicate clearly by speaking must also be developed very significantly long after childhood. In fact, one of the least understood and most basic realities about becoming literate is that it is closely tied to experience in communicating orally. That is precisely why
early school success depends so much on the home environment. Furthermore, development of oral language and development of cognitive skills are closely tied: we need language to think with, and it develops first as spoken language.

Nonetheless, it is high-level literacy - being able to read and write at the level of a well-functioning adult - that tops everyone's list of what students must ultimately achieve in school.

Being fully literate now means acquiring technical literacy. The spread of information technology has made the ability to read technical manuals and directions increasingly important. Historically, this kind of reading has been missing from language and literature classes, being relegated to the special technical classes in which only a minority of students enrol. However, it is increasingly clear that all learners and workers require technical literacy. Even those for whom literacy was once not considered necessary are becoming more dependent on various kinds of information technology - for example, the office janitor who pushes a mop along a hallway now finds it essential: the cleaning fluid at the end of the mop comes in containers with vital information on use, storage, and disposal, as well as on health and environmental hazards.

The material presented to students in language and literature classes beyond the primary grades must include more non-fiction in general and, as youngsters progress into adolescence, more technical literature.

In other words, the more education U.S. students have, the less likely they are to be able to navigate through the world of consumer technology. Those with master's degrees... might as well be functionally illiterate... in other countries, people with high levels of education were most adept at reading technical manuals... Students don't graduate from high school in the industrialized nations of Europe and Asia today without the equivalent of four years of technical reading and writing.(4)

Teaching "literacy skills" does not stop once students have learned to read and to write; we move them from literacy to literacies, which we describe as higher levels of competency in communication and such other basics as problem-solving, analytic thinking, and the ability to learn collaboratively as well as individually. These will continue to evolve, not only throughout the school years, but throughout life.

Once children have "broken the code," they have acquired the basic tool for further intellectual development. While literacy is not a prerequisite for critical thinking or even for intellectual brilliance, its lack seriously handicaps any student. Without literacy, group instruction is inevitably slower and more painful. And the reality is that children who do not acquire functional literacy early rarely overcome the serious disadvantage that their handicap imposes in school and in life.

Recognizing this, parents express great concern about the acquisition of literacy and numeracy. There is a strong public feeling that, in the early school years in particular, these fundamental skills must take priority over any other curricula and that teachers must be able to show parents the level of literacy their children have attained in a way parents can understand and support. We agree.

We understand why no issue engages parents more than this. But we do not usually find the long media debates about how children should be taught to read, or at what age a particular landmark should be reached, helpful or enlightening. The debate about how reading should be taught - the "phonics versus whole language debate" as it has often been phrased - has obscured, rather than clarified, the main issue,
which is how solidly all or almost all children are learning to read.

At the present time, most children are able to read and write at an appropriate level by the end of Grade 2. But this is truer of some groups than others, depending on parents’ education, immigrant status, and other circumstances. We expect that, if first-rate early-years education is available and widely utilized, the gap between more and less advantaged groups will shrink very considerably: that 80 percent or more of all children, regardless of background, will be able to read and write at the age-appropriate level by the end of Grade 2, and that all students, excepting only those with serious learning problems, will be able to do so by the end of Grade 3. We define that as a school system which, from the beginning, is both excellent and equitable.

Earlier education should mean fewer children having difficulties in Grade 1, and more moving smoothly into reading. Some who have been in early education will already have received the help they need, and those who have reading-related difficulties in Grade 1 must be identified early.

Any child who might otherwise be left behind should quickly receive in-school, appropriate help, before or very early in Grade 2. This should ensure that nearly all students will be able to achieve the reading, writing, listening, and speaking outcomes specified as appropriate to the end of Grade 3 by then. Increasingly, with early education, those outcomes will be reached by the end of Grade 2, although some "late bloomers" may require longer to attain literacy.

In fact, we suggest that the expectation of literacy attainment for all children (excluding a very few who have serious learning handicaps) by or before the end of Grade 3 should be so strong that it constitutes a "literacy guarantee" to parents.

However, if that guarantee is to be made in good faith, parents must acknowledge that they have a part to play. It is essential that they act on the advice and information that must be forthcoming from educational authorities, provincial and local, concerning the importance of talk and print (in the language used at home) to children's lifelong learning capability.

Just as schools must reach out to parents with borrow-a-book programs, family literacy programs, and other home-school literacy links, parents must take up such invitations enthusiastically.

Although there is controversy on the subject, educators do know a great deal about teaching children to read, and the importance of including a variety of teaching methods. Balanced reading programs include both phonics and "whole language" or meaning-based approaches. (For a brief discussion of the issue of phonics in balanced reading programs, see Chapter 6, where the topic is mentioned in the context of pedagogical expertise.) This knowledge, however, is not always in the hands and heads of the people who most need it - the classroom teachers of young children. Sometimes, it is most familiar to only a very few teachers, those with special remedial responsibilities.

One phenomenon in Ontario education in the last two years has been the excitement generated by a remedial reading program called Reading Recovery, created in New Zealand, for children who show difficulty in learning to read in Grade 1, and adopted by the Scarborough Board of Education. Well designed and well researched, it helps many youngsters; the program involves hundreds of hours of training for teachers, and is delivered one-on-one for 20 minutes a day over several months. Reading Recovery is highly structured, for both students and teachers, who monitor each step of the child's performance. While it does not solve every child's problems and its rate of success is not unique among remedial reading programs, it is certainly a promising intervention for many children.
But to begin with remediation is to begin at the wrong end. In New Zealand, teachers receive very rigorous training in how to teach reading before they teach their first classroom. Teacher training for literacy acquisition is by no means so extensive or intensive in Ontario. But good early education depends on teachers receiving thorough training in their pre-service education, or soon afterward. The ultimate prevention program is excellent teacher education. With it, a greater number of children will learn to read in the regular classroom, without expensive tutorial assistance, and the need for reading "recovery"/remediation will shrink.

There is no lack of technology for teaching adults how to teach children to read; the issue is delivering that technology to prospective and practising teachers, especially those in the primary grades. If that is done - if all teachers of young children know how to be effective reading teachers (and, crucially, if those teachers know how to teach parents and other volunteers, including older children, to be effective reading coaches) - schools can deliver on what must be considered a basic entitlement: that, with few exceptions, all children will be functionally and effectively literate in English or French by or before the end of Grade 3. (This issue is discussed further in Chapter 11.)

Among the learner outcomes statements for the end of Grade 3 in *The Common Curriculum* are the following, which describe what students will be able to do with written material:

- Understand a story and predict what may happen next;
- Learn new words through reading;
- Be able to interpret simple diagrams, charts, and maps;
- Be able to follow written directions;
- Understand the purpose of spelling and punctuation and use them correctly to make meaning clear.

*The Common Curriculum* must become real. The stated goals are realistic for most nine- or ten-year-old children, and they should and could be guaranteed almost universally. The relatively few exceptions will include children who are profoundly handicapped or developmentally delayed; those who are recent non-English or non-French-speaking immigrants; and some who enter school in kindergarten without oral fluency in the language of instruction.

We believe that parents should be encouraged to monitor their children's growing literacy, and that educators should welcome them as advocates for such growth. Parental expertise should be built, not dismissed. One way of doing so is for the Ministry of Education and Training, with the assistance of teachers and librarians, to develop a list of high-quality children's books for parents and teachers, books that are readily available in libraries and bookstores, and group them by reading level, according to age or grade. We suggest that public as well as school libraries organize books according to such categories, to help parents and children select books at the child's level.

Such a simple step would enable parents and children to select books together; parents could deliberately choose to read books to their children that were just beyond the child's independent reading ability. And parents would have a very good idea of their child's reading level and rate of progress, as a basis for discussions with the child's teacher.

The Ministry of Education and Training is in the process of developing standards for measuring literacy at the end of Grades 3, 6, and 9. We believe it is both possible and essential for almost all students to achieve at least an adequate reading standard, and for a large minority to reach a superior level. Clarity is required so that teachers and parents know what is expected. A high level of teacher competency in
reaching and teaching the range of learners in any class is necessary. Such supports as intensive reading-tutoring programs must be provided to children who need them. As well, there must be a continuing commitment, provincially and locally, to assessment for improvement. (See Chapter 11.)

Finally, it is important to remember that literacy is not owned by language arts teachers. Once children have the foundation skills - reading, comprehension, writing, and communicating these must be expanded by all teachers across all subject areas: literature is certainly not the only vehicle for developing literacy skills. In the arts and sciences and in technical studies, teachers have the right to expect students to be able to read for information and to write expressively and correctly. They also have the responsibility to help students develop these skills, no matter what the subject context.

The Commission's interest in fundamental literacy skills and on higher literacies as a primary learning issue is evident in our emphasis on language development as an essential for babies and toddlers in the curriculum of home and care, and the curriculum of the Early Childhood Education for three- to five-year-olds. In addition, Chapter 11 focuses on assessing literacy at the end of Grade 3, to evaluate students' progress and the way the educational system functions for young children.

**Numeracy/problem-solving**

Narrowly defined, numeracy corresponds to the narrow definition of literacy: a knowledge of the basics - the ability to compute, measure, estimate quantity, and manipulate numbers, in order to deal with the practical demands of life, including money. Just as the person who cannot read a manual or a newspaper, who cannot write a memo or friendly note, will be less employable and will suffer a certain loss of dignity and self-esteem, the person who is unable to check an invoice, understand a simple chart, divide a restaurant cheque, or estimate the cost of groceries is also under a genuine economic and social handicap.

As with literacy, we see the responsibility of the schools going far beyond basic numeracy to genuine mathematical literacy. As well as a solid grounding in simple arithmetic, this includes the ability to solve both abstract and practical problems efficiently by creating algebraic models to represent them; understanding and being able to use mathematical symbols; understanding formulae as generalizations about observed patterns; and being able to solve problems by applying patterns to them.

In this broader definition, genuine mathematical literacy gives a person another way of representing and understanding reality, a mode of critical and analytic reasoning that, in many situations, is the most efficient and effective one, and a language that is essential to the physical sciences.

While we share parents' wishes to have children acquire basic numeracy skills early in their formal education, we are aware that international math testing over the last decade suggests that most children in Ontario, like most of North America, need to have a better grasp, not of number facts and simple arithmetic, but of the language and conceptual basis of math, the patterns on which mathematical models are built.(5) When clearly instructed to do so, most students can show they have learned how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide; but they do far less well when they have to move beyond mechanical skill - for example, reading a problem that does not dictate the procedure to follow, and deciding what operations are required, and in what order.

Evidence suggests that appropriate emphasis on problem-solving skills can and should begin as early as Grade 1. Not only is this pedagogically important, it also ensures that, from their first experience with arithmetic, children will understand its practical value and the useful reasons for learning it. Thus, good
pedagogy reinforces students' motivation as well as their competence.

Research into primary classrooms in Japan, Taiwan, and China suggests that the advantage children show on international tests begins early, and that teaching methods in those countries differ from our own in important ways. Although classes tend to be larger, teachers structure class time for maximum interaction with students. Such unproductive practices as long periods of individual seatwork, often in the latter part of the instructional period and without immediate feedback from the teacher, are much rarer in Asian than in North American schools. Students there frequently exhibit their work to teachers and classmates, and discuss how they arrived at their conclusions. Incorrect answers are treated as an opportunity for teaching, rather than as evidence of ignorance or a failure from which nothing can be learned.

There is a clearer focus on teaching for understanding, rather than for memorization and recall. Not only is there less uninterrupted seatwork, there is more direct instruction, more guided practice, more value placed on reasoning. Math educators in North America support these strategies and approaches, and it seems highly likely that, if teachers were better educated in the language of mathematics and in teaching that language, we could reasonably expect to see most young students exhibiting more-than-adequate proficiency in the subject. Our recommendation in this area concerns teacher preparation and on-going education. (See Chapter 12.)

In numeracy as in literacy, it is essential that all young learners have a solid foundation on which to build. The literacy guarantee must apply to numeracy as well; by the end of Grade 3, almost all children should exhibit adequate-to-superior skills in fundamental mathematical operations and be able to apply them to age-appropriate problem-solving.

The Ministry of Education and Training has developed standards that are appropriate for measuring the mathematical skills of young learners; it is essential that parents understand what is expected of their children, be given assistance in supporting their learning, and, through regular reporting, be kept aware of the clear indications of their children's progress in math. End-of-Grade 3 assessment (as recommended in Chapter 11) should bring no surprises, and should affirm children's acquisition of the basic skills, including an understanding of how to read and think about and solve math problems that derive from, and apply to, everyday situations.

**Group learning and interpersonal skills and values**

Although it is clear that schools have a primary academic function, there is a growing consensus that they must also recognize the importance of teaching and building on skills that facilitate learning, that enable groups to function harmoniously, and that offer a range of personal and interpersonal skills that are vital to children and adults.

In order to learn at school, students must be able to benefit from group learning situations. In classes of 20 to 35 students, very little instruction can be one-to-one, teacher-to-student. Although effective teachers are aware of each student and constantly monitor individual progress, most classroom learning occurs at the whole-class or small-group level. It involves listening as well as speaking, and is essentially interactive: students must be able to learn from others, from the teacher and from peers.

As well, students must be able and willing to learn in groups that are inclusive, respectful, and appreciative of individual and group diversity. Learners who cannot or will not accept as peers and colleagues persons who are of a different gender, colour, or background are clearly at a disadvantage and are limiting to others.
Furthermore, it has become increasingly obvious that these same interpersonal skills are essential in the workplace. At a minimum, learners/workers must be able to listen, to take turns, to offer help to and accept it from a wide range of others. Beyond that, it is clear that people who welcome the opportunity to learn from and with their peers have significant advantages both academically and in their careers. Many students in Ontario study in classrooms and schools that are richly diverse, as is the local society of which they are part. For these students, interpersonal skills are both complicated and enriched by cultural heterogeneity. Group learning and interpersonal skills in heterogeneous societies are simultaneously more multifaceted and subtler.

In general, Ontario's schools succeed in bringing together young people from extraordinarily diverse heritages to interact positively. Schools must continue to be strengthened in their role as centres for excellence in the development of a citizenry dedicated to equity. In a society as complex and diverse as ours, it is unwise to assume that individuals and groups will interact positively without some support, intervention, and teaching.

If we think of interpersonal literacy as being as much a part of the learning continuum as any other of the foundation literacies, we see tolerance as literacy in a narrow sense; genuine appreciation, welcoming and learning from diversity, is a higher-level interpersonal literacy. And, like other higher level literacies, it is not inborn, but is learned - or not learned from parents, teachers, and peers.

Although home is the primary source of values, school is also an important setting in which they are learned. Teachers and schools teach values implicitly, when they encourage students to work together in groups, to help one another as tutors, and to engage in community service. Teachers often choose books, to read to or to be read by students, that reinforce such values as honesty, compassion, and altruism. Fortunately, many teachers also recognize teachable moments not only in academic but in interpersonal contexts. In the younger grades, teachers often use stories and games to elicit children's feelings about themselves and others, in order to make them conscious of the need for self and mutual understanding.

While teaching values is a controversial and contested area - in a heterogeneous society, values differ among groups and among individuals - it is nonetheless true that making an absolute distinction between knowledge and values is creating a false dichotomy. The curriculum is a statement not only of what we want children and youth to learn; it is also about what we want them to feel for their fellow humans. Thus, we find statements of desired learner outcomes in language in *The Common Curriculum* such as: "By the end of Grade 3, students will use vocabulary that shows respect for people of both sexes and all backgrounds."(6)

Group learning and interpersonal skills are important for school success, but schools and teachers also recognize that students must be educated to behave responsibly; that education is for greater human good, not only for individual success and achievement; and that schools and teachers also have a character-building role to play in the lives of children. A "literacy of values" is part of a general cultural literacy.

The connection between group learning and interpersonal skills and values is also evident in the problems that arise, in school and elsewhere, between male and female students. If schools do not attempt to discourage harassment by peers, and, at the same time, teach good communication skills that can overcome barriers posed by gender (and by race, language, and culture), they lose an opportunity to influence young people positively. That loss may have serious implications for the relationships students have with others throughout their lives.
While it is difficult for schools to overcome negative forces that confront students elsewhere, it is essential that they demand high standards of behaviour from students, while guaranteeing them safety from harassment and bullying.

While teachers must always model good communication skills and positive interpersonal behaviour, they should not be expected to be the sole deliverers of programs that mental health workers and counsellors, for example, are equipped to offer. Such social skills programs as peer coaching and group skills for co-operative learning, which are very clearly classroom oriented, are naturally taught in the classroom, most often by the teacher. But anyone with the requisite expertise can also deliver that kind of training in a classroom setting.

Because co-operative learning and peer and cross-age tutoring facilitate learning, it is essential to teach these to children who would otherwise quickly falter. Having one student tutor or coach another is one of the least expensive and effective ways of increasing learning, for both "teacher" and "pupil." Peers may be more effective communicators than teachers when a student is confused or doesn't understand: for example, thinking of another way to reword the teacher's explanation. Moreover, the student in the teaching role is forced to think clearly and logically, and often to face and fill previously unidentified gaps in her own understanding.(7)

As well, cross-age tutoring is a valid form of community service in the school.(8) As long as all students have the opportunity to help another if they wish (and cross-age tutoring makes this possible for almost all students), it is appropriate for teachers to describe and students to understand that this is service to others. As such, it can begin early and act as a child's introduction to that concept.

Even closer to schools is the resource of students themselves. Peer tutoring, especially cross-age peer tutoring, has modest effects. But the effects are so consistent, and the effects in terms of self-esteem of both tutors and children tutored so visible, that one authority has labelled peer tutoring an "educational conjuring trick." Peer tutoring is very much more cost-effective in raising pupil achievement than many more widely-advocated strategies... Implementation of effective peer tutoring programs requires goodwill and organization, but little else; it is a resource there for the taking.(9)

Another part of a life skills curriculum that should be delivered by an educator - though it can be a retired teacher volunteer is the practice of studying: teaching students study skills, such as how to read texts for information, using tables of contents and section headings, and how to review material for tests, etc.

Students need these skills, which can be taught; it is essential that some youngsters not be placed at a disadvantage because they have not been taught at school what others may be taught at home.

It is essential that teachers know and can act according to principles of effective classroom management, and that they know how to help students learn effective interpersonal behaviour working in groups and helping one another - as well as personal organizational and study habits. But they cannot be expected to single-handedly create and take sole responsibility for implementing and maintaining such important school-wide safety initiatives as anti-bullying or conflict mediation programs, although they must know how to support and reinforce them.

Teaching and learning interpersonal or life skills is an area in which community partnerships are absolutely necessary. Teachers need some essential strategies for promoting negotiation and problem-solving among students, in order to implement such processes as co-operative learning and peer
coaching and as a vehicle for curbing anti-social behaviour in the classroom and on the playground. Most teachers have no special knowledge in these areas, and may not know what questions to ask, what strategies to teach, to get beyond negative and reach positive behaviour. Just telling a student to behave differently is rarely enough. Other expertise is necessary, either through more and different teacher preparation, or through the assistance of others with appropriate backgrounds.

It is essential that all teachers know how to model and teach negotiation skills and conflict resolution, as well as other social skills that enable students to work productively together, such as the listening and questioning skills necessary to learning in large- and small-group situations.

While, in theory, the best time to acquire some of this knowledge may be in pre-service, most teachers probably find it useful after they begin teaching, in the context of the school and the larger community. And while all teachers (one could argue all persons) need these skills, teachers of young children are able to establish a firm foundation in this area - an important responsibility.

There are people, including retirees, in a variety of disciplines - social work, mental health, youth work, counselling - who are able to teach and model these skills for teachers as well as for students directly. Involving community helpers, whether salaried or volunteer, also ensures that culturally different habits and customs are understood, and that this diversity is used to support such school-wide group and interpersonal skills as conflict mediation.

If schools are to be effective learning communities, the need for a safe and constructive social environment cannot be ignored. By themselves, teachers cannot develop and deliver programs needed to create that environment.

In order to be "fit" for learning, students must feel safe and secure at school, not threatened in the classroom, on the playground, or elsewhere by others who cannot control their anger, or who react to frustration with verbal or physical aggression. Prevention programs, whether school-wide, in small groups, or for individuals, are also part of interpersonal and group learning skills; schools must depend on the resources of the larger community to deliver a range of such programs.

Other interpersonal skills curricula that could be better delivered by community partners are such aspects of family studies as knowledge of child development as it applies to baby-sitting.

We have identified group and interpersonal skills as an essential literacy - like computers, communication, numeracy, and scientific reasoning. Therefore, we are calling on the Ministry of Education and Training to develop standards in this area, as a tool for measuring achievement and progress over time.

We do not anticipate that elaborate testing or systematic performance assessment will be necessary - they would be artificial, time-consuming, and inefficient when applied here. Neither do we wish to see evaluation in this area left to chance, or neglected. We assume that the most effective way to assess student achievement in group and interpersonal learning goals would be to create a checklist, with learner outcomes stated as a continuum, just as they are in other areas (at the end of Grades 3, 6, and 9). This would enable teachers, on the basis of frequent observations of a student in class, in the hallways, and on the playground, to let parents and students know how well group learning and interpersonal skills are being developed.

At the class and school levels, teachers and administrators can use this data to decide what improvements
are needed, what programs they and/or community helpers should be offering.

**Scientific literacy**

Scientific literacy includes a basic understanding of key facts that explain natural phenomena, and of scientific principles of analysis, fundamental to critical thinking and to the design and execution of experiments. The need to develop in young children a sense of how to understand natural events and the world around them, and how to think scientifically and analytically - to look at cause-effect relationships, diversity and variation, probability and prediction, and to learn more about something new by comparing and contrasting it with the known - these are necessary and fundamental tools for thinking and comprehending, irrespective of the area of study or work. As well, early science programs can build on and enhance children’s natural curiosity, which the school must nurture as an important intellectual force. Children can test their hypotheses and be rewarded with concrete feedback on their thinking.

Since 1984, when the Science Council of Canada issued its report, Science for Every Student,(10) there has been considerable growth in science education in the province's elementary schools. A report issued by the government in 1991(11) concluded that science education in Grades 1 to 6 had improved significantly over the previous four years. Science-related curriculum guides and resource documents were well received and apparently fairly well utilized.

Some science educators, however, feel that there is still too little science in elementary schools, and tie this to the relatively small number of university students who choose the physical sciences as their major field of study; that, in its turn, means that a relatively small number of teachers, especially at the elementary level, have a background in the physical sciences.

The possibility of a link between science in Grade 1 and in Grade 12 was the subject of a research study that followed children who had been given a course of science lessons in Grades 1 or 2, and a comparison group who did not have the lessons. Both groups were interviewed several times over the next ten to eleven years, and were asked questions about scientific concepts. The study probed their thinking about objects or events they had manipulated or observed during the primary science unit. Researchers found that the differences in favour of the science-instructed group were greater at Grade 12 than they had been at the end of Grade 1 or 2. They concluded that:

> The remarkable finding of this study is that a relatively few hours of high quality science instruction in grades one and two apparently served as a kind of advance organizer for many students for later instruction in science... The data suggest that primary grade children have much science concept learning capability that goes unexploited in our schools... it seems evident that much meaningful learning potential remains unexploited in our school children.(12)

There has been considerable interest and concern in science education at the middle elementary level (Grades 4 to 6). There are two obvious reasons why:

First, although Canada exceeds almost all countries in the world in the number of young adults enrolled in university, and ranks near the top percentage of adults with post-secondary education, it is very low, among developed countries, in the proportion of science and engineering degrees being granted. Many people consider this an economic liability for the country, and are concerned that positive attitudes towards and interest in science be developed early.
Second, there is a concern for excellence. International test results suggest that our elementary students are doing as well as most, but not better. "Overall, Ontario students appear to be achieving at around the international average in international studies, but significantly less well than students in British Columbia and Alberta." (13) Science educators are convinced that our students would show greater aptitude and interest in science if they had greater exposure to it in elementary school, and if it were taught in ways that were more relevant and interesting to them.

While the gender gap in math/science achievement and participation has decreased so substantially that it has essentially disappeared before the senior years of secondary school, (14) educators tend to agree that later participation in these disciplines would improve significantly if young women, beginning early and continuing through secondary and post-secondary education, were offered practical and human applications of the physical sciences. This emphasis on meaningful uses of science would seem to be what is needed for all young learners, not just for females, although its absence may have more impact on their long-term involvement. "Gender-fair teaching strategies for mathematics, science, and technology are good practice for all students... [Programs] designed to encourage girls in the primary grades in the use of mathematics depend[s] on problem-solving activities all students would find useful." (15)

Science educators say it is necessary to present a more "authentic" view of science, to emphasize the science/technology/society connection, and to make clear the connections between scientific literacy and the lives and work of Canadians:

Nothing motivates students to higher performance more than a sense that what they are studying is of real relevance and importance to themselves, their lives and personal aspirations. Science and technology are of enormous relevance to the lives and careers of all young people in school today. Yet too often the way it is taught fails to highlight this relevance. Science is seen as "just another school subject" rather than as the key to a door to rewarding work or exciting opportunity. The ways in which mathematics, science, and technology are taught need to be examined for these links to the real world of students. (16)

A 1991 survey of Grade 4, 5, and 6 classrooms in one Ontario region (17) showed that most teachers had never invited another person to make a presentation that was related to the science program. The need for community-based education, to enrich programs and make them real for students, extends to all areas of the curriculum.

The issues we have already raised about preparing elementary school teachers to teach math are also true of science. Many teachers take no university-level science courses, and even if they did, it is not at all clear that they would be much better science teachers: it is questionable whether science courses, as taught at the university level, are good models for teaching science to younger students or to anyone who is not a science specialist.

Preparing to teach science must combine preparation in science and in pedagogy (an issue that is dealt with in more detail in Chapter 12). Teachers need models for presenting curriculum in a more integrated and life-like way, connecting scientific concepts with meaningful examples drawn from everyday life.

We believe that scientific literacy is an essential for Canadians, and we urge support for teaching and learning science as part of the common curriculum through more and better science education for prospective teachers, adequate laboratory resources, and development of clear and high standards for student achievement.
**Computer literacy**

[A central curriculum question is]... how, in particular, to redefine the core curriculum in a situation in which technology is becoming part of the general culture, with all the implications that this has for the redefinition and acquisition of the basic competencies needed for the transition to adult life. Computer literacy, for example, has become part of the new basics in education. (18)

When we speak of computer literacy as a foundation skill, we are referring to the ability to use the computer, equipped appropriately with CD-ROM player, modem, and phone or cable line, as well as output devices such as printers and plotters; to gather information; analyze, organize, and understand that information; and present it clearly and effectively.

Being able to use the central tool of information technology, the computer, is no longer a luxury restricted to a privileged few, or even an option for those growing up in today's world. Computer skills are basic, used not just in the workplace but in the home, for recreation and leisure, and in innumerable other ways.

Many people use computers to "draw" and "paint," adding graphics to work and play. And, as was evident on the TVOnline discussion on education, organized for the Commission, many people spend hours sharing ideas, asking questions, and seeking information through computers.

Aside from their pervasive influence on society, computers and other informational or instructional technologies, used properly, can have a transforming effect on learning and teaching. They can individualize learning and allow students to achieve excellence at varying rates of speed, and can give them access to far more information than what is contained in the school library.

Clearly, acquiring computer literacy cannot be left to chance, to unequal opportunities outside school, or to a few older students who may be interested in the inner workings of the hardware or software. If we do not commit ourselves to making all our students computer literate, we create a significant barrier to their in-school education and to their success as learners throughout life. All classrooms need computers, and all teachers and students need computer literacy. Unless teachers are equipped to guide their students into the world of Information Technology (IT), the remarkable potential of this new learning tool will not be fully realized, and students' opportunities to learn will be significantly curtailed.

Given that, the Ministry must establish clear outcomes for the computer literacy skills students must acquire as they progress through school. The Ministry must differentiate clearly between learning with computers and learning how to use computers. The machines must be used to help students learn how to learn, as well as to strengthen their learning in biology, history, and instrumental music; but they must also learn to be comfortable, competent computer users, knowledgeable in harnessing computer power in their work and their play. These skills will give them an edge in the job market and will also give them the confidence to continue learning, to access information for their own benefit, and to make the best use of computers for personal interests.

The value of the computer, properly used as a tool for young learners, is boundless. That's why we have classified technology as one of the four engines that we believe are crucial to the reforms to the system that are now necessary. In Chapter 13, we discuss in detail the role of the computer in supporting learning and teaching, and (in Chapter 11) assessment, as well as in professional development for
teachers.

**Core subjects**

The core curriculum is that array of discipline-specific subjects to which students are expected to be exposed so that they can become educated, productive members of society. Typically, the core subjects occupy almost all the formal curriculum of elementary school; by secondary school, students are given more options, and the core subjects occupy much, but not all, their attention.

While we believe that the foundation skills underlie all learning, and at no time more than in the early years of schooling, we are not suggesting that the rest of the common curriculum be neglected, or be viewed as a frill. Nor are we suggesting that students delay their introduction to the arts, the social sciences, or broad-based technologies until after they have mastered the foundation skills. On the contrary, all of the core subjects of the common curriculum have an important place in the education of children, from the beginning, as a context for learning and applying foundation skills. Similarly, foundation skills are not finally acquired at the end of Grades 3 or 6; they must be built upon throughout the years of formal education, and beyond. Students certainly must continue to study literature even after they become literate, and mathematics even after they can perform the fundamental operations. Similarly, they must, over the years, acquire increasing knowledge and understanding of history, geography, the arts, and the many other subjects that comprise the common curriculum.

Whereas the foundations, as we described them, are generic skills that apply across all subject areas, the rest of the core curriculum is the knowledge base to which students apply those generic skills. We want students to develop communication, problem-solving, group learning, interpersonal, analytic, and computer skills within a content-rich context. One cannot argue a point about constitutional rights, judge an argument on municipal election reform, or analyze an experiment in biology without a base of knowledge of the subject. Thinking is always about something, and the more knowledge of the subject, the more developed and substantive the thought. Expert performance in a subject requires subject-specific knowledge as well as thinking and learning skills.

It is also true that students learn not only bodies of fact but specific and essential thinking skills within disciplines. Maps, musical scores, and diagrams are generalized ways of organizing information for understanding and recall, although they derive from particular subject areas.

Different subjects depend on different patterns of thinking: the way arguments are developed and evidence is organized differs according to subject. Well-educated people are able to read and understand across a range of subjects not only because they begin with a knowledge of content, but because exposure and familiarity tell them how to read and what to expect in different disciplines and genres.

It is important to note that the core curriculum may be delivered in a variety of ways (for example, with subjects segregated or integrated); differently at different age levels; and differently in different schools. What it implies is that, across schools and teachers, there is some common content and that assessment will be based on that content to create a degree of consistency in what is taught and what is learned.

While many teachers and parents are concerned that the curriculum may be crowded, and that foundation skills may be neglected or core subjects slighted, we did not hear any suggestions from the public about dropping any of the 15 subjects that are part of the common curriculum. Language and literature, mathematics, and science, each built on a foundation of literacy, are certainly part of the core curriculum.
Few people disagree with the idea that computer literacy is also a fundamental part of core curriculum, and there were no suggestions that history or geography or art not be offered to all students. Each subject has many advocates, and a traditional and accepted place in the curriculum, although newer additions to the elementary curriculum, such as business studies, are less likely to be seen as part of the core curriculum.

There was more discussion in the public hearings and briefs of a few core subjects because people were concerned they might be neglected now or in the future. We comment on these briefly, reminding the reader that we are not attempting to include all core curriculum subjects in this discussion.

**The arts: Dance, drama, music, visual arts**

The arts are an integral part of any complete education; and they can and should be a very rewarding part. They are unique as a way of taking in information and as a vehicle for communication and self-expression. The point is that what is best understood or expressed in music, in movement, or in a drawing cannot be paraphrased in words. Students denied access to the arts are denied literacies and are impoverished as learners. All young people should receive at least an introduction to the arts in school. Art and art education will be a major source of fulfilment and the most developed mode of learning and communicating for some students; they will at least open an important door to the world for others.

In contrast to the idea that non-essentials might crowd out the fundamentals, many people connected with the arts argued that in a time of decreasing resources and increasing anxiety about economic competitiveness, budget cuts already affect delivery of the arts curriculum: there is no money to increase or even replace the inventory of musical instruments, no money to sponsor artists in the schools, no funds for trips to museums and galleries, and the like.

This is a concern for two reasons, we believe; first, the arts are part of the core curriculum and not inherently less valuable as part of a well-rounded education than any other subject; they are not "frills" and should not be treated as such. Not only does every student have the right to be introduced to the arts as an area of cultural knowledge, learners also need ways of making abstract ideas concrete. Like science, art is a hands-on way to apply mathematical and logical reasoning skills, explore ideas, and have the satisfaction of making something with what one has learned.

Second, art is the major route to learning for many students, their most developed "intelligence" and their best way of solidifying foundation skills. Drama, for example, has been shown to motivate students who otherwise avoid writing to write - and write well. Music is mathematical in structure, and some evidence suggests that it may be similarly related to understanding and describing spatial relationships. Saving money by targeting arts programs probably does a disservice to all students, and can impose a particular hardship on many of them.

Any school system that fails to open up the spirit of the arts to its students is unworthy of public support.

**Career education**

An opinion, commonly heard by the Commission, is that schools often neglect the part of their mandate, beyond the traditional academic subjects, that other people consider important. This other function of schools involves making students aware of the kinds of work that are available, and of the personal
attributes and educational preparation suited to a variety of occupations and careers. The point was frequently made that students are interested, from the youngest grades, in what adults do, and that this interest should be cultivated in a planned way; that would enable students, by the time they are beginning to consider their high school options, to do so on a very strong base of knowledge and information about the opportunities that exist, the preparation needed for different careers, and a sense of their own interests, abilities, and suitability.

Students and parents across the spectrum articulated their desire to see career and occupational awareness and preparation built into the curriculum, beginning well before secondary school. This desire was generally phrased, not as a request for specific occupational channelling or training, but as a perceived need to help students see the link between formal education and the world of work, and help them plan their courses in keeping with their interests and strengths, and the opportunities available. We believe this is a sensible notion, one that is well worth pursuing.

While education in the career planning sense may best be described as part of the core curriculum from Grade 7 on, it is clear to us that it must rest on an earlier and continuous exposure to the resources of the local community; it must be an experience-based program in which young students learn to think about their interests, aptitudes, and responsibilities within a community framework. For that reason, we view community-based education with a strong component of career awareness as an essential part of the core curriculum in elementary school beginning in the primary grades. Every zoo trip is an opportunity to learn from and about the people who work there: Who feeds the animals, and how did keepers train for their jobs? Who decides what plants to put in different enclosures, and what do they have to know in order to do that?

Community-based "career" education also means that students walk through the neighbourhood with local hosts, and visit such neighbourhood workplaces as libraries and fire stations. It means science projects that involve municipal employees: park workers, engineers, and others, and taking students to important natural sites nearby. Children come to school knowing that the most important resource in their world is other people. Schools must build on that knowledge systematically, so that, from a young age, children appreciate and value human diversity, understand that they can learn from everyone they meet, and have a sense of the role education and training play in the lives of adults in their community.

The complement of learning about what other people do and how they prepare for it is an understanding of one's own strengths and interests, of the learning or development needed to grow more competent in those areas. These self-appraisal and reflective skills are explicitly built into effective career-awareness programs.

Like all curricula, the career education component is developmental: it starts as a self- and community-awareness program (including an emphasis on community service), and, for adolescents, develops into explicit career education to help students make informed plans for their future occupation.

The school's community is as essential to this as it is to the interpersonal and life skills curriculum. It is impossible for teachers and other school staff members to meet all students' needs for exposure to a variety of learning environments. As pointed out in Chapter 6, the teacher's role is as general practitioner/diagnostician: knowing who can provide special help and when it is needed.

Teachers cannot be experts in occupations ranging from aerospace to zoology. They depend on local individuals, businesses, and agencies to support their students' search for diverse role models and
hands-on opportunities for educational experiences just as other people provide physical and mental health supports for students, recreational and library programs to supplement the school’s facilities, and a host of other professional and voluntary services.

If school-level integration of services and resources is to be achieved, changes will have to be made in the way services are funded, in who undertakes co-ordination of efforts between the school and the community. As well, ways must be found to increase the use of information technology by teachers and students - of both sophisticated computers and simple telephones that must be available in all classrooms to all teachers and learners.

Community-based education also includes an early introduction to the value of community service and the need to take on that responsibility, with visits to homes for the aged, blood-donor clinics, and the like. This simple but fundamental expansion of the curriculum to include the human, the built, and the natural community around the school is the foundation upon which a continuous career education curriculum is built. This is true even though students will not define this aspect of community-based curriculum as career education until they are entering adolescence.

Because this kind of education has not been systematically developed and implemented in the past, teachers need numerous examples of community and workplace visits, and preparatory and follow-up activities, to support age-appropriate, community-based career awareness programs. We would hope that the Ministry of Education and Training would arrange for the preparation and distribution of such materials in the future. Teachers also need support at the local level to co-ordinate such a program, and we will recommend that support in Chapter 10, in the section on career education.

But there is more to linking schools to communities than preparation for work. The essence of "environmental" education, of "global" education, of studying "history," "science," or "English," can be the means of coming to understand one's community in all its dimensions. There is too often a sense in which the school experience, while trying to prepare its students for a broad variety of experiences in life, merely abstracts them with something disconnected, irrelevant (to them) and alienating. If school is to be a place worth staying in (for a student) it must be a place where connections are made, where learning is meaningful and where people learn more about coping with the complex realities of their many communities.(19)

Some French-language schools and classes have the additional problem of lack of a local French-language community resource base; therefore, there is a need for long-term planning and organization for community-based learning when French-language resources are not as visible or accessible in the immediate society. In such a case, identifying community resources and creating networks may be done most efficiently through centralized planning, within a general language-planning policy of French-language schools, to ensure that French resources are available in the milieu, regardless of geographic region or concentration of francophones.

History

History, as many people reminded us, is more than a collection of dates and facts: like good literature, its stories provide repeated opportunities for wonder, questions, debates, clarification, and thinking through difficult issues to logical conclusions.

Teachers must give students the opportunity to relate the past to the present. In many cases, the conflicts
that beset us currently are older than Confederation; students, who will be voters, must understand those links.

Canadian history, because it is the story of all Canadians, cannot be accurate without being truly inclusive; it must not ignore the country's history before European contact. It should be taught so that students know and appreciate the diversity at our core from then until now and are more tolerant of the stresses that inevitably accompany heterogeneity, and can consider those in the context of our common humanity and basic community values.

Besides being information-filled, history (Canadian history, world history) is also value-filled, and offers opportunities for thoughtful consideration of ethical issues. Students are eager to discuss notions of justice, altruism, and ethics, and such discussions are an essential part of an adequate education. While they must also occur throughout the curriculum - in literature, science, art - history is extremely important as a context for such exchanges because it is the reality of the human record, and the basis for thinking about who we are as a people, and what we want to become. Issues of majority rule, of minority rights, and of the rights of minors, of the way freedom and responsibility must complement each other, of community responsibility, of individual versus collective rights - all these are issues that educated people must have experience in considering and debating. All have moral and value-laden dimensions that should not be avoided but, instead, should be exploited as an opportunity to develop critical thinking that engages students' desire to mature, and to gain expertise and responsibility.

Official languages and international languages

Official languages

English as a second language:

English becomes compulsory as of Grade 5, as stipulated in the Education Act. (It will be recalled that anglophones must start taking French by no later than Grade 4.) In either case, initiatives for teaching the second language sooner, even as early as nursery school, are permitted.

The attraction of English and its dominant position as an international language are such that compulsory formal instruction in Grade 5, at about age 10, strengthens skills acquired in French, the weaker, less visible language in the surrounding society. It is felt that some 80 percent of school activity should therefore be conducted in French. Students can then hope to achieve a minimal level of competency in French, which is critical to good cognitive development, before learning the second language.

The fact that the elementary classroom teacher teaches all subjects, including English, may pose problems for second-language learning, particularly if the teacher has limited competency in, or expresses a negative attitude towards, the second language. The teaching of English by someone other than the classroom teacher may help the student to make a clear-cut distinction between the two languages used at school and in society, and thereby help to achieve additive bilingualism in the Franco-Ontarian community, that is, bilingualism that is firmly entrenched. A public information document clarifying the role and place of English in Franco-Ontarian schools would promote a better understanding of the situation on the part of parents and other social interveners. We would point out that it is a specialist teacher other than the classroom teacher who teaches French as a second language in anglophone classrooms at the primary level.

The following passage defines the concepts of "additive bilingualism" and "subtractive bilingualism" as
Additive bilingualism is stable and promotes social integration of the members of a community without devaluing their language and culture. Subtractive bilingualism is transitional in nature; it is a stage in the processes of assimilation and acculturation. Only additive bilingualism can ensure the long-term survival of a weak linguistic community. A broadened definition of additive bilingualism encompasses the linguistic, cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of language development; a high degree of competency in the mother tongue and the second language in both interpersonal and cognitive-academic communication; the maintenance of a strong ethno-linguistic identity and the development of positive beliefs about one's language, culture, and community, along with positive attitudes towards other languages, cultures, and communities; extensive and continuous use of one's mother tongue without diglossia, that is, without usage being confined to too limited a number of social functions. (21)

Like French-language programs, English-language programs must address the new school clientele. They must therefore include, based on local needs, beginners' programs aimed at anglophone students, and francophone students having no English competency; programs for students having moderate competency; and finally, programs for students having a high degree of bilingual competency. We feel The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9 addresses these various needs.

The other official language in anglophone schools: French in English-language schools is part of the common curriculum, most commonly taught as a subject like any other, by a French specialist teacher. However, a number of English-language schools offer FSL (French as a second language) in an immersion program, in which students learn other subjects, such as geography or science, in French. Canada has been a world leader in developing language immersion programs for young learners.

At present, the only other languages that may be offered at the elementary level are American Sign Language (ASL) and La Langue des Signes Quebecoise (LSQ), the English and French sign languages, which are permitted as languages of instruction for students with hearing problems; and Native languages, which may be taught as subjects.

International languages in Ontario schools

In addition to achieving a high level of language skills in both official languages, many parents and communities want their children to have opportunities to learn other languages as well, in both elementary and secondary school. The rationale varied among groups, but all had the same goal: to give their children more of a chance to become or remain bilingual or multilingual in a bilingual, multicultural country.

Some are most interested in the cultural benefits of learning another language, and argued that learning another language and about the culture from which it springs helps students appreciate other people, here and in other countries. Another language gives them access to the literary riches of other cultures (available to non-readers of that language only in translation) and to other windows on the world.

Others saw foreign language acquisition in terms of travel and personal enrichment. Slightly altering the old adage "When in Rome, speak as the Romans do," they suggested that their children would be better able to make their way in other societies if they have a grasp of the language.
Still other groups emphasized the importance of knowing other languages in this era of global business. In June 1994, Northern Telecom made a significant grant to the University of Toronto to develop an Ibero-American program. (Ibero-America is defined as Spain, Portugal, and the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries of Latin America.) The purpose is to develop closer business and cultural collaboration between Canada and Ibero-American countries.

Clearly, business sees the need to develop language skills among Canada's young people. As a trading nation, being able to speak the language of our trading partners is an advantage. Northern Telecom wants to do more business in Latin America and needs more people who can not only speak the languages, but have some cultural and business knowledge of those countries.

Still others are seeking ways to maintain the linguistic skills conferred on children by their heritage. In October 1993, the Heritage Languages Advisory Work Group presented its report to the Minister of Education and Training. The report focused on strengthening the International Language Program (Elementary),* which provides non-English/non-French instruction, primarily after school and on weekends, generally by non-certificated instructors. It should be noted that, while most students in the program share the cultural heritage of the particular language, classes in the program are open to all students, regardless of background.

Ontario benefits from the rich variety of linguistic abilities that result from the number of immigrants in the province. At a time of increasing global competition, we are told that the ability to speak the languages of other trading nations can make the difference between a deal and no deal. This is one reason for supporting the idea of having students add a language instead of trading one tongue for another.

The Work Group called teaching and learning international languages "a positive economic investment in our students." In addition, there is the evidence that strength in one language enhances proficiency in others. Thus, non-native speakers of English/French are likely to carry over language-learning strengths from their native language, if they continue to use it, into the language of the school. (See also the discussion of bilingual and immersion programs in Chapter 10.)

The Commission strongly agrees that learning international languages, in addition to English and French, is valuable and should be encouraged. At present, there is virtually no international language instruction in elementary school and relatively little in secondary school. The International Languages Program (Elementary) is typically viewed as a frill or extra, rather than being made part of the formal school program, even in schools that extend the day so that these languages can be taught during school hours, rather than after school or on weekends.

We understand that, at the secondary level, the proportion of students taking languages other than French and English has decreased over the years. For example, of the more than 111,000 students who received their secondary school diploma in 1992-1993, 49 percent (55,000) had at least one OAC (a credit toward university admission) in English, and 18 percent (20,000) in French. But the largest numbers in all the other languages (such as Spanish and German) were less than one percent - in the range of 400 to 500 students. We are thus eager to see children offered the opportunity to learn an additional language while they are young and especially able to acquire native-like oral fluency.

**Recommendation 6**

*We recommend that the acquisition of a third language become an intrinsic part of the common curriculum
from a young age up to Grade 9 inclusively, with the understanding that the choice of language(s) taught or acquired will be determined locally, and that the acquisition of such a third language outside schools be recognized as equivalent by an examination process, similar to what we term challenge exams within the secondary school credit system.

The learning of a third language, like the learning of English, may present special challenges for Franco-Ontarian, French-language schools, for consolidating and enriching the spoken and written French of their young people. Franco-Ontarians and newcomers, however, have as much of an interest in learning a third language as do Ontario's other communities.

Because of the local variation in context for offering and learning a non-official language, we are not suggesting that all schools be required to do so, and we are not, therefore, suggesting that The Common Curriculum be amended to include one or another international language. We do, however, wish to encourage schools wherever possible to offer their students this wonderful opportunity, and we suggest that one excellent use of the local curriculum option that we are recommending be available to schools (see Recommendation, below) would be to offer an international language to all students in an elementary school (or to all students beginning in a particular grade).

Physical and health education

We heard a good deal from professional organizations, from parents and from students, about the importance of physical education; the most common recommendation was that all students should be involved in at least 30 minutes of continuous physical exercise daily. This is based on sound fitness guidelines, and we believe the idea should not be ignored. It is another area in which curriculum delivery should be shared with non-school staff, such as recreation workers and health agents. Daily or thrice-weekly physical exercise programs can be led by a variety of trained and volunteer staff who are not teachers.

Physical education, usually based on games and sports activities, has long been a part of public education, based on the widely held belief that physical exercise and exertion improve mental sharpness and the ability to concentrate. As well, society has become increasingly aware of the importance of exercise for health, and in that sense, a physical education program that includes regular exercise should serve as the basis for lifelong participation in health-promoting activities.

The Commission heard many voices raised in favour of expanding the amount of physical exercise in the daily program at both the elementary and secondary levels, including advocates who were particularly eager to have female adolescents appreciate the value of physical exercise as a source of strength and self-esteem and as a much healthier weight-control strategy than stringent dieting. They believe all students should be required to have daily physical exercise throughout their school career.

While competitive sport is a well-established part of school life, physical exercise for fitness is the universal need of young people (and adults). We believe there is abundant evidence that daily physical exercise is a strong component of health.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that all elementary schools integrate a daily period of regular physical exercise of no less than 30 minutes of continuous activity as an essential part of a healthy school environment. Schools that have problems scheduling daily periods should, as a minimum, require three exercise periods per week.
All schools should encourage students, parents, other community members, and health and fitness professionals to become involved in delivering exercise programs at school and in creating healthy schools. Students who choose to engage in regular sports programs or physical education classes at school could be exempted from exercise sessions.

While we firmly believe this policy will benefit all students, we are convinced that female students, in particular, will profit from lesser emphasis on competitive sport, traditionally very male dominated.

As well, we believe that health education - drug and sex education and parts of the family studies curriculum - should be delivered by community partners on whom the schools can draw. Increasingly, as schools attempt to deal with such health crises as drug use, violence, and HIV, non-academic concerns have sometimes taken time away from the core curriculum and have used teacher time inappropriately. Although they are not part of the academic curriculum, these are essential areas of instruction for students, but they need not be delivered solely by teachers.

Both the life skills and career education components of community-based or partnership education are incorporated into a program known as the Healthy Schools model. Developed in Europe and North America, it now exists in a Canadian version that evolved in British Columbia, where the program is called "Learning for Living" and extends from the primary grades to the end of secondary school. It includes curriculum-based instruction, services for students, and an emphasis on a healthful school environment, i.e., a sound social climate as well as healthy physical surroundings.

We believe the model of a continuous, elementary-secondary emphasis on health promotion is a positive development in curriculum. We also note the emphasis on healthy environments that is the essential rationale of all public health programs, and that has recently expanded to include healthy communities.

Physical and health education can be seen both as part of the core curriculum and as components of a healthy school, one in which staff model, and students appreciate, the link between exercise and health. In addition to physical exercise and physical education, healthy schools emphasize a safe and healthy environment, community participation, with students and teachers taking responsibility for making health-related decisions.

The healthy schools initiative is an excellent example of education that can be community-based, rather than depending exclusively on teachers to plan or deliver the curriculum. It is the kind of initiative around which student energy can be mobilized, and it may be extended to include such activities as participation in community "runs" for charity, as well as in other kinds of community service, inter-generational programs, and diverse strategies for building students' experience in decision-making; it emphasizes the willingness to accept real community responsibilities. Part of this ambitious agenda belongs within the core curriculum, and part of it can occur outside class time.

We believe that a comprehensive school health model, as recommended by the Canadian Association for School Health, and as exemplified by the Learning for Living Primary-Graduation curriculum in British Columbia, is a healthy direction for Ontario schools, and suggest that the Ministry of Education and Training work with appropriate professional groups and partners to learn from the B.C. experience, and encourage and support a healthy school emphasis within the core curriculum, that is strongly community-based and that incorporates mechanisms to facilitate collaborative planning and funding between the school system and public or private agencies concerned with physical and mental health.

Technology (broad-based)
Like art, broad-based technological studies, which challenge students to apply mathematics and science to materials and processes - to design and develop objects and techniques as ways to solve problems - are extremely important, and it makes good sense to include them in the elementary curriculum, from the early years onward. Broad-based technologies include: communications, construction, technological design, hospitality services, manufacturing, personal services, and transportation.

As part of the core curriculum, technology offers all students the opportunity to apply the problem-solving and reasoning strategies they acquire in math, science, and language to concrete problems of design and use of tools and materials. All students need a basic understanding of how physical materials and processes are produced and applied, and many learn best when they are given frequent opportunities to make the abstract concrete. This is most obvious for young learners (through Grade 6), but even students mature enough to deal with abstraction benefit some very strongly - from testing their knowledge concretely and appropriately.

Students whose way of learning is more spatial than linguistic benefit especially from the inclusion of technological education in the core curriculum. But it is also true that technological education helps to develop literacy skills, in an applied and immediately relevant way, because it requires the student to read manuals, make lists, write requisitions, and give and follow oral and written instructions.

**Continuity in curriculum and learning, Grades 1-6**

The organization of elementary schooling supports the possibility of good communication and good relationships between students and teachers, and between teachers and parents. Because students in Grades 1 to 6 spend most of their time each year with one teacher, they and their parents can establish a relationship of personal knowledge and trust with her. In the same way, the teacher has a manageable number of students each year with whom she can quickly become familiar, both as teacher and diagnostician. But what is missing is continuity of supervision over the years, and continuous monitoring of the student's academic well-being.

While parents are often well aware of their children's development - the gaps that have been closed and those that have not, the gifts that have been noticed and exploited positively by one teacher but not by another - the school has no structure or process that guarantees continuous monitoring from teacher to teacher, and across the years. Too often, only when a child is in serious difficulty do teachers examine the student's record and begin to ask questions that should have been asked earlier.

Even when learning issues are addressed in a timely way, there is no assurance that next year's teacher will be aware of what has happened, and of how to build on it. We think it is important for all students and their parents to be assured that there is an educator, one person, who is keeping track over time of each student's progress.

We do not think that, at this early level, it is necessary for students to meet regularly with a teacher other than that year's classroom teacher. But we do believe that students, and especially their parents, should know that someone is aware of how the student is doing over time, and that this teacher (or principal or vice-principal), who is a kind of case manager for the student, can be contacted by parents concerned about an issue related to their child's progress, about which the current teacher may be unaware or insufficiently informed.

We do not consider it advisable for only the principal, or only the principal and vice-principal, to fulfil
this responsibility: it would be difficult, except in exceptionally small schools, for them to do so well on behalf of many dozens or hundreds of children. If all certificated staff are involved, it is unlikely that any one of them would be responsible for more than 20 to 30 students, a number that makes it possible for the adult to know each student personally - particularly because the group for whom they have responsibility would change by only a few students per year.

**Recommendation 8**

*We recommend that, at the Grade 1-5/6 level,* an educator monitor a student's progress during the years the student is at the school, and be assigned responsibility for maintaining that student's record.

The educator will ensure that each of the child's teachers is aware of that record, will be aware of and act on behalf of the continuity of the student's progress, and will be a contact for parent(s) or guardian(s) when there are questions related to progress over those years. Excellent school transition programs for young students would include contact and communication between the educator who monitored their progress through Grade 5 or 6, and the educator who becomes responsible for their educational planning at the next level.

**The transition to adolescence: Special consideration of the needs of learners from age 12 to 15**

While there is no change in curriculum content between Grades 1 to 6 and Grades 7 to 9, there are significant changes in the way schools are organized and curriculum is delivered.

As well, there are important changes in the students. First, they must begin to consider where their interests and achievements are leading them, and to become more future-oriented in terms of secondary and post-secondary educational and career choices.

Second, they increasingly demand to be treated as adults: to make choices, participate in important decisions, and take control over their own lives, including their lives at school.

We suggest that there are some inherent contradictions between the way schools are organized and the needs of the young adolescent learners, and offer some suggestions for ways of meeting their needs more effectively.

**Relational needs**

Adolescence is "a period of rapid and uneven physical growth and unsettling emotional development. It is a time when most human beings experiment with the limits of acceptable behaviour and physical risk. Peer pressure is strong. Vulnerability is high."(22) And, at the same time that adults are sensitive to increased vulnerability among adolescents, the young people themselves are seeking increased autonomy.

Acknowledging these realities has led to considerations about ways of providing stability and, at the same time, of challenging students of this age. Some of their identified needs include a strong requirement for positive peer relationships, for caring adult relationships, for opportunities to learn what they do well, and to be recognized for that as part of constructing a positive self-image.

Finally, they need to participate meaningfully in the world around them, including the world of school,
As students move into adolescence, at age 12 or 13, they have to deal with warring feelings. On one hand, they are eager for more autonomy and, on the other, they feel increasingly self-conscious and easily alienated. They seek independence from parents and other adults, and closeness to peers; at the same time, they are anxious for adult approval and disappointed and angry when teachers and other adults fail to appreciate them or are not sensitive to their feelings.

While, at this age, students often yearn for the change and sense of maturity they associate with a large, departmentalized secondary school, there is evidence that such large and relatively impersonal institutions are not in their best interests, academically or socially. Large schools do provide economies of scale in terms of facilities and equipment, but research suggests they are not optimal learning environments for adolescents. For this reason, educators increasingly urge that the size of schools be decreased in order to provide a sense of community, and a peer group that has some constancy.

When existing buildings are large and cannot be replaced within current budgets, as is the case in much of Ontario at present, the preferred strategy is to create what is called a school-within-a-school, a kind of separate house system. Students may take some classes (technology and lab classes, for example) outside their "school" or "house," but take most of their other core classes within their school unit. An ideal school-within-a-school is often described as between 100 and 500 students, with a group of teachers attached to that unit to teach such subjects as language, mathematics, science, and social studies.

In these "houses," and in large, conventional junior-high and secondary schools as well, there are distinct advantages to having each teacher specialize in and teach two subjects, rather than just one, in order to provide greater flexibility.

An additional strategy for creating a sense of community in a French-language school is a well-structured program of "animation culturelle" (activities that develop pride in, and a sense of belonging to, a pluralistic Franco-Ontarian community) integrated into the school curriculum. This is particularly important because students in a French-language school in an English-language culture may feel ambivalent about their linguistic and cultural identity, and are likely to need, and will benefit from, an emphasis on cultural solidarity that creates mutual respect and support among francophone students and between the students and their teachers.

Central to developing community within a Catholic school is the shared spiritual and sacramental tradition of the students and staff. The school is a community of faith, and many Catholic secondary schools have chaplains and pastoral teams who focus the school's energies on liturgical events, retreats, community outreach, social justice projects, and the needs of the students themselves. For many students, these services and activities become an essential part of the school experience, and are frequently vehicles that help them cope with personal and home problems.

Another way of offering some stability and sense of community to students who move from class to class without any constant peer group is to establish a teacher advisory system: each teacher acts as advisor to a group of about 15 students, who meet together often - usually daily.

In a school organized on the rotary system (a different teacher for each subject), which often begins in Grade 6 or 7, teachers may have as many as 250 students on their register, and cannot possibly know all or even most of them individually. While there are certainly advantages to having specialist teachers -
they can offer students more depth and precision in subject areas - it is not surprising that some students feel quite alienated and unnoticed in large, departmentalized schools. This situation is exacerbated by the credit system, which now begins in Grade 10, and replaces the stability of a fairly constant peer group with a different set of students for each subject.

No teacher, however well prepared and hard working, is likely to be successful with students if she does not communicate that they are important to her as individuals as well as learners. In earlier grades, where teachers have responsibility for a single group of students, that can and most often does happen, although it becomes more difficult as the number of students in the class increases.

But when teachers have hundreds of students on their roll, and see them for only 40 or 50 minutes a day - when students spend these brief periods with seven or eight teachers per day - the opportunity for real interpersonal contact and caring is seriously attenuated. At the very time when students most need to develop a relationship of trust with an adult other than a parent, something else is required.

Even in a modified rotary system, sometimes used for Grades 6 to 8, students usually have at least four teachers, and teachers have many more than a hundred students. (The modified rotary, however, has real advantages over full rotary: students can remain together as a group for at least half the day, and it can be seen as a helpful transition between the typical elementary and secondary structures, as they exist at present.)

Advisory or mentor arrangements create a role for teachers, not as either instructor or evaluator, but as advisor and advocate. Ideally, the contact between student and teacher is maintained during their years in the school, giving students and their parents an optimal opportunity to establish a personal and trusting relationship with the advisor.

While some of the advisory group meetings may be brief (a daily ten-minute "check-in" for attendance and announcements), other, longer, regular meetings, usually scheduled once or twice a week, give students an opportunity to discuss issues of concern to them. As well, individual advisor-student meetings occur regularly, to provide an opportunity for student and advisor to share information and concerns, discuss the student's progress, and decide whether the student needs other kinds of support or whether teachers or parents should be involved in any decisions. The advisor functions as co-ordinator of each student's program, collecting necessary information from other teachers, and acting as a contact point with the school for parents.

Even when students have a teacher-advisor and a small advisory group with whom they meet regularly, they still benefit from a unit in which there is a real possibility that they will have face-to-face contact and familiarity with all members of the school community. We suggest that much smaller school units ranging between 100 and 500 students - and teacher advisory programs create optimal learning situations for adolescents.

We want to create contexts that support students and give substance to the rhetoric of "communities of learners." We believe this will happen when there are smaller learning units, such as schools-within-schools, or house systems, that can create stronger bonds between students and students, between students and teachers, and between teachers across disciplines and departments.

**Recommendation 9**

*We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training and the local boards of education provide*
incentives to large middle (and secondary) schools to create smaller learning units, such as schools-within-schools or houses.

In addition to downsizing schools, stronger learning communities can be achieved by creating teacher-advisor relationships for students.

The teacher-advisor program has additional important potential for supporting a stronger, more informed involvement of parents in the education of their adolescents, at a time when youth often do themselves a disservice by trying to exclude parents from that process.

> As an absolute minimum, any serious attempt to reduce the alienation that is a major cause of dropping out must begin by providing every student with an assured and regular relationship with at least one caring adult within the school system.\(^{(24)}\)

**Planning needs**

The need that many, if not all, adolescents have for a more personal relationship with a teacher coincides with what becomes, beginning in Grade 7, a strong need for educational and career guidance. As students enter adolescence and what is traditionally considered middle or junior high school, they become more concerned with their future, and with the choices they are aware must be made, beginning in three years, when the curriculum becomes more specialized.

At this point in their schooling, students will begin thinking in a more focused way about their interests, the subjects they want to pursue, and even the kinds of education, training, or work they might choose after high school. If they have been exposed to a multitude of community settings and work sites, through an active community-based, career-awareness program in their earlier years in school, they will be well prepared to begin this thinking.

Nonetheless, students and their parents need an informed person at school who will talk with them about the various options at the secondary level. The role is one of an educational advisor/career planner.

Beginning in Grade 7, students, parents, and the teacher should be participating in a semi-annual review of the student's overall progress and experience to date, including both academic progress and other learning experiences.

The Ministry of Education and Training has announced that it intends to develop guidelines for a Comprehensive Achievement Profile, a cumulative record of a student's achievements from Grade 7 to Grade 9. We suggest that this document would better be termed a Cumulative Educational Plan (CEP), and be viewed as an essential education- and career-planning tool, to be maintained through Grade 12.

In our view, the process of creating the CEP is at least as important as the final product. The value of such a process is that it demands that teacher, student, and parents regularly review what the student is learning and what opportunities and experiences she is acquiring, so that decisions about courses and futures are made on the basis of reflection and discussion begun years before any hard choices have to be made; this also allows many opportunities for exploring new alternatives.

To be of value, such a process must not be rushed or mechanical. The conversation cannot last for just five minutes, and participants must share a common understanding of its purpose. In order to develop and support this kind of program, teacher-advisors will need guidance from administrators or counsellors, who will have to review the CEPs periodically to ensure that the process is working.
The major purpose of the CEP is not simply to record student history, but to serve as a planning guide in the short and long term. What interests and talents has the student exhibited? What difficulties, if any, need to be addressed so that she can work towards a chosen goal, whether in Grade 8 or later? By the time the student reaches Grade 9, she and her parents will have been through this process four times. Thus, there will be a history of discussions about the student's interests and goals, and all parties will be reasonably prepared to make decisions about the secondary school program.

**Recommendation 10**

*We recommend that, beginning in Grade 7, every student have a Cumulative Education Plan, which includes the student's academic and other learning experiences, is understood to be the major planning tool for the student's secondary and post-secondary education, and is reviewed semi-annually by the student, parents, and by the teacher who has a continuing relationship with and responsibility for that student as long as she or he remains in the school.*

The CEP is part of a stronger student orientation, beginning in the elementary years, to career and self-awareness. It is also part of an emphasis we believe essential: the school's responsibility for continuous and purposeful monitoring of student progress.

It is conceivable that schools may want to merge the CEP conference with the end-of-term meeting with parents; in that case the teacher-advisor would have to be prepared to discuss the student's current marks as well.

We do not expect teacher-advisors to be career counsellors, nor do we intend that students should be completely dependent on subject teachers for career counselling. In Chapter 10 we make recommendations to support both teachers and students in this important area.

**The need for choice, decision-making, and control**

Key determinants of adolescent health may be defined as supportive environments on the one hand, and control over decisions and choices on the other. While adolescent students are likely to benefit from consistency and stability, this is the period when they ask for choice and control. One of the main complaints we heard from these and older students was that they had very little sense of control over their lives at school: decisions are made by others, and they do not feel they are acquiring experience that will equip them for decision-making later on.

Students are not often asked what they think of their program, or their teachers, or whether the school is meeting their needs. When they are asked, their response is generally thoughtful and practical, which suggests that, in addition to giving them satisfaction, consulting the students provides principals and teachers with real input for improving their schools.

Students told us that student councils in many schools are perceived as acting as social conveners only, arranging dances and the like. They added that, as a whole, students do not see council members as representatives of the student body, and hence do not treat them as such. Clearly, if student councils are to represent students and to develop leadership, there must be some preparation for understanding the role of such organizations, not only for those who are elected, but for all students, and perhaps for staff as well.

Even when student councils do provide real leadership and decision-making opportunities, they do so for only a very few students. Most students will not hold office or become sports heroes. In the classroom as
well in a wide variety of co-curricular programs, opportunities can be created for greater student participation and responsibility.

Most students, including those still in elementary school, appreciate the opportunity to make choices among topics and assignments. Even having options among test questions gives students a sense of greater freedom and control. By the time they are in adolescence, students regard the "contract" assignment, which puts control for acquiring, organizing, and presenting information squarely in their hands, as offering them real responsibility - which, with practice, they are probably quite able to fulfil.

Similarly, community-based education and work experiences, such as community service assignments, job-shadowing, and co-operative education, put students in adult-like roles, with significant responsibility and without heavy school-based supervision. The popularity of co-operative education among employers, as well as among students, suggests that most students who take these opportunities do not abuse them.

There are many ways of increasing students' experiences and opportunities for making choices and decisions in what they are learning and how, and in the organization of their schools. The essential component is that teachers and administrators understand the importance of treating students respectfully, as maturing young men and women whose opinions are worthy of consideration, as well as the importance of giving them greater control over the learning and social environment of their schools. Inevitably, a 14-year-old is immature in the eyes of adults; but maturity depends not only on age, but also on practice, and practice depends on being given freedom and responsibility. Students need the support of adults to become adult.

Adolescence is the beginning of the transition to adulthood, and any transition is best made gradually, not abruptly. To expect students to be docile, passive, and dependent until they reach 18 or 19, and then to become mature and self-sufficient the day they graduate is to undermine a smooth passage to adulthood.

We suggest that a very useful planning tool for senior elementary and secondary schools would be to create a checklist of ways students could be involved in decision-making at both the classroom and the school level. Senior students, working with teachers and administrators, could create and field-test such tools, which could be used by student councils and school staff to develop and periodically assess the school's atmosphere in terms of student opportunities and responsibilities.

In the same way that a school uses results of a literacy test to better understand how student needs and curriculum fit, a tool that assesses the school climate can be used to improve the school, and it has the advantage of being one the students can "own" and use. Recommendations concerning the collection of information from students, by students, for the purpose of improving education at the school and board level are made in Chapter 15.

At the end of Grade 9, students must make a choice of which courses they will take the next school year. While this choice is not, and should not be, binding or excessively constraining, it is highly significant. Making the decision, which is the first step away from a common curriculum into a set of options that lead in different directions, is easier if the student and her parents and advisor have been examining and re-examining her interests and achievements since Grade 7, and if she has had significant opportunities - in and outside class - to reflect on her interests and performance, as well as to work in the community and to make decisions that affect her daily life in school.

One of our major goals in this report is to build a system that, from the early years, focuses students on
the connection between themselves and the community of which they are a part, emphasizing work and career as important, not only to their own livelihood but to the role they will eventually play in their community. We want to help students become aware of the connection between what is learned in school and what is used in life so that, by the time they reach the end of the common curriculum, they will have a rich understanding of themselves and their communities on which to base their choice of post-secondary education and work.

In this chapter, we have described what we think is the essential content of and the essential supports in the school and community for a common curriculum - one that ensures that all children and young adolescents have the opportunity to obtain a solid and rich basic education that will equip them for increasing specialization at the secondary and post-secondary level. Our emphasis has been on the young learner, and the curriculum that will meet her growing needs.

In the following section we discuss some aspects of The Common Curriculum about which we heard considerable comment and controversy. These issues include the destreamed Grade 9, learner outcomes as a way of structuring the curriculum, the integration of subjects, and the opportunity for local additions to the common curriculum.

The curriculum as the basis of a learning system through Grade 9

As we explained earlier, a common curriculum from Grades 1 through 9 has recently been defined by the Ministry of Education and Training. This is an attempt to define learning as continuous over the nine years, in place of previous curriculum documents that usually separated primary (Grades 1 to 3) from junior (Grades 4 to 6) and intermediate (Grades 7 to 10). The continuum of learning across subject areas in The Common Curriculum is described by learning outcomes (descriptions of what students will know and be able to do) at the end of Grades 3, 6, and 9. We have recommended that, in addition, such outcomes be prepared for the end of Grade 1, so that the curriculum of Early Childhood Education flows into the curriculum that starts with the beginning of compulsory schooling.

Many people spoke to us about the common curriculum. While we heard little argument about the range of subjects to be covered, there was considerable concern about the specific document, *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9*, its content and format.

*The Common Curriculum* is a departure from previous practice in three major ways:

- It includes Grade 9, based on the decision that, like Grades 1-8, Grade 9 is now non-streamed, and all students follow the same program.
- It describes curriculum in terms of its intended results for the students, rather than in terms of teacher inputs.
- It describes curriculum in four "strands," rather than as more than a dozen separate subjects.

We briefly discuss each of these innovations.

*The inclusion of Grade 9*

The public is divided on the subject of destreaming Grade 9. Those who oppose it and prefer streaming believe that students gain advantages when they are divided on the basis of their prior level of achievement, and are taught in more homogeneous groups. Others support destreaming in Grade 9, and
believe that students will benefit from an additional year of common curriculum before they make a choice about their secondary program, which is, indeed, the purpose of destreaming. It is an attempt to respond to the high drop-out rate among students outside the university-preparatory (advanced level) stream and the fact that certain groups (defined by class and/or race) are under-represented in courses designed to prepare students for university.

We note that research offers little support for the idea that all or most students benefit from streaming in Grade 9, and we accept the idea that postponing specialization until Grade 10 is likely to help more students than not. As well, we are aware that this is the most common type of curriculum organization in Canada.

The focus on learner outcomes

The quantity, quality, and effectiveness of learner outcomes as a way of organizing curriculum

The Common Curriculum outlines what students should learn by the end of Grades 3, 6, and 9, by listing the expected "learner outcomes" in each of four broad, integrated subject areas. The idea of focusing curriculum on what should be learned, rather than what should be taught, makes sense. Schools exist, after all, not to create employment for adults but to ensure education of youth. But neither, it should also be said, do statements about learner outcomes guarantee they will be attained. In other words, they contain no magic, and there is no reason to assume that learning or teaching will change simply because learner outcomes have been written.

Furthermore, while they may be helpful in communicating to teachers, parents, and others (including the students themselves) the sequence of learning that is expected, they may, if improperly or over-used, convey the false impression that all learning is perfectly sequential, which it is not.

While we heard little opposition to the idea of basing curriculum on learner outcomes, we did hear complaints about the quality and quantity of the outcomes specified in The Common Curriculum. Many people found them too numerous and too vague, and insufficiently clear for communicating to students, parents, and teachers the actual and concrete expectations of learners they imply.

While it is certainly dangerous to insist on outcomes that are easily measured, at the expense of highly valued but less easily gauged results, there is little value in statements that do not communicate clearly, to teachers or parents or students, what is intended, or how one would know if the outcome had been achieved. How will parents or teachers be enlightened by the statement that, by the end of Grade 3, students will "recognize the values presented in literature"?

We agree that the outcomes stated in The Common Curriculum are both too numerous and too vague. For example, there are 25 outcomes expected of students by the end of Grade 3 in reading. They range from the fairly specific and concrete ("use such features as the table of contents, index, and glossary to find information") to the very general and non-specific ("use their knowledge and experiences to interpret what they read"), and reflect no particular order or degree of priority and importance.

We believe that if teachers are to check their course plans against a blueprint of essential learning, and if parents are to understand what they can expect their child to be able to read and absorb, they need fewer and clearer guideposts - or, if not fewer, then certainly a presentation in which major outcomes are
grouped, and examples are given. The same is true in all curriculum areas.

Major outcomes should be presented to parents as a fairly brief, descriptive list, which could appear on a report card, to give concrete indicators of a student’s progress so that a "satisfactory" in reading, for example, is broken down to tell the parent something about the particular reading activities and skills the student shows competence in.

While *The Common Curriculum*, revised as of December 1994, tries to address these concerns, it cannot fully succeed. Inevitably, there is a continuing tension between the need for clear, measurable learner outcomes and the need to ensure they are not overwhelmingly detailed and specific. It may be that learner outcomes are best expressed in fairly general terms, and illustrated with very concrete examples, used only as examples, and not meant to be exhaustive. Additional documents, such as standards (at least in foundation subjects) and course descriptions, will certainly be needed by teachers if they are to have sufficient guidance on what they are expected to teach and what students are expected to learn.

By itself, *The Common Curriculum* is insufficient for informing teachers and parents about programs. While it is sensible to make learner outcomes the basis of curriculum design, it is also necessary to indicate what major areas, topics, or skills might be emphasized in an annual program, in a way that is not restrictive, but permissive and helpful in choosing priorities among alternatives.

Teachers want and need some guidance about the elements of a subject to be addressed in order to achieve the learner outcomes described at three-year intervals. To argue backwards: if, by the end of Grade 3, a large number of children are unable to use such features as tables of contents, indices, etc., how will Grade 1, 2, and 3 teachers know how to improve the lessons to meet that target?

What is missing now is a set of curriculum guidelines that describe at least some of the sequences. Without such common guidelines, there is no assurance of consistency in or between schools in what is taught and learned. Curriculum guidelines are frameworks within which specific programs can be elaborated in each school or class. Existing provincial guidelines below the Grade 10 level are not congruent with *The Common Curriculum* and must be redesigned. This is not necessarily a long and arduous process; existing materials may be adaptable. But some work is necessary at once, to give teachers and parents some guidance, support, and reassurance.

We believe the Ministry of Education and Training should support the development of updated course guidelines based on the learning outcomes of *The Common Curriculum*, which will help teachers understand what they are expected to teach and what students are expected to learn each year. Such documents should encourage continuity from year to year, and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort at both the planning and delivery levels, and should help to create consistency both vertically (from Grades 1 to 9) and horizontally (within and across schools and boards).

The course guidelines must not be overly specific: if content is too closely prescribed, programs can become rigid, and teachers forced into a passive mode: as their opportunity to exercise professional judgement is eroded, their commitment to excellence is weakened. Guidelines that are appropriate and not overly detailed will encourage consistency without creating stultifying rigidity and an overwhelming concern for "covering" the curriculum that overrides the teacher's judgment about what students are learning, and how well they are learning it.

While teachers do not need a detailed user manual for each course, it should not be necessary for each teacher to invent her own course guideline. Instead, she should be free to supplement the basic guidelines
by selecting unit topics or modules (detailed examples of which, in menu form, should be available as curriculum support documents or within the guidelines, as examples and appendices). The teacher's job is not to write curriculum, but to decide how best to present it, based on available resources and on her knowledge of the students' interests and prior achievements.

Parents (and students) also need course descriptions, in order to understand what is expected. These descriptions should be brief, but convey enough information to give parents a picture of what their children will be learning, and so that older students beyond the primary years - have an overview of the course. (Even quite young students can use a look at the year's plan as a very good example of preparing and organizing for learning.)

For example, this excerpt from a Grade 3 guideline called a "core knowledge sequence" describes the music component of the curriculum, Grades 1-3:

*In the first grade, students were introduced to three parts of music: melody, rhythm, and harmony. In the second grade, students studied melody in depth; in the third grade, they will study rhythm; and in the fourth grade, harmony. Students will also identify more of the musical instruments and their sounds. Children begin learning to read notes.*

An individual Grade 3 teacher might add some detail - for example, the instruments children will have a chance to play, the fact that they will learn songs from several countries and cultural traditions, and a list of appropriate stories and books about music and musicians they could read with their parents. This level of information would tell parents what their children are learning in music in a way that encourages parental conversation and involvement in the child's learning experience.

If parents and the general public can gain easy access to course descriptions that have clear learner outcomes, they can understand concretely what students are supposed to learn. Assessment in foundation skills, based on clearly stated standards, will tell them how well those areas are being learned. Public systems depend on public support, which, in turn, depends on public information. And it is much easier for parents to support and monitor a child's progress if they have a map. These will give teachers and parents a clear idea of the basic structure of each year's course or subject, and should include suggestions to parents for supporting their children's learning.

One important element, traditionally missing from curriculum guidelines, is a group of suggestions to teachers on helping parents enhance the work of the school. One reason many parents feel so frustrated about dealing with their child's school is that, when they ask how they can help their child at home, they may be told not to worry, because their child is doing well suggesting that parents are superfluous to their child's learning and growth.

Parents should have a way of connecting to the child's school life, and should be encouraged to show interest. Parents' desire to help should be welcomed, not discouraged. Teachers must appreciate the value, for children, of the connection between home and school - an emotional value that has strong consequences for academic success.

If conventional curriculum guidelines have sorely neglected the home-school link part of the curriculum, so have courses designed to prepare teachers for their profession. Teachers need specific examples linked to specific curriculum pieces, so that they can give parents concrete, positive suggestions on what they can do at home as particular projects or topics are being covered at school. We suggest that course guidelines for teachers include suggested summaries for parents and students, which teachers can
distribute (with any additions they wish to make) early in the year, at a first parents' meeting or another suitable occasion.

For example, using the description of the Grade 3 music curriculum above, teachers could include suggestions to parents for listening to music with their children, could suggest some children's music tapes available at libraries (including the school library) and book and music stores, could mention music-related television programs that parents could watch with children, could describe some simple rhythm and harmony games and tunes to play and sing together, and so forth.

**Recommendation 11**

*We recommend that curriculum guidelines be developed in each subject taught within the common curriculum, to assist teachers in designing programs that will help students achieve the learning outcomes in The Common Curriculum. These guidelines should include concrete suggestions on how teachers can share with parents ways to help their children at home.*

**Outcomes and time**

Perhaps the single most significant rationale for serious attention to learner outcomes is that, if they are clear and precise, they can be far superior as an indicator of learning to amount of instructional time devoted to a subject. What is important about the elementary science curriculum, for example, is that, from it, students learn to recognize and understand certain natural processes and ways of asking questions scientifically - not that they have attended school 180 days in the year and been exposed to an average of 20 minutes per day of science instruction. Of course, without instruction and exposure they are very unlikely to learn; but exposure by itself is no guarantee of learning and, in fact, some very productive exposure that results in learning may happen outside the classroom.

Focusing on learner outcomes makes it possible to abandon the strict number of days or hours as a measure of "product" and allow for the reality that people learn at different rates. Then the teacher's and the school's commitment must be to monitor individual understanding and achievement very regularly, allowing those students who need it more time for learning; this can be done through additional tutoring and practice time during the school day or by making use of time during the summer.

By insisting that all students learn material within a set time, usually one school year, we have created a whole category of students who are seen as handicapped. Sometimes they are called slow learners, a term that is sometimes confused with learning disabilities. And we have tried, usually with little success, to create different, often separate, learning programs for each of these groups. Learning outcomes offer an alternative approach, one that suggests that learners differ, not categorically but along a continuum according to rate of learning, and that these rates vary by subject matter. A person may learn mathematics slowly but learn French at an above-average rate. Another person may be slower than average in all or almost all subject areas, but be quite capable of attaining the target outcomes if given more time to do so.

Making time a variable rather than a constant is most important when students are acquiring the foundation skills on which their future learning depends. If these are solidly acquired, students will be able to apply themselves to such subjects as literature, history, mathematics, and geography with some confidence. While learning rates will continue to vary, we would expect that students whose rate of learning is much slower than average would, with solid foundation skills, move closer to the average.
While it is essential to allow for variability in learning rate, it is also true that there is and will be a range of achievement. Thus, for example, some students will receive a higher mark than others, but everyone in the range may be performing at an acceptable level, with the highest achievers showing more than adequate mastery. The standards being developed in language and mathematics by the Ministry of Education and Training reflect that range, by describing several "standards of performance" for each major area of the curriculum. In mathematics, there are four standards or levels of performance, called "limited," "adequate," "proficient," and "superior"; students are expected to reach either the "adequate" or the "proficient" level.

If there was more flexibility in learning time, we could expect the range in performance to narrow to the degree that achievement at the "limited" level would drop to a very small percentage of students; some students would take longer to achieve at an "adequate" level; and those who were achieving at the "proficient" and "superior" levels would move more quickly through the curriculum.

Many of the more traditional strategies for attempting to help slower learners have been largely unsuccessful. Repeating a grade, for example, is rarely associated with greater academic success; most often, students who do so do not seem to benefit after the second year, and are again at the bottom of their class, unable to keep up. Eventually they swell the ranks of the high-school drop-out population. (27) If a student has learned some, but not all, of what classmates have shown they understand, she does not need to be put back to the beginning, but needs help at the place she has reached.

Rather than putting her in a different program with a different and less challenging curriculum, where she has no chance of completing the same work as her peers, her best chances for success will probably come from being in that same program, with support and assistance, so that she can move with them. In some cases, additional catch-up time can be made available during the summer.

In a few schools, for example, all courses are broken into small units, meant to last ten months (one school year) for most students, but flexible enough to be compressed for students who can move faster, or to stretch longer (14 months) for slower learners or for learners who are slower in a particular subject area. Evaluation is frequent, as are reports to parents. It should be noted that schools organized that way are offering this level of individualization, monitoring, and reporting to all their students, not just to a few slower learners.

Another aspect of helping students learn more quickly has to do with lessening the likelihood they will forget what they have learned. Schedules that shorten the long summer break - whether they are year-round with month-long breaks twice a year, or extended school years in which students attend school 200 or 210 instead of 185 days - may have a significant impact, especially for young learners. There is some evidence that the long summer break is counter-productive for students who are already disadvantaged in terms of school achievement. (28) Some studies suggest that the "summer forgetting" phenomenon, which affects few advantaged but many disadvantaged students, might, by itself, account for much of the widening gap between the two groups in the later elementary years and beyond. (29) Some summer programs have been implemented, such as the summer book-by-mail program in some downtown Toronto schools, which showed success in eliminating or narrowing the summer learning gap. While year-round schools are most often recommended as a way of avoiding the need to build new schools to accommodate growing enrolments (and, therefore, to save money), it is important to point out
that the year-round school has positive implications for learning, particularly for disadvantaged students, and that this is particularly true in the early years, when students are acquiring foundation skills. For this reason, we suggest that in some circumstances the idea of year-round schools and/or extended school-year calendars should be given careful consideration.

Recommendation 12

"We recommend that the Minister of Education and Training amend the regulations to enable school boards to extend the length of the school day and/or school year.

For students who can move more quickly through one or several subjects, we recommend that exams similar to the challenge exams at the secondary level (see Chapter 9) should be available. A student who shows, on such an exam, that she is ready to move ahead to the next level should be helped to do so, whether or not the eventual result is acceleration (skipping a grade).

Recommendation 13

"We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training work with curriculum and learning specialists to develop strategies (based on sound theory and practice and enriched with detailed examples) for providing more flexibility in the amount of time available to students for mastering curriculum.

Schools that want to move ahead on implementing aspects of these more flexible systems should receive incentives and be supported throughout the process; field-based monitoring and evaluation must be built in; and information on the process and the results should be quickly communicated to educators and the public, using electronic as well as other media for sharing and discussing the work as it progresses.

Curriculum integration

The Common Curriculum presents subjects as clustered, or integrated, into four strands: language; the arts; mathematics, science, and technology; and self and society. So, the learner outcomes for history, for example, are embedded in the area called "Self and Society," which also includes outcomes pertaining to geography, family and business studies, physical and health education, and other subjects.

There is little research on curriculum integration, especially with regard to its potential for improving achievement or mastery. The notion of curriculum integration derives from the fact that, outside of formal education, most learning is integrated; therefore, it is both a more natural and a more attractive way to learn. Nonetheless, we cannot assume, in the absence of research, that curriculum integration will prove to be more effective as a way of presenting information to students than the more conventional delivery of discrete subjects.

It is certainly true that a more integrated, less fragmented, curriculum was a hallmark of some of the schools that most impressed us as engaging their students in the learning process. The argument can be made that the more life-like the model for learning presented in school, the greater the likelihood that students will transfer the habit of learning to the rest of life. Students may find learning by topic (e.g., a unit on fish and fishing that includes science, math, and technology) more interesting and motivating than learning in discrete subject/disciplines (although there is the risk they will not realize that, while learning about fishing, they learned some biology, some geometry, and some environmental science, and will not be able to reassure their parents when asked what they are learning!).
Another logical argument in favour of integrated curriculum is that it organizes a disparate and extensive menu of courses into some reasonable framework; this makes it more coherent for both teachers and learners, and addresses, to a significant extent, the curriculum overload problem.

Finally, and perhaps most important, integration of subjects may promote, in teaching and learning, the practice of bringing together - synthesizing - different kinds of information when working on a problem. Being able to transfer knowledge, understanding, and skills from one situation to another is a very critical component of learning. At the simplest level, it makes the difference between being able or unable to learn from experience, and without it learners are severely handicapped. At a more complex level, where most learners function, it marks the difference between a basic and a more-than-basic level of understanding. The reader who can apply and transfer generalized knowledge from one situation to another is the level 4 or 5 reader (the "proficient" or "superior" one), rather than the level 3 reader (who is only "competent" or "adequate"). It is this latter standard of literacy that is too often not attained by our students.

Integration of subjects certainly does not guarantee this greater level of understanding, and is not essential to it; but integration may help promote teaching for the higher levels of understanding that should be the heart of the repertoire of all learners.

The primary integration is of learning and life, the problem of compartmentalization of learning is a subset of the bigger problem of learning not being meaningful to the learner. Whether or not students integrate their learning in biology with their learning in literature is a good question. Whether they integrate their learnings in these areas with their daily thought and action and view of the world is a much more critical question. The focus of all our integrative efforts, therefore, must be the students themselves.(30)

Curriculum integration is intuitively appealing, and it has significant potential for making school-based learning more coherent; therefore, while we would like to see it supported throughout the common curriculum and beyond, we recognize substantial structural barriers to its implementation, in addition to the need for more and longer-term evaluation of its results. For one thing, it is not supported by universities when they pressure secondary schools to prepare students for the disciplines the universities recognize and teach - a pressure that is very effective in shaping secondary school curriculum.

As well, an integrated curriculum does not guarantee that teachers will teach the essential skills of each subject logically and cumulatively if there is no specific plan for doing so - if, for example, mathematics is entirely embedded in, and determined by, science and technology projects.

Because we are concerned about the potential dangers of losing a comprehensive and sequential view of learning in fundamental and core subjects, we have recommended that written standards be developed by subject in the foundation areas.

While the task of developing integrated curriculum that does justice to the various subjects is not impossible, it is not familiar or easy, and requires considerable expertise. A very real concern about integrated curriculum is that it takes considerable time, as well as expertise, to design it in such a way that it is not superficial and does not inadvertently omit crucial components in the development of bodies of knowledge.

Integrated studies can degenerate into theme work and topics which contain no real challenge and involve students copying copiously from resource books... Effective
integration is secured according to agreed-upon high-level principles which bring different subjects together... Discussion about, agreement upon, and planning around key skills, concepts and attitudes at the school and district level is exceptionally important in achieving effective integrated studies. (31)

While a great deal of extremely valuable professional development may occur when teachers in a school work together to build an intelligent and thoroughly integrated curriculum, it is unrealistic to expect that the time necessary for this process is available in many or most schools. In order to integrate subjects, teachers need an extensive menu of topics or themes keyed to the learner outcomes in the subjects to be integrated, sequenced appropriately. They need an abundance of good examples on which to draw. Otherwise, the amount of planning necessary for this kind of teaching will seem overwhelming, and a disincentive to trying.

Because we believe the teaching and learning of the common curriculum will be enhanced by the availability of many concrete examples of integrated curricula in the four "strands," at a variety of grade levels, we suggest that the Ministry of Education and Training, with the help of teachers and others with curriculum-writing expertise, create a "menu" of examples of integrated curricula keyed to the learner objectives of the common curriculum.

Inclusiveness of The Common Curriculum

As mentioned earlier, educators and the public assume that The Common Curriculum describes all the subjects and learning outcomes that are expected to be included in school from Grades 1 through 9. And many educators and members of the public fear there isn't enough time in the day to cover what is described. We have argued that time and crowding are not the main issues, but that focus and clarity of purpose are.

We also believe that there should be room for local options within the curriculum of a school. We recognize the importance of local priorities - schools and communities with an interest in seeing young people become more involved in environmental issues, or in community service; the desire to ensure that students have more understanding of, and exposure to, local government or to local artists and writers; a school being distinguished by the special emphasis it puts on science or computers or Native studies. Such local priorities can be addressed by allowing up to 10 percent of school time (the equivalent of one half-day per week, or one full day biweekly) to be devoted to subjects that are outside of, or represent an expansion of, the common curriculum.

The local option component would be part of the school's program, subject to the same guidelines regarding curriculum and monitoring as any other part. It would be necessary for the Ministry of Education and Training to provide criteria of acceptability; local proposals would have to conform to these in order to be approved by the Ministry. But the idea is to enable school communities to be able to articulate their own special interests on behalf of their youth, in a partnership between parents and educators.

Recommendation 14

*We recommend that local schools and boards be allowed to develop and offer programs in addition to those in The Common Curriculum, as long as those options meet provincially developed criteria, and as long as at least 90 percent of instructional time is devoted to the common curriculum for Grades 1 to 9.
Endnotes (Chapter 8)


27. For a recent summary of this research, see P.R. Madak, "Grade Retention," Canadian School Executive 14, no. 1 (1994): 24-26.


ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
©Copyright 1994, Queens Printer for Ontario
For the Love of Learning

Volume II: Learning - Our Vision for Schools

Chapter 9: The Learner from Age 15 to 18: Further Education and Specialization Years

It is our hope and expectation that, were the kind of system we have described in place for young learners, the more specialized program, beginning in Grade 10, would rest on a very solid foundation of learning skills, subject matter, knowledge of community and self, and on exposure to a large number of work settings. By the end of Grade 9, students would be ready and eager to commit themselves to some specialization, with a view to a post-secondary career; education from Grade 10 on would be a mixture of further general education and opportunities for specialization, and would help students make choices based on their sense of future possibilities.

In the preceding chapters we have been building a learning system that begins between the ages of 3 and 6, and continues from age 6 to 15, using a single curriculum that occupies at least 90 percent of all students' school time. We have emphasized what we call literacies, defined as the ability to read, write, reason, and think intelligently across a wide variety of subject areas.

We have also placed a high value on a learning system that is focused, purposeful, challenging, and intellectually rewarding. We have defined what we think are the foundation skills, which should be strongly emphasized in the early years of the common curriculum, especially from Grades 1 to 6. We have suggested a curriculum that is centrally developed, and detailed enough to provide consistency across schools and teachers without overly constraining the teachers and the communities they serve.

As well, we have described and recommended ways of assuring that students are well looked after individually, and that their progress is regularly monitored over time. We have urged that, from the time students enter adolescence, they, their teachers, and parents pay serious attention to academic and experiential preparation for post-secondary education and for work. We believe that, were such a system in place, students would be further advanced at an earlier age than is now the case: that a Grade 7 student in such a system would have the skills and knowledge more closely associated with today's Grade 9 student.

The same emphasis on essential literacies, on challenge and rigor, and on coherent programming, must inform students' education after the common core curriculum years. As well, the concern we have expressed about support for students' personal, social, and educational/career planning in early adolescence is as much of an issue in the student's later years. Smaller school units, teacher-advisors, and support from career education specialists are important to 15- to 18-year-olds as well as to youngsters of 12 to 14, and we envision a system in which all adolescents find their education organized with these concerns in mind, as well as the concern for their development as responsible decision-makers, with a strong voice and choice in matters that directly concern them.
We envision a school that, from Grade 10 on, encourages specialization by interest, but does not separate students into disparate groups. It permits considerable flexibility, while depending on small school units and teacher advisory groups to give students a sense of belonging and of a peer group.

While we are satisfied that our argument for this kind of schooling is logical - that a more focused, challenging, supportive, and common educational experience through Grade 9 will prepare students for a greater degree of specialization, combined with a solid core of general education at a higher level - we have no illusion that such a restructured secondary system will satisfy everyone.

There is, after all, no part of the educational system more fraught with controversy and disagreement about purpose and structure than the secondary curriculum. It has always been thus - and not only in Ontario: the same issues about the nature of post-elementary education are debated everywhere. A move to earlier specialization is applauded by some, but heartily rejected by others, who see quality and equality in a common core of courses to be taken by all students. On the other hand, specifying a large number of required courses for all students is resisted by students who want more choice, and by those who feel that students' interests and talents differ too much for them to be bound to a common curriculum.

In addition to disagreements about specialization and choice versus general education and a common course of study, there is the ever-present controversy about the necessity of providing different types of courses, streams, or programs in response to the varying levels of achievement, ability, or motivation that characterize any large group of students, and meeting the needs of both university-bound and other students.

As a group, we Commissioners are a microcosm of the diversity of public opinion and the desire to satisfy several different and sometimes conflicting agendas for students who are 15 or 16 and older. Our plan, which is a real compromise between the general and the specialized, and between a common core and the need to accommodate differences, is necessarily complex, and will inevitably leave many educators and lay persons dissatisfied, either because it does not wholly endorse the option they prefer or because it is less simple, less clear, and less well-defined than they hoped.

We do not apologize for the fact that it is a mixed, not a pure, solution. We believe that a system that attempts to accommodate the tensions within itself - however uneasily - is better than one that ignores those tensions. That it is complex cannot be helped: compromise based on honouring diverse, legitimate intentions and preferences does not result in simple solutions.

We freely admit that it will depend on others for more definition and clarification, and we acknowledge the inadequacy of both the time frame under which we have operated and the very significant technical expertise required to implement new programs in the specialized area of curriculum design and organization.

If the concept of secondary education that we are offering finds significant public support, its successful development and delivery will depend in very large measure on the technical skill and the good will of curriculum planners and professional educators.

In the following pages, we will first describe the existing organization of secondary education, and then offer a series of recommendations on its reform, aimed at creating a system that is more equitable and more successful for more students. We will make some suggestions concerning the content as well as the
organization of curriculum. Finally, we will talk about the transition between school and post-secondary life as a complex one, one that is not always direct or unidirectional, and suggest ways of strengthening the transition for both young and adult learners.

The current context of secondary education in Ontario

In the 1980s, after extensive debate and consultation and after several secondary education reform committees had been appointed to respond to public concern about a program that was seen as too loosely structured and choice-driven, the Ministry decided that much of the secondary curriculum would be mandatory and uniform for all students. It replaced a "cafeteria style" curriculum menu that had been created, a decade or so earlier, as a reaction to the belief that the existing program was excessively rigid and restrictive. This is a perfect example of the cyclical nature of action and reaction that underlies so much educational reform.

The document that resulted from all the work of the early '80s is called OSIS (Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior). It defines secondary school de facto as four to five years, beginning after Grade 8. The curriculum is defined by credits, with every course credit being earned through 110 hours of in-school work (except for co-operative education credits, which are a combination of in-school and work-site hours). Thirty credits are required for graduation with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD); of these, 16 are specified and the other 14 chosen from a range of options.

If students complete most of the 16 specified credits in their first two years (eight per year), as teachers and counsellors have generally encouraged them to, they can choose many of their courses in the final two to three years. While it is quite possible for students to graduate in four years - the OSIS plan intended that - most students who complete the OSSD still take longer to do so, i.e., four and a half to five years.

In some cases, this is because students are working part-time or are repeating courses they have failed or in which they want to improve their mark (only the higher mark is entered on the record). In other cases, students complete more than 30 credits before they leave high school because they wish to pursue different interests; those who are going on to university want to accumulate high marks in the courses that are most important for admission, and take the Ontario Academic Courses (OACs) until they have the required minimum (six), with high marks in each.

Under OSIS, almost all courses are streamed - that is, offered at three levels of difficulty: as advanced (the university-qualifying courses), general, and basic. (The OACs are the exception: by definition, these university-qualifying courses are offered only at the advanced level.)

The purpose is to give all students the same choice of subjects and opportunity for success at whichever of the three levels of difficulty is suited to their ability and prior achievement. While one might expect an even distribution of students among the three levels, that is not what happens: because two-thirds of students entering secondary school want to go to university, they therefore choose all or almost all their courses at the advanced level, obviously because these are the only ones accepted by universities. Only about one in three who follow this sequence from Grade 9 to graduation actually enter university (because of the limited number of university spaces); some go to college, others to different kinds of private post-secondary training or directly to work. About 88 percent of students who begin Grade 9 in advanced-level courses complete their OSSD, although some switch and take some or almost all their
courses at the general level before they graduate.

Just over one in four students begin Grade 9 taking general-level courses, and another 5 percent take mainly basic-level courses. In both categories there is an over-representation of children of working-class parents, while the children of professional and managerial parents are under-represented. (Many students in basic-level courses have not graduated from Grade 8, and have been transferred rather than promoted to secondary school.)

The non-completion (drop-out) rate for students from general level courses is 58 percent, and for those from basic-level courses it is 65 percent - about six times higher than for those in advanced level. The difference in both selection and retention rates makes it clear that the three levels are not equally appealing or equally satisfying. There is general agreement that one cause of the high drop-out rate among those enrolled in general- and basic-level courses is that they recognize that these courses do not lead anywhere.

Unlike the high achievement in advanced-level courses, the exclusive route to university, excellent performance in the other two levels guarantees nothing. They are not an exclusive route to college: colleges can, and often do, admit students who have completed the advanced-level/OAC course but whose marks were not high enough to qualify them for university.

Only one in ten students who begin Grade 9 taking mainly general level courses enrol in a post-secondary program in community college; therefore, the students in this broad category cannot be encouraged to remain in school by holding out the possibility of a college or university destination as the incentive. Opportunities for strengthening the connection between career opportunities and secondary school programs must be enhanced.\(^1\)

Aside from university and college, there are very few post-secondary destinations or training programs to which students can go. Ontario has very few apprenticeship places, and no tradition of employers hiring inexperienced workers, intending to make a substantial investment in their training.

In fact, the only clear destination for secondary students who want one is university: only the advanced-level/OAC/university path is a clear, if highly competitive, one. The confused and confusing mandate of the colleges is part of the larger issue of unclear paths and lack of purpose confronting students who do not choose advanced-level courses.

Figure 1 shows that, while 29 percent of students taking mainly advanced-level courses went to college, only 12 percent of those taking general-level, and 2 percent of those taking basic-level, courses did. Moreover, of the advanced-level students, the only ones who can reach university, 37 percent did.\(^2\)

Thus advanced-level students not only have a unique option (which they may or may not reach, but which only they can aim for), they also are much more likely to be accepted into college. Put another way, and adjusting for the high drop-out rates of students in basic- and general-level courses, the chances of high school graduates within each stream going directly to post-secondary education (college, for those taking general- and basic-level courses, college or university for those taking advanced courses) are about 1 in 17.5 for students graduating with basic-level courses; 1 in 3.5 for graduates of the general
level; and 1 in 1.3 for advanced-level course graduates. In terms of post-secondary education, there is no question about a differential pay-off for the high school diploma, based on course level, or stream.

It is clear to us that students in advanced-level courses have a double advantage: they are being uniquely qualified to apply to university, and are more likely to be accepted into college. Conversely, students in the other two programs have a double disadvantage, and it is out of respect and concern for them that we believe the college mandate should be re-examined and clarified.

Clearly, the organization of the curriculum according to three levels of difficulty, as set out in OSIS, was unsuccessful in providing a meaningful or equal route to post-secondary education and work for most students. It does sort students more or less effectively as far as university admission is concerned, but it clearly fails to provide most students who will not be going to university with feasible alternatives. One result of this situation - although not the only one - is the dramatically different drop-out rates between advanced-level students and those in the other two programs.

The efforts of some colleges in recent years to increase accessibility to a variety of groups must be acknowledged. One of the issues that must be considered as well is the literacy and numeracy levels of students who have completed general- and basic-level programs. Space providing, the likelihood of more of these students gaining admission to colleges would increase if they had the skills to cope with an increasingly demanding program.

**Recommendation 15**

*We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training review community college education - its mandate, funding, coherence, and how it fits into the system of education in Ontario, including clarification of access routes from secondary school to college, and with special attention being paid to students who are not university bound.*

As well, colleges should be encouraged to implement appropriate recommendations from Vision 2000, the key directions document that resulted from a provincial consultation in 1988 and 1989.

In the second half of the last decade, educators and the public began to question the high school drop-out rate, and to look for ways of lowering it; that rate has become the source of considerable debate, and has driven attempts at reform, such as the destreamed Grade 9, and reactions against such attempts. The four-to five-year drop-out rate (the percentage of students who begin Grade 9 and do not have a diploma four to five years later) is currently estimated at between 18 and 30 percent, depending on the way it is calculated. The most current source we know suggests that it is indeed 30 percent, although one-third of those drop-outs eventually earn a diploma, giving a net drop-out rate of 20 percent. This means that one in five students who begin the secondary program never earn the secondary school diploma.

Compared to the past and to other countries, this drop-out rate is not high: it is far lower than it has ever been, in fact, and represents a real and substantial success story. Over the past century, the definition of an adequate general education for all students has expanded from an elementary education to one that encompasses secondary school. It is only in the last 50 years or so that society has assumed that all students ought to earn a high school diploma; until recently, we acted on the belief that a Grade 8 - and, later, a Grade 10 general education - was sufficient for all but the university-bound.

As recently as the 1950s, it was expected that most students would leave school after Grade 10, and indeed drop-outs were a majority, not a minority, in those days. To a large extent, that attitude still
prevails in many countries outside North America, where the drop-out rate is much higher, but where, in many cases, those not bound for university move into apprenticeship training that may include some continuing general education. It is only in comparison to the United States (and, now, Japan) that our drop-out rate is high.

Whether or not educating four out of five young Ontarians to the level of the secondary diploma is adequate is a matter of values. Increasingly, people have come to think of the diploma as a kind of rite of passage and a basic document of full citizenship - but it certainly has not always been so.

Because we tend to equate education with schooling, to a greater degree than may be true in some other countries, there is significant stigma attached to the lack of the diploma.

As well, because we (like the Americans) have never developed a strong apprenticeship system that brings together the education and training systems, we treat young people who leave school as being on their own when it comes to finding employment; that being so, we are reluctant to see them leave at age 16 or 17, without earning a diploma, knowing how difficult it will be for them to find living-wage jobs that offer opportunities for growth and advancement over time.

But it is very important to appreciate that the drop-out rate is by no means uniform or uniformly low across groups. In a heterogeneous society like ours, non-completion rates reflect the same problems of inequity as does streaming students in secondary school. Drop-outs, including students taking general- and basic-level courses (who, as we have seen, make up far more than their fair share of drop-outs) are much more likely than advanced-course students or graduates to come from lower-income homes, to be the children of parents who have relatively little formal education or who are recent immigrants, to come from single-parent homes, and to come from certain racial and linguistic groups - aboriginals, blacks, and Portuguese, among them.

In fact, a 25-year longitudinal study of students in Toronto shows that the drop-out rate among the children of working-class and poor people is double that of children from better-off families: two-thirds of the working-class and poor children drop out, compared to one-third of those from better-off families.\(^4\)

It was in response to these inequities, more than to the total number of drop-outs, that in 1987 George Radwanski recommended that all secondary students enrol in the same courses - that there be just one level of difficulty, or stream.\(^5\) His argument rests on the historically accurate observation that, as long as there are different streams, students from less advantaged circumstances, or students who are handicapped by unfair assumptions and social and racial bias, will always be disproportionately represented in the least demanding courses, and will obtain a lower quality and quantity of formal education, to their long-term economic and social disadvantage.

He offers abundant evidence to show that these disparities are not primarily related to differences in students' ability to learn, but to such non-academic factors as family income and parental education level. (The 25-year longitudinal study also found that the stream or level in which the student was placed bore more relation to that student's subsequent academic success, or lack thereof, than did measured intelligence or elementary school marks.\(^6\)

In response to the points in the Radwanski report and to other similar arguments, the Ministry of Education began to seriously consider destreaming high schools. But it was clear they would not accept
Radwanski's recommendation "that the current policy of streaming high school students into academic, general, and basic courses of study be abolished, and replaced by provision of a single and undifferentiated high-quality educational stream for all students." Instead, the Ministry indicated an interest in the possible destreaming of the first and second years of secondary school, Grades 9 and 10. This division fitted the existing pattern of curriculum guidelines, which defined Grades 7 through 10 as the intermediate division, and 11 to OAC as the senior division.

It would also bring Ontario into line with other Canadian provinces, most of which begin streaming students after Grade 9. (British Columbia and Quebec begin doing so after Grade 10.)

The recommendation brought a negative response from many secondary teachers, from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), from many secondary students, from the Ontario Secondary School Students Association, from much of the university community, and from many parents of students in the advanced-level stream. The teachers took the position that homogeneous grouping was bound to be a disadvantage to both the most and the least able students; although our understanding of the research is that it does not support that position, many teachers continue to adhere to it. Like the teachers, many parents of students who were or would be in the advanced programs felt that their children would be at a disadvantage and "held back" in more heterogeneous classes. There was also some opposition from a much smaller number of parents of children who were in basic-level vocational schools that, the parents considered, were offering their children a coherent alternative.

In the face of this opposition, the Ministry proceeded with the destreaming of Grade 9 only, and gave schools three school years, from September 1993 to June 1996, to complete this change. By the time we held public hearings, and throughout the lifetime of this Commission, considerable opposition to destreaming continued to be heard, but response was mixed, and there were an increasing number of reports about schools and teachers who felt they were making a success of the destreamed Grade 9 program.

In 1993, when schools began implementing Grade 9 destreaming, they had a new curriculum outline to follow. In what is referred to as the "destreaming" and "decrediting" of Grade 9, the Ministry of Education and Training, through *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9*, made Grade 9 part of the common curriculum. No distinction is made between the curriculum of Grade 9 and Grades 7 or 8; the learner outcomes that define the core curriculum are aggregated in three-year groups, and stated in terms of the final year: "By the end of Grade 6" and "By the end of Grade 9," students will have achieved certain results. Thus, Grades 7 to 9 are treated as a three-year block, in terms of common curriculum and learner outcomes.

By including Grade 9, *The Common Curriculum* left the remaining school years undefined. Because of the lack of new directions, schools and teachers are operating under the old rules (although some interim decisions had to be made for the students who are in Grade 10 in 1994-95).

In fact, the Ministry of Education and Training had begun the process of re-examining the secondary school curriculum before *The Common Curriculum* document was published; it abandoned the process when the Royal Commission on Learning was established, making secondary school restructuring, by default, part of our work.

The process of consultation begun by the Ministry focused on a number of issues, including the status of Grade 10 (credits and streams or neither); the definition of a credit and use of fractional credits; school
size; retaining students in school; life skills and social issues in the curriculum; career planning; curriculum guidelines; learner outcomes; and others. Equity issues were also a focus, as well as the education of adult and immigrant students. Information is available on responses to the consultation, most of which came from educators, but no action has been taken on any of these matters.

Therefore, while *The Common Curriculum* has redefined the elementary curriculum over the past two years, that has not happened in relation to the secondary curriculum (which now begins in Grade 10). For that reason, we propose a number of significant changes to the way the curriculum that follows the common curriculum is organized; we call it the specialized curriculum. Because we see curriculum as a continuum, rather than as a dichotomy, instead of referring to an elementary and a secondary curriculum, we prefer to think in terms of a common core curriculum from Grades 1 to 9 (which includes some options for local specialization) and a specialized curriculum after Grade 9, which nonetheless has considerable room for common courses.

Based on careful consideration of what we heard and have read about change in general and destreaming in particular, we have decided not to recommend the extension of the common curriculum to the end of Grade 10, as has often been proposed. We note that many educators have found the decision to destream Grade 9 traumatic, and they told us they feel beleaguered by the pace of educational change and reform in the last decade: they have not had time to implement one change before another is upon them. We are convinced, both by what we have read and by what some teachers and principals told us, that a common core curriculum could be offered through Grade 10, as is done in British Columbia and Quebec, but do not recommend that it be done in Ontario at present.

### Suggestions for reorganizing the secondary school

#### The Duration

The most common form of school organization in Europe, Asia, and most of North America involves six years of elementary school, three of middle school, and three years of secondary school. Most students complete their final year of school in the year they turn 18; by contrast, students in Ontario have four years of secondary school after Grade 9, and most are 19 when they graduate. While the government has long intended to reduce secondary school by one year, to bring Ontario's structure into line with almost all other Canadian provinces and most other jurisdictions, the majority of our students take a half to a full year longer to graduate. Fewer than four in ten finish in four years, according to recent data. Most typically, university-bound students studying their OACs (Ontario Academic Credits, taken in the final one to two years of secondary school, and required for university admission in Ontario) prolong their graduation in order to repeat courses and raise their average. Even students who would like to finish in four years are sometimes thwarted by inflexible timetables, while others simply wish to take additional courses in which they are interested.

In principle, the Commission is committed to the idea that some students will take longer than others to complete a course, and that this kind of variability is preferable to the alternatives, which include lowering standards or punishing students with non-productive solutions such as repeating a grade; or, at the other end, forcing them to move more slowly than they are able.

But we are conscious that no other jurisdiction in Canada, and few anywhere in the world, allocate more than three years to secondary education, or more than twelve years to the compulsory education system.
There is no evidence that the result is superior performance in university, as compared to students who spend only four in secondary school.

We concur with earlier commissions that have recommended that the fifth year of secondary education, or of education after Grade 8, be eliminated in Ontario, and that, starting in Grade 10, the program be defined as being three years in duration, regardless of the student's post-secondary destination, with the understanding that students may remain in school until they receive their diploma.

Having said that, we wish to discourage this practice, and reduce public expense by capping the number of course credits that can be obtained before automatic graduation, to ensure that the specialized curriculum is completed in three years. Thus we are recommending that a maximum number of credits (including any and all mandatory courses) be permitted, after which students will automatically receive their diploma, and will not be permitted to take further courses.

Under the present rules, simply prescribing the maximum (as well as the minimum) number of credits for graduation will not solve the problem. We reiterate: one of the principal reasons some students remain in secondary school longer than four years is that they are repeating courses, usually OACs, in order to improve their average, because universities typically base entrance requirements on a particular average in six OACs. At present, course repetitions do not show on the student's record; if they did, universities and colleges could, and almost surely would, choose the student whose 90 in English represented the first try, rather than the second.

Similarly, when a student fails a course, that failure does not appear on the Ontario Student Record; this lack of documentation also acts as a disincentive to students to make the maximum effort needed to pass the first time.

Some students take extra courses because they have changed their mind about the direction they want to take in future. While this will always be the case, we expect the emphasis on career awareness and career and educational planning that we are recommending - beginning in the early years, with explicit educational and career planning beginning in Grade 7, using and continually updating the Cumulative Educational Profile, and the student's on-going relationship with the teacher-advisor - will result in fewer changes and a reduction in the resulting need to make up courses.

Another reason secondary school careers are prolonged is that students are permitted, until quite late, to drop courses in which they have enrolled. Many do so after the mid-term exam, if they have received low marks. This accounts in part for the popularity of semetered courses: a student can drop a course in December and pick up a new one in January. One result is that each January many students change to semetered schools in order to begin new courses, having abandoned the course or courses they began the previous September at a non-semetered school. While it is reasonable to permit students to change their mind about a course after only one or two classes, it is not reasonable, in our opinion, to make it easy to abandon most of a semester's work - or lack thereof.

Repeating or dropping courses months after they begin is not productive, is not about learning, and requires unnecessary public expenditures. By removing any consequences for repeating and abandoning courses, and getting lower-than-desired marks, the system encourages an attitude that prolongs dependence, and that values success, however gained, but does not value effort.

**Recommendation 16**
We recommend that secondary school be defined as a three-year program, beginning after Grade 9, and that students be permitted to take a maximum of three courses beyond the required 21, for a total of not more than 24 credits. We further recommend that all courses in which the student has enrolled - whether completed or incomplete, passed or failed - be recorded on that student's transcript.

It should be clear that we are not trying to make things more difficult for students who have legitimate reasons for taking time out of their secondary careers, or who take fewer than seven or eight courses per year. Those who must work part-time, who are caring for young children, who cannot cope successfully with a full load of courses, or who have other obligations that prevent them from finishing the specialized curriculum in three years, will not be penalized: we are not restricting the length of time students may take to finish the equivalent of three years of full-time schooling.

What should be limited, in our view, is the number of courses they can take, not the length of time in which they complete them.

Curriculum organization

Problems

In virtually every country, students are streamed in secondary school. Typically, there is an academic or university-bound route, a technology route (which may or may not lead to some form of higher education), and a vocational route, which goes no further. In many countries, streaming begins earlier than in most of Canada; in some, it begins later.

As previously mentioned, Ontario's secondary school courses are offered at three levels of difficulty or what are often referred to as streams: basic, general, and advanced. Students leaving Grade 9 (previously, Grade 8) choose the level at which they will take most of their courses. This choice is often strongly influenced by teachers and guidance counsellors; parents may or may not be involved in making the decision, but must consent in writing.

The rationale for different levels or streams is that, by the time they reach secondary school, students differ so greatly, in terms of previous achievement (and, it is often presumed, in basic ability) they cannot reasonably learn and be taught together. (Research at the Grade 9 level, as we mentioned earlier, is not supportive of this idea.) It is assumed that the best-prepared and brightest students will be held back, and the least-prepared and slowest students will fall behind and fail. In theory, segregating students by program means that the distribution of marks within each of the three programs will be the same, because, once they have been appropriately placed, students will be competing at their appropriate level, and, relative to their classmates, will have the same opportunity to excel, no matter the level at which they are working.

In fact, this is not the case. There is abundant evidence that the marks of students in the general-level courses (math, English, etc.) are considerably lower overall than those of students in advanced-level courses. Furthermore, their failure rate is much higher: for example, in a 1992 sample of 60 schools, 15.6 percent of general-level Grade 10 English students failed their course, compared with 6.5 percent who failed it at the advanced level. Coupled with the fact that the drop-out rate is much higher among students in general- and basic-level programs, these data clearly indicate that streamed programs do not accomplish what they are supposed to do: to equalize opportunities for high achievement across levels.

Observations of classroom procedures and course content, both in Ontario and elsewhere, consistently
show lower expectations of students (for example, little or no homework is assigned) and lower motivation on the part of teachers in non-university preparatory, or non-advanced-level courses. Rather than being organized differently or having a different emphasis on content that meets the needs of different kinds of learners, or learners with different interests, most observers find these classes "watered-down" versions of those at the advanced level. (9)

In principle, a student may take courses at different levels. For example, she might take advanced-level math classes but general-level French classes. In practice, however, most students take most courses at the same level. This practice is so widespread that many schools, especially in urban areas, offer only one level of course across all subjects, on the assumption that this arrangement will accommodate most students' needs. Thus, we have basic-level schools, or collegiates that offer only advanced-level courses, making no allowance for possible differences in talent and ability by subject rather than by student.

Perhaps the greatest problem with the existing system is that it succeeds for only a minority of students, if we take success to mean that they meet their stated goals. As mentioned earlier, two-thirds of students choose advanced-level courses, because they hope to be eligible for university. But universities can and do accommodate fewer than half that number; in other words, the majority of students who aspire to university will not get there.

Low or failing marks given in the required first- and second-year secondary school courses (most notably in mathematics) function to screen out large numbers of students. Much higher proportions of students in advanced-level courses receive marks in the 50s and 60s than in the 80s or 90s in courses required for university. In other words, the marking curves are not normal or bell-shaped. But this is not true of several of the non-sorting courses - such as physical education, drama, and music. (10) While most of these screened-out students do not realize or acknowledge, until their last or second-last year, that they will not get into university, their fate is quite predictable, based on the number of credits they acquire by the end of their first high school year. Almost all students try eight, or at least seven courses; those who have fewer than six passes will almost certainly be among the majority of advanced-level students who do not complete six OACs with marks that will gain them admittance to university.

Unless universities double their admission rates - which seems highly unlikely - many students need a better option than they have. The issue is not the level of sophistication, or the content of advanced-level courses, but that the idea of a university education is so attractive.

While that attraction is not likely to lessen, it is very important to attempt to provide an attractive and realistic alternative - not just a weaker version of similar courses that reach toward no particular goal.

It is true, of course, that the problem is deep-seated in a culture that values and rewards academic and professional skills more than applied skills. In spite of the fact that we lament the lack of skilled craftspeople, and despite our chronic dependence on immigrants with these skills, we do not pay or honour skilled workers as we do those who have a university degree and professional training.

University is the gateway to higher earnings and status, and is likely to remain so. We tend to equate general intelligence with academic intelligence, so that academic success and academic credentials become the major evidence of individual excellence and employability. As a consequence, courses or course sequences that do not lead to university eligibility will probably remain less desirable.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the majority of students choose, and are likely to continue to choose,
the pre-university program even though it is perfectly clear that most will not be admitted to university after they complete secondary school.

**Strategies**

Notwithstanding the apparent difficulties, we are convinced that it is possible to fashion more successful alternatives that will help lower the number of students who leave school without a diploma, and will increase the percentage who attend college. At present, about 30 percent of secondary school students leave without a diploma (although one-third of those eventually earn it); about 25 percent go directly to university; about 20 percent go directly to college; a small percentage go to other post-secondary institutions; and about 20 percent go directly to work (although half of these people later attend university or college).

A more successful set of options in secondary school might be expected to increase the percentage of students who go directly to college, increase the school-directly-to-work stream somewhat, and cut very substantially the number of students who leave school without a diploma. No matter how the curriculum is altered, there can be little doubt that students from disadvantaged homes and neighbourhoods will continue to be under-represented among those admitted to university. But a more successful multi-stream system should enable more of them to complete their diploma - which, in itself, is a measure of increasing equity. As well, better links with colleges increase the likelihood that more working-class and minority students will obtain some post-secondary education, a considerable asset in terms of employment and income opportunities.

The success of any attempt to provide a workable and attractive alternative to pre-university education depends, in part, on the amount and quality of career education and awareness that has been built into students' experience before they have to make a choice.

Students who are aware of a wide variety of career opportunities, many of which do not hinge on university education, are much more likely to choose from among a wider range of options.

We agree that it is not sufficient to offer only one program in secondary school; because students have different experiences, interests, and aptitudes, and are eager to make choices, we are not proposing that students should take exactly the same array of courses, all taught at a single level of difficulty. At the same time however, we do not believe that it is necessary to offer courses at three levels, or to specify a particular level of difficulty or stream for every course offered. Nor do we think it is necessary or useful for students to feel obliged to take all or almost all their courses at one particular level of difficulty, rather than making distinctions in response to their own interests and strengths.

Therefore, we recommend three major changes to the way secondary school courses are now being offered and sequenced:

**Recommendation 17**

*We recommend that only two, not three, differentiated types of courses should exist.*

While our conception of these two levels is that they should differ in emphasis between a more academic and a more applied approach to learning, we understand that, in the minds of most people familiar with the current jargon, the two will be likened to the current advanced and general levels.
Using that terminology, we would have to say that the third level - the one we recommend be dropped - is the present basic level. We recognize that there is a small group of students - at least 5 percent - who learn more slowly and do need extra assistance. But we think that it makes no sense to create a special set of courses or a program for these students - a program that, at present, almost four-fifths of them do not complete.

In our view, it is preferable to make extra support available to these students, in the form of individual tutoring by teachers, teaching assistants, and/or senior student-tutors; as well, they should be given extra time to complete courses. The principle of increased flexibility in course completion time - both to permit acceleration and to accommodate slower learners and learners with other demands on their time - is very important to us, and is discussed at several points throughout this and the preceding and following chapters.

Recommendation 18

*We recommend that some courses, (to be called Ontario Academic Courses, or OAcCs) be offered with an academic emphasis; that others (to be called Ontario Applied Courses, or OApCs) be offered, with an emphasis on application; and that still others be presented as common courses, blending academic and applied approaches, and with no special designation.

We recognize that one of the ways that people of all ages differ in their approach to learning is the degree to which they look for practicality, relevance, and applicability in what they are learning. While we are convinced that many students in elementary and secondary school - perhaps the great majority - are more motivated when their teachers help them see a connection between what they study and the rest of their world, we recognize that making this connection is more essential for some learners than for others. For those whose interests tend to be more technical and hands-on, courses in such subjects as English/francais, mathematics, and the physical and social sciences, need to differ, not in the level of skill required, but in kinds of problems presented, and the use to which the content and concepts are put.

Take English/francais as an example: all students must have a command of correct and conventional language, spoken and written, and, by the senior years of school, must be able to comprehend texts at an adult level. But some students want to read for information about topics that directly interest them - perhaps in science or in politics - while others want to read fictional and non-fictional literature as a source of ideas and themes about history and human nature.

But the student with the more practical approach to literature may have the more academic interest in science: differences exist not only among learners, but in the way that each learner approaches each subject. Someone with a strong interest in the humanities, for example, may be intrigued by aesthetics and motivated to study literature or art as a foundation of ideas and wisdom, without looking for obvious or immediately practical applications for what is being learned. But the same student may have little interest in mathematics unless its application is made very clear.

Consequently, we want schools to offer courses that meet the needs, not of two distinct kinds of students, but for two different emphases in course content, understanding that some students will prefer to select most of their courses as either OAcCs or OApCs, but not both; while other students will be more eclectic.

While we have no illusions about the likelihood of solving all problems or satisfying all stakeholders, we propose to change the nature of the secondary school course offerings and requirements into something that, we are persuaded, would be both more efficient and more realistic. (See Figure 2 on next page.) We
want students to have the opportunity to focus on what interests them, and what will bring some coherence and a sense of purposefulness to their secondary school program.

Rather than dividing courses into different levels of difficulty, which then create streams or programs (of which only the advanced-level/OAC/university has a clear purpose and destination), we recommend that a number of programs be created. By these we don't mean streams, but rather packages of courses organized around such subject or career areas as math/science/technology, health-related occupations, communications, international languages, and finance. As well, the four integrated subject areas on which The Common Curriculum is built (math/science/tech, the arts, self and society, language/literature) offer one possible organizing principle for clusters of courses, or academies. We envision students who have a particular interest or goal (environmental science, for example, or a college diploma course in early childhood education), with the help of their advisor, constructing a program which might include one or several academic, applied, and common courses each year, each of which would make sense as part of a package of courses supporting that interest and/or goal.

Some models currently exist in secondary schools for students who want to specialize; there are a few arts academies, for example. The current "business studies endorsement" and "tech studies endorsement" are secondary-level certificates that recognize a concentration of at least eight courses in those areas. In some jurisdictions outside Ontario, the variety of career academy models includes, in addition to the arts, health sciences, communications, etc. All of these options tend to make secondary programming more coherent, meaningful, and attractive to students.

In Chapter 8, in the context of a discussion of the needs of young adolescents in middle and junior high schools, we explained our preference for smaller schools, in which adolescents have a better chance of knowing and being known by their teachers and their peers, and are much less likely to feel alienated or to be simply a face in the crowd. We recommended that the Ministry and local boards encourage and provide incentives to schools that wish to reorganize themselves to create smaller learning units.

Secondary schools are usually the largest of the school units not uncommonly including well over a thousand students. Hence our concern for creating smaller communities for students is especially applicable at the secondary level. Furthermore, there is another advantage to the small school at this level: given that most secondary schools in Ontario are large, and that the small units can only be achieved by creating "schools-within-schools" or "houses," in which two or more such units share a large building and its major facilities such as labs, library, gymnasium, and cafeteria, it follows that the small schools within the large shared building could also specialize by subject or topic. One school building could, for example, contain four discrete schools, one an arts academy, one organized around the health sciences and allied disciplines, a third devoted to international languages, and a fourth with an emphasis on social sciences and helping professions. Students might take some courses outside of their "school" but within the same building; but they would choose the "school" or "house" that best represents their main interest.

Schools like this are somewhat analogous to the alternative schools in some municipalities, which are deliberately small, focus on a particular program, and draw teachers and students who want to be part of that program.

Both because smaller learning units support stronger bonds between teachers and students and between students and students, and because they offer the potential to support the kind of interest-focused curriculum packages that represent a degree of specialization, we believe such smaller learning units are
productive for students of this age.

**Recommendation 19**

“We recommend that large secondary schools be reorganized into "schools-within-schools" or "houses," in which students have a core of teachers and peers with whom they interact for a substantial part of their program. Such units may be topic-, discipline-, or interest-focused.

At the same time that we expect programs with a significant degree of specialization and focus to be attractive to all students, we recognize the necessity of involving universities and colleges in organizing and structuring various programs and program options, as a way of marking out paths to post-secondary education. A locally developed model for programming of this kind is the school/college articulation program, which has blossomed in recent years: high school students take courses that lead directly to placement in specific college programs. For example, Seneca College and the Etobicoke Board of Education have signed an articulation agreement that gives students who complete a secondary school course, Seniors in Society, advanced standing in the first year of Seneca's Social Services Worker Gerontology Program.

While students take Seniors in Society, they are also learning about and negotiating the admissions requirements for Seneca's program - should they decide to apply to it. This specific articulation agreement is another example of the generic model we favour, in which school and post-secondary institution jointly define a program that is continuous and cumulative; nonetheless, we believe that it may be too specific to become a general pattern.

While some colleges are involved in very specific articulation programs, as a sector they have not joined with the secondary school sector to plan centrally for secondary-post-secondary continuity in the same way universities have. The opposite is true for universities: there is a single program, the advanced-level/OAC sequence, that clearly leads to the possibility of university application and admission but makes no distinction between subjects students intend to pursue and those they do not. The university sequence could be improved by being made less global and general, as well as more plural and interest-focused. In other words, we need university packages, not a university stream. The college sequences could be improved by being made less specific and more comprehensive. In other words, we need some college packages, not dozens or hundreds of articulation agreements.

We believe that, just as there are now certain courses students must take if they aspire to university, in future there should be equally well-defined requirements for college application and admission. We are not proposing that, as is now the case, courses recognized by universities be totally distinct from all others.

We do not propose that the university-bound student be obliged to take OAcCs only, or that the one planning to go to college take OApCs exclusively. Instead, we suggest that the particular combination of OAcCs and OApCs required for admission to various programs and major areas of study at colleges and universities should depend on decisions made by those bodies working with secondary school educators, and organized by and responsible to the Ministry of Education and Training.

For example, a student who wants to attend a university's engineering faculty might be required to take a set of math/science/technology courses, all of which are OAcCs, and might take the other subjects - English, social sciences, arts as OApCs. A student whose goal is the electronics technology program in a college might have to take some, but not all, math and technology courses as OAcCs, but the science
courses, as well as those in arts and humanities courses, could be OApCs. A third student, interested in a college's program for technicians, might take all courses as OApCs.

While we are aware that this plan does not provide a specific set of programs tailored for students who do not go on to post-secondary education, we believe that, for several reasons, the structure is a benefit for them as well: first, there is growing consensus that, increasingly, students who do not have any post-secondary education or training will be at an economic disadvantage; this convinces us that it is unwise to create dead-end secondary programs. Second, many students - about half, in fact - who do not immediately go on to post-secondary education after secondary school do so eventually; being prepared for a post-secondary program can only facilitate that later transition. Finally, a coherent, practical, interest-focused program should make schools more attractive and help them retain students, irrespective of their future plans.

There is little purpose in staying in school if the program has no shape and no destination; if it has both, it should encourage more students to stay to completion and to continue on.

Our idea is that all students should be treated alike when it comes to organizing their curriculum after the common core curriculum is finished at the end of Grade 9. All students, we think, would benefit from, and be motivated by, a degree of coherence that comes from greater specialization. We also believe that a good, common education to the end of Grade 9, built on strong foundation skills, on early and continuous career awareness, on a community-work experience program, as well as on excellent career counselling will mean that 15-year-olds are ready and eager to focus on their interests and strengths, without having to sacrifice a good general education.

We believe, as well, that this good general education can and should continue within the more specialized curriculum after Grade 9. That principle is embedded in our proposal in two ways: first, we are suggesting that many courses be offered, not as OAcCs or OApCs, but in one form only, without special designation. Such courses as family studies, physical education, life skills, drama, visual arts, and most business courses can be offered in this single, common way. The only courses that should take the form of OAcCs or OApCs are those required by universities and colleges for admission to particular programs. These would probably include English/francais, mathematics, science, French/anglais, history, as well as geography and some business and technology courses. But the final decision on this would be left to the post-secondary educators, working with secondary educators.

We have recommended that courses in subjects important to university or college admission be offered in two forms OAcC/OApC - and that other courses be offered in one form only. Although specific requirements must be worked out between universities, colleges, and the secondary education section, we believe the guiding principle should be that students should be required to take courses in a particular one of the two forms, rather than being able to choose freely between them, only when they are specializing in a particular subject or career area.

Our second mechanism for ensuring that students continue to acquire a general, liberal education even while they specialize in an area of interest is to require that all students take a number of mandatory courses, as is the case at present.

We are particularly concerned that no student graduate without adult literacy skills. Therefore, we have chosen to make such literacy a requirement for the diploma. (See Chapter 11.) In addition, we are certain that all graduates should have a solid basis of knowledge of Canadian and world history and literature,
but are concerned that not all do at present.

While we are certain that decisions concerning exactly what courses should be required of all students must be based on clearly defined learner outcomes for the end of Grade 12, these outcomes do not yet exist. Nonetheless, we offer as one reasonable model the following list of 14 courses to be required of all students within the 21 credits (Grades 10-12) required for the diploma:*

- 3 English/communications (or français) credits
- 2 math credits
- 2 science credits
- 1 Canadian history credit
- 1 geography or social science credit
- 1 arts or physical education credit
- 2 language credits (French/anglais and/or one other international language)
- 1 life skills credit, with modules in career education, community service, violence prevention, anti-racism, media literacy, and personal/financial management (These modules could also be offered within the English or mathematics curricula)
- 1 business studies or technological studies credit

* At the request of a parent or student, up to two exemption/substitutions could be made, as is presently the case.

In addition, we recommend two mandatory diploma requirements (credit or non-credit) for all students.

**Recommendations 20, 21**

*First, we recommend that they participate in physical exercise at least three times per week, for not less than 30 minutes per session, either in or outside physical education classes.

*Second, we recommend that they take part in a minimum of 20 hours per year (two hours per month) of community service, facilitated and monitored by the school, to take place outside or inside the school. (Examples of the latter include peer and cross-age tutoring.)

All students, we believe, should also be given, and be expected to use, generous opportunities to participate in work- and career-related learning activities in and out of school, which will be integrated into the curriculum. Both the community service and the work- and career-related activities should be included in the student's Cumulative Educational Profile (CEP).

Finally, we believe that reorganizing curriculum into programs that are topic- and interest-focused will have a healthy effect on informally reorganizing staff. Many educators told us, and local research also suggests, that, as a result of the system of departmental affiliation of secondary teachers, there is a lack of communication across subject boundaries - "Balkanization" which is aggravated by the large size of secondary schools.(11) This failure to integrate staff has sometimes been reflected in an exaggerated and artificial segregation of curriculum, preventing connections from being made that would enrich the coherence and importance of a student's total learning experience during a given year or semester.

While smaller learning units - our schools-within-schools - will help to break down these walls, so will interdisciplinary programs that bring subjects and, therefore, teachers together. If math, science, English,
and art teachers are part of a communications academy, they will, of necessity, find themselves working together to present a reasoned sequence of courses over the three years. While each teacher may maintain her departmental affiliation, she is very likely to find herself spending as much time with teachers from other departments. We believe this shift would be to the great benefit of students as well as of teachers, whose continuing education depends so much on their professional interchanges with colleagues. (See the section on department heads in Chapter 12, for further discussion of the issue of staffing and staff functioning.)

**Flexibility**

As we said earlier, we are concerned about the present inflexibility in force in almost all secondary schools: all courses are offered in units of equal length, and every student has exactly the same length of time as every other in which to complete a course - no more and no less. We have seen some powerfully persuasive examples of flexibility in secondary schools, and we want to see them become more widespread. One way is to design units or modules, either within courses of the traditional length (one semester or one year), or as partial credits in themselves. In either case, the idea is that students could progress through a sequence of modules at different paces, with those needing more support able to get it, and those capable of accelerating doing so.

Another form of acceleration is by prior learning assessment: to the extent that courses are broken into modules, or that partial credits are offered, it becomes increasingly plausible to give students the option of "testing out" through a challenge exam and moving to a higher level. We have no doubt that, for example, there are students sitting through much of Grade 10 math who are quite able to do Grade 11 math or do the second half of Grade 10 math in September of their Grade 10 year. (Below, in the section "International languages," we speak of the challenge exam as applied to international languages, and in Chapter 10 we address this issue more generally.)

At the same time, many students fail Grade 10 math unnecessarily: some may need 12 or 14, not 10 months to complete the course, and may need extra support in one-on-one or small groups, with a teacher or perhaps with a senior student tutor. But these youngsters should not have to finish in 10 months or fail and invest a second 10 months in the same material, much of which they already know. Instead, they need flexibility of time to complete the work, and immediate remediation - a little help when they need it, not a lot of help when it is much too late.

While most courses have not been developed in modular form, teachers need not necessarily start from scratch to redefine curriculum that way. One resource - not well known but readily available - is the long list of courses developed as independent learning packages by the Independent Learning Centre of the Ministry of Education and Training. Although most ILC students are adults, there are several thousand day-school students every year who acquire credits independently by completing ILC courses. In some, but not all cases, the students are using the ILC as a distance education resource. But the materials used for ILC courses are certainly readily available to teachers who want models for work that is broken into smaller units and done at the individual's own pace. We also expect that increased availability of computers and interactive videos will make individualization of materials more attractive and more effective.

Summer and night schools are other possibilities for students who want to accelerate or to catch up. But, like day-school courses, those being taught at night or in the summer are of uniform length and occupy a pre-established number of classroom hours. One intriguing possibility related to the idea of the
year-round school is to make summer an optional learning extension period, for the student who wants to spend longer than the usual number of days and weeks to complete a course begun in the fall, winter, or spring.

Another way to give students flexibility, both in what they learn and how they learn it, is through a study or project that is independent of any course. Although this can be done within current guidelines, it is rarely presented to students as an option. Students can be encouraged to discuss an idea with a teacher - any teacher - and work out a plan or contract. Any teacher, depending on interests and expertise, can act as a resource for a student. Students who work in this manner have the opportunity to further develop invaluable skills related to time management and self-discipline.

**Recommendation 22**

*We recommend that the same efforts to centrally develop strategies and ideas for increasing flexibility and individualization of the pace of learning, which we called for in the common core curriculum, be applied to the specialization years.*

The other important kind of flexibility is that which exists between programs. If a student changes her mind about her interests, or about going to college or university, program requirements should not be so rigid as to discourage her. Our recommendations make it possible to achieve flexibility in two ways: first, because many courses would be available in only one form, the issue of differences between programs would be minimized: if she chooses drama - whether she is taking courses in applied arts, communications, or humanities, or intends to apply to university or college - it would be the same course. Second, by encouraging challenge exams and prior learning assessment, students would be able, on the basis of tests, to move beyond content they already have mastered and to enter that course, either in a class setting or on an individualized basis, at the point where they qualify, or, in some cases, be excused from the whole course or most of it. This would cover any course and any student, regardless of the program in which she had been specializing. If, for example, a student had completed the Grade 10 English OApC and wished to take Grade 11 English OAcC, she could do so after passing the Grade 10 English OAcC exam.

**Curriculum content**

**Basic requirements**

We want to build a secondary program that rests on high standards, rigour, and continuity of general education and the opportunity for specialization. We want all students to be able to choose a program based on their interests and aptitudes, in which links are made between academics and applications, and between school and working-and-learning settings outside school.

We have described a three-year secondary program, beginning after Grade 9, with 21 course credits required for graduation. Some of these will be offered in only one format; others will be available in OAcC and OApC configurations.

While all students are likely to experience a mix of academic and applied learning, the balance between the two programs will differ somewhat. For example, we intend that the number and intensity of workplace and in-school work-related experiences job-shadowing, co-operative education, and other worksite learning opportunities - - would increase substantially in all courses, and that curricular
emphasis would be on in-class practical applications of knowledge. But more time would be spent in these learning contexts in OApC than in OAcC courses; for example, while all students would take English/communications courses, which would contain components of both conventional literature and technical literature, the balance between those two would certainly differ in OAcC and OApC courses.

The goal would be to ensure that, no matter what courses students took, they would be well prepared for the Grade 11 literacy examination. (See Chapter 11.)

We believe it is very important that the most advanced OAcC and OApC course in each subject area should have a common core, across all schools; it should be significant enough to give students some guarantee of consistency of both content and evaluation standards, as well as providing reliability in what is taught and learned in courses that have a major impact on admission to college or university.

To accomplish this, we propose that an existing process, the Ontario Academic Credit/Teacher-Inservice-Program (OAC/TIP), be expanded and improved. OAC/TIP involves secondary and university educators working together to evaluate the final examinations set by teachers across the province in each last-year academic (OAC) course, the quality of student response, and the standard being applied, as reflected in teachers' evaluations and marks. Teachers from the two levels look at actual sets of exams, and arrive at agreement about standards.

At present, this process applies only to those final-year academic courses; we are proposing that it expand to include final-year OApCs as well as OAcCs, because we believe that standards of excellence are equally important in both course types. It would be necessary to involve college as well as university teachers in this process, and both groups more prominently than the university sector is currently involved. If the process were implemented and monitored seriously, and involved college educators for the new OApCs, with a now-absent emphasis on public reporting and accountability, consistency would be achieved while building teacher capability in assessment. Chapter 11 includes our specific recommendation for expanding the examination review process for final-year courses, to be certain that all courses are included, and that the cyclical review schedule for subjects is accelerated, so that reviews are more frequent.

In order to implement this curriculum, major efforts are required: first, new course groupings, or programs, must be developed by schools, colleges, and universities, working toward better articulation for students. Second, many course guidelines will have to be rewritten. Currently, for example, there is little emphasis on technical writing in any English class, and too little emphasis on application in most mathematics and science courses. At present, these applied but challenging math and English courses do not exist in most schools. And the common courses - the drama, family studies, and other courses offered in only one format - must reflect a good balance between academic and applied skills and experiences, to cater to all students.

In order to offer common courses within a variety of interest-based programs, it is necessary to agree on the intended outcomes of each course. Thus, the drama course may have quite different content and applicability if it is being offered in a communications program rather than a health sciences program; but there must be a common set of outcomes that apply to drama in both (and many other) programs. For example, we may expect all drama students to show an increased ability to understand and portray a range of human feelings, although the dramatic situations and roles in which they develop and exhibit this ability will differ in content. As long as curriculum guidelines are developed that specify what students are expected to learn and know, curriculum designers and teachers will be able to develop a
variety of modules and materials that cover the requirements and connect to the content theme. In so far as this can be done centrally, teachers will not have to develop materials even as they attempt to teach them.

Finally, there must be a very significant increase, for students, in the school/work articulation opportunities, which are severely limited at present by the traditional reluctance of business and labour to become involved in apprenticeship-like activities.

While we strongly believe that all students in all programs need to see a greater connection between school and career, have more experience in work settings, and gain a greater sense of how their course work can be applied outside the classroom, we recognize that students who do not intend to go to university have the greatest need for this connection and emphasis, to give both program and student a sense of purpose and direction.

Given that we have recommended much smaller school units, usually in the form of schools-within-schools, it should be possible for most if not all communities to offer several different kinds of focused programs to attract and engage students with different interests and talents, at the same time they are offered a high-quality core curriculum, regardless of specialization. We think the best way to ensure the latter is through a combination of learner outcomes, standards of performance in foundation skills areas, and example-illustrated curriculum guidelines for each course - in precisely the same way we described the elementary level curriculum.

**Recommendation 23**

*We recommend that a set of graduation outcomes be developed for the end of Grade 12; that they be subject and skill oriented, as well as relatively brief; and that they cover common learner outcomes for all students as well as supplemental learner outcomes for the OAcC and the OApC programs.*

Thus, the curriculum guidelines for Grade 10 Geography, for example, would list: (1) outcomes for all learners, (2) supplemental outcomes for those in the Grade 10 OApC, and (3) supplemental outcomes for those in the Grade 10 OAcC. The first list would be longer than either of the other two.

We strongly suggest that learner outcomes, Grades 1-12, be understood as a continuum, and that the new statements of outcomes developed for the specialization years be created and tested by elementary, secondary, and post-secondary educators, working together. The Ministry of Education and Training must provide leadership, but should draw heavily on expertise from teachers' professional groups, such as subject councils.

**The foundation subjects revisited**

In our opinion, the subjects we described as the foundation of Grades 1 to 9 should continue to function that way through graduation: all students must continue to enhance their literacies by acquiring knowledge and sophistication in communications, in mathematics, in science, in information technology, and in group learning/life skills. The issues for restructuring in each of these areas are discussed briefly.

The concern of many educators and specialists is that communications, mathematics, and science courses should have more applied emphasis in the specialization years. We agree that all learners would appreciate this emphasis, and want to see all courses connect more to students' realities; in particular, the OApCs we are recommending would be carefully designed to meet this need.
In English/communications, there should be more emphasis, for all students, on universally needed and useful applications, such as writing resumes and reading technical reports. We do not wish to see any student deprived of continuing exposure to the world's great literature; nor is it acceptable for a student to graduate without being able to write a grammatically correct, well-reasoned essay or well-researched paper. But we are equally concerned that practical applications, such as a high level of media and technical literacy, should be part of everyone's education.

In both science and mathematics, the need for a more practical and useful approach to science is equally acute.

At the secondary level, scientific literacy for all implies an entirely new approach to curriculum ... New courses [in math, science, and technology] ... would have a general focus on science and technology in a broad societal context and would have scientific literacy for all as their main focus ... Courses in biology, chemistry and physics would remain ... but would be taken by fewer students, those intending to specialize in particular sciences at the post-secondary level.(12)

We would add that the "broad societal context" focus in science should include an emphasis on ethics and on human and social applications of science. Researchers and advocates concerned with attracting more female students to the sciences often identify this kind of content as being a key to improving both the quality and comprehensiveness of the science curriculum in general, and attracting and keeping more female students in particular.

While science is one avenue for applied mathematics, math courses themselves must be restructured so that they become more useful to students. Most students will not become mathematicians, but they need to know how to use math and to solve problems in the context of life and work. This does not imply any lack of rigor or challenge, only an obligation to prepare students well for what they will need and be able to make use of, whatever their post-secondary destination.

Mathematics educators tell us that

students need to see how mathematical ideas are related. The mathematics curriculum is generally viewed as consisting of several discrete strands such as number or space which are often taught in isolation from one another. It is important that students connect ideas both among and within the areas of mathematics. Students need to broaden their perspective to view mathematics as an integrated whole and to recognize its usefulness and relevance both inside and outside of school.(13)

What educators are calling for is an emphasis on problem-solving, application, and understanding - the literacies. They emphasize that fewer "big ideas" well understood and well connected in the mind of the learner are far more important than extensive lists of facts, which will not be remembered.

In the last years of secondary school, science and math remain the areas in which female students lag behind males. Their participation and success rates equal (or exceed) those of male students in elementary and secondary science and math - until the final year courses in physics and calculus.(14) It is at this last step, and in university courses that function as gatekeepers to science and math, that women's participation rates drop off. While there are indications that many female students would particularly like to see more practical and social applications of math and science made explicit throughout the program,
their success in spite of the abstract nature of most existing advanced-level math and science courses equals that of their male peers. It would appear that the prospect of continuing in math/science in university is what they find unattractive or forbidding. In recognition of this, some schools, colleges, and universities have co-operated to create transitional and linking programs designed to make university-level science and math more accessible to women.

Of the foundation subjects being revisited in this chapter, none must be upgraded more than information technology: as students come into secondary school with extensive experience in using computers for writing and communicating with others, courses that do not expand the student's skill base - keyboarding for example - will virtually disappear from the curriculum. (In the same way that we do not offer courses in the use of the ordinary phone.)

Students will have extensive experience with word-processing software long before they reach Grade 10, and we can expect to see computer use and skill expand as information is searched and synthesized in increasingly sophisticated ways across most subjects, as well as in specialized arts applications. Networks of computers and the information they make available will also be essential in independent study projects, with the teacher acting as a consultant rather than as the organizer of the material to be learned.

As the emphasis on workplace learning increases substantially in the secondary years, the interpersonal, group learning, organizational, and decision-making skills that have been emphasized since the early years will have obviously broader applications. Students will need guidance and practice in interviewing, and in understanding expectations of employers and fellow workers.

The greater emphasis on applied topics will give students opportunities to practice such essential life skills as preparing resumes and income tax forms, and learning to read technical manuals and labels critically.

Many parents and others concerned with the broader interpersonal education of adolescents commented to us on the need for greater education in parenting. Despite the fact that the transition to parenting is as real, that it may be as imminent, and certainly is as important for high school graduates as the transition to work, most students in the public school system are not exposed to family life education until Grade 7, although it begins in the early grades in Catholic schools; and many do not opt to take family studies courses later, in secondary school, when they might be more useful.

As we become increasingly more concerned about the rising rate of marriage breakdown, the growth in the number of child abuse cases being reported, the fact that more teen mothers are raising babies ("children raising children") than ever before, and alarming rates of family and youth violence, there is a new sense of urgency about the need to offer parenting education to young people. This is perhaps the situation in which community partners must be most active in assisting schools to design and deliver the curriculum, and in promoting non-academic learning of vital interest to the community.

Rather than insisting all students take a non-academic course that some of them, or their parents, do not feel is useful or desirable in secondary school or as part of the curriculum, we suggest it remain optional - that the parenting component within the family studies or life skills course be made well known to students, and that parenting courses in the community be supported by government, and made widely available through childbirth preparation courses, birthing centres, and hospital maternity wards, as well as at public libraries and community centres.
From Grade 10 on, students can and should, for their benefit and that of their peers, be accepting increasing responsibility for organizing and operating support systems in school, including conflict resolution teams, tutoring programs, and peer support groups. Students may need adult assistance in organizing and maintaining these services, but can carry out most operations, in a valuable learning opportunity that offers them a valid way to discharge part of their annual community service obligations. This form of community service, whether at school or in the larger community, is a rich field for developing life skills.

**Career education and career counselling**

The curriculum we recommend would begin building connections between the school and the community very early, starting with a focus on community and career awareness in ECE/kindergarten, and continuing with a Cumulative Educational Plan (CEP) starting in Grade 7. But it is in the specialized curriculum that actual participation in extended, as well as brief, work experiences occurs, and the crucial links to work, career, and full-time employment are made - whether that employment begins for the learner at age 18 or earlier, or later, after post-secondary education. Starting in Grade 10, serious attention must be given to building links between curriculum and work applications.

We believe that every student should have the opportunity to participate in co-operative education, and in many shorter-term work experience activities, and should be exposed to a variety of career models in the classroom and school programs.

This clearly gives employers, unions, and post-secondary institutions a central role in educating high school students. The need for work settings in all kind of sectors, private and public, for-profit and non-profit, would grow enormously. The success of co-operative education programs, in terms of student, employer, parent, and teacher satisfaction, is considerable. But greater commitment from institutions outside the secondary system is essential if more opportunities are to open up for students.

We urge the Ontario government to explore ways of increasing opportunities for co-operative education and other longer-term on-site work/education placements for secondary students. For example, it might be possible to use tax incentives to recognize investments in training, and to work with organized labour to guarantee that secondary school training programs are not, and are not perceived as, threats to employee security.

Older students, many of whom are close to the transition to work and career, would best be served if all career counselling and information agencies in the community - whether local, provincial, or federal - were accessible to secondary students in a system connected to all sources of information on-site, either electronically or by locating various counselling services in the school.

*The Government of Ontario should work with relevant stakeholders to implement a province-wide … system of career/vocational information and counselling services. The goal should be a "one-start" system that provides access to a province-wide network of career/vocational information and counselling services from all points of delivery in the infrastructure. The system should include the full range of existing sources of career/vocational information and counselling services, including schools, colleges, universities, public libraries, federal, provincial, and municipal offices, non-governmental organizations, community groups, and private counselling firms.*

(15)
International languages

In order to encourage students while they are young to learn or maintain a language through the International Languages program or privately, we propose to provide and encourage the use of challenge exams in international languages beginning in Grade 10. A student could take such an exam in the language of her choice, receive a mark that would be equated to a course level (e.g., equivalent to the completion of one credit in Italian, or equivalent to the completion of two credits in Mandarin). This would serve the student in two ways: first, she could, if she wished, receive the equivalent of up to two credits (and we suggest imposing this maximum) toward her diploma. This is now done in Manitoba, where students are offered the opportunity to earn a limited number of credits by exam without actually studying the language in school. The option is available both for languages taught in Manitoba schools as well as those that are not, and is parallel to the existing option in Ontario under which students earn a credit for musical achievement by taking examinations at an approved conservatory of music.

In our opinion, more important than being able to earn credits is the opportunity to qualify for enrolment in a more advanced language course without taking prerequisites, by demonstrating the appropriate level of mastery on the challenge examination. We speak throughout this report of wanting to increase flexibility for students, so that they can spend more or less time on a subject or course, depending on their proficiency and the speed at which they progress. We want the challenge exam option, or its functional equivalent, to be available for students in all subject areas. In the case of international languages the difference is that acceleration may not be possible before Grade 10, because the courses may not be offered until that point.

We hope and expect that if, from Grade 10 on, students were encouraged to take challenge exams in international languages, enrolment in those subjects would increase substantially. While a particular school might not have sufficient numbers to establish a course in every language for which one or more students passed the exam, students could be accommodated, either by having courses delivered in the school building or elsewhere in the community, using interactive video, or individually, through courses offered by the Independent Learning Centre (ILC), an agency of the Ministry of Education and Training. The ILC is also an important resource for developing the challenge exams, and for marking them.

We want to see every effort made to provide instruction, individually or in groups, to those students in Grades 10 to 12 who wish to continue their language studies. As part of that effort and encouragement, the Ministry of Education and Training should support the design and encourage the use of challenge exams in international languages, beginning in Grade 10, for students who wish to earn a limited number of credits in a language other than English or French, whether or not they receive instruction in the school system.

Recommendation 24

We recommend that students have the option of receiving as many as two international language credits toward their diploma no matter where they obtained their training or knowledge of the language(s) if, upon examination, they demonstrate appropriate levels of language mastery.

Continuity in curriculum

At this point, it is necessary to reiterate some of the ideas and themes developed in Chapter 8, because they relate to matters at least as important in later adolescence as in earlier years.
First, the necessity for students to be known by one teacher who has a commitment to their on-going welfare and progress is paramount. When a student enters Grade 9 or 10, she will have a new teacher-advisor, who will be the student's advisor and advocate for as many years as the student is in the school. (Thus, secondary school teachers, in addition to their subject teaching, will have responsibility for a group of students in the role of advisor.) It is essential that at this "handing-over" point, the new advisor speedily obtain the student's CEP, study it, and confer with the student near the beginning of the term, so that students do not feel that, in changing schools, they have lost the opportunity for a meaningful relationship with a teacher who knows their background and has a commitment to helping them make their way through school.

It should be evident that in small schools and in the schools-within-schools we have recommended, there will be solid opportunities for each student to know and be known by teachers and fellow students, lessening the sense, which many secondary school students told us they have, that no-one knows or cares whether they remain in school.

From Grade 10 on, the results of alienation from school that some students experience from an early age become most evident. There is the high drop-out rate among some ethno-cultural and aboriginal groups, as well as among disadvantaged students - the culmination of a process that begins much earlier.

While solutions to this problem are dependent on processes that also begin much earlier, teachers and counsellors must be particularly vigilant, in these school years, for signs that students are abandoning hope of graduating. While the Commission believes that the suggestions in this chapter will reduce the drop-out rate by serving all students better, by giving more students a reason to complete high school, by allowing them flexibility and providing support where needed, and by engaging them through curriculum that is of interest and relevance to them, it also recognizes that some students will still require specific types of help, including support and intervention by appropriate agencies and professionals. In addition to the teacher-advisor or home-room teacher concept we have described, it might be appropriate to link potential drop-outs with community mentors, post-secondary students, senior or more successful students, or even with retired teachers.

The Commission strongly urges schools and school boards to identify students at risk of dropping out, and to design innovative programs to help them stay in school.

**The transition to work from school (and back again)**

Throughout this report, we have said that we expect our recommendations, beginning with solid early childhood education, will lead to students learning more and learning it better, thus reducing the number of discouraged and unsuccessful students who reach Grade 10, and the age at which they can decide to leave school. This chapter has focused on a Grade 10-12 curriculum which, in our opinion, will increase the number of students who graduate, and who go on to post-secondary education. We do not pretend, however, that our suggestions, even if fully implemented, will mean that there will be no drop-outs, and that all graduates will go on to college or university. They should, however, be supported in moving into the workforce, just as drop-outs should be encouraged to drop back into school.

A student who leaves school to go to work, whether before or after earning a diploma, will probably need to learn how to find a job, how to apply for it, and how to evaluate her opportunities. At present, schools have no responsibility in this area, and do not provide the student with a link between school and work. Some students who leave school without a diploma find their way to the Youth Employment Service.
offices; most probably do not.

As well, students who leave without the diploma, work for a while, and then decide to re-enter school may or may not be encouraged and helped to do so. If, for example, a student left school in mid-course, he or she is unlikely to receive a partial credit, and will have to repeat the course from the beginning. This is another situation in which we recommend that students have the option of a challenge exam, and we believe schools that really want students to receive their diploma will welcome the idea.

We suggest that schools be equipped and expected to maintain an interest in students who leave to go to work, and in drop-outs who choose to re-enter. The career education specialists in the school must take on increasing responsibilities for career counselling older students and make clear that they are eager to help students who have made a decision to go to work. They can provide counselling directly, or can link students, when they are still in school, to such facilities as the Youth Employment Services and other community counselling resources. They can encourage former students to call or visit when they need guidance. The role of the school, and the school's career education specialist, should also include responsibility for assisting students to remain in school while they work, as well as to re-enter after they have left to go into the workforce. Challenge exams and prior learning assessments should be available to help former students pick up their formal education at as advanced a point as possible.

We suggest that the school take an active role in maintaining friendly and interested relations with the student who leaves school without a diploma, for at least a year or until she turns 18, whichever comes later.

We further suggest that this activity and monitoring be linked to the welfare system, so that students who leave school before age 18 and do not find work are encouraged to participate in training programs rather than moving onto welfare.

We would also like to see a variety of innovations, in addition to challenge exams and prior learning assessments, that make it easier for students to drop back in. For example, some students might be helped by formal re-entry programs geared to their needs. The programs might include remediation that increased the possibility of a successful re-entry. The school might work with community agencies to find shelter for former students having problems at home.

Depending on their needs, students might also be paired with mentors in the community who could provide moral and/or academic support. (Later, we identify necessary help for adult students facing difficult life situations.)

**Recommendation 25**

*We recommend that the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board (OTAB) be given the mandate to take leadership, working in partnership with school boards, community colleges, and other community partners, to establish programs that will assist secondary school graduates and drop-outs to transfer successfully to the workforce, including increasing opportunities for apprenticeship and for other kinds of training as well as employment counselling.*

The Ministry, school boards, and the schools should also encourage and smooth the re-entry of drop-outs into the school system.

We have not suggested that the compulsory school-leaving age be raised to 18, because we recognize that many students are impatient to leave school and move into the workforce; nonetheless, we want
schools to feel a strong vested interest in, and responsibility for, former students under the age of 18. We believe it is healthy for the school, as well as for the former student, to see that its concern for the students extends beyond the classroom and school walls and into the community - not only while youngsters are enrolled in school, but as long as they are of secondary school age.

Summary

Every structure or curriculum organization that can be proposed for the post-elementary years reflects and embodies the cultural and social strains of the society it serves and from which it draws support. While it is not difficult to achieve general agreement on a common curriculum through the earlier years of schooling - tradition supports it - the lack of social consensus about commonality versus specialization (which underlies the debate about streaming and destreaming) quickly becomes obvious in the later years of schooling.

Because the Commission recognizes that this is so, and because we cannot invent any answer that would satisfy everyone, we are recommending a program that honours the need many students feel for greater coherence and specialization; we are doing so by suggesting that each student be involved in a three-year program organized around a subject, an interdisciplinary area, or a career/professional area. We are aware that the idea of having students aged 15 to 18 choose a subject or career focus may seem to some to be premature specialization. But we have chosen this strategy because it is the best way we know of giving some sense of coherence and purpose to programming after the common curriculum.

The plan acknowledges that students differ in the degree to which they are motivated by academic and applied interests in various subject areas. We are allowing students' programs to reflect those differences in emphasis. While we discussed at length the idea of extending the common curriculum through graduation, as for example the Radwanski report proposed (as in earlier grades, all students take the same courses, at the same level, and in the same sequence) - and while we know there are strong arguments for that plan, we have opted instead for a mixed model, which includes opportunities for specialization.

At the same time, we have built in a very significant degree of commonality, within a semi-specialized program: courses that are not "gate-keeping" for university or college programs should be offered in one format only; students should choose OAcC or OApC courses based on the specialty or major subject they want to pursue, not just on whether they want to go to university, college, or work. As well, we have pointed out the need for a more applied focus in many courses and the importance of making work experience a significant component for all students, regardless of destination.

Again, we are aware that, just as some people will disagree with the notion of earlier specialization by subject, others will reject the degree of commonality and the decreased degree of streaming in our plan, compared to current practice. We are convinced that one of the most important things the people of Ontario can learn from our most-cited national competitor in educational excellence, Japan, is that it is mainly motivation not inherent and unalterable differences in ability and intelligence - that distinguishes successful from unsuccessful students.

We have no illusion that the program we are recommending is perfect, or that others will not be able to improve it. Indeed, we depend on an informed public and on educational leaders to do just that. We have, however, made a real effort to be true to the principles that informed our discussion of education for children from 3 to 15. Our vision of excellent education for older students depends on the same essentials as those on which we based our suggestions about the common core curriculum.
The program will
- facilitate learning for all students - learning defined as the continuing development of high levels of "literacies," disciplined and rigorous thinking across and within subject areas. At the secondary level, curriculum integration may or may not move in the direction of the four strands of The Common Curriculum. But it must be an integration of the entire three-year program: all students should have a sense that their courses form a coherent whole which is clearly related to their future as post-secondary students and as workers. The emphasis must be on making subject-based learning meaningful and useful. Hence, course development at the Ministry level must involve colleges and universities, and course delivery at the local level must involve the business and labour community.
- be based on very clear outcomes, and very flexible about strategies. The Ministry of Education and Training must provide leadership in clarifying the expected outcomes of secondary education; if, for example all students should be able to demonstrate mastery of certain levels in mathematics, or a particular body of knowledge about Canadian history and culture, those outcomes must be clearly stated, and curriculum review and assessment measures developed and used. At the same time, strong encouragement should be given, and resources be developed, to support flexibility at the school and individual level. Smaller modules of instruction, challenge exams, and individualized course delivery offer the kind of flexibility that enables students to make choices about the pace of learning, and encourages them to take responsibility for their education and to persist.
- build on a strong foundation for program choice, beginning in the elementary years, by providing abundant opportunities for students to gain experience in a variety of work settings through community service and curriculum-integrated activities in the neighbourhood and the classroom; and for reflecting on one's experiences and responses to these situations.
- facilitate a sense of community and supportive relationships among students and between students and teachers, and between the school and the larger community - all on behalf of student learning. Students learn best when they feel that their success matters to their teachers and is valued by their peers (as well as their parents). Such caring and valuing is most likely to thrive when students and teachers, and students and students, know each other as individuals, in a face-to-face community, the kind that may occur in a small school unit, and in a teacher-advisory program.
- be built on a strong relationship between the school and community in support of learners, and thus make significant local resources available to students; at the same time, it reinforces the school's commitment to its part-time and full-time students, even beyond the school walls, and encourages an on-going relationship with them, until they are 18 years old, in order to protect their opportunities to continue to learn and to thrive.

Many kinds of secondary school programs can be created in keeping with these principles. But any school that focuses on building a learning community, which reaches out to include the diverse learners who are its clients, which is scaled to attend to their individual needs, and which recognizes that it is part of a larger community of learners, will not be structured on the basis of a timetable. Nor will it be organized according to an administrative or bureaucratic rationale, rather than grounded in the need to enhance most students' opportunities to learn.

Finally, we recognize that parents (as well as students) must have a clear overview of the continuity of learning through childhood and adolescence.
Recommendation 26

*We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training create a brief and clear document that describes for parents what their children are expected to learn and to know, based on the developmental framework of stages of learning from birth to school entrance, The Common Curriculum, and the secondary school graduation outcomes. Succinct information on college and university programs should be also included.

This document would inform parents of what it is that children can be expected to learn, know, and be able to do as they develop into adult learners.

Adult education

Secondary schools are serving a rapidly increasing number and proportion of adult learners. In 1991-92, about 13 percent of all secondary day school students were 19 years or older, and half of that group was 22 or older; the average age of the adult students was 30.

While the adult sector of the secondary school population grew by 24 percent between 1990 and 1992 alone, school boards have no obligation to provide adult education. When spaces are filled, adults are turned away, in contrast to the legal obligation schools have to students between the ages of 4 and 21. Legislation and space for adult learners in the free public education system, until completion of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), have not kept pace with our social commitment to lifelong learning.

Recommendation 27

* We recommend that, in order to ensure that all Ontario residents, regardless of age, have access to a secondary school diploma, publicly funded school boards be given the mandate and the funds to provide adult educational programs.

Many adults working toward the OSSD are immigrants educated in other countries. In other cases, the adult learner was educated in Ontario, dropped out of secondary school, and has spent many years in the workforce. While there is a mechanism in place for assessing prior learning as a vehicle for granting credit equivalency for courses taken elsewhere or for work experience, many observers suggest that it is under-used, and that, as a result, many adult learners are required to begin or resume their secondary education at an earlier point than is necessary.

We believe that a more consistent application of the prior learning assessment strategy is necessary, and that the PLA options should include an examination for a secondary school equivalency diploma. The Ministry of Education and Training should co-ordinate a major exploration of the General Education Diploma and other equivalency measures, building on work already being done in the college sector, in preparation for instituting an equivalency examination in Ontario. A similar mechanism exists in many other Canadian jurisdictions, and is particularly relevant in Ontario, which has more immigrants than any other province. Furthermore, we believe that the same process of accrediting prior learning, wherever gained, makes equally good sense at the college and university levels.

Recommendations 28, 29

*We therefore recommend that a consistent process of prior learning assessment be developed for adult students in Ontario, and that this process include an examination for a secondary school equivalency diploma.
We further recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training, with its mandate which includes post-secondary education, require the development of challenge exams and other appropriate forms of prior learning assessment by colleges and universities, to be used up to and including the granting of diplomas and degrees.

We have suggested that prior learning assessment and challenge exams are an appropriate and essential part of a flexible learning system for all learners. Adults need the same kind of flexibility, and probably need it more often if they are to succeed in the formal education system.

Similarly, other mechanisms for increasing flexibility in secondary schools - for example, breaking courses into smaller units or modules, and greatly facilitating school re-entry, are hallmarks of a system that is responsive to adults as well as to adolescents. Moreover, expanding co-operative education opportunities and greatly enhancing career education and counselling, as we have recommended for secondary schools, is extremely important to adult learners.

Adult education in day schools may or may not be related to labour force development. While many adults may wish to obtain the OSSD in order to make themselves more marketable, others may want to obtain a general education for their own intellectual and cultural development, apart from job or career considerations. This is also true of adults taking such non-credit courses in the publicly funded school system as English or French as a second language, as well as basic education (literacy and numeracy). While the Ontario government has made clear its commitment to adult education when that is directed at increased labour force participation, it has not made the same assurance for general education for adults.

In 1993, the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board (OTAB) Conseil ontarien de la formation et de l'adaptation de la main-d'oeuvre (COFAM) - was created to co-ordinate labour force development programs and services. It is governed jointly by representatives of education, training, business, labour, and equity groups. Its mandate covers training of all sorts, for the employed and the unemployed, and includes apprenticeship, entry-level training and retraining, and literacy and youth employment services (counselling and generic job-search skills training).

Although OTAB is committed to lifelong learning, that commitment is placed within the framework of labour force development. This has led to concerns about adult literacy learners who might not be workers or potential workers (seniors, for example, and others at home who are crucially important to their children's learning) and who wish to improve their literacy skills for their own personal development. We believe that society benefits from a citizenry that has a sound basic education, and we are acutely aware of the advantages parental literacy gives children.

**Recommendation 30**

*We recommend that the right of adults to pursue literacy education must be protected, regardless of employment status or intentions.*

The need for adult literacy programs not tied to workforce status is particularly acute in the Ontario francophone community, both for adults as citizens and for adults as parents. It is particularly difficult for children to become literate in French in an anglophone society when their parents cannot actively support their literacy development.

**Recommendation 31**
We recommend that COFAM/OTAB immediately define and set aside, for short- and medium-term adult literacy programs, a francophone allotment that is not linked to participation in the workforce, in addition to the francophone programs linked to workforce status and intention.

As a Commission concerned primarily with the education of children and youth, we are aware that increasing parents' and grandparents' literacy has extremely positive implications for the educational success and life opportunities of their children. For this reason, and because we think education must be a right for all citizens, regardless of age, we believe that all adults have the right to a basic education, up to and including the OSSD, and that this right must be guaranteed, irrespective of employment status or potential.

Adult education and training are now being delivered by a wide variety of public and private institutions and groups, profit and non-profit. It seems quite likely that the number of adults being served will grow in future, as will the number of services being offered such as the training programs (unrelated to the secondary school diploma program) offered by school boards in partnership with government, business, and labour, and now regulated through the Local Training and Apprenticeship Boards (LTABs).

The many training facilities that school boards have available make them obvious candidates for increased delivery of programs on contract. While we heard arguments in favour of a multiplicity of delivery agents for both education and training of adults, and while we have no reason to doubt that different kinds of delivery and deliverers can appropriately meet the needs of different learners, we are concerned about the lack of an inventory of existing programs, either as a guide to learners and to educational and employment counsellors, or as a guide to government and non-governmental organizations concerned about planning and rationalizing programs.

Adult education and training clearly are a major and rapidly expanding part of our learning system. We want to ensure that adult education is stabilized and inclusive, as part of a lifelong learning system and in order to make efficient use of scarce resources.

We strongly suggest to the Ministry of Education and Training that it place restrictions on creating new adult educational and training programs or on discontinuing existing ones, until an inventory of such programs has been completed, and major deliverers have had an opportunity to rationalize existing services.

We would hope that, in time, there would be a central information source on all kinds of adult training and upgrading programs, accessible from anywhere in the province through a 1-800 telephone number, and by modem, with the information also on CD-ROMs available at community information centres and libraries.

Endnotes (Chapter 10)


6. Crysdale and MacKay, *Youth's Passage*.


ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
©Copyright 1994, Queens Printer for Ontario
Chapter 10: Supports for Learning: Special Needs and Special Opportunities

Throughout this report, we make the case for a learning system that is rigorous and focused, that communicates a sense of purpose and challenge to students and, at the same time, acknowledges that many non-academic needs of young people must be met at school, because that is where young people are.

We also argue that the system must support students as individuals: it must be flexible and allow for different rates of learning as well as learners’ different strengths and needs. Care and concern for students must be one of the essential elements of that system. Care and concern for individuals are manifested when one person is responsible for monitoring the student's progress; when smaller teaching and learning units are created; when career education and counselling are treated seriously.

A system built on academic rigour, flexibility, and continuous student-teacher contact will meet the needs of most students and successfully start their transition to adulthood - as learners, workers, citizens, and parents. Others - students with disabilities, with somewhat severe emotional problems, or those from homes in which neither French nor English is spoken - will need more. So will students whose pace of learning in some or all areas is outside the usual range, either because it is exceptionally slow or exceptionally rapid.

We have already suggested that people other than teachers may be able to help all kinds of students - not just those who require special support - leaving teachers free to focus on curriculum. We include as examples in this category outside experts in safe school programs, and conflict-management training.

In addition to benefiting from these school-wide programs, there are students who require counselling individually or in small groups, whether only for a short time or more intensively and for the longer term. In either case, there must be an adult, from outside the classroom, who will help when help is needed, whether that adult is seen regularly or only occasionally.

The point is that schools have students of all types. In this chapter, we consider the issues related to needs beyond those that can and should be met by well-prepared, thoughtful teachers. We also look at additional supports for learning, language facility, and for children with special physical and emotional needs.

We will discuss below four kinds of special situations: those to do with language/culture background; those that derive from a disability, either physical or cognitive; the needs of students who learn at a substantially different pace from most; and those that are related to emotional problems.
Supports for some students

Support for students with different language backgrounds and different learning needs based on language

Many submissions we received spoke of the importance for students of learning languages, and of becoming fluent in one of Canada's official languages. Learning a language and learning through language - the issue of literacy and literacies in English/Francais - is basic to the entire discussion of curriculum: nothing is more essential to success in learning than having a high level of competence in the language of instruction. Students who enter school speaking neither of the official languages will likely need special help. We will discuss the need for programs to support these students: English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Skills Development (ESD) in English-language schools, and their French equivalents, Actualisation linguistique en francais (ALF) and Perfectionnement du francais (PDF). ALF and PDF are just beginning to be implemented in French-language school units to support both Section 23 (Charter rights) and francophone immigrant students. A related issue, the use of the student's first language as a language of instruction, is discussed as an alternative way to support students who have little or no knowledge of the language of instruction in English-language schools.

The need to ensure that all students have access to the second official language, French or English, also underpins the common core curriculum. Competency is enormously important both practically (it broadens careers and job opportunities) and symbolically, because it adds to our sense of Canadian uniqueness. We have already recommended that multilingualism be supported throughout the common core curriculum and that in the specialization years, students maintain international languages, acquire additional languages, and increase their linguistic fluency.

Acquisition of an official language by non-native speakers of English or French

Both the French- and English-language school systems focus on the development of literacies in the curriculum. However, there are key differences between them: in addition to the different social/societal context that influences first- and second-language programs offered in French-language schools, the needs of students requiring second-language support are different in the two systems.

In French-language schools, some ALF/PDF students are immigrants, but more are likely to be children of Franco-Ontarian descent. These are youngsters whose parents, under Section 23 of the Charter, hold rights to have their children educated in French, but who may not have French as the language of the home.

In English-language schools, by contrast, the overwhelming majority of ESL/ESD students are immigrants, with a small number being native-born Canadians whose families generally do not speak English at home. (The latter group will benefit very considerably from enrolment in the ECE program described in Chapter 7.)

While it is often said that Canada is a land of immigrants, it is also true that Ontario welcomes more immigrants than any other province, and that Metro Toronto attracts more of those immigrants than any other city in Canada. (See Chapter 2 for a more detailed demographic description.)

School systems must educate those students and help most of them to learn at least one official language; as well, these youth must continue to be, or in some cases re-establish themselves as, learners, at the
same time as they respond to all the other challenges of leaving one society and culture for another.

All this is happening at a time when the increasing number of immigrants who speak French, or who choose French as their official language, are making Ontario - Metro Toronto and Ottawa, in particular - their destination. The new influx requires a new response on the part of Ontario's French-language schools.

The task, then, is to improve and enrich spoken French while furthering the acquisition of the usual basic skills. This calls for special pedagogical strategies. In this context, in addition to the core curriculum, which sets out the desired outcomes of learning the language of instruction, we support the vision for Franco-Ontarian education presented in the documents prepared by the Ministry of Education and Training. One of the three documents published consists of ALF/PDF curriculum guidelines. The ALF curriculum will enable students having limited or no fluency in French to acquire basic competence in French and to follow the academic program with success. Certain students, owing to their academic background, need the PDF program, because they either have had no schooling or must adapt to their new cultural setting.

ALF/PDF clientele consists mainly of Charter rights holders who have undergone a process of assimilation, and immigrant students. These students are evolving, for the most part, in a social environment where the act of setting foot in a school often means entering a new linguistic and cultural universe. The messages conveyed at school may appear to conflict with those they receive in the home and create in the students a certain ambivalence about their language, their culture, even their personal and social identity.

Many people told the Commission that the present structure of support for acquiring one of the official languages does not do the job. Many francophone parents said they support ALF/PDF programs because those help the French-language school face the difficult challenge of recapturing the linguistic heritage of some students, while enabling those who are already competent in French to accelerate their learning. In this context, the Early Childhood Education Program we are recommending would give children a significant head start in French language as well as learning skills to Franco-Ontarian children.

Available research indicates that while immigrant students may achieve oral fluency in two years, it may take from five to seven years to reach the full social and academic competence necessary for success in secondary school and post-secondary education.(1)

Do students get full support for that period? Do they require such support, or does it inevitably take time and practice to achieve written fluency? Or, as some immigrants argue, is the period of five to seven years unrealistically long?

There is no research to indicate how long it may take francophone students to learn both social and academic language when something other than French is the language of the majority. However, there is clear-cut research on the need for institutional support for French if it is to survive in a dominantly English world. And it explains why franco-phone presenters at the hearings emphasized the need for institutional support for French-language education from "the cradle to the grave."

Many anglophone parents are concerned that there have been serious cuts to the ESL/ESD programs offered by many English-language boards, and that some current ESL/ESD programs are not effective. The Commission is concerned about the decision of some boards to make substantial ESL/ESD cuts,
while other programs - some mandatory (e.g., classes for gifted children) or some optional (e.g., French immersion) - are spared the cuts. Without adequate support, the majority of immigrant children, particularly those in their late childhood or early adolescence, may be condemned to lower educational attainment and career success.

This is not to suggest that there is or should be only one model of ESL/ESD. At present, the delivery of ESL/ESD is based largely on withdrawing the student for some part, or even all, of the school day; the student is given instruction in English while her/his classmates are learning other subjects.

Generally, the ESL/ESD teacher does not speak the language(s) of the immigrant student(s), and the class itself is usually multilingual; students may not understand each other.

Occasionally, schools will try a different structure: the ESL/ESD teacher works with the regular teacher in the regular class to give support to the immigrant student. Research does not clearly favour one delivery model over the other, although it does suggest that withdrawal from the regular class is valuable to many students as a reception program, orienting and "cushioning" them at a time when many feel bewildered and vulnerable. However, that advantage may be counterbalanced by the likelihood that students are missing much of the regular curriculum. As far as promoting first-language acquisition, however, it offers no clear advantage (or disadvantage).

A new and, we believe, very exciting model is being developed in Toronto. We visited Alexander Muir/Gladstone Avenue Public School, where all members of the staff have developed knowledge of second-language acquisition through an ESL course. Rather than seeing the students' lack of English-language skills as a deficit, teachers emphasize adding English to the languages that students bring with them to school.

Immigrant students are provided with some curriculum content (such as science or history) in their first language within the regular classroom, using the assistance of "language tutors." Some of the tutors are paid (e.g., the school's heritage-language instructors and ESL teachers) and some are volunteers. The practice is supported by research that indicates that heritage-language instructors can effectively support students in curricular areas. Therefore, through the transitional use of their language, students learn their science and history along with their peers, maintaining and developing their literacy in their first language and acquiring English, which will gradually replace their heritage language for all of their instruction.

Whatever the model, it is clear to us that French-language and English-language schools with significant immigrant populations (and, in the case of French-language schools, Charter rights holders with little or no fluency in French) have a challenging task requiring resources. In our opinion, it means that ESL/ALF programs, in whatever form, must become mandatory: the staffing formula used to decide the number of ESL/ALF teachers each school and school board should have must be protected, and teachers should be used in a way that helps students who need language-based support.

While we do not make a detailed recommendation on what the staffing formula should include, we note again that available research shows that while oral fluency can be achieved in just two years, and while some immigrants acquire written fluency fairly rapidly, it may take much longer for many students to acquire the level of second-language skills needed in post-secondary education. On the other hand, some immigrants acquire written fluency in significantly less time.
But the object of ESL/ESD and ALF/PDF is not to produce native-level ability. It is to bring students to the point at which, like others in the class, they are able to learn listening to the teacher, asking and answering questions, reading from the board or the assigned book, and so on. The difference in the length of time it takes to reach this level may have to do with a number of factors, including school experience in the country of origin, and the specific original language and its relation to English or French.

This suggests to us that the formula should perhaps provide for more intensive support in the first six months to one year after arrival in Canada and, after that, the student would slowly be integrated into regular classrooms for all or most of the day, with the possibility of continuing ESL support being delivered in the regular classroom.

**Recommendation 32**

*Therefore, the Commission recommends that the Ministry make it mandatory for English-language schools to provide ESL/ESD, and French-language school units to provide ALF/ PDF, to ensure that immigrant students with limited or no fluency in English or French, and Charter rights holders with limited or no fluency in French, receive the support they require, using locally chosen models of delivery. In its block-funding grants, the Ministry should include the budgetary supplements required to allow the schools to offer these programs wherever the community identifies a need for them.*

The program at Alexander Muir/Gladstone raises the issue of the transitional use of other languages as languages of instruction. A goal of all programs designed to give immigrant students facility in English as the language of instruction must be to add English to the student's language repertory. In so doing, the school is helping the learner to continue the conceptual development already begun in the first language, and to build linguistic and conceptual skills in English.

In a society such as Ontario's, where an official language minority has a separate school system to support and promote that language, the parallel situation does not hold. Charter rights students who have English as a language of use do not need it emphasized in their early years in a French-language school, because English so dominates everyday life. If there is going to be serious erosion of the minority language (as is the case in Ontario for French), research indicates that students should receive a minimum of 80 percent of their instruction in that language, so that they develop threshold levels of competence.(4)

On the other hand, the Somali child who has just arrived in the French-language school may need some initial support in the principal language of the home, if it is not French. What is clear is that all students' languages must be valued so that they will feel accepted and be ready to learn.

It is crucial to value the first (non-English/non-French) language rather than giving the impression that it and, by extension, the student's native culture are unimportant or disposable. Support for "heritage" (international) languages helps all students develop a stronger identity and appreciate the validity of all cultures and languages.

Greater flexibility in the languages that may be used for instruction would support the intent of the anti-racist and ethno-cultural equity policy announced in 1993 by the Minister. One of the policy's core elements is to "affirm and value the students' first language."(5) The policy announcement goes on:

*Competence in the first language provides students with the foundation for developing proficiency in additional languages, and maintenance of the first language supports the acquisition of other languages.*
In other words, students who are given support in their first language are more likely to learn English/French well if their first language is strong, rather than if it is weakened or abandoned. This is why in Australia, the State of Victoria provides for second-language students to "consolidate their knowledge and understanding of the mother tongue ... and use this language in a range of situations, including in the school community."(6)

Other research provides evidence that when students are given support in their first language, they are more likely to learn both the first and the second official languages, compared with English-only students and to non-official- language students who had not achieved or maintained literacy in their heritage language.(7)

The Toronto Board of Education reviewed research in this area and it, too, found that students given support in their first language are likely to do better learning English, that literacy in English or French (or both) is likely to be enhanced through the support of other languages.(8)

Some researchers caution that bilingual programs may be only marginally successful in increasing achievement unless teachers, not just teaching assistants, are genuinely bilingual. As well, gains are likely to be quite limited if teachers do not use effective pedagogical strategies, if programs are reorganized too frequently, if teacher turnover is very high, or if students are moved out of the bilingual/transition program too early.(9)

Providing more flexibility in using other languages to support the teaching of content, such as science, history, and geography, offers schools greater choice in how to support students who arrive at school not able to speak English/French. While the present Education Act provides flexibility in terms of using other languages transitionally, there is a potential for greater success in learning English/French if schools are encouraged to provide bilingual/multilingual reception centres and bilingual programs. (When we speak of "bilingual," we mean programs and centres in which languages other than English/French are used.) We believe this flexibility is important and should be utilized more often.

We acknowledge that if they are to provide more flexibility, teachers, school boards, and parents must be involved at the local level in designing programs. This is particularly true in the French-language schools, where students already face the challenge of learning French in an English environment.

Researchers told us that French-language schools require a very strong in-school French ambience if students are to learn French successfully. A crucial difference between the English- and French-language schools is that a student in the former is immersed in an English-language environment outside school, while the student in a French-language school is much less likely to be immersed in French outside school. Therefore, we recognize that French-language schools and the communities they serve will have to develop some models of language instruction that are specific to their needs while still valuing the heritage language the student brings to the school. What is crucial is that French-language schools maintain a supportive environment for the transitional languages while, at the same time, enabling students to learn in French.

We are impressed by the research into the ability of students to learn both official languages when their mother tongue is recognized and supported. And we believe that Alexander Muir/Gladstone offers a strong model, one that merits further study.
Given the linguistic diversity in Ontario, and the province's tight financial resources, it may seem difficult to imagine extending and strengthening the Alexander Muir/Gladstone model. But strong commitment at the school and community levels tends to mitigate financial constraints. Embracing this model and giving it life will require strong community support by volunteers willing to assist in the classroom, and in locating or developing materials. It is the kind of program that can be supported in significant measure by people in the community who speak the languages of the students. It can also be used by secondary students as a community service option, in keeping with our recommendations in that area.

We encourage schools to use other languages of instruction for transitional purposes, and urge that the Ministry continue to provide for and encourage greater flexibility in the use of other languages of instruction, in order to meet the transitional needs of immigrant and other students, and that it actively encourage and support more school boards, where appropriate, to do the same.

**Additional languages of instruction (bilingual and immersion programs) for English-language schools**

Another way to help students develop high-level skills in a language is to use it for other purposes. In Ontario, we have the model of French immersion and extended French, in which students in English-language schools are taught all, most, or some of their subjects in French instead of being educated in English all day. This is permitted because, like English, French is an official language of instruction. Under existing provincial legislation, parallel programs in other languages - German, for example, or Russian - are not permitted.

A number of English-language submissions suggested that other languages be permitted for use in instruction. For example, the Chinese Lingual-Cultural Centre of Canada said, in a written brief, "The time has come to amend the Education Act to replace the stipulation that only English or French can be used as languages of instruction." Similarly, a coalition of three Spanish community organizations recommended to the Commission:

> That the Education Act be amended to allow the use of the Spanish language as a vehicle of instruction. The use of Spanish as a language of instruction would ... enhance the opportunities of Spanish-speaking students to develop fluency in an important international language.

The Heritage Language Advisory Work Group also recommended that "the Education Act be amended to permit the use of instructional languages other than English and French."(10) As the Work Group said, "Permitting school boards flexibility in program implementation represents an investment in Ontario's linguistic resources." Such programs already exist in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

We do not recommend a change in Ontario's legislation with respect to languages of instruction at this time. We strongly support the use of other languages as a transitional strategy, which is already permitted, and we have already suggested that more flexibility be applied in this regard, to encourage and enhance more transitional language programs. We also support a learning system that places more value on languages as subjects, and we hope that many more students will learn third (and fourth) languages, and take courses in them at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Our discussion and recommendations in Chapters 8 and 9 support that development.
But we are very concerned that all students in Ontario be truly literate in one of the official languages. In our view, the school system is obliged to help students function at a high level in English or French, and to gain a reasonable knowledge of the other official language. We appreciate the value of the existing, optional International- (formerly Heritage-) Language program, elementary, but we are not prepared to go well beyond that by suggesting that students be educated in an immersion or bilingual program in any one of a vast number of non-official languages.

**The acquisition and use of sign languages by deaf students**

The Commission heard from a number of parents and others concerned about the language of instruction for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, and the role of ASL or LSQ in their education.

There has been extensive work in this area over the last few years: in 1989 and 1990, three reports were issued, one dealing with deaf students in anglophone schools, one on students in francophone schools, and the third on deaf students taking post-secondary education.\(^{(11)}\) A series of recommendations was made, including enhancing the use of sign language.

In our view, while a great deal has been accomplished in research and policy review, implementation remains the issue. In 1993, the Legislature approved the use of either ASL or LSQ as languages of instruction, a move we support.

We believe, however, that there is a need to give full effect to this decision. While it is now possible for deaf persons to obtain an Ontario Teacher's Certificate, this can occur only through training in ASL in an English-language faculty of education. There is an urgent need to develop a program in a French-language faculty to support the training of LSQ teachers, and the development of teaching materials for the francophone sector.

We also support recommendations that deal with providing all students with the option of studying sign language for credit or as a "heritage language" in school.

We believe that the direction already taken in support of ASL and LSQ is appropriate. Parents should have the option of having their deaf children educated using ASL or LSQ as a language of instruction; those who do not wish to do so should be able to continue to choose existing options.

We also recognize the considerable debate that has taken place on this issue, when the 1989-90 reports were released, and again in 1992-93, when the implementation reports were published.\(^{(12)}\) Because we detect a growing consensus around the recommendations of those reports, which focus on providing realistic options, we urge the government to move forward in their direction.

**Support for students with disabilities, and for slow and fast learners**

Recent figures indicate that students with disabilities account for more than 6 percent of all Ontario's school-age children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disabled Students in Ontario: Numbers and Percentages ( )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Vision/Blind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthopaedic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech &amp; Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard of Hearing/Deaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educable Retarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainable Retarded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Population Identified: 124,087**  
**Total School-Age Population: 1,982,994**

*From Statistical Services Section, Policy Analysis and Research Branch, Ministry of Education for 1990-91. Figures include enrolments at the provincial schools.*

During the public hearings, we were often moved by the testimony of parents of children with disabilities. Their devotion to their children, and to others like them, is not only admirable but frequently extraordinary. When schools and the education system have supported the needs of their children, their gratitude and willingness to work hard and co-operatively with educators is limitless.

They were at pains to tell us both how well the system can work, and how vulnerable they and their children are when it does not. They pointed out, for example, that although Ontario's legislation on behalf of disabled students is a model for other provinces, its implementation sometimes falls far short of stated policy. In some areas, they told us, there is a lack of accountability that permits very uneven implementation by school boards - for example, in due process and special-needs funding.

We strongly support the position that policies are of limited value unless they are seriously monitored and accounted for at the local and central levels. While we can and do take pride in the degree to which Ontario is on record as caring about, and dedicating resources to, the education of students with special needs, we certainly support the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario in its request

> that there be adequate accountability measures introduced and implemented to ensure that the educational system of Ontario, while delivering an excellent level of education to all, remains focused on children and their needs.

**Physical disabilities**

The public education system recognizes that it has a responsibility to provide education for all school-aged persons (until age 21), regardless of level of ability or of disabbling conditions. In recent years, legislation and practice have moved away from separating or segregating students with disabilities or different abilities to integrating or "mainstreaming" them in regular schools and classrooms.

The major issue raised in hearings and briefs around the education of the differently abled was integration. It is generally supported, but particular concerns are raised by various members of the public. Parents who favour integration told us that some integrated programs lack some of the extra supports that were promised or are necessary; and others, who favour centralized or residential programs for some types of students, feel that the number of such programs, or the distance between delivery sites, is
inadequate, given the need.

In some cases, parents and advocates for students with disabilities are concerned that integration may not be the best solution. For example, within the deaf community, some parents and teachers believe that the best educational facilities and opportunities are found in the residential schools, while the majority of families choose to have their children educated in the regular schools.

The government has acknowledged that both kinds of education are appropriate, and has continued to support them; it plans to provide a residential facility in the northern part of the province. The Ministry of Education and Training has responded positively to the committees that advised it about education of the deaf anglophone students; it must respond as well to the needs of the young deaf francophones, including the request for a residential facility in the north, for teacher preparation, and the availability of texts and materials.

The Commission supports the policy of making both segregated and integrated facilities available where demand for both exists, and where there is reason to believe that both provide good learning environments. We recognize, however, that the cost of education in residential facilities is much greater, and suggest that before the increased expense can be justified, the particular advantages of a residential program must be clear to educators as well as to parents.

In most cases, parents of children with disabilities opt for integrated settings because they are eager to make sure that their children will enjoy a normal childhood, and attendance at the local neighbourhood school is part of that normal childhood. But integration and mainstreaming have costs: specialized knowledge and technology are lost and are not, and cannot, realistically be available in every teacher, in every neighbourhood school, in every classroom.

Moreover, mainstreaming means that children with particular learning differences or disabilities will not have the company of peers with whom communication may be easiest and most natural to them. This is probably truest for deaf children: in an integrated classroom, there are not likely to be other students with whom they can sign; and even where there are either human or technical supports for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, there are likely to be fewer of them. Similarly, blind children educated in integrated settings may have access to fewer books and materials in Braille than are available in classrooms or schools designed for the education of the blind.

While some of these deficiencies in resources can be remedied through the use of itinerant specialists, distance education, information technology, and shared resources, it is unrealistic to expect that every neighbourhood school will be as well equipped and well staffed to meet special needs as are schools and classrooms dedicated to that task.

The public education system has an obligation to educate all educable children and youth, and it must be responsive to the parents and public who support it. But members of the public must also be aware of the varying advantages and possibilities, as well as the costs, of segregated or concentrated, compared with fully integrated, classes and schools. It is not realistic to expect that all the advantages of one kind of setting can be found in the other.

No one countenances the segregation of children in wheelchairs in special classes because some school buildings do not have wheelchair access. But making adjustments to entries, exits, and washrooms will still not enable youngsters with all types and degrees of disability to be accommodated in neighbourhood
Learning disabilities, learning disadvantages, and slow learners

We have already commented on how touched we were throughout our public hearings by the many heart-wrenching submissions we received from young people with disabilities, from their parents or teachers. Government has a responsibility and has made a commitment to provide adequate educational facilities for learners with disabilities, in special facilities or in integrated mainstream schools.

From what presenters told us, it is clear that this commitment is not yet being fully realized. It must be. Teachers in integrated classrooms cannot be expected to teach anyone, with or without disabilities, unless they have the necessary and proper support for doing so. Its absence undermines the original rationale for integration for all students.

While physical disabilities may come to mind first when special needs are being discussed, by far the greatest number of students classified as having special needs are "learning disabled." They account for 59 percent of all students diagnosed as disabled.

Although learning difficulties are traditionally labelled and defined in ways that parallel medical problems (diagnosis, prescription, and treatment), the fact is that the medical model does not work very well in this context.

For some time, educators have observed that the labels assigned to children with learning difficulties change over time and location, which suggests they lack clear definition. There are two phenomena in this regard that suggest caution:

- When schools are given large budgets earmarked for the learning disabled, the number of children who are identified this way expands to absorb the available budget;
- In experiments where all children of a particular age or grade have been given the "diagnostic" tests for learning disabilities, results indicate that a huge proportion would be so labelled, although most of the students involved exhibit no learning difficulties.(14)

Research has begun to show that prevention and intensive early intervention - when children are learning about reading and are learning to read - may prevent a large proportion of so-called learning disabilities, many of which are not really distinguishable from the general early academic deficits that are more characteristic of boys than of girls, and of more children from disadvantaged than advantaged neighbourhoods.

The overlap between "learning disability" and the learning disadvantage associated with poverty is very great, and the distinction between special education and what is sometimes called compensatory education is so unclear as to frequently make the differing "diagnoses" of dubious value.(15) For that matter, there is no indication that these different labels identify difficulties that require different, rather than the same, treatment.(16)

It is increasingly clear that children who have difficulty learning to read, for whatever reason, are likely to fall behind and remain behind throughout their schooling, to repeat a grade, and to drop out before completing secondary school. The evidence that many - not all - of these failures can be avoided with better early literacy education is a sound reason for hope.
This issue causes great personal anxiety to many Ontario citizens, and it is important to be as clear as possible: the unhappy fact is that some children have difficulties in learning that will not be solved either by prevention through good early education or by early and intensive intervention.

At the same time, there is reason to think that a large proportion of those now labelled learning disabled - perhaps as many as half - could avoid the stigma (and expense) of carrying that label and, most important, could learn to read at the same pace and with the same success as their peers.

What they may require is the advantage of early education and excellent instruction in language skills in the primary classroom, supplemented where necessary by intensive, individual tutoring by a skilled teacher during the primary grades. A renewed focus on excellent pre-service and continuing teacher education in the pedagogy of literacy for primary teachers, plus the literacy guarantee we described earlier (any child who showed signs of difficulty in reading by the end of Grade 1 or early Grade 2 would receive intensive individual assistance for weeks or months), is the best strategy for preventing many apparent "learning disabilities."

It would seem that many children are suffering not from learning disabilities but from what we might term "instructional deficit disorder," were we to embroider on the elaborate medical terminology typical of special education, which too often assigns cause with no effect.

**Recommendation 33**

*We recommend that no child who shows difficulty or who lags behind peers in learning to read be labelled "learning disabled" unless and until he or she has received intensive individual assistance in learning to read that has not resulted in improved academic performance.*

We are thinking not only of children in the primary grades, but also of those who enter Ontario schools later, with a history of irregular school attendance, or with little facility in English or French.

In recent years, as the term "learning disabled" has become more popular, the number of children to whom the term is applied has increased, while the number described as "slow learners" has decreased - especially in middle- and upper-income neighbourhood schools. We are not the first to observe that this can hardly be a coincidence - that diagnosis may be more tied to fashion and to socio-economic perceptions and assumptions than to reality.

As with all other human behaviour, there are variations in learning rates. While some children labelled as learning disabled may have an early academic disadvantage (which, if addressed appropriately, will not become a lasting problem), others may be slower-than-average learners.

Some people learn some or most things faster or more slowly than do other people. School emphasizes certain kinds of learning, and rewards certain kinds of intelligence. Children who continue to have difficulty learning from print, or who continue to need to move systematically from the concrete to the abstract, or who need more or different examples or experiences to understand or internalize a concept may need not just a greater variety of teaching and learning modes, but more time to master the same curriculum.

Providing more variety pedagogically and more flexibility in learning time is probably simpler - and it is certainly more cost-effective and more easily justified - than going through a lengthy process that ends in a label ("slow learner" or "learning disabled") that may be stigmatizing and that is in itself no guarantee
While we are aware that by the time they reach 21 years of age, some mentally handicapped young adults will not be able to achieve mastery of the common or specialized curricula, we are not recommending, as some parents have suggested, that free public schooling be extended past that age. We are genuinely concerned - and we trust that the appropriate branches of government share our concern - that support for these young adults and their families is apparently inadequate: such support as day-centre programs; recreational, occupational, and life-skills programs; and other essentials for community living. We view this as a social issue, and feel strongly that it must be addressed; but the solution is not in the schools.

Throughout this document we speak of the need for flexibility. Students must have help when they need it, not later. This requires flexibility in both the student's schedule and the curriculum. A student failing a grade often does so because difficulties were allowed to accumulate during the year, and were not addressed immediately, even when a lack of progress had been evident early in the school year.

For many students who can learn at an average pace but have fallen behind, the best approach to a gap in learning is to treat it as a temporary problem that is addressed by fast-paced, "accelerated" instruction, based on the student's understanding that it is possible to catch up with classmates, provided that he or she is willing to work hard with targeted support for a limited time.

The most promising interventions for such students involve work in class, after class, before class, and during the summer, all of which expand the amount of instructional and learning time available. The model, to draw on industrial terminology, is a "just-in-time" strategy. While, through constant monitoring, skilful teachers can identify students who are having difficulty with a new idea or skill, and may be able to modify their teaching to accommodate the student, some students will need the additional temporary "catch-up" work we have described.

Some researchers suggest that no form of extra or compensatory education is as likely to be as successful as in-class instruction provided by classroom teachers who are well trained to teach in heterogeneous classrooms, supported where necessary by para-professionals, lay assistants, and consulting teachers. It is true, nonetheless, that some students will still need on-going, long-term assistance in order to continue to make reasonable progress, although they may never "catch up" to some of their classmates. Among the interventions that are most helpful is cross-age tutoring. A student who lags behind peers tutors a younger child and, in the process of "talking through" a solution to a problem, comes to understand how to ask herself questions as a way of learning new material and of monitoring her own comprehension.

Another useful arrangement is the multi-age classroom. When the range of development is broader, cross-age tutoring can occur within the classroom, and the teacher can do part-time homogeneous grouping for such fundamental skills as reading. As well, if the teacher has the same group of students for two or three years, it is easier to know when children are making regular progress, even if they are not at the same level as some of their peers.

What is usually not helpful either for students who have temporarily fallen behind or for slower learners is to take them away from class, so that instruction in one subject is missed while another subject is being reinforced. Exceptions exist, especially when the withdrawal program is brief, intensive, and focuses on accelerated instruction; but they are truly rare, in terms of both content and effect, and are not typical of withdrawal programs.

Generally speaking, separating children who have difficulty with the curriculum into special or
withdrawal classes has not been effective in improving their level of achievement.\(^{(17)}\) Of itself, the segregation tends to be stigmatizing and unproductive, in part because good peer role models are lacking. Most typically, the programs offered in the special classrooms have tended to be ineffective, in part because of a focus on "basic skills" at the cost of higher-level cognitive processing. This runs counter to the fact that these students, like most others, appear to learn more when basic skills are taught within the context of solving real problems, and acquiring real knowledge, rather than in isolation.\(^{(18)}\)

Another significant problem of special education classes is that they tend not to increase overall available instructional time for students, many of whom need more time to learn material. Parents often support or initiate the decision to have their children designated as learning disabled because they believe that the special attention and small classes will be highly beneficial. While this may be true in individual instances, or in the case of exceptionally well-designed programs, it is certainly not generally supported by research in this area.\(^{(19)}\)

In fact, a review of the most effective ways of helping many students who are now described as disadvantaged, as slow learners, and as learning disabled, yields a list that would be equally appropriate for students with no learning disadvantages at all.

There is a rapidly growing literature that identifies programmatic structures, curriculum and instructional strategies that produce substantial increases in student performance for low achieving, poor, learning disabled or mildly handicapped ... interestingly, the strategies work successfully for all categories of students. [These are:]

1. early childhood education for three- and four-year-olds;
2. extended day [full-day] kindergarten programs;
3. extensive use of pedagogical strategies based on the effective teaching research;
4. continuous progress programs in reading and mathematics;
5. curriculum programs with the goal of developing students' complex thinking skills;
6. co-operative learning across all of the ... curriculum topics;
7. peer or volunteer tutoring;
8. computer-assisted instruction;
9. providing as much of the extra educational [program] in the regular classroom as possible, bolstered by providing a consulting teacher to work with the regular classroom teacher.\(^{(20)}\)

A review of research into the effectiveness of special education for students with learning handicaps or deficits shows that a program of separate instruction for these students is not effective.

The needs of students with handicapping conditions have led some parents and professionals to accept the notion of separate, if quality, education. We will argue that the current system has proven to be inadequate because it is a system that is not integrated, and that we must learn from our mistakes and attempt to create a new type of unitary system, one which incorporates quality education for all students ... While special education programs ... have been successful in bringing unserved students into public education, and have established their right to education, these programs have failed ... to make the separate system significant in terms of student benefits.\(^{(21)}\)
We know that some children of normal intelligence who have had effective instruction in reading continue to have difficulty in school for reasons that appear to be primarily cognitive rather than emotional. And we do not doubt that some - though by no means all - have been helped by special-education programs in which a teacher works with students one-on-one or in very small groups. While we are unequivocally sympathetic to such efforts, we must report that we could find no research evidence to suggest that what happens is substantially or systematically different from what any well-trained teacher would do with any student having difficulty comprehending text, conveying information, or expressing opinions through speech or writing. The one plausible advantage of the special-education situation is the individualized or small-group setting.

It is very possible that there is a great deal still to be learned about how to help children with learning problems, and that future research will be more fruitful. Meanwhile, the most promising supports for significant numbers of children having learning difficulties appear to be the same as those that help all children: well-prepared teachers, solid early education, and classrooms in which children are supported by their teachers and by each other. In turn, their teachers are supported by good information and resources, including helpful professional colleagues, a knowledgable principal, consulting teachers, and professional networks.

In Chapter 12 we emphasize the need to ensure that teachers' pre-service and continuing education equip them with an understanding of children's cognitive, emotional, and social development; an awareness of the wide range of normal behaviour; skill in identifying genuine learning problems and seeking appropriate assistance; and familiarity with, and skill in the use of, a wide range of teaching methods. These are the essential components of preparation for teaching all students well, including students who might formerly have been seen as needing special and separate education.

**Able, advantaged, and fast learners**

Some children learn material more quickly than most, either in one subject, in several related areas, or in virtually all of them. At present, such students are given extra or more complex work to do in the regular classroom ("enrichment") or are placed in a part-time or full-time class for "gifted" students. In 1990-91, students officially designated as gifted accounted for more than one in five of all "exceptional students," and 1.75 percent of the entire school-age population.

While many parents spoke to us about their satisfaction with the gifted programs in which their children are enrolled, we think that it makes sense to question whether students who are academically advanced or learn more quickly are best thought of as gifted, or whether that description might be better applied to a very narrow band of students who would be at a substantial disadvantage in any class not tailored to their very special individual talents. This might apply to the person who is very gifted in math, for example, or in music, and whose needs, therefore, cannot be met by any teacher in the school.

We believe that parents and students should seriously consider an alternative for the larger group of quick or advanced learners, one that is rarely used in Ontario: acceleration, which can mean accelerating in a particular subject or in all subject areas. (The latter is often called "skipping a grade.") In a more flexible system, it should be possible for some students to progress more quickly than others. Through the use of teacher assessment, as well as of the challenge examination, students who can demonstrate knowledge of a subject area should be able to progress to the next level at once - not many months later.

But, whereas repeating a grade has been a common practice despite a very poor track record (students
who are held back rarely show improved longer-term progress), acceleration, despite its rare use in Ontario, has a very strong and positive record, based on the experience of other jurisdictions. In fact, acceleration has much more pronounced effects on student learning than enrichment. Many parents and educators fear that students who accelerate will be at risk socially: at a disadvantage with their peers because of their relative youth, they will become ill adjusted and unhappy. However, in spite of considerable research on the subject, there is very little evidence that this is the case.

Another concern is that students, however bright, cannot afford to miss content instruction by skipping. As we make clear throughout this report, we are convinced that almost all students could learn more, faster, and better in a system that supports teaching for understanding. We have recommended that there be only three specialization years after Grade 9, and that even after that, learning time can be compressed; or, alternatively, that what is learned in the same amount of time can be expanded. For fast learners especially, the notion of missing learning because of a lack of time is inappropriate. As long as we are clear about what students need to know, the acquisition of knowledge can be monitored so that no real gaps go unaddressed. Time is not the problem, especially for the quick.

While we are not suggesting that enrichment and special gifted programs cease to exist, we question the idea that this is the best strategy for quick learners, and reiterate that acceleration is a highly effective, greatly under-used, and extremely cost-effective alternative for students who are fast learners.

**Recommendation 34**

*Therefore, we recommend that in addition to gifted programs, acceleration, based on teacher assessment, challenge exams, and/or other appropriate measures, become widely available as an important option for students.*

**Socio-emotional or behavioral disabilities**

**Classroom strategies:**
Like learning difficulties, behavioral problems, including excessive anger and aggression, and depression and withdrawal, exist in a continuum, ranging from those that are temporary or environmentally driven and can be addressed by improved teacher education and pedagogy, to severe obstacles that require long-term supportive programming, and may never be fully resolved. Some teachers are more skilled than others at preventing disruptive behaviour, and their superior techniques can and should be taught to all teachers. There is some evidence that when these are part of the repertoire of primary teachers, children who would otherwise be labelled "behavioral" and put in special classes avoid such placements and the attached stigma and high likelihood of academic failure.

Another kind of skill that makes a significant difference to the aggravating or lessening of "behavioral problems" of the aggressive variety is that of conflict resolution, or negotiation. When teachers and peers respond non-confrontationally to a student who is angry, it is often possible to defuse that anger, and avoid an explosion. Situations that might otherwise result in suspension can sometimes be averted, and, with models for acceptable social behaviour, students may begin to alter negative self-expectations and gain self-control.

With emotional as with learning problems, the first, best "solution" for some children is simply a well-trained and well-supported teacher. But, even with the advantage of well-prepared teachers - and class or school-wide conflict resolution training - there are some students who will need additional
short-term support, while others will require support throughout their years in school. This includes both
the aggressive children and those students who are depressed. Depressed students, most of whom are
female, risk not being identified and helped if they are quiet, do their work, and do not call teachers'
attention to themselves.

But it is the hostile or very aggressive children whom teachers typically find most difficult in regular
classrooms, because those students are the ones who disrupt the class and cause difficulty for other
students. Most of these are males. In some cases, disruptive students may have learning problems - either
the material is too difficult and they are discouraged and frustrated, or the material is too easy and they
are bored. Both possibilities should be explored before they are ruled out as causative factors. Whether
the problem requires remediation or acceleration, the best solution may be intensive tutoring or more
challenge, rather than a focus on non-academic "behavioral" concerns.

If, on the other hand, the problem is not mainly about learning difficulties, but about social and emotional
factors, counselling is necessary. Often, counselling is not available at school or outside (at least without
a long waiting period). But because the student is too disruptive to remain in class, he is placed in a
special-education class called "behavioral," most often staffed by teachers with some special-education
training, but without training or experience in counselling or therapy. It is hardly surprising that this
"treatment" is not often very effective, and that the behaviour of students who spend years in such classes
does not improve while, very frequently, they deteriorate academically.(25)

While educators are aware of the poor prognosis for students placed in behavioral classes, the classes
continue because they do not address an individual's problem solely or even primarily: they serve the
larger community by removing him as a disruptive influence from a classroom of 20 to 35 students and
one teacher.

In the special classroom, with perhaps six students, a teacher and an assistant, the student's behaviour can
more readily be contained. Those with significant emotional disabilities who act out or are particularly
hostile present a real difficulty for the school, an institution in which children and young people learn in
groups, with a fairly low adult-to-youth ratio.

The special-education classroom substantially increases the ratio of adults to students. There are other
conceivable alternatives, some possibly better from the viewpoint of the troublesome students, but
unlikely to be implemented if they do not meet the need for a reasonable learning and teaching
environment for the students and teacher in the regular classroom.

Another, and possibly a better, alternative in many cases, is to increase the number of adults in the
regular classroom in order to keep students integrated while giving them enough close supervision and
support to enable them, through a mixture of prevention and quick intervention, to minimize their
disruptive or anti-social behaviour. Many schools and classrooms have recently become engaged in such
programs, which hold out the hope that students, as they continue to be exposed to high expectations, a
normal peer group, and a common curriculum, will learn over time to model positive social and learning
behaviour. Avoiding the isolation of the special class means escaping stigma and low expectations of
self, while being exposed to, and having the opportunity to learn, the curriculum presented to the peer
group.

**Health interventions:**
For those students who need additional, therapeutic support, schools must depend on health resources
that are not readily available. If treatment could be delivered at the school site instead of in hospitals and clinics, students could spend more of their day in their normal environment, and parents would feel less intimidated by the idea of treatment. And if professional help were available over longer periods to those who most need it, the possibility of students remaining in a normal learning environment and profiting from it, academically as well as socially, might be vastly increased.

If a teacher, whose job is to help students learn a curriculum, is to be able to do so, children and youth handicapped by emotional problems must be helped by health professionals, some of them intensively and for the long term. Whether depressed or angry, they cannot function effectively as students unless they receive very strong support.

These young people are not typical, and they are not numerous; estimates vary, but it is rare for any school to have more than a small number. But these few are not effective learners, and no education, however "special," will be effective for people whose basic health needs are not met.

The connection between the need for treatment for individual students and the provision of a safe and strong learning system for all students must be recognized, and should become the basis for the delivery of mental-health services to children and youth and, where appropriate, their families, as early as possible. Without such support for the few, education for the many suffers.

We reiterate that there are relatively few children and youth who need long-term, intensive professional care. And we remind educators again that not only disruptive and hostile children and youth need help; students who exhibit signs of serious depression are not disruptive at all, but they certainly need significant support from health professionals if they are to realize their potential as learners and as adults.

These children must be a priority for the health system: by dint of their age, they are most responsive to preventive measures and early intervention. And they must not be ignored by the health system on the grounds that they will be looked after by the educational system, when they require the care of health professionals.

The identification, placement, and progress of students with special needs

While different learning rates (slower or faster than average) may seem categorically different from "disabilities," whether learning related, emotional-behavioral, or both, they are organizationally similar: most students who receive special programming - whether in the form of remediation or enrichment through in-class special support, or in a totally segregated setting based on special learning or emotional needs - are first identified in a process that involves assessment and diagnosis, parental consent, and then special designation, whose continuing applicability must be reviewed annually.

The Identification, Placement, Review Committee (IPRC) process is very costly in professional time, typically requiring a significant amount of preparation and involvement by teachers, administrators, and such support personnel as psychologists, psychometrists, and sometimes social workers, speech therapists, and others. This time is invested not only in the actual study of a student's record and apparent difficulties but in the legal formalities as well.

There is reason to question whether this costly identification and placement process serves students well, mostly because the precision of diagnosis ("learning disabled" versus "slow learner," for example) is not supported by equal precision in prescription. In other words, we are far better at labelling learning
problems than at resolving them.

It appears that the reasons some students have difficulty mastering the curriculum are not always accurately reflected by the available assessment tools. For example, while most educators and specialists agree that there are genuine learning disabilities (such as letter reversals in reading), these appear to account for far fewer of the school population than may be identified as learning disabled.

Similarly, the "behavioral" designation describes a classroom problem rather than that of an individual. The student's behaviour is problematic for the teacher and for other students, but the identification as "behavioral" does not clarify the student's problem, or suggest any particular intervention. It is a label, not a diagnosis. That why is we question the value of the I (Identification) in the IPRC acronym.

Most evaluative studies suggest that a great deal of special education does not succeed in achieving its goal, which is to enable the student to make significantly greater progress than peers who remain in the regular program such that he can catch up sufficiently to be reintegrated into the class. The medical model of diagnosis and prescription often does not result in the desired "cure." Therefore, the second reason we question the IPRC process is the poor track record of special-education withdrawal programs, which has helped drive the move towards integrating students with learning and behavioral problems into regular classrooms. With a decline in special placement, and the increased emphasis on program rather than placement, the P in IPRC becomes much less salient.

Perhaps the most important part of the IPRC acronym refers to the R (Review), carried out annually after the identification and placement have occurred. Our concern is that this review may not take place frequently enough, may not be taken seriously enough, and may reflect educators' low expectations of the student, leaving that student in a special program for years, with no demonstrated evidence of improvement. There is little point in special placement that does not result in more progress than would be made in a regular class or program: not only is it unjustifiable, it can be cruel.

In fact, in suggesting a "case manager" approach for students in Grades 1 to 6, and a Cumulative Educational Profile supervised by a teacher from Grade 7 on, we are recommending a system in which there is much more frequent review on an informal basis through regular teacher-student-parent consultation, independent of a special referral process.

The C in IPRC - the Committee process being followed - is sometimes adversarial in tone. Parents are asked to attend the meeting at which the case will be made that their child should be designated as requiring special education, as well as any subsequent review meetings.

If parents are uneasy, or disagree with the diagnosis, they may choose to be accompanied by an advocate, perhaps a lawyer. In other cases, parents feel they have been overwhelmed by a roomful of experts, and have been too intimidated to ask questions or to disagree. As well, although many school boards make efforts to assure that parents are invited to the meeting, and understand it, that does not always happen. In some cases, IPRC decisions are legally appealed by parents. We think that less adversarial, more informal and more responsive interchange between parents and educators might result in better communication and ultimately in better support to the learner.

While we appreciate the need to take decisions to alter students' programs very seriously, especially if that involves removing them from the regular classroom for part or all of the day, and the necessity for truly informed parental consent to such decisions, we are not convinced that the costly legal process involved in the IPRC process is always useful. At the same time, we are very concerned that parents be
fully informed about the school's recommendation, and that when they consent to it, they do so on that basis.

**Recommendations 35, 36, 37, 38**

For this reason, we recommend that:

* when parents and educators agree on the best programming for the student, and there is a written record of a parent's informed agreement, no IPRC process occur;

* when there is no agreement, and an IPRC meeting must take place, a mediator/facilitator be chosen, on an ad hoc basis, to facilitate discussion and compromise, to alleviate the likelihood of a legal appeal; and that the legislation be rewritten to provide for this pre-appeal mediation;

* when a student has been formally identified and placed, the annual review be replaced by semi-annual individual assessment that will show whether and how much the student has progressed over a five-month period, and that decisions about continuation of the program will be made based on objective evidence as well on as the judgment of the educators and parents in regard to the student's progress; and

* school boards look for ways to provide assistance to those who need it, without tying that assistance to a formal identification process.

Funding for such supports could flow to schools on a per capita basis, based on a formula that estimates the percentage of students in a neighbourhood school who are likely to need extra help. (Schools that serve as centres for special education or that have other special designations, such as "inner city" or "special needs," could be funded accordingly.)

Our discussion of the programming needs of children who are exceptional because of physical, cognitive, or emotional handicaps or differences has stressed our support for the integration of such students whenever possible. At the same time, we recognize and have acknowledged that in some cases there are advantages to students in part-time or full-time placement in other settings.

**Recommendation 39**

* Therefore we recommend that while integration should be the norm, school boards continue to provide a continuum of services for students whose needs would, in the opinion of parents and educators, be best served in other settings.

**Supports for learning for all students**

Most students can learn what they are expected to learn as long as they have competent and caring teachers with high standards for themselves as professionals and for their students as learners, a well-planned curriculum, adequate learning resources of all kinds, and family and peers who value them.

Indeed, despite frequent media criticism, lack of concrete evidence of student achievement (as the result of scarce school, district, and provincial assessment data), and some recent, general decrease in confidence in public institutions, opinion polls over the years have tended to show a considerable degree of satisfaction with Ontario's schools. (See Chapter 2.)

But one function that came under particularly heavy criticism was that which is supposed to be carried out by guidance teacher/counsellors, both as career educators and as personal/social counsellors.
Guidance programs are under more pressure to change than most others. Parents and students rarely complain that the way history or geography is taught has not changed; there is no general expectation on the part of the public that the content or delivery of these subjects would necessarily shift over time.

But the world of work changes over time, and is radically altering personal experience, leading to expectations that schools will alter career education accordingly. However, it is not easy to provide satisfactory service with staff who were trained 20 or more years ago, are not regularly retrained, may have had minimal training in this area to begin with, and who typically do not have recent personal experience or systematic links with workplaces other than schools, or even with the college and university systems.

In personal and social guidance, too, the demands and expectations have grown enormously. Teachers (including guidance teachers), administrators, parents, and health and social-service professionals told us again and again that schools are trying to help more and more children and families cope with more and more problems related to poverty, family breakup and dysfunction, and lack of support. Guidance counsellors - some of whom are teachers whose guidance training consists of as little as one summer course - are on the front line in helping young people cope with school as part of their often-complicated lives.

As well, these teacher/counsellors are frequently burdened inappropriately with clerical tasks - sometimes by principals who appear not to value or want to protect the legitimate guidance role, and the staff who should be dedicated to it. These duties take much of their time away from students, and make it difficult for guidance teachers to deliver important curricula in life skills and decision-making, which most students need. Diverting guidance teachers from the legitimate teaching role also makes it more difficult for them to be successful in their counselling role because they are prevented from having an initial, non-threatening contact with students who may latter seek them out for individual help.

Therefore, it is not surprising that guidance counsellors are often described by students and their parents as being insufficiently trained or accessible, and as not meeting the needs of students. All these shortcomings are real, but certainly do not apply to all counsellors at all schools. Many professional associations of guidance teachers and career counsellors told us that there are excellent teachers and counsellors who are eager to be supported by the training, mandate, and resources needed to do an important job well. We trust they will find our recommendations encouraging and helpful.

Career education

For decades, surveys of the Ontario public have shown a discrepancy between the strong importance parents and older students place on career education, planning, and counselling, and the relatively insignificant amount of time guidance and other teachers actually devote to it.(26)

Students say they need help in formulating educational plans and making decisions about courses and options but that guidance counsellors lack information, or are unavailable without a prior appointment, or are unknown to them. We were told that guidance counsellors were often uninformed about college programs, and under-informed or misinformed about university programs. We heard that they spend much more time working with university-bound students than with others, that they know little about the work world, and cannot help students who need work-related information and counselling. We heard, as well, that there is a need for much greater understanding and skill in working with students who are often marginalized by colour or culture.
On the other hand, we also saw impressive evidence of what could be and is being done in innovative
programs involving career centres and various kinds of school and community partnerships. "In those
schools regarded as most effective by students, counsellors spent a great deal of time with students on
career counselling."(27)

Throughout these pages, we have envisioned a system that is cognizant of the importance students and
parents place on career education and planning, and acknowledges the necessity to begin very early to
build student awareness of the myriad of possible occupations, of the value of education to their future,
and of the importance of knowing and developing one's abilities and interests. Such a system would give
a central place to career education, and include trained and dedicated career-education personnel in every
school.

We have put a strong emphasis on career awareness, appropriately embedded in a community-based
learning environment, beginning in the primary grades. (See Chapter 8.) We believe that for this to
happen, teachers must have assistance in gaining access to co-ordinating and connecting opportunities for
community-based, career-awareness activities with the curriculum, taking students outside the school,
and bringing community workers and employers into it. This work depends on someone with time
dedicated to it, and with some experience and interest in school-community liaison and community-based
education.

**Recommendation 40**

*We recommend that all elementary school teachers have regular access to a "community career co-ordinator"
responsible for co-ordinating the school's community-based career-awareness curriculum, and working with
teachers and community members to build and support the program.*

The co-ordinator might be a person who works at a local career centre, a parent, teacher, or community
member with appropriate background and/or experience. The number of hours per week needed will vary
according to the size of the school and the age of the students.

We have also created a cumulative educational plan (CEP), beginning in Grade 6 or 7, and monitored
and regularly reviewed by teacher-advisors in consultation with students and parents, as well as
providing co-operative education and career counselling during the specialization years, and during the
transition from school to work. (See Chapters 8 and 9.)

In order to support the CEP and the career-education-related curriculum beginning in Grade 7, we
believe that students and their teacher-advisors must have access to a career-education specialist who
knows about education, training, and work opportunities, about secondary and post-secondary
educational programs, and who is able to provide students with assessment and counselling as well as job
and career information. We want schools, beginning no later than Grade 7, to have career-education
personnel who are professionally trained to organize, co-ordinate, and deliver educational and career
information, planning, and counselling, with differing emphases according to the age and needs of the
student.

The career-education specialist's job would include direct contact with students individually and in
groups, with parents, and as a consultant helping teachers and teacher-advisors to become aware of the
range of education, training, and work options available to students after high school.

In addition to advising, counselling, and consulting, the job would include periodic monitoring of
students' CEPs. The career-education specialist would continue to assist students, not only those who stay in secondary school, but those who leave before they are 18 years old, advising them, referring them to other sources of help, and helping those who wish to re-enter school to do so. Currently, career education is primarily the job of guidance counsellors who may have little specific training in the area, and who typically do not or cannot give it the time and attention it needs. We are convinced that in future, this service must be delivered by people trained for it, and dedicated to it.

Teacher training is not the essential component; training as a career educator/counsellor is. To the extent that the function will continue to be carried out by existing staff for some time, they must be retrained; people entering the field must also be trained, whether or not they are teachers; the result may be a mixture of teachers and non-teachers doing this work.

**Recommendation 41**

*We recommend that beginning in Grade 6 or 7 and continuing through Grade 12, all schools have appropriately trained and certified career-education specialists to carry out career counselling functions.*

The career-education specialist would continue to advise and refer students who leave school before they are 18 years old, and would help them re-enter school if they wished to do so.

We suggest that the role and function of the career-education specialist be clarified by:

- defining the skills and training required to provide these services, including skills in communicating with a diverse population;
- creating and implementing a plan for educating and re-educating people who are now, or should now be, delivering these services to students; and
- ensuring that career-education services are delivered by those who, after a date to be specified, have the agreed-on training.

The redefinition of the career-education role and function should be done in co-operation with other ministries, such as Industry and Trade, Citizenship, and the Ontario Women's Directorate, as well as with the Ontario School Counsellors' Association, the Association of Career Centres in Educational Settings, and with representatives of colleges and universities, and the training should be accessible from several routes, not only teacher education.

*Any person can call himself/herself a career counsellor with absolutely no qualifications. There is a need for a comprehensive training initiative that is developed with extensive field consultation to ensure that the training is relevant and accessible to practising career counsellors.*

*The Government of Ontario should work with relevant stakeholder groups to establish career/vocational counselling as a recognized field of professional research and practice in Ontario, comparable to its status in other jurisdictions.*

Career information constantly changes and grows. No career educator, however well prepared, can function well without having an excellent and current information base. Responsibility for developing and updating such a base must be centralized and be equally accessible to all schools and all learners.

We suggest that the Ministry support the development, or updating and implementing, of a provincial,
career-information system accessible to staff and students. Responsibility for developing and updating such a database must be centralized, and the information must be equally accessible to all schools and all learners, to teachers, career-education specialists, students (including those with disabilities), and adult learners. We suggest that as one way of establishing a provincial system, the Ministry investigate the role of information technology, in connecting sources and networks of career information and counselling, and explore the feasibility of increasing resource availability through electronic means.

Another type of invaluable information for schools is the careful description of exemplary programs and the conditions necessary for their implementation and maintenance. The Ministry of Education and Training has recently undertaken initiatives, such as the Education-Work Connection (EWC), that expand and improve the information base and the educational opportunities available to learners and to career-education personnel in schools. This kind of project, which builds capacity at the local level by building information and expertise centrally, is extremely helpful.

In order to meet students' needs for career and educational planning and counselling, there must be a clear statement about what students have to know about post-secondary opportunities, best expressed as learner outcomes for career awareness and education. Some of these statements are embedded in The Common Curriculum; others, especially for Grades 10 to 12, do not exist.

**Recommendation 42**

*We recommend that the Ministry, in co-operation with professional career-education groups, the Ontario School Counsellors' Association, and the Association of Career Centres in Educational Settings, and with representation from colleges, universities, and business and labour, develop a continuum of appropriate learner outcomes in career awareness and career education for Grades 1 to 12.*

These outcomes should place a continuing emphasis on linking the school's curriculum to the community and its work settings, and should be understood to include community service.

Because career education has traditionally been delivered by teachers with training in guidance, and because we are recommending that the career-educator function in schools be expanded (to begin no later than Grade 7) and differentiated from the teaching function, it is necessary that the Ministry of Education and Training, in collaboration with professional career counselling and school guidance groups, and with business, labour, and colleges, examine and clarify the role of guidance counsellors in career education, and develop models of effective and exemplary staffing, training, strategies, and practices.

Finally, while we are confident that greater clarity about learner outcomes in career education, and a strong push for more intensive and appropriate training for those who provide it, are the keys to better career education and counselling for students, we are aware that well-planned programs and well-trained staff are genuinely effective only when they are supported by an environment - in this case a school and a school board - that recognizes the importance of career education, and facilitates the job of career educators.

It is our hope that all schools and school administrators will find in these pages the voices of the parents and students who spoke to us, and take seriously the responsibility for supporting dedicated staff who can carry out their duties in career education and guidance.

*Social and personal guidance teaching and counselling*
We also heard concerns about the personal and social (as opposed to the educational and career-planning) function of guidance. Guidance teacher/counsellors are often seen as remote and too unfamiliar for students to approach; in fact, research supports the finding that students are more likely to go to subject teachers for help that would be more appropriately provided by trained counsellors, in part because the guidance teacher is simply not well known and accessible to them.

At some point in their school careers, many, if not most, students will be concerned about an issue that may or may not be educational in nature, but that could interfere with their ability to concentrate on their work. They would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns in confidence with an adult other than a parent, another relative, or a friend of the family.

Because most children and young people know only one other class of adults - teachers - they may turn to one of them for personal help or advice. Some students, when asked, acknowledge that they would like to be able to speak to a counselling adult at their school, but have not done so for a variety of reasons.

Teachers, especially when they are acting in an advisory capacity, should be prepared to listen to students in a friendly, non-judgmental and confidential way, to offer support and advice as appropriate. As well, they must be able to recognize when a student needs more help than they can appropriately offer, and to help that person gain access to a counsellor or health professional. In elementary schools, there is often no guidance counsellor, and referral is usually through a school team to a health professional.

In addition to personal counselling, guidance may involve individual students or groups of students organized around interests and issues such as decision-making, leadership, or social support; or problems, including substance abuse or family violence. In addition, guidance counsellors, who are certificated teachers, have a role inside the classroom and the school, as teachers of life skills and related curricula. Besides delivering a specific curriculum, such as life skills, guidance teachers may organize, supervise, and support such school-wide programs as peer tutors, peacemakers, or the student council.

Counselling

There are apparently several problems that prevent many guidance teacher/counsellors from carrying out their responsibilities successfully. First, a variety of roles, but especially those of teacher and counsellor, have traditionally been subsumed under one title. It is possible that separation and specialization between them would serve schools and students better, and that more differentiated staffing would result in higher-quality and more user-friendly guidance teaching and counselling.

Related to this is the clear fact that for a variety of reasons, guidance staff are not always properly prepared for their work and not always appropriately assigned. For example, part-time counsellors are often teachers of other subjects, with very little training in counselling.

Moreover, because counsellors do not have full-time classroom assignments and are therefore "available," administrators often make demands on their time for work more efficiently done by others: prime examples are clerical duties involving registration, record-keeping, and the like. Finally, too many counsellors see their offices as the appropriate place for working, and they stay there, waiting for students to find them, and serving only the minority that does so, rather than allocating their time in a planned way to groups of students who could benefit from their service. Counselling in many schools tends to be individual and reactive; neither is efficient, and both severely limit counsellors' efficacy for the student population as a whole.
The essence of the personal counselling function in schools is to connect with students and help them cope in school so that they can be academically successful in spite of difficulties or distractions of various degrees of seriousness, many of which are commonplaces of daily life, especially for adolescents.

The appropriate strategy for meeting much of this need is prevention: offering group counselling and group learning/life skills programs in such areas as decision-making, study skills, stress management, and so on. As well, intervention programs for groups of students with definable short-term needs - such as students at risk of failing, or of being suspended because of poor attendance or inappropriate behaviour - can be assisted by a combination of group and peer counselling, with guidance counsellors providing the orientation, training, and monitoring of the peer tutors.

It is not essential that counsellors be certificated teachers, or that teachers be trained as counsellors. What is essential is that people with appropriate training and expertise for preventive and short-term counselling are available and are well known to all students, so that it is not difficult or stressful for students to gain access to them when they wish to make individual contact.

There are ways counsellors can make themselves known and accessible to most students. These include offering a combination of such programs as student council advisor; facilitator of training in study skills, in peer tutoring, and in conflict mediation; and advisor-facilitator of group programs for women students, recent immigrants, teen parents, and others.

If counsellors do not take an active role in the life of the school, their time and services are absorbed by a small minority of students, and they are perceived as not useful.

> It is clear that the majority of students do not see the guidance office as a place to go for help with their personal problems. If guidance counsellors feel this latter service is an important responsibility, they have a great deal to do to make themselves appear not only accessible, but as people who can meet this need.(30)

When, on the other hand, they make themselves well known and accessible, through classroom contacts and programs delivered to the entire school, they make a positive difference.

When students need long-term or intensive help, a teacher, counsellor, or team of teachers and administrators who review teacher referrals must refer these students to a health professional, such as a physician, a psychologist, a social worker, or another therapist. Whether these health professionals are directly employed by the school or school board, or by hospitals, clinics, or community agencies, or are self-employed, their availability as a back-up system is essential.

Schools are not staffed with a high enough ratio of counsellors to students to allow them to give more than brief counselling on an individual basis, and extended mental-health intervention is not what they are or should be doing. When students have problems and concerns that are not readily dealt with, they must have access to qualified health professionals at school or nearby, people who can give them appropriate time and attention, whether individually or in small groups. This is one of several examples of the need for links between the health system and local schools in a way that makes help available to young people where and when they need it.

Teaching
Guidance curricula of the kind we described earlier as group learning and life skills, can be delivered by guidance teachers who spend a set number of hours in classrooms. In cases where there is no guidance counsellor (typically before Grade 9), the existing "guidance" curriculum (decision-making and interpersonal skills) has been delivered by a classroom teacher or by an administrator who may have some guidance training.

It is common for elementary schools to lack guidance teachers/counsellors. This report emphasizes, from beginning to end, that in addition to providing a well-planned, challenging learning program, schools must look to people outside to offer children other kinds of learning experiences - many of which are in what we think of as the life skills areas.

Rather than expecting a busy school principal or a classroom teacher, already responsible for teaching a myriad of academic subjects, to present a curriculum on the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, or to help students learn how to operate a students' council, schools must be able to draw on community personnel outside their walls for the skill and expertise that are certainly present in a variety of publicly supported agencies with mandates that certainly include the children and families served by the school.

In the curriculum from Grade 10 on, we have suggested that life skills instruction, in areas like parenting education, for example, have an important place. Currently, guidance teachers may be delivering such programs, as may family studies teachers. Whether teachers or non-teachers are involved, students need access to this information, as well as to opportunities to discuss their concerns and questions about health- and lifestyle-related choices.

We suggest that there are a variety of possible deliverers of a group learning/life skills curriculum, and of training in such skills as peer tutoring and other kinds of leadership and service to students of any age or grade level. This includes subject teachers, who may integrate a study skills or a small-group learning focus into their program; as well, it may include administrators, guidance teachers, or non-teachers, such as public health workers, community workers, and others.

Thus, teachers with guidance training are one of several possible resources for delivering this curriculum. The appropriate training for delivering group learning, life skills, and interpersonal and intrapersonal development could be the core of a revised program for guidance teachers, in which the teaching role is emphasized.

**Recommendations 43, 44, 45**

We recommend that in order to meet the needs of students for guidance and personal counselling:

*first, the Ministry of Education and Training take the lead in working with the Ministry of Health to develop a definition of essential mental-health promotion programs and services that should be available in the school setting; the professional training necessary to provide them; the services that should be offered to students outside the schools and by whom; and the way responsibility for providing these services is shared across ministries.

*second, the Ministry of Education and Training clarify the nature and function of personal and social guidance counselling in schools by:

  a) redefining the appropriate training required for a guidance or personal counsellor, and creating and implementing a plan for educating and re-educating those people who are now, or should now be, delivering these services to students; this redefinition should be done in co-operation with the Ontario School Counsellors' Association and representatives of colleges and universities;
such training should also be accessible through avenues other than teacher education;

b) ensuring that delivery of these services be implemented by personnel who, after a date to be specified, have received the agreed-on training.

"third, the Ministry of Education and Training develop a new guideline for social/personal guidance to replace Guidance, Intermediate and Senior Divisions, 1984 including a description of the kind of differentiated staffing needed to deliver guidance and counselling services in schools, both elementary and secondary.

In the case of students with serious mental-health needs, we strongly support the principle that the institution that has primary responsibility for the child or youth should take the lead in defining the supports needed, and other institutions should co-operate to meet the defined need. (For further discussion of this principle, see Chapter 14.)

While we believe that it is important for policy makers to consider career education, personal and social education, and counselling as functionally distinct - and to ensure that preparation for, and execution of, each of these roles in schools is well supported - we are aware of several schools in which career education, life skills, and group and individual guidance and counselling are integrated. These programs are of high quality, are accessible, and are well respected by students, teachers, and parents.

We are encouraged by such exemplary initiatives because they can serve as excellent models for the development of new guidelines for training and program delivery.

____________________

Endnotes (Chapter 10)


2. In the text, we have referred consistently to "immigrant students." While it is true that there may be a very small number of students born in Canada but living in a home in which English is not spoken and who might benefit from ESL support, we want to emphasize the very small number who should be in segregated or withdrawal ESL classes. This is not, however, the case in French-language schools, where the need for ALF is as relevant for Canadian-born students as for students born outside Canada.


7. Cummins, "The Role of Language Maintenance."
17. Odden, "Thinking about Program Quality."
26. See, for example, M. Levi and S. Ziegler, Making Connections: Guidance and Career Education


30. King, *The Adolescent Experience*, p. 120.
Chapter 11: Evaluating Achievement

It would seem self-evident that, no matter how carefully designed the curriculum, or how thoroughly prepared the teachers, we cannot know how well students are learning without measuring and describing - assessing and evaluating - their level of achievement and their progress. However, until recently, such information has been scanty and unclear in Ontario.

Assessment, especially when it is used for decision-making purposes, exerts powerful influences on curriculum and instruction ... If assessment exerts these influences it should be carefully shaped to send signals that are consistent with the kinds of learning desired and the approaches to curriculum and instruction that will support such learning.(1)

While recognizing that, as public institutions, schools are obliged to report to the public on how well they have fulfilled their mandate, educators point to many obstacles to doing so about assessing and evaluating effectively, efficiently, and constructively. Professionals who specialize in the complex and technical area of assessment of student achievement acknowledge that it is easier to carry out poorly than well, easier to mislead than to inform with statistics, and easier to spend a great deal of money in assessing what students know than to improve teaching or learning effectively. (We are referring here to professional educators, not to those who have tried - and, in many places, succeeded - in creating profitable businesses built on mass testing that is saleable rather than genuinely useful.)

As the discussion of curriculum emphasized, learning does not proceed in neat steps, each one exactly equal, nor in an unvarying sequence; therefore, tests cannot be applied to students as simply as quality control can be applied to objects coming off a conveyor belt. Tests will not fix students' problems or improve teaching; they will not guarantee that students will find successful jobs or careers. At best, they can tell parents something (but never everything) about what their children know, and give teachers useful information about what material they have taught successfully, and what they need to approach differently.

We know that the schools, the boards, and the province have an obligation to ensure that student learning is assessed fairly and clearly, and that it is reported in a readily understandable way. At the same time, we caution that, no matter how simple it may appear to be to undertake, assessment is complex and costly. It must be done, and done well, but without losing sight of the fact that assessment is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Not only must it enable us to describe what students know and what they have been taught, it must show where improvement is possible and desirable. And, although there is abundant evidence that assessment can cause educators, however unwittingly, to narrow the curriculum and limit students' and teachers' horizons, it must not do so. In Ontario, we need more and better information on what students are learning; we do not need a large-scale testing industry or an educational system that is driven - and limited - by the need to teach only what is easily measured, or to measure only...
what is easily taught.

This chapter considers issues inherent in monitoring and reporting student achievement, and in ensuring quality and consistency in evaluating students' work. We describe good assessment practices, and identify ways in which those responsible for education in Ontario can be more accountable to the public; as well, we chart directions that will lead to the continuous improvement that is characteristic of a healthy learning organization. System accountability, as differentiated from student assessment, is discussed in Chapter 19.

**Student assessment: What people told us**

We heard a great deal of concern, mostly from parents and students, but from others as well, about measuring a student's learning.

Parents want information: to be told, fully, honestly, in a language they can understand, and in a timely way, how well their children are progressing in school, and what teachers will do if students are not making satisfactory progress. Parents want standards in order to know how well their children are doing, compared to others of their age, or according to some accepted and consistent criterion of what children their age should know.

The word "standard" is confusing, because it has a general and a specific meaning, and both are used in conversations about learning and assessment. The general meaning is the one implied in a remark such as, "We need high standards." In this general sense, standards is often synonymous with goal or expectation, and refers to an ideal; it connotes a passion for excellence and habitual attention to quality.

"Standards are objective, exemplary ideals that serve as worthy and tangible goals for everyone, even if some cannot (yet) reach them."(2)

In its more specific meaning, often used by the parents we heard from, standards are a reference point against which performance is measured. Educators compare a student's achievements to a number of different reference points. Performance is compared to that of other students in the same class, the school system, or the province (norm-referenced); or it is compared to some pre-determined, expected level of performance (criterion or outcomes-referenced). Standard in this sense is similar to yardstick, and refers to a typical, rather than to an ideal, state. Both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessments allow us to describe the individual student as performing below, at, or above the standard, whether the standard is other students' performances, or mastery of content. When people call for "standardized testing," they can mean either a norm-referenced test or a criterion-referenced test, although those outside the system tend to be most familiar with the norm-referenced variety. Examples include the Canadian Test of Basic Skills and the Gates-McGinnity Reading Test. The old Grade 13 departmental exams were examples of criterion-referenced standardized tests.

Students, post-secondary educators, employers, and the general public - like parents - are concerned about standards, each group from a particular vantage point and interest.

Students told us they are concerned about information: they want teachers to tell them clearly and promptly what they need to do in order to improve; they want fairness: they believe (as do many adults) that some teachers and some schools mark "harder" than others, putting students at a disadvantage when making application to college or university. (Or, conversely, marking too easily, and putting students at a
disadvantage because they are ill-prepared for the next grade, or for college or university.) Thus they, too, are concerned about common standards for assessment.

Representatives of various sectors of the public - post-secondary institutions, the business community, some professional groups expressed concern about the lack of information about what students know and the existing information that indicates to them that students are not learning well enough. They were often among those calling for an increase in standardized testing, as a way of obtaining more information, and demanding higher expectations (standards) in learning and teaching.

While many parents and community members recommended some kind of standardized testing program as a vehicle for increased consistency and clarity about actual student achievement, some parent groups were concerned about the effects of standardized testing. They noted it might have a particularly harmful impact on minority, low-income, and special-needs students, whose real achievement level might not be reflected because of language differences or difficulties with the test's form, rather than its content; some teacher groups expressed fears that the results of such tests might be misinterpreted.

The recent history of student assessment in Ontario

In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on assessment, as well as an increasing concern about the nature of the most widely used forms of student assessment and uses that are made of the results.(3)

The fact that many people are asking, with some impatience and a sense of urgency, for more information about student achievement across Ontario, reflects the lack of such data over the last several decades, compared to earlier times and other jurisdictions, and the current crise de confiance about education, an anxiety which is certainly fed by lack of concrete information.

Ontario has had very little tradition of standardized testing. Throughout the '50s and '60s, standardized exit exams in Grade 13 (departmental exams) were given in all subject areas, and formed the sole basis for entry to university. In the mid-1960s that changed: results from the exams were coupled with teacher's marks. In the late '60s, the exams were discontinued and teachers' marks became the only basis for university entrance. That change was made in part because it was learned that teachers' marks predicted university achievement as well as the exams. This should not be a surprise: one would expect that a teacher who has known a student for a year, and judged his or her performance on a variety of formal and informal criteria, would be a better predictor of potential success than any single test. Traditional tests, of the Grade 13 variety, tended to reflect ability to memorize and regurgitate, and to bear up under stress - useful abilities, certainly, but not the kind of serious thinking and knowledge acquisition our schools should foster, and not the kind of shallow goals that should shape the curriculum.

Teachers have had considerable autonomy in designing their own assessments, and in making judgments about the quality of a student's work. Teachers' marks have been viewed as an acceptable and adequate method of deciding whether students should be promoted, where they should be placed, and what programs they should undertake.(4)

In the 1970s and early '80s, when other provinces and many American states were expanding their assessment programs, Ontario was leaving assessment in the hands of educators. A program called the Ontario Assessment Instrument Pool (OAIP), for example, created banks of test and assessment items from which teachers of various subjects at different grade levels could choose. The OAIP had potential
for bringing greater consistency to student assessment, but its implementation was left largely to chance and individual initiative, and its potential was never realized.

This policy of leaving assessment to the discretion of individual teachers was clearly stated in the OSIS policy document (1984) for Grades 7-12/OAC:

*For the most part, it is recognized that the most effective form of evaluation is the application of the teacher's professional judgment to a wide range of information gathered through observation and assessment. In order to help teachers evaluate student achievement, curriculum guidelines will describe appropriate evaluation techniques.*

Thus, evaluation techniques were described, but standards against which to evaluate were not specified.

The first of Ontario's recent large-scale assessments directed at evaluating the school system's performance were in science and mathematics. During the 1980s, the province participated in several of them. The results were reported by the media as generally indicating that Ontario students scored mid-way, with about half the other jurisdictions (which usually included a few other provinces as well as many other countries) scoring higher, and half lower. While this "middle-of-the-pack" score was an accurate reflection of Ontario's performance for some tests, it was not for others. In fact, this kind of reporting ignored the size and meaning of differences; in some cases, these were so small as to be insignificant and unreliable. What looked like higher or lower scores in a ranking table were often actually ties, because the spread in points was minuscule. For example, in the Second International Mathematics Study, while Ontario was reported as being in the middle of the table in most areas, in fact only Japan scored higher in algebra; Ontario and British Columbia were tied with two other countries; and the rest had lower scores. The same was true in geometry: Japan at the top; Ontario, British Columbia, and five others tied below it, and the rest below them. But in typical "league-table" reporting, the results seemed far worse.

Having said that, however, it is true that the performance of Ontario's students on the math and science tests overall indicated adequate but not outstanding performance; they tended to be stronger on the basic skills components than on higher-level problem-solving.

We think that the more impressive distinction between Ontario and some higher-scoring jurisdictions (these differed from one test to another and, in addition to Japan, included Hungary, Korea, Taiwan, Alberta, British Columbia, and Quebec) is not how well our students learned, but how much they were taught. The results of comparing what is asked on a test to what the curriculum in a particular jurisdiction is supposed to cover are calculated as the "opportunity to learn" (OTL). What is found, when this comparison is made, is that students in Ontario are simply being taught less - fewer concepts and topics - in mathematics and science than students in some other countries and provinces. Thus, the problem is not achievement - our students show similar mastery of what they have been taught. It is a problem of input, not outcome. While it is possible that our students might be taught some things which were not included on the tests, it is clear that they are not being taught many things which students in other countries are given the opportunity to learn.

*In many ways, the OTL data are more compelling than the achievement results ... the cause of [different OTL results] is that some countries teach a lot more mathematics or science than others ... it does raise the issue of whether we ought to be teaching more mathematics and science ... a topic agreed upon for inclusion [in an international test] is not necessarily more important than material not included. However, when one country gives high OTL to*
twice as many items as another country, it certainly must raise the question of whether that second country is teaching enough ... the question of whether we want to teach more material is settled by examination of subject matter content and societal needs, and not the achievement results. The comparative OTL data point to the problem, and curricular analysis answers it. (5)

(In 1995, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study will involve Ontario students in Grades 3, 4, 7, and 8, as well as secondary school students, and will include mathematics, science, and physics.)

Recently, the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada (CMEC) embarked on national assessments in its School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP), which samples students in each of the participating provinces. The first test, in 1993, was in mathematics and included a sample of 13- and 16-year-old anglophone and francophone students from across Ontario. Results indicated that the two groups were similar to the national average in their knowledge of content (number and operations, algebra, measurement, geometry, statistics, etc.) and problem-solving; like other Canadian students, and as international tests have also shown, their problem-solving skills lagged behind their knowledge of content; and relatively few students were working at the highest levels of achievement. There was considerable inter-provincial variation, with students from Quebec (both francophone and anglophone) tending to score higher than those from other provinces. (Future SAIP testing is scheduled to include reading and writing in 1994 and 1998, science in 1996 and 1999, and mathematics in 1997 and 2000.)

In addition, the Ministry has undertaken provincial reviews of senior geography (1987), senior chemistry and physics (1988), mathematics and reading in Grade 6 (1989), mathematics in Grade 8, 10 (general) and 12 (advanced) (1990), and writing in Grade 12 (1992). These are assessments of curriculum effectiveness based on testing a representative sample of students, plus data based on interviews and observations. (In some cases, school boards extended testing to all students.) Although the provincial reviews were not based on explicit learner outcomes, they have been a good source of information about how well students are learning. The Grade 12 writing review, for example, demonstrated that, while the majority of students were able to write at a "satisfactory" level, very few reached the "superior" category.

All these international, national, and provincial studies have used student samples, which is a much more economical way to assess general student achievement, although it obviously does not permit reporting on the individual student or school. For example, we are advised by the Ministry of Education and Training that the cost of a provincial review is about one quarter the cost of a test given to every student in Ontario. Thus, the Grade 12 reading/ writing review cost about $750,000, while the Grade 9 reading/writing test cost about $3,000,000.

The results of these studies have contributed to public discussion and concern about education in Ontario, and led to increased interest in routine student assessment. In 1993, the government responded by modifying a planned Grade 9 reading/writing review (which would have used a random sample of Grade 9 students across the province) to become a test taken by all 140,000 Grade 9 students in Ontario. (A second Grade 9 reading/writing test is planned for 1994/95, and it, too, will be given to all students.) The 1993 review was based on a two-week curriculum on the theme of food (anglophone) and media literacy (francophone) and included an extensive written portion; test scores counted for 20 percent of a student's final mark. The majority of students performed at or above the level deemed "adequate." Some of the media, however, questioned the validity of the terms "adequate," "competent," and "proficient," based on examples of students' writing graded in those terms. Clearly, there is no pre-determined standard for what
constitutes a given level of writing or problem-solving.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 referred to the development of learner outcomes against which progress can be measured; these have been defined for Grades 1 to 9, and we have recommended that they be expanded to the other grades and levels, and that they be improved. As well, we made reference to the standards being developed in language and mathematics, and we recommended that they be established in other foundation areas. These standards could and should play a key role in future student assessment.

Developing standards depends both on examining actual performance of different groups and trying to develop consensus among educators and the public.

Standards may exist at many levels of sophistication and excellence. They can be set very high (Elvis Stojko's skating, Margaret Atwood's writing, or John Polanyi's work in chemistry), or they can describe realistic expectations and worthy and appropriate goals by which to judge student performance. It is important to note that there is no one way to define a standard: there must be a variety of concrete examples, known to all concerned, that make expectations clear.

One of the most difficult and challenging tasks in education today is establishing these standards, based on informed consensus. Once we have a useful set of outcomes that describe what students should know and be able to do, for example in mathematics by the end of Grade 3, we can assess their performance and compare it to the standards that have been established.

The Ministry of Education and Training has begun to develop standards in language/literacy and mathematics/numeracy. These are based on the learner outcomes for The Common Curriculum for language and mathematics and suggest different levels of performance such as "limited," "adequate," and "proficient" for students at the end of Grades 3, 6, and 9. A student's performance can fall into one category or another in each subject, and within each subject in several areas. The math standards, for example, are built on areas within math that are specified in The Common Curriculum as "measurement," "problem-solving," "algebra and patterning," etc. These standards are intended to provide descriptions of expected levels of achievement by which students' learning can be assessed, and to provide a clear basis for board-wide and provincial assessments of student achievement. As we said earlier, learner outcomes and standards must be very clear for all foundation subjects: language, mathematics, science, computer literacy, and group learning/interpersonal skills. As these standards are developed and refined, they will become the yardstick against which teachers and the public can measure student performance. In fact, the Ministry of Education and Training has already indicated that it plans to use the standards as a basis for assessment at the end of the three grades, although it has not been specific about how it intends to carry that out.

We are convinced that the Ontario government, and educators' professional associations and bodies, must make a serious, long-term commitment to assessment, both for improvement and for public reporting and accounting. While public discussion of the issue often focuses on large-scale assessment as an indicator of how the system is working, it is also a tool for improvement. As a commission on learning, we are very concerned about the quality of assessment, formal and informal, that occurs daily in the classroom, and that informs, or should inform, students, teachers, and parents about improving performance. Much more than large-scale assessment for public accounting, this level of frequent and cumulative assessment has the potential to increase and enhance learning.
Assessing individual students

This section covers four issues. The first, and most important, is assessment for improvement; second is reporting clearly, accurately, and fairly what has been learned. In our opinion, fairness means that individual student assessment is consistent that a 75 percent at one school is not a 65 or an 85 percent in another; moreover, parents must be accurately informed about what their children have achieved in relation to explicit and universally applied standards.

Third is the role of information technology, which has a significant contribution to make to improving assessment practice. Finally, there are issues of bias in assessment evaluating students fairly across gender, social, and cultural lines.

Assessing for individual improvement: The most important reason

The most important use of assessment is as a way of finding out how well students are doing in order to help them learn better, more, and faster. Assessing what students know - and what they don't - enables teachers to capitalize on students' knowledge, and focus on gaps in it. Furthermore, by examining student performance, teachers have the opportunity to assess the success of their own methods and efforts. Evaluating students regularly enables teachers to monitor learning, and make changes when learning is not occurring, not occurring fast enough, or not occurring in sufficient depth. Regular evaluations, with frequent and detailed feedback from teachers, assure students that they understand what is being taught and can move onto the next task, thus advancing student learning. We call this formative evaluation, because it helps form the learning and teaching needed to achieve success.

Large-scale assessments, used to monitor the school, school board, or province as a whole, and individual assessments (such as final exams) used for marks and accountability, are not very useful to individual students. First, students, who need immediate feedback, typically do not find out how well they did on these tests for some time. Second, the results may be just a letter or a number, rather than an analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Third, large-scale tests usually ask questions that are easy to mark, but do not measure problem-solving, analytic ability, or understanding. While marking of surface features like capitalization and punctuation may be carried out by computer, such assessment methods cannot adequately cover content, style, and other elements; nor can they distinguish between a wrong answer which reflects real misunderstanding or ignorance, and a wrong answer which reflects simply a mechanical error.

Teachers and students alike show disrespect for learning and teaching that emphasize "just the facts," are not applied to "real" problems, are "low level," or require "regurgitation." In spite of these espoused beliefs, much teaching and learning is shallow, and there is legitimate concern that this is the result of evaluation practices and perceptions of them.

It is essential that assessment be a regular part of learning. In Ontario, classroom assessment has been the typical vehicle for assessing individual student learning. It is part of the daily experience of educators and students, an integral part of classroom activity, and occurs frequently. It may be formal or informal and is often indistinguishable from instruction; it may take place with an individual or in a group. Classroom assessment includes oral questions, teacher-created tests, quizzes, essays, assignments, examinations, projects, as well as observations of performance, and any other products or samples of work that might provide information about performance. Because it is frequent and varied, classroom assessment can tell far more about what a student knows and has learned than any single test. Teachers
have opportunities to observe whether or not students are learning to think critically, to make connections between prior and new learning, and whether they take pleasure in learning. "Using one assessment procedure is like using a hammer to do everything from brain surgery to pile driving."\(^{(8)}\)

If a test is to give accurate data on a student's full knowledge and understanding of a single concept, it must comprise a number of questions. Telling, reliably, what a 10-year-old knows about math requires a lengthy test. A test that would give reliable information on what that 10-year-old knows about math, language, science, and computers would have to be administered over several sessions, would probably take on a significance in the minds of teachers and students that exceeded its value, and still could not provide the accurate and meaningful evaluation of continuous classroom assessment.

In the classroom, students can work on projects that result in a useful product, or in a real discovery about how things operate. They can write - on paper or on a computer screen - for a real audience, whether a student in another school, near or far, or for the newspaper of the school or the town.

> A lot of intelligences really can't be tested for, in the sense that we usually use the word "test." What we need to do is to create school environments where you can observe a lot about what kids are good at, what interests them, and where they show substantial growth.\(^{(9)}\)

While professional preparation and continuing professional education may expose teachers to all kinds of assessments, good assessment for improvement requires much more attention than it has traditionally received, more than can be delivered in a oneor two-year pre-service program. Designing and marking tests and other assignments (papers, presentations, projects) should be a priority in professional development, as should the systematic use and interpretation of information based on observing and meeting with students. Such training cannot stop when a credential is awarded: it must continue in schools.

Although it is common for educators to point out that the danger of large-scale testing is that it tends to measure what is most easily measurable, it is equally true that accurately evaluating more complex thinking skills in the classroom demands careful training, extensive supervised practice, and the development of skills that are seriously neglected in teacher education.

For example, when students are asked to summarize a story, their product - the summary - can be at the simple level of listing all the ideas in the story or text, in which case the writer shows immaturity in carrying out the assignment. (This may be quite appropriate for a young learner, but it is unsatisfactory later on.) A more adequate summary shows some judgment: the reader selects the main ideas, and links them together sequentially. But this kind of summary still attempts to pay equal attention to each section or episode of the text, to summarize the plot, and usually goes on at length. A summary which shows real comprehension and proficiency (beyond listing and linking main ideas) examines underlying themes, pays more attention to some main ideas than others, or even constructs new ideas, by building on the significant themes of the text - the famous "reading between the lines." Reading and assessing students' work for higher levels of literacy, what some call depth of processing in learning,\(^{(10)}\) is not something that all teachers know how to do, or how to describe to students and parents. But it is the kind of analysis and assessment that is necessary, if we are to teach and to assess for understanding.

Based on what we learned in the hearings and from the research, teachers must provide more and better feedback to students and parents, which pinpoints strengths and weaknesses, results in teachers and
students and parents doing things differently, and is timely enough that it contributes to what the student is learning now, and what the teacher is teaching now, rather that to what was taught but not learned weeks or months ago.

In essence, this is like coaching: for example, a teacher observes a student making an oral presentation on the use of the computers in graphic design and finds that he or she speaks too quickly and does not frame the presentation in a manner that allows the listener to follow easily. Rather than waiting until the term report and noting that the student is weak in presentation skills, the teacher needs to tell the student as soon as possible that speed and organization need improvement, help map out a possible reorganization, discuss techniques for slowing speech, and offer an opportunity to try the presentation again.

Our belief is that the first report card of the year, whether at the end of October or in December/January, should not contain surprises for parents. It should not, for example, indicate that the youngster is reading below grade expectations, when the parent has not previously been made aware of the problem. We know (because we heard about it and because some of us have experienced it) that it does happen, and that it should not. The report card may not always bear good news, but the contact between parents and teachers should be frequent and consistent, whether or not students are performing according to expectations.

Parents need to see the results of routine classroom tests and the evaluations of regular classroom assignments throughout the year, starting in September, as well as portfolios of students' work, with indications of progress made from earlier to later efforts. Teachers need to inform parents about what has been covered in recent weeks and what is coming up; they should tell parents how, at home, they can support their children in gaining specific skills or knowledge.

Our strategy for enhancing individual student assessment for improvement, including helpful feedback, involves giving teachers the information and skills to link better assessment to student learning. Programs that build the capacity to reliably and consistently evaluate writing, problem-solving, understanding, and analysis in all subject areas - in other words, to assess the achievement of the higher-order literacies that we want our graduates to have - are an investment in the ability to measure what matters most. They are a commitment to teach, re-teach, and teach better. Such programs demand considerable time, and thus can be expensive, as is most high-quality, professional training. But, to the extent that we can teach teachers to evaluate complex thinking skills well and consistently, we build the capacity to measure well what matters most.

Consistency is tied to fairness - a subject about which students said a great deal. Right now, the only training teachers get on consistency in assessing critical thinking and communicating skills is in relation to provincial subject reviews and OAC examinations (given in the final year of high school for students preparing to enter university); these do not affect most teachers. But all teachers need to be better educated in assessing, whether that is being done through written tests, essays, presentations, or projects.

Because we are care above all about learning, our first concern with assessment centres on teachers' ability to assess student work accurately and consistently, and to communicate effectively to students (and to parents) how they can improve. We are convinced that assessing for purposes of improvement always depends on the teacher's ability in both assessment itself and on response to the results. That is why the first recommendation we make about assessment is that efforts in this area be the subject of teacher education at every level: in faculties of education, school boards, schools, and continuing professional education at such post-graduate institutions as the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
Assessing understanding, critical thinking, and the ability to generalize, synthesize, and apply knowledge from one situation to another is very complicated and requires considerable experience and practice. Reporting the results of such assessment takes time - to think, to write, and, often, to discuss results with the student and/or parent. The necessary skills are built throughout the teacher's career. We believe that a great deal of the practice and training should take place in the school, with teachers working systematically in teams to mark papers and presentations, and to discuss their ratings, guided by consultants who have expertise in assessment.

**Recommendation 46**

*We recommend that significantly more time in pre-service and continuing professional development be devoted to training teachers to assess student learning in a way that will help students improve their performance, and we recommend supervised practice and guidance as the principal teaching/learning mechanism for doing so.*

We hasten to point out that we are not suggesting that teachers test or assess more or mark more papers, but that they bring a higher level of professional training and expertise to the process of assessing and reporting on what students have achieved.

**Accounting for student assessment: Reporting what is learned**

Accountability begins, then, with something more humble than large-scale testing: it begins with … teachers monitoring and adjusting the daily homework and classwork of students rigorously and consistently. It begins with not accepting work that is shoddy … It begins with a policy that says schools will send reports home more than twice a year. In short, if you want to stop the kind of minimal compliance and perfunctory work that can sink a school, you’ll need an effective and timely grading system, reporting mechanisms, and promotion standards.(11)

Thus far, we have discussed the importance of assessing students for improvement, giving all students a fair opportunity to demonstrate what they know, and offering feedback to students and parents to keep them apprised of the students' progress through frequent and consistent communication.

The final report for the term or year/semester is particularly important: it tells student and parent what level of learning has been achieved in the required knowledge and skills for that course or year. The evaluation summary that appears on the year-end report is permanent: it goes into the Ontario Student Record and may be used by other teachers for planning, or as a way of diagnosing student performance. The report may also be a factor in decisions about course or class placement, streaming, and planning for post-secondary education. Hence, the quality of that assessment has long-term significance. Schools and teachers are accountable to parents for its accuracy and reliability.

We heard from parents and others that report cards are not very helpful: they are unclear or lack sufficient information on how much the student has learned and where the focus for improvement should be. While some parents want marks in letters or numbers, others want more detail and a better sense of how their children are doing. Many parents brought report cards to our public hearings, or sent them, pointing out inconsistencies and "edu-babble." These examples did not reflect well on the teachers, principals, schools, or school boards involved.
While parents who are in regular and friendly communication with a child's teacher are likely to be well informed about the child's progress, that level of communication isn't always maintained: a parent may not be able or willing to articulate concerns or misgivings, or may not always understand or agree with the teacher's analysis. More frequent and more candid communication would do more to correct this problem than any increase in assessments or testing.

Teachers have an obligation to be sensitive to parents who don't understand, don't agree, or who have difficulty articulating their concerns. They have to reassure parents who are afraid to voice misgivings, lest their children suffer some form of retaliation. The fact is that no report card, no matter how precise, makes good communication between teacher and parent obsolete or less vital to the student's well-being.

Parents also want to know how their children are progressing in terms of acceptable and universal standards which, until recently, had not been established. Now that they have begun to be established, standardized assessment is possible - as long as teachers are equipped to carry it out.

As already noted, the recent development of learner outcomes and standards is helping to create a clearer and more provincially consistent basis for curriculum and standards on which assessment will be built. That is a crucial step. We have urged the Ministry of Education and Training to develop "curriculum guidelines based on the learner outcomes that will give teachers and parents a clear idea of the basic structure of each curriculum area each year." (See recommendations in Chapter 8.) We have recommended that, at the beginning of each school year or semester, schools give parents and students information on course content, based on clear learner outcomes. We have also suggested that the learner outcomes in the common curriculum courses be made more readily understandable, and that outcomes statements are needed for all grades and subjects, including the specialized curriculum in Grades 10 to 12.

Clearly written learner outcomes, even without descriptions of different levels or standards of achievement, would make it considerably easier for parents to know what their children are expected to learn and what they have learned. The standards (which have been developed for language/literacy and mathematics/numeracy, and which we have recommended be developed for science, computer literacy, and group learning skills) give parents information they need if they are to better understand and informally assess their children's progress. We believe that reporting to parents should be based on the same learner outcomes and standards as the curriculum. Thus, in a parent-teacher-student conference, parents should be shown examples of work of different standards, so that they can fully understand their own child's level and mark. Report cards should reflect the student's level of attainment of major outcomes, measured by adherence to clear and universal standards.

Goals are made clear if, at the beginning of the school year, parents and students are provided with a written description of expected outcomes, and then get feedback on students' learning throughout the term or session; report cards must be consistent with this information. The importance of evaluating students according to uniform and explicit standards also pertains to issues of fairness and consistency.

An individual student or parent says, "It isn't fair that teacher X (and/or school Y) gives much easier marks than my teacher (school). It gives those students the advantage of a higher average and means they get a place in university that is denied to me, even though my 80 percent is worth as much as their 90 percent." Beyond the individual's complaint, universities and colleges worry about screening applicants to get students who are most likely to be successful. Employers worry about the meaning and value of a transcript or diploma. Society worries about whether its best and brightest have opportunities for higher
education so that they can become pillars of a productive and competitive society.

Because teachers have been held responsible for using uniform, consistent standards that did not exist, they have used their own. The supposed objectivity of numbers, percentages, and letter grades obscures the fact that standards differ; a provincial standard should mean that, while differences in teachers' marks will never completely disappear, they will be fewer, smaller, and less significant.

It is of course true that we can never eliminate all subjectivity in assessment, and cannot pretend that there is or ever will be a fool-proof objective test of everything we want students to know. We can, however, take steps to modify and decrease, albeit not eliminate, inconsistency among teachers in marking.

We have spoken earlier of the necessity to improve teachers' ability to assess students' work accurately and consistently, and of our belief that this professional education must begin early and continue through the teaching career. In order for that training and practice to be most efficient and effective, it is highly desirable that its content be determined by the learner outcomes and standards which teachers will be assessing students on. In order to offer this support, it will be essential to create resource materials and manuals keyed to the curriculum, to guide teachers both at the training and application stages. Such materials must give multiple examples of how the achievement of specific outcomes at various levels (or standards) can be consistently measured. "There is no reason why we have to be assessed in the same way ... If I understand a mathematical principle and I can show you it one way, it's not really important that I show it to you in another way." (12)

**Recommendation 47**

We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training begin immediately to develop resource materials that help teachers learn to assess student work accurately and consistently, on the specific learner outcomes upon which standardized assessment and reporting will be based.

One valuable resource has already been developed, but needs to be updated and refined: the Ontario Assessment Indicators Program (OAIP), referred to earlier, which contains assessment items and ideas for many grade levels and subjects.

The next step, we suggest, is creation of a provincial report card, an Ontario Student Achievement Report (OSAR) based on the outcomes and standards expected in each grade and each subject. In addition to a global mark for each subject or interdisciplinary area (e.g., math or arts), students should be rated on a set of specific outcomes, derived from the common curriculum and provincial standards documents. In the first and second terms, the report should indicate the extent to which the student is (or is not) making good progress toward the achievement of each of the several outcomes related to the particular subject and, at the end of the school year, has or has not achieved that outcome at a satisfactory level.

In the term (and possibly the final) reports, the teacher should include practical and specific suggestions for students and parents for progress and how it can be achieved. The teacher who works at being a capable assessor of foundation skills will give parents the information they want: a clear indication of where their children stand as measured by provincial standards. In other words, we believe the accountability so many parents are asking for is based on clear standards, and on able teacher-assessors making unambiguous reports, the core of which (the key learner outcomes reflected in the report) will be the same for all teachers of the same grade or course. We also believe that teacher comments are a very
important part of any report card, and should refer to significant, authentic demonstrations of knowledge and skills, or to indications of genuine difficulties.

We also suggest that, after Grade 9, when students follow different programs each semester or year, it is desirable to have the same kind of standard reporting format. We have recommended the development of learner outcomes for the courses that follow the common curriculum of Grades 1 to 9; once they exist, the OSAR is equally appropriate after Grade 9. Each subject teacher would indicate the extent to which the student is achieving the expected outcomes, give the student a global mark in the subject, and include helpful comments to the parent. In keeping with current practice, subject teachers' reports would be combined into a single report, possibly with comments from the home-room teacher or advisor-teacher who examined the student's progress across subjects. All of this could be greatly facilitated through the use of standard forms and computer programs developed centrally by the Ministry of Education and Training.

We do not want to remove the flexibility of teachers and schools in reporting to parents in a way that reflects local needs and preferences. We suggest that the Ministry prepare a common report card based on the expected outcomes in each grade within the common curriculum (and each course within the specialized curriculum) and that it provide an electronic copy to every board; boards could seek permission from the Ministry to make additions, but not deletions, and any substantial changes in content or format would require the approval of the Ministry. Of course, boards could add other documents, as long as the Ontario Student Achievement Report was the main vehicle of communication. There should be ample room for teacher comments as well as the check-offs on achievement levels. Translations should be provided by the Ministry for parents who do not read French or English, and a Braille version could also be developed.

The Ontario Student Achievement Report should be designed by a team of educators and assessment experts, with significant input from the community, (through the Ontario Parent Council, for example) and, at least at the secondary level, from the three student federations or the Ontario Student Council (see Chapter 17). The OSAR should be field-tested initially and reviewed regularly to ensure that it meets the needs of teachers, parents, and students.

We are not suggesting that the OSAR for Grade 1 be the same as for Grade 7, even with differences in outcomes. We believe that professional educators, students, and parents are in the best position to decide how reports should be structured, given the differences from one age to another. The key criteria are clarity, a direct link to learner outcomes in the curriculum, and input from the users.

**Recommendation 48**

*Therefore, we recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training, in conjunction with professional educators, assessment experts, parents, students, and members of the general public, design a common report card appropriate for each grade. To be known as the Ontario Student Achievement Report, it would relate directly to the outcomes and standards of the given year or course and, in all years, would be used as the main vehicle for communicating, to parents and students, information about the students' achievements. While school boards would not be permitted to delete any part of the OSAR, they could seek permission from the Ministry to add to it.*

We come now to the matter of setting a standard for communication, one that recognizes the importance of assessment and the right and need of parents to have information on their children's progress, if they are to support learning and the school.
We believe that, in each school year, all teachers should have a minimum of two conversations, in person or by phone, with the parents or guardians of each student for whom they carry prime responsibility.

These conversations (and we see two as a minimum), which are in addition to the formal conference at report-card time, should focus on student achievement, improvement, and concrete suggestions about what parents can do to support their children's learning. From kindergarten to Grades 5/6, this would include all the students in the "main" class, while students in a rotary system would be the responsibility of a home-room teacher or a teacher-advisor, as recommended in Chapters 8 and 9.

We suggest that the first conversation take place prior to the first report if, as often occurs, that is scheduled as late as December; beginning in Grade 7, the discussion would probably make reference to the development of a Cumulative Educational Plan (CEP). (See Chapter 8.)

We are convinced that the key to assessment for accountability to parents is teacher-based standardized assessment which indicates how much progress students make over a year toward the achievement of critical learning outcomes. We think that the government would be wise to invest the considerable monies necessary for good assessment where there is the biggest payoff for students: in extensive, high-quality teacher education for extensive, high-quality, standardized, classroom-based assessment.

**The uses of information technology in improving student assessment**

*In our opinion, information technologies, and in particular microcomputers, can help implement educational practices in accordance with the principles of formative assessment. First, they enable data to be collected and analyzed coherently, and second, they help to improve teaching and student learning.* (13)

We agree that the computer has an important place in individual student assessment, particularly in its potential for giving students quick feedback on how much and how well they have learned.

Eric Dempster, head of the Business Department at Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate Institute in Scarborough, e-mailed a submission to the Royal Commission, giving an example of the way technology can be used in testing, in order to improve student learning. Mr. Dempster says he first used computers for assessment six years ago and allowed students, including those who would have failed but had never been given the opportunity to do better, to take tests more than once. Mr. Dempster averaged the test marks, which provided an incentive to do well the first time, but also showed students they could improve. "The overall result [was] that the poor students felt empowered and realized quickly that they could improve."

His present testing software randomly generates questions, prevents students from restarting a test, and includes graphics.

The students in Mr. Dempster's class are learning more than just the subjects he teaches: they are discovering that they can improve, and that self-assessment is an important part of the process. Many employers told us that, if they are to stay competitive, future workers will have to be experienced in self-assessment. And, because it involves the student guiding his or her own learning with the support of technology, self-assessment also has the potential to increase the teacher's role as coach and mentor.

Mr. Dempster's experiences have been replicated in classrooms where Computerized Adaptive Testing (CAT) is being used: the computer chooses a question on the basis of the answer to the previous one. (14)
A correct response results in a harder question, while an incorrect one elicits an easier question. This quickly clarifies the level at which a student is working, and uses few questions to do so; it also pinpoints for students the areas in which they need more help and/or more practice, and makes them responsible for their own progress.

Immediate feedback can be used to motivate students who might otherwise have very little interest in school. This was one finding of a pilot project in New York City (15) that involved a group of inner-city students considered most at-risk of dropping out. They visited the computer lab once a week and took computer-generated "adaptive" math tests. The computer provided students and the teacher with immediate feedback, "rewarded" students who reached 100 percent in each topic with a graphic of a hamburger, and generated practice sheets for the rest of the week.

Contrary to common expectations of them, many at-risk students in the experimental group sought to do well in the computer tests. Sometimes they argued with the teacher that a response marked by the computer as incorrect was, in fact, right, thus indicating that the assessment mattered to them. An unexpected result of the pilot project was student-generated competition for the hamburger. Over time, the students did better in math, as the result of the "friendly competition," the immediate feedback, and the work of the classroom teacher; moreover, they were less often found to be "off task," doing something other than the work at hand.

It is also interesting to note that, contrary to other research findings, the female students were more comfortable with the computer than were the males.

For some time, technology has been used in assessment, to collect and sometimes analyze achievement data. Teachers are already keeping track of how well students do in assignments and tests, and there is software that enables teachers to graph or otherwise display and analyze the data.

We are certain that, with more and better data, teachers will be in a better position to decide on the best types of programs and interventions for their students. Better information and new ways of displaying it will mean improved reporting to parents. As well, computer-based assessment and diagnosis will reduce marking time for teachers, eliminate errors in marking, and offer opportunities for different test formats and for tests in other languages.(16)

However, good assessment software (of which there is an inadequate supply) should do more, moving students from simply accumulating facts to organizing, analyzing, and transforming data. It should measure the quality, rather than simply the quantity, of the student's understanding. And it should be capable of making assessments using portfolios and "real-life" performances based on provincially set standards, with fewer multiple-choice (sometimes called "multiple-guess") tests to compare one student with others in the class, school, or province. Software that requires students to solve problems, that includes high-quality three-dimensional graphics, and that requires students to present their answers and solutions in a variety of formats, will challenge students to show they understand rather than just remember.

There is a long way to go before Mr. Dempster's on-line assessment is the norm in Ontario's schools. Change of this nature requires professional development, adequate hardware, and the right kinds of software, screened for bias. (And, as we make clear in the next section, equal access to computers is a necessary element in eliminating assessment bias.)
We believe that the potential of information technology to improve assessment is substantial, and suggest that information technology play a prominent role in teacher development in assessment, and that the Ministry of Education and Training, in making high-quality software available to Ontario schools, place emphasis on the potential that software offers for improving assessment.

**Avoiding bias in assessment: Respecting differences, recognizing diversity**

The notion that a student, because of colour, race, or handicap might be streamed to an educational program which is not consistent with the attributes and abilities of that individual is unacceptable. (17)

We have discussed the importance of frequent and accurate assessment of student learning and literacies, and recognized the link between timely feedback and effective student learning, as well as the need to report to parents and the larger public. However, the Commission is very aware that assessment, when not carried out well, can have serious negative repercussions on individuals and on groups of students. The challenge to be effective, helpful, and fair means ensuring that assessment is done well, not that it is avoided.

Assessment must be as bias-free as possible, so that gender, social class, race, culture, and disability are not treated as negative factors. The results of assessment, even of routine classroom assessment, are likely to have an important effect on the confidence and motivation of students, which, in turn, affects performance. Assessment may also have an impact on the student's academic career, and has the potential to cause life-long damage to the person who is assessed below his or her real ability and streamed into lower groups (the "lambs" rather than the "lions" reading group), special education classes or non-university high school streams.

A growing number of parents and educators are raising questions about the over-representation of minority students in special education, vocational, and basic-level programs. The essential concern focuses upon the perceived use of inappropriate testing materials, assessment practices, placement strategies, and restrictive learning opportunities in some jurisdictions. (18)

Many groups are concerned about bias. (19) Various forms of assessment have shown that those who are poor, members of some minority groups, or who are female perform less well than their knowledge or skills would warrant. Some communities complain that their students have been negatively streamed because of biased assessments. For example, more than a decade ago, a York University symposium on racial and ethnic relations in city school boards was told by Marcela Duran that we were able to institute an experimental program, in co-operation with the Jamaican-Canadian Association, in which 100 West Indian children who had been placed in vocational schools were re-assessed, using different testing instruments. According to this process, 90 of these students were found to have been wrongly placed. (20)

We agree that there is ample evidence that students from some groups are more likely to be placed in lower "ability" classes and streams than others, (21) and that assessment methods may figure in those decisions. But we are convinced that improvement depends on more than just modifying assessment procedures: changes are needed in curriculum, teaching methods, and other areas (including, as we make clear elsewhere in this report, a fundamental reduction in streaming).
Given the importance of assessment, it must not only avoid bias on the basis of gender, social class, or cultural background, it must reflect diverse skills and knowledge, valuing what students know and can do, even if they express it unconventionally or do it in different ways.

In Ontario, as in other Canadian jurisdictions, in the United States and in England, a great deal of attention has been paid to the way assessment bias affects minorities and immigrants. This is because some minorities and immigrant groups, as well as students from poor families or communities, are over-represented in special education classes and non-university streams.\(^{(22)}\)

Test bias exists in many different contexts: for example, despite our support for computer-based assessment, we recognize that bias can be found and perhaps even made worse by the use of information technology. We know that students from different socio-economic backgrounds have different levels of access to computers and, therefore, that some will be more at ease than others and that comfort levels undoubtedly affect results.

Four potential causes of bias have been identified in assessing students who are members of ethnic or racial minorities or who are immigrants: bias in the test’s content and form; in the way the test is given; as a result of factors in the student’s environment, in or outside school; and in the ways results are interpreted and reported.\(^{(23)}\) Many of these are related to the inadequacy of teacher education in assessment, and lead to inappropriate student placements.

> Educators must also be careful, when assessing students of ethnic/racial minority backgrounds for placement in special education programs, to ensure that due consideration has been given to linguistic and/or cultural factors that can preclude fair and accurate assessment.\(^{(24)}\)

Assessments of many second-language students do not adequately differentiate between language-related difficulties and the actual level of knowledge or skill the students possess. The person who thoroughly understands all the material at hand will not be able to answer even the simplest question, if he or she does not comprehend the language in which it is being asked. There is the related problem of confusing linguistic deficits with deficits in ability. Students who have emigrated to Ontario may need time to learn the language, but that does not necessarily mean they need remedial or special education.

There is also the issue of measuring students in terms of what they have learned or are capable of learning, in contrast to assessments that have more to do with the learning environment than with any inherent characteristic of the learner.\(^{(25)}\) Is the "learning-disabled" student genuinely disabled, or is the problem a lack of instruction in reading, in disguise?

Before decisions are made to place students in special education classes or in non-university streams, there should be evidence that they cannot achieve progress by changing curricular material or being assigned to a different teacher, and that modified regular-classroom teaching strategies that are being used successfully with other youngsters from a variety of ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic groups are not working.

> Stereotypes develop as we attempt to organize people into categories and to make sense of our world. That in itself is not the problem. However we are in real trouble when these categories are so closed that they prevent us from seeing people's full potential.\(^{(26)}\)

There is also evidence that, on multiple-choice tests, girls and women do not do as well as boys and men.
According to a joint study by the College Board and the Educational Testing Service in the United States, "the gender gap is substantially larger for multiple-choice items than for other types of questions." The study found that the gender gap narrowed or disappeared when students had to write their answers, as in essays or word problems. The study concludes that a mix of assessment instruments is necessary to ensure equity in high-stakes standardized testing.

Another form of gender bias is found in tests that include questions or examples related to activities more frequently of interest to males than to females - certain sports, for example. Obviously, assessment tools must treat male and female students equally, and must meet the needs of our diverse school populations.

In trying to remove bias from tests, efforts have tended to focus more on the material than on training teachers to construct bias-free tests or to use fair testing techniques. This is baffling, given that most forms of assessment - tests, assignments, projects, oral discussions, etc. - are part of the daily interaction between the teacher and students. Clearly, more attention must be paid to teacher education and to on-going professional development.

More frequent and more varied classroom assessment is another way of minimizing bias, but it presupposes that the teacher is familiar with a variety of techniques. When testing or examining students, giving them a choice in the way a question is answered also helps.

A fair assessment also takes the individual student's environment into account. For example, assessing for placement purposes may be inappropriate for a recent refugee or for a student who has just moved from French immersion to an English-language program. Assessment in the student's first language has been shown to isolate problems related to acquiring a second language, rather than to gaps in knowledge or skill, and it should be used where suitable and possible.

Teachers must have a sense of whether or not students and parents believe that an assessment is fair; if they see it as unfair, there is, at the very least, a problem of communication and there may also be one of equity. When it is impossible to test a student in a first language or to delay assessment of a refugee student, it is vital that the student not suffer as the result of our lack of resources or time. That means, for example, not placing the refugee student with younger children when a test might reveal that what is needed is a specially planned program with specific kinds of support.

Bias in assessment will become increasingly important as Ontario participates more regularly in assessments that encompass other provinces and other nations. This is particularly true in a province that is geographically and socially diverse, and that will become even more culturally and linguistically varied. Fair assessment is vital if the system is to more fully reflect the needs of all students.

As a tool for tracking students into different courses, levels, and kinds of instructional programs, testing has been a primary means of limiting or expanding students' life choices and their avenues for demonstrating competence ... [T]he goals ... of assessment are being transformed from deciding who will be permitted to become well-educated to helping ensure that everyone will learn successfully.

In our view, the Ministry must take the lead role in ensuring that its own assessment instruments treat all students equitably and that the materials used in schools are appropriate and fair. It can do this by evaluating the substance and procedures used in assessment and by monitoring the placement of various groups by stream (or track). The Ministry's new anti-racism, equity, and access division can lead the
effort to ensure fairness in assessment. It should also be responsible for monitoring implementation of recommendations made by the Consultative Committee on Assessment and Program Placement of Minority Students for Educational Equity. (30)

**Recommendation 49**

*We recommend that the Ministry monitor its own assessment instruments for possible bias, and work with boards and professional bodies to monitor other assessment instruments; that teachers be offered more knowledge and training in detecting and eradicating bias in all aspects of assessment; and that the Ministry monitor the effects of assessment on various groups.*

**Large-scale assessment of student achievement and the effectiveness of school programs**

**Large-scale assessment of student achievement**

Having said that assessments should be based on agreed-on standards, and that teachers should be trained to use them skillfully and fairly and to communicate their results clearly, we turn now to the matter of external tests, given simultaneously to all students in a grade or course. Some people believe that these are a more objective and therefore fairer and more accurate measure of what students have learned. We believe that some system-wide testing should be built in, as a check on student learning at a few critical transition points, and as a vehicle for assuring people that, at those points, all students are being assessed according to the same yardstick.

However, it is important to emphasize that large-scale testing has limitations; otherwise, people reach what we are convinced is the mistaken conclusion that these few tests are the most important in the student's school career, or that many such tests would be ideal. In our opinion, large-scale testing is unlikely to be a more fair and accurate representation of student learning than the best judgment of the well-trained teacher-assessor. Moreover, such testing is easily misused. The following are the three basic problems of using large-scale testing as the major form of student assessment.

First, any external testing is, of necessity, much briefer than classroom-based assessment: a single test cannot reflect everything students are expected to learn over a year. For example, to get a true reading of what a Grade 6 student has learned in math, a number of tests would be necessary, each quite lengthy, to overcome such irrelevancies as the student's level of well-being (hours of sleep, nutrition) that day, or the use of an unfamiliar word in a problem (which might lead to the erroneous conclusion that the student didn't understand the question or the mathematical operation), etc. The reason we are urging that the major source of data on student achievement be that which is collected by the classroom teacher over the year is precisely because that is what offers the greatest potential for reflecting, cumulatively and in summary, what has been learned. A simple achievement test, such as the Canadian Test of Basic Skills, or others of that kind, is not designed to reflect what children know in any depth. Its purpose is to arrange students along a continuum, from those who know most to who know least, in order to make placement decisions. Such tests are not measures of how well teaching and learning have occurred.

*Let's say, for example ... that you get a certain score on a standardized test. Can I assume then that you understand something? You might say, "Sure, because those tests test for understanding. But ... research indicates that most students in most schools ... do not really understand ... When you ask students who get very high grades ... to explain a physical*
phenomenon, not only can they not explain it but they actually give the same sort of
explanations that four- and five-year-olds give ... We can only really determine whether a
student understands something when we give the student something new, and they can draw
upon what they have learned to help answer a question, illuminate a problem, or explain a
phenomenon to someone else.\(31\)

Testing is no panacea for an education system under stress. After all, a mechanic can
inspect a car without making the necessary repairs. The long-term educational improvement
lies with a comprehensive restructuring of the enterprise, not in resorting to the proverbial
"quick fix" of a standardized test. The public needs to be informed about the growing array
of assessment tools, but also about how they should be interpreted to improve student,
school, and system-wide performance in education. For that reason, testing is only one part
of a more comprehensive education restructuring package.\(32\)

Second, because of their necessary brevity and because thousands of tests must be marked quickly,
external tests usually tend toward short-answer and multiple-choice questions, with all their severe
limitations on measuring understanding and learning skills. They are the classic case of measuring what
is easiest to measure, not what is most important. We are not suggesting that such tests can?t measure
certain important abilities we expect all students to have, only that they cannot and do not measure all, or
any representative sample, of them. They are biased toward certain kinds of learning, and there is ample
evidence that such bias distorts the curriculum in ways that are unhealthy in an educational system that is
serious about learning.\(33\)

Third, any single test used for large-scale assessment and reporting assumes a distorted importance, and
can - and often does - have long-term, frequently negative consequences for students and for the learning
system, because of the inappropriate ways the information is used. Tests meant to measure whether most
children have learned the year's material should not be used to make decisions about students' capacity
for learning, or their long-term ability to succeed in school or in the regular program. The problem is
that, typically, test scores end up being put to such inappropriate uses. Placement decisions should not be
made on the basis of any single test given on a single day in a student's year; however, that is precisely
how they are frequently used.

As early as the late 1970s, evidence began to accumulate showing that high-stakes
standardized testing policies were highly corruptible, creating greater incentives for
cheating than for actually improving instruction, and that the use of standardized tests for
accountability had actually narrowed curricula and driven instruction increasingly towards
pedagogues, based on memorization and basic skills rather than improving educational
quality.\(34\)

The 1993-94 Ontario Grade 9 testing for language and literacy (with a similar test being given in
1994-95) can be used as an illustration of these points. It is, in fact, a very good test: first, it took place
over more than six hours, spread over a two-week interval, thus giving students an opportunity to
demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in a way that would be impossible in a typical one-hour
"test of basic skills" or the like. Second, the test did not just ask short-answer questions, but was a
genuine assessment of performance.

Nonetheless, by itself, the test would tell us less about what students learned about reading and writing in
nine (or fewer) years of schooling than would teacher reports based on clear and consistent standards.
Moreover, it did not differentiate among students schooled in Ontario for one, two, or nine years prior to
the testing. But it did give us valuable data on how well Ontario's Grade 9 students understand what they
read and whether they can write clearly, expressively, and to the point. We do not know yet whether the
test will lead to improved teaching and learning, but it was a much better accountability mechanism than
most tests - and, of course, at about two million dollars to administer each year, much more expensive.
(As we have already pointed out, however, good assessment is very expensive.)

We applaud the Ministry's attempt at large-scale testing in order to measure learning authentically.
Despite its strengths, however, a test's ability to withstand inappropriate or damaging misuse is much
more problematic. The Minister made it clear to educators that the test was to count for 20 percent of the
course mark, but was not to be used for making major decisions about student achievement. It was not to
affect whether the grade was passed or failed, or whether the students were to attend summer school or
be placed in different programs or "streams" in Grade 10. Nonetheless, informally and unofficially, there
are indications that, in some instances, it has been used in exactly those ways.

Whether these reports are accurate, and irrespective of the number of cases to which they might apply,
we see such uses as the natural outcome of large-scale external testing. It becomes "high stakes" testing,
even when it is not intended to be.

While we want to be very clear about our lack of enthusiasm for extensive, expensive, universal testing,
as opposed to sample-based assessment, we recognize the public's need for some measure of basic
student achievement that is applied in the same way to every student at a few points in time. That is why
we are recommending two province-wide assessments to be given to all students relatively early in their
schooling, with the understanding that educators (most especially school principals) will make it clear
that the results of such assessment are to be used by teachers, individually and collectively, for purposes
of diagnosing and remediating the individual student's difficulties or gaps in learning. In addition, the
tests are to enhance reporting to parents and for examining the content and delivery of curriculum. Test
results are, most emphatically, not to be used to place or sort students for any reason. They will serve as a
central check on how effectively the curriculum is serving the learning needs of the students, and can be
an aid in revising or refining curriculum content or teaching strategies.

We are also recommending that a test, to be given much later in a student's school career, make the
secondary school diploma a literacy guarantee.

Assessment for early acquisition of literacy and numeracy: getting it right from the start

We have built a learning system on a strong, early foundation. (See Chapter 7.) We have urged that all
children be helped to become literate and numerate by the end of Grade 3. By that time, we expect that
almost all children should be able to read and understand materials appropriate to their age, and to write
on an assigned topic, or a topic of their choice, showing reasonable understanding of conventional rules
of grammar, spelling, and punctuation, as well as an ability to bring organization and a "voice" to their
writing. As well, we expect them to be able to use the four arithmetic operations, and to understand when
to apply them. We see the value of a check on the success of the system in delivering a program that
brings all or nearly all children to a point, by about age 9, that enables them to build on dependable
foundation skills so that they can acquire more sophisticated knowledge and understanding. We think
that parents will also welcome conversations with their child's teacher that include the results of this
universal assessment, and a discussion of the child's future progress.
Recommendation 50

*Therefore we recommend that all students be given two uniform assessments at the end of Grade 3, one in literacy and one in numeracy, based on specific learner outcomes and standards that are well known to teachers, parents, and to students themselves.

And, in order that these tests have high credibility in the eyes of the public:

Recommendation 51

*We recommend that their construction, administration, scoring, and reporting be the responsibility of a small agency independent of the Ministry of Education and Training, and operating at a very senior level, to be called the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability.

This agency will consult with provincial leaders in literacy and numeracy education who can provide leadership in creating assessment instruments that are as valid and reliable, as authentic and comprehensive, as possible. We recognize that principals and teachers will need support and assistance in interpreting and reporting the information gained from these instruments, and would expect both the agency (through the written material it prepares) and the Ministry to act as sources of expertise for school boards.

The results of these tests should be reported promptly and in clear language to parents individually, to every teacher whose students have been tested, to the local community at the school level, and to the general public at the board and provincial levels.

Assessment for graduation: the diploma as a literacy guarantee

The value of assessment at an early stage, such as the end of Grade 3, is that it gives a clear indication of a child’s strengths and weaknesses, and shows where school and home efforts must be focused and monitored. There is also value of a different kind in assessment for accountability near the end of the student's secondary schooling: as a fundamental guarantee, the education system must assure the public that a high school diploma signals adult literacy; that no high school graduate is incapable of reading and writing well enough to communicate in a post-secondary classroom, on the job, or in order to meet the demands of everyday life as a citizen and voter.

Recommendation 52

*We recommend that a literacy test be given to students, which they must pass before receiving their secondary school diploma.

The test would be given in Grade 11, the year before graduation. Students who did not pass the first time would be able to retake the test until they did, but graduation would be dependent on passing.

Some students who took the test the first time might find that they needed help in order to pass, and they would have an opportunity to find that help, and prepare again for the exam. The test would be inappropriate for some students in specially modified programs (such as those in schools for the severely developmentally handicapped) that do not now generally lead to a diploma. However, we believe that it is reasonable to award a diploma only to those who pass the literacy test.

We propose that other large-scale assessments be applied, not to individual students, but to representative
samples of students. These would be used to judge how well the curriculum was being learned, as now occurs in the case of provincial, national, and international assessments in mathematics, science, and other subjects.

**The effectiveness of school programs: program and examination review**

As we have seen, individual students are assessed by their teachers, with the addition of occasional large-scale assessments, and students' progress and achievement must be reported very regularly to parents.

Furthermore, those who are responsible for the overall quality of the system - the provincial government and local boards - must not only ensure that individual students are progressing, but that the curriculum is being delivered effectively and that, on the whole, students in each grade and subject are learning what they are expected to learn.

This is system-level monitoring of achievement. It does not involve testing or assessing every student or every classroom but depends on monitoring student achievement and teacher practices by testing representative samples drawn from across the province; in addition, these samples must be of sufficient size to provide reliable data at the individual school board level.

In Ontario, two processes are used to accomplish those goals and both are extremely sound approaches to system monitoring. The first of these is the process known as the provincial reviews of curriculum, and the second is the examination review process at the senior level, known as the OAC/TIP program. Both have applications well beyond their present restricted use and reporting. At present, both suffer because they are applied sporadically, rather than systematically, across the curriculum, and because the results are under-reported.

**Provincial reviews of curriculum**

From time to time, provincial reviews of a variety of elementary and secondary courses are undertaken. In each case, the review includes testing of a representative sample of students on the content of the course (for example, Grade 6 reading or senior-level geography), as well as an inspection of curriculum materials, interviews with teachers and students, and other information that helps describe what is taught and learned.

As a result of a provincial review, the Ministry and all school boards have concrete information about the parts of the reading or geography curriculum that are being successfully delivered to students and the parts that are not, based on student performance. As well, they can identify the kinds of resource materials that may be lacking, and the areas in which further teacher education should be offered. These reviews are useful, for both large-scale assessment purposes and for teacher and curriculum development. But they are scheduled sporadically and unpredictably and are publicly under-reported. Moreover, because clear and consensual standards are not established in advance, the results of such assessments are sometimes questioned.

In order to build a good program for educators and make it an effective monitoring mechanism as well, the Ministry of Education and Training should commit to a regular review cycle in all subjects that are part of the common curriculum, with more frequent review in the foundation areas. Subjects should be reviewed at points within the common and specialized curriculum; for example, a history or a geography
Some school boards have used the provincial review to include all students, with no individual identification attached to the test. We applaud this concern for accountability at the local level, and consider it very appropriate because it does not confuse individual scores with evaluating the performance of the staff and students of an institution.

There are, of course, serious concerns about invidious comparisons that ignore many factors over which the individual school has no control. However, the provincial review data have been, and should continue to be, used by schools and school boards to improve teaching and learning at the local level. We believe that review results should be shared with the professional staff and school governance committees of schools that participate, as well, of course, as school board administrators responsible for monitoring and supporting schools. That, after all, is the level at which the data are useful for making improvements to a school. (See the following section for a more extended discussion of this issue.)

The provincial curriculum reviews have also involved teachers as markers, a process exactly like that we described earlier as the ideal professional training for classroom assessment. Working in groups, with the support of experienced markers, teachers reach agreement on what makes one paragraph or paper more or less satisfactory than another, and they establish criteria for judging performance consistently. Thus, the teacher development "spin-off" of the monitoring process is, itself, an investment in better assessment in the classroom.

The examination monitoring process

In the 1980s the Ministry of Education began monitoring examinations used in the Ontario Academic Courses (OACs). This process, which is officially called the OAC/TIP (for "teacher in-service program") was designed to ensure consistency in the quality and coverage of the exam and the marking standards set by each teacher in every course which helps to qualify students for university. The process involves collecting and scrutinizing examinations teachers set and the marks they award to the students' examination papers. All publicly supported secondary schools, as well as inspected private schools that offer university-preparatory courses in the final year (OAC), must participate in this examination review process. At this point, the process, which has been virtually invisible and unreported publicly, has not been extended to any other courses.

After surveying practices under the OAC/TIP, the Ministry of Education and Training develops a handbook on designing and marking examinations in a particular subject area. Teachers in-service programs inform them about the contents of the handbooks, and schools submit copies of their final examinations and scoring keys, as well as a range of test papers representing high, average, and low scores.

An analysis of the examinations and their consistency with expected standards enables the Ministry to judge the impact of standards; schools that vary from them are required to take corrective action and report to the Ministry on the steps they are taking.

University teachers are also part of this process, although their participation has tended to be based on individual expertise, rather than encompassing any responsibility to represent and report to the larger university community. We suggest that, in future, universities and colleges see their role in the process as an opportunity to present their needs and requirements as part of the formation of standards, rather than
remaining outside of that conversation.

We further suggest that professors and instructors who teach undergraduates in a discipline, rather than those at the professional (faculty of education) level, take part in the process. People who will be teaching English, geography, or other courses to first-year university and college students are better placed to participate in decisions about acceptable levels of performance in Grade 12, and to work with secondary educators to help students make the transition from high school to college or university.

To date, the OAC examination review has been conducted in several subject areas (English language and literature, visual arts, calculus, economics, accounting, physics, chemistry, and Francais) and is currently scheduled to add one subject per year through 1996. While it is expected that schools or teachers will take action when a review indicates that there are areas that require attention, implementation has not been systematically monitored, and results have not been publicly reported.

This process, like the provincial curriculum review, is especially worthwhile because it involves many teachers in the marking exercise, and, thereby, expands their professional capacity for assessment. Teachers must become more skilled at making professional judgments on the quality of responses to questions that are not simple, multiple-choice or otherwise close-ended. Building this kind of skill and expertise educates teachers in consistent assessment of high-level learning.

The OAC/TIP examination process has all the elements of good assessment and teacher development, but needs better quality control, much more public visibility, and very considerable expansion. As a monitoring program, it can help ensure that a teacher’s application of assessment standards is accurate and consistent; this will give increased credibility to a system that depends fundamentally (as any school system must, and any honest school system will readily admit) on teacher education and expertise.

The examination review process, in combination with provincial reviews, gives a reasonably complete picture of what is being learned, and how fairly and consistently that is being assessed. It can and should be taken to the next step, implementing changes in programs, teacher training, and marking procedures, based on what is learned. Furthermore, implementation should be monitored.

The examination review procedure should be expanded to include the full range of Grade 12 courses. Because the process has significant potential for helping to achieve consistency, and because we believe the process should be transparent, it should be extended, and all results should be reported to the public.

Without doubt, considerably expanding program and examination reviews will involve educators in Ontario in more program evaluation than they are accustomed to doing, and will necessitate diverting more funds to assessment. We believe that such efforts and investments are essential; we are convinced that they will be supported by the public, as long as they are carefully designed and implemented, and as long as results are clearly, promptly, and publicly communicated. We see curriculum and examination reviews (what have been called program reviews and the OAC/TIP model of examination review) as an important and ongoing responsibility of the Ministry, in the development of curriculum outcomes, standards, and assessment measures or strategies; and the administration, scoring, and reporting of results.

We envision a cyclic large-scale and province-wide assessment program that:

- identifies the one or two areas (skill, subject, cross-curricular) to be assessed for each of the next three years, with a commitment to extend this schedule by announcing another program each year;
is centred on established outcomes and standards for assessment that will form the basis for judgments about students' levels of attainment, to be shared with educators and the public for discussion;

is based on a statistically reliable sample at the provincial level;

will be planned and conducted by teachers and experts in assessment, working together;

requires each board to participate in a board-wide assessment, so that the content and process are consistent throughout the province, and the results comparable from one jurisdiction to another.

**Recommendations 53, 54, 55**

We recommend that:

*the Ministry continue to be involved in and to support national and international assessments, and work to improve their calibre;

*the Ministry develop detailed, multi-year plans for large-scale assessments (program reviews, examination monitoring), which establish the data to be collected and the way implementation will be monitored, and report the results publicly, and provide for the interpretation and use of results to educators and to the public;

*initially, and for a five- to seven-year period, until the process is well-established in the school system and in the public consciousness, an independent accountability agency be charged with implementing and reporting the Grades 3 and 11 universal student assessments. The reports and recommendations of the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability would go directly to the Minister, the College of Teachers, and the public.

The other responsibilities of the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability are detailed in Chapter 19.

**Reporting the results of large-scale assessments**

While large-scale assessments are complex and expensive, the results they produce, and the wealth of information they contain, must be reported in ways that can be easily understood without being trivialized. The results achieved by Ontario students in international and national assessments have raised public awareness and concern, particularly because they identified some areas that need concerted attention. As we have pointed out, however, the results have sometimes been used - and misused - to rank Ontario in terms of other jurisdictions, but without thoughtful consideration and interpretation of the studies themselves. While not a simple task (it is a major challenge for the future), reporting results understandably and usefully is vital. This is an area in which the media also have serious responsibilities, to inform, not thoughtlessly arouse, the public.

Although the provincial government's main interest is in the overall state of education in Ontario, information about large-scale assessments is more useful to parents and educators when it is available for their particular school and school system; educators are concerned that any potential usefulness is offset by the possible misuse of the information.

Their concerns are not unique: there have been vigorous debates in other jurisdictions, especially where school results are reported as rankings or "league tables," and have been used as simple indicators of the relative quality of schools. Even a cursory look shows that these kinds of comparisons are totally inappropriate and ignore such crucial influences on student achievement as socio-economic family status, parental literacy, facility in the language of use, etc. Merely ranking schools may identify the area in
which the most privileged students live, but it does not indicate the degree to which any school has helped its students develop. The fact that a school is apparently successful may be the result of non-school factors, just as the schools in which achievements seem modest may, in fact, be serving students who enter with low performance levels and improve greatly.

The issue of the value added by schools has become very heated, engendering both political and technical problems. Particularly in Britain, where the process has been in place for a while, teachers rightly point out that achievement results are inadequate measures of a school's contribution to student learning, and some have even refused to participate in the national testing program.

The British experience shows clearly that when the purpose of the study is to establish the effectiveness of the school, it must include information about contextual conditions, such as the readiness of students to learn, the nature of instruction, and the resources available. A statistician who has considered this problem in Britain says that:

\[ \text{It is not technically possible with any reasonable certainty to give an unequivocal ranking of schools ... it is important to avoid the trap of supposing that the provision of some information about schools is better than no information. The problem is that such information will be biased and misleading.}\]

The overall complexity of adjusting scores and the overly simplistic approach of publishing raw scores, brings into question the usefulness of ranking schools. Britain's National Commission on Education concluded that a single statistic was not an adequate summary of a school's effect on the progress of students.

This is not intended to suggest that information should not be provided about how schools are doing. But it does highlight the problems of making valid school comparisons on the basis of simple scores and the importance of schools and school boards giving results that include comprehensive information about themselves.

The most appropriate and constructive use of school results for comparative purposes is to look at results in the same school over time. Barring very major changes in neighbourhood demographics (which usually occur only over numbers of decades) the population of a given school is more comparable to itself over time than to that of another school:

For example, checking a student assessment in 1997 with the results of the same assessment at the same school in 1995, offers teachers and the principal an important indicator of progress and quality. When such comparisons are anticipated and planned for, staff have a real incentive to develop targeted school improvement plans, and to compare the next set of results to those plans. Making schools accountable for improving, as opposed to making them accountable for factors beyond their control, gives the promise of really adding value and quality to existing school practices.

\[ \text{To assess value added - and to gain valid insights into whether your schools are effective - you have to compare tests or other results over a period of time, with the same group of students.}\]

Another difficulty related to reporting is that of obtaining results of large-scale assessments broken down according to such sub-groups as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and geographic region. Although this kind of analysis is technically possible if the information is available, detailed
demographic data on students is not collected by most school boards. As well, as in the case of reporting results for individual schools, it would be almost impossible to explain differences that might be found among the population groups, unless a great deal of contextual information was added. Without these breakdowns of results, however, educators cannot fulfill their responsibility to monitor equity of outcomes.

Policy makers must accept responsibility for actively communicating with the public about large-scale assessment results, and must work with technical specialists who know the study and can help them interpret the results accurately to the public in many forms and forums. The major challenge is to provide as much information as possible, accurately and succinctly, without oversimplifying the message.

Large-scale assessment rarely provides unequivocal answers, but it does create a context within which different interests policy makers, professional educators, and parents, among others - can find a basis for informed dialogue. It can provide the foundation for debates about public policy, and identify the general direction for making changes in emphasis or focus. More than anything, policy makers must create a range of action plans for responding directly to the results of the assessments.

We urge that school boards and schools be provided with direction and training (initially by the independent accountability agency) to ensure they are able to report results of provincially directed assessments accurately and clearly, to their respective communities, and that, when they wish to do their own assessments, they be helped to do so, using high-quality tools.

**Recommendation 56**

*We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training, in consultation with community members and researchers, develop a specific procedure for collecting and reporting province-wide data on student achievement (marks, and Grade 3 and Grade 11 literacy test results) for groups identified according to gender, race, ethno-cultural background, and socio-economic status.*

**Conclusion**

Because they represent the visible products of schools, student assessments and program reviews are key elements in the process of education reform. The Commissioners are very conscious of the impact our recommendations will have on curricula, instruction, teachers, administrators, and, most of all, students. As the focus of education moves towards raising the levels of literacies for all our students, we can no longer rely on simply sorting and comparing students. The Commission is saying that, instead, we want clear descriptions of whether students are achieving the complex learning outcomes they will need if they are to succeed in the 21st century.

**Endnotes (Chapter 11)**


6. For example, a study in the United States of both standardized science and math texts - and the tests included with the textbook series - found that they contain almost entirely (close to 95 percent) items which test memorization and quick recall, and omit, almost entirely, items which test the higher-order functions involved in genuine problem-solving. See C. Holden, "Study Flunks Science and Math Tests," *Science* 258 (October 1992): 541.


10. Kirby and Woodhouse, "Measuring and Predicting Depth of Processing."


16. Lauren H. Sandals, "An Overview of the Uses of Computer-Based Assessment and Diagnosis," *Canadian Journal of Educational Communication* 21, no. 1 (1992): 71. This article lists a variety of other benefits.


23. Chodzinski, "Teacher Strategies for Non-Biased Student Evaluation," p. 69. The list is based on work by Ronald Samuda
28. In 1980, a study by R. MacIntyre, A. Keeton, and R. Agard found that certain diagnostic tests, such as the Bender Visual Perception, the Wepman Auditory Discrimination Test, and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, were not adequate to identify learning disabilities among minority children. Quoted in Samuda, *New Approaches to Assessment and Placement*, p. 7.
33. For an extended discussion of this evidence, see T. Toch, *In the Name of Excellence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
Conclusion: What We Have Said about the Learning System

Our vision of curriculum is very broad: it begins with the traditional - and we think very proper - concern that children acquire essential foundation skills; these have always meant literacy and numeracy, have long included scientific thinking, and now, we strongly believe, also include computer literacy and the skills needed to work and learn with and from others.

From the beginning, however, we have talked about more than the traditional curriculum; in fact, we have talked about more than the program of schools. Our discussion and recommendations are directed at understanding and improving the learning system, as an integrated whole, one that stretches beyond school walls, not merely beyond classroom walls.

Traditionally, discussions of curriculum begin with the curriculum of Grade 1; sometimes they include kindergarten. But we look at the learning system as beginning at birth and with children's first teachers: their parents. We hope that throughout these pages, with their many issues and recommendations, people see clearly that we have not deviated from our conviction that parents are the first and most important teachers, and that the influence of parents and schools on learners is intertwined and inextricable.

Many of our recommendations stress the need to increase knowledge and communication in both directions, and to share more information and authority between the two. There are two reasons we want parents to know what children can and should be expected to learn at every age and stage in their development: first, so parents can be effective as educators in their own right; and second, so they can be effective as emissaries and advocates for their children at school.

It is in the child's interest as a learner that parents be very well informed and very powerful. That is why we speak of the need for parents to be told and be aware of what the curriculum is, what the expected learning outcomes are, and what standards of achievement are considered acceptable in foundation subjects.

Our recommendations on building assessment expertise in teachers are also designed to improve both teaching and learning, and to make more information available to parents and the public about what is being taught and learned. The same is true of our recommendations concerning system-wide curriculum reviews, and of our recommendation that a standardized and informative report card (the Ontario Student Achievement Report) be sent to all parents.

We have said that learning begins at birth, so our discussion of the school curriculum begins for children at age 3. We have recommended that full-time schooling be available across Ontario for children of that age. While this would be routine in some countries, it certainly is not in Canada: we are well aware that
some people may look on our recommendation for universal early childhood education as an unnecessary or unaffordable luxury too expensive to provide universally, if at all.

Having reviewed the evidence of the effectiveness of such programs, we are convinced, however, that Ontario cannot afford not to have them. Our children are in school longer than most others; we spend significant sums of money on remedial and special education programs. Yet, in spite of these programs and expenditures, the overall achievement level of our students is not outstanding. And while many, many children receive an excellent public education in Ontario, there are still some hard truths to be faced: only a minority achieve what can be called high-level literacy; a large minority don't make it through high school; and, within some disadvantaged groups, that minority comes perilously close to, or even reaches, majority status.

We want what we believe most people in Ontario want: more children to be better educated, and the irreplaceable asset of an excellent education to be owned equally by all our children. Excellent early childhood education is one big step toward achieving those goals. There are any number of reasons why that is so, but a central one is that, from infancy, children are acquiring ideas about cause and effect, about comparison and contrast, about quantity - in short, about the most fundamental building blocks of thinking and learning; by the time they are three years old, knowledgeable, skilled, and caring teachers can make a real difference for them.

Beginning school earlier gives children advantages. But those can be lost if the emphasis on teaching and monitoring the acquisition of foundation skills, especially language skills, is not maintained throughout elementary and secondary education and most especially during the first three years of compulsory schooling.

We have taken the position that almost all children should have mastered the basic literacy skills before the end of Grade 3, and we have recommended a universal literacy test (as well as a numeracy test) at that point, on the understanding that significant steps will have been taken one or two years earlier to help children who are having problems.

While we know that many children will continue to need support throughout the common curriculum years, and that some individual learning difficulties require on-going special attention, we have no doubt that early education and early help will prevent an enormous amount of frustration and suffering. It is the first essential step the system can take toward creating a better-educated populace.

We stress continuity. Children pass through teacher after teacher, class after class, and school after school, from their early years until they leave secondary school. Yes, interests and aptitudes grow and change, but the singularity and consistency of the person is always apparent.

It is very difficult for teachers or schools to have such a comprehensive view of a student, but we argue that unless schools can do better than they do now, students' education will remain too fragmented and too discontinuous, with consequences for the individual and the system - at the least, very wasteful of talent and fulfillment, and, at worst, truly destructive.

To improve continuity for students, we have recommended that beginning at the start of their compulsory schooling in Grade 1, there be one person at the child's school who is responsible for knowing the child and the child's record, so that as year succeeds year, and teacher succeeds teacher, there is someone who is aware of whether that child is progressing at a normal rate, who makes certain that the new teacher has a good idea of what the child's strengths and needs are, and who can speak to the parents as an informed
and concerned representative of the school. And, at the point where schools become more specialized and children have several different subject teachers, and teachers have far more students than they can know well individually, we have recommended that this case-management function become much more personal and hands-on, and that all students have a teacher-advisor or the like, someone who not only remains aware of their overall progress, but who actually meets with them often, and with their parents at least twice annually, and who assists them with educational and career planning in an informed but informal way.

The tool that we recommend as both a facilitator and a record of this process is the Cumulative Educational Plan (CEP), which is a comprehensive planning tool for the student. We say comprehensive because, as we stated earlier, we do not believe that it is helpful for schools to ignore what students are learning and developing an interest in outside of school. We have made much of the importance of what we call community-based career awareness, by which we mean that the whole community is a child’s school, and that schools must act accordingly. The curriculum must take students out of the classroom, by foot and by computer; and the school must insist that the resources of the community become the resources of the learning system for students. Thus we build in a community career co-ordinator for the younger grades, and a career education specialist for the older ones, and put considerable emphasis on the continuity of career education from beginning to end.

And we expect the CEP to include information on what the student is learning in the community that has implications for her school program and for her future. A concrete example is international languages, where community resources often exceed school resources: many children develop fluency and literacy in international languages outside of school. We strongly suggest that such knowledge become part of their record, and that they be encouraged to put their knowledge to a test, when they reach Grade 10, and receive both advanced placement and credits toward their diploma for that knowledge. We see this kind of encouragement of learning, wherever it happens, as enriching the community as well as the individual.

As soon as one considers the curriculum to be more than what is taught in classrooms, one begins to appreciate the advantages, as well as the necessity, of greater flexibility in the learning system. At the school level, we suggest that 10 percent of the curriculum be available for local definition; that the common curriculum occupy at least 90 percent of the learning agenda from Grades 1 though 9. Depending on the physical environment and geography of the school and community, and/or on its social environment and human geography, a school (its teachers, its parents, its community helpers) may decide to put a special focus on an environmental study project, on a social history project, or on some other worthwhile endeavour that can enhance students’ knowledge and skills, and perhaps also benefit the larger community.

At the individual level, flexibility in what is learned, and at what pace, has always been necessary, just as individual variation has always been inevitable. But it has been difficult for schools to provide the necessary flexibility, for many reasons. It will continue to be so: any system that tries to provide for everyone will have difficulty in providing for those who are farthest from the average. However, we firmly believe it is possible to do better, and extremely important to try. Hence we draw attention to a few schools that have made real efforts to diminish the lock-step nature of learning by allowing students to use the whole 12-month calendar or more, or much less, rather than insisting that learning comes in packages of 10 months only. And we have recommended more use of all the techniques that make it easier for students to learn at the pace right for them: acceleration for students who can move faster, individual learning assessment (challenge exams and prior learning assessment), and intensive,
accelerated, and immediate catch-up courses for students from the elementary years through adulthood. We know this is an area that requires greater skill and will from educators, and we have urged the Minister of Education and Training to provide leadership and support for those who are willing to work at developing models and strategies to increase flexibility for learners.

There is another kind of flexibility we are committed to as well, and we hope our readers are aware of it, though it is perhaps written between our lines as much as within them. That is the flexibility we believe is the best way to encourage responsibility and creativity. Our recommendations stress clarity about ends, not means. Thus, we think teachers and parents must have clarity about intended learning outcomes and standards; and about the essential components of a course, whether it is Grade 7 math or Grade 11 geography.

As well, we think the principles we have emphasized - continuity, stewardship, flexibility for learners, learning without walls are tremendously important everywhere. But we also believe there are as many ways of teaching an excellent Grade 7 math or Grade 11 art course as there are excellent math and art teachers; and as many ways of building strong relationships between students, teachers, parents, and the community on behalf of learning as there are caring and committed professionals and parents. We do believe that much good can be achieved by offering people teachers, parents, volunteers - training, and the opportunity to work together to come up with their own strategies for supporting those principles, in ways that will work in their schools and their communities.

The same principles that we have developed and discussed in talking about younger learners apply to older ones as well. Older students also need well-informed parents who are on comfortable terms with their teachers; students continue to need a teacher who knows them and acts on their behalf; and they continue to need flexibility in learning time. But, in addition, as our children pass beyond the age of the common curriculum, when all of them are meant to be acquiring that bank of knowledge and essential thinking and learning skills that every one of them needs, they must be given opportunities for making choices based on what they have learned about themselves and the world. By the time a young person reaches Grade 10 in the learning system we have envisioned, she is ready to make some decisions - not irreversible, by any means, but very important nonetheless about what direction she wants to take, not only in secondary school, but afterward. This has traditionally been the case; secondary education has always meant the point at which options increase and alternative paths open up.

But an abiding concern, in the last 50 years at least, has been how to increase options and open up paths in a way that is inclusive, and doesn't leave out those students who come to school with fewer advantages, less "social capital" in the form of parents with higher education, more money, and the like. In our opinion, differences in interest and aptitude, which is what program options should accommodate, have become confused with differences in social class and social rewards. Hence, we have a secondary system organized by "levels," which come to be thought of as reflecting the inherent and unalterable ability levels of individual students, but which in fact reflect best such other factors as parents' occupations, education, and income levels, and sometimes also race or home language or national origin.

Our concern in making recommendations to reform and improve education beyond the years of the common curriculum is to continue to strengthen core knowledge and skill areas for all students, while at the same time making alternative paths as clear and as open to everyone as is possible. So, for example, we redefine the courses that are offered as falling into three kinds, which do not in our mind speak of greater or lesser ability, but of different degrees of emphasis along a continuum between applied and
We make the point that it is courses, not students, that fall into one or another of these three categories. Thus, in Grade 10, a student might choose a science course that emphasizes practical applications (an Ontario Applied Course, or OApC); a history course that puts more emphasis on a traditional academic approach (an Ontario Academic Course, or OAcC); and a music course that attempts to maintain an even balance between applied and academic emphasis (a common course). Such a student may be one who thinks of going on to a technical course at a college but who has a strong avocational interest in history, or one who wants to study social sciences at a university and also wants to have an intelligent layperson's understanding of basic science.

While we are aware that no plan, however flexible, can overcome social preferences, prejudices, and rewards that favour academic over applied skills, and university over college education, we do believe that it is plausible that a system such as we suggest could increase students' options, and result in a better match between interest and talent on the one hand and useful post-secondary education on the other.

For this to happen, colleges and universities must co-operate with secondary educators to redefine entrance requirements. The object would be to define these in both a clearer and a more differentiated way than at present. Now, universities, for the most part, look at students' marks in their last year only, and insist on prerequisite courses defined as pre-university in all those six final OACs. While this is clear enough, it is very undifferentiated; a student who wants to study history must take the same science course as a peer who wants to be a chemist, or else take no science course at all. Colleges, for their part, have no such blanket rule; but while they show greater flexibility, the paths to college are very confused and unclear for students, except in cases where individual colleges and secondary schools have worked out specific articulation programs.

We have recommended that schools, colleges, and universities define "packages" of courses that lead to particular college and university programs, and that these packages include the appropriate OApCs, OAcCs, and common courses for each post-secondary program.

We have also recommended that schools organize themselves into relatively small units, and that these units (which will most often be small schools within large buildings, sharing administrators and some facilities and courses) might have a subject or career focus, such as is now available in a few cities in schools that have an arts academy or a science academy. In such "academies," students who are interested in a career in art history or arts administration, in engineering or in electronics, can find a curriculum that has a clear relationship to their interests and - if course packages have been defined collaboratively as we suggest - to their future.

As much as we want adolescents and young adults to feel the connection between their formal education and their future - and we strongly endorse such out-of-school learning experiences as co-operative education and community service, both as emphases within courses and as experiences in themselves - we are also concerned that there are commonalities in education and learning that must not be lost sight of. All students want to understand the practical applications of what they are learning; similarly, all students need a high level of literacy no matter what career interest they may pursue.

Our recommendations concerning the common needs of secondary students speak of the necessity for certain outcomes as prerequisite to graduation. Thus, we suggest that there must be specified learner outcomes at the end of Grade 12, just as there are for the lower grades; and that these outcomes must include a majority that are common to all learners, as well as some that are specific to courses offered as OApCs or OAcCs. And we recommend an increase in the amount of province-wide curriculum and
examination review at this level, as well as earlier, so that educators and the public can know how successfully the curriculum is being learned, and so that some consistency is guaranteed across teachers and schools.

We also call for a more efficient system at this level, one that does not encourage students to extend their stay in secondary school by a year or two beyond what is necessary to take the required number of courses and graduate. While we make it clear that we continue to support flexibility in learning time, and have no intention of making matters more difficult for students who need longer to complete their course of study for legitimate reasons connected to how they learn, or to other circumstances in their life, we do not wish to see the majority of students take longer than three years, beginning in Grade 10, to complete their diploma. No other province keeps most of its students in secondary school so long, and there is no clear advantage to doing so, but considerable expenditure that we believe is better spent early than late. Hence we make recommendations designed to limit the number of credits students may accumulate before they graduate.

As well, we call for a universal literacy test to be given first in Grade 11, and to be passed eventually before a student can receive a diploma. The emphasis that we have put on literacy, beginning at age 3, culminates here in a literacy guarantee: what we believe should be a promise to the public that any high school graduate in Ontario can read and understand, and can write and convey information and feeling, as an educated adult should be able to do.

Consistent with our emphasis on continuity of concern for students' progress, we suggest that secondary schools maintain contact with and support for students until they are 18 years old, whether or not they remain in school to finish their diploma. Students need help with the transition to work, not only to post-secondary education, and until they are 18, school should be there for them, just as it is for their peers who are going on with their education.

And just as we began our discussion of the formal learning system before age 6, we do not end it at age 18. The increasing number of adults wanting to complete their secondary education deserve the same opportunity as younger learners, and we recommend that space be guaranteed them in the public system. As well, we strongly recommend that the literacy guarantee that we want our school system to make be also a literacy promise for adults who, for whatever reasons, wish to become fluent and literate in either of the official languages. Those adults include, after all, parents and future parents, grandparents and future grandparents, whose literacy is perhaps the most significant part of the learning legacy they pass on to their children and grandchildren.

ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
©Copyright 1994, Queens Printer for Ontario
Chapter 12: The Educators

The most important question...has to do with what conditions of schooling are most enhancing of teachers' work. The workplace is the key, and we...argue that it is currently a workplace designed for people of a different age and for ideas of management and control no longer viable.

Michael Fullan and Michael Connelly
Teacher Education in Ontario: Current Practice and Options for the Future, 1987

In this chapter, we explore one of our levers for change, what we term "teacher professionalization and development." There are four distinct parts to the chapter, corresponding to four important areas relating to educators:

Section A: Professional issues
Section B: Teacher education
Section C: Evaluating performance
Section D: Leadership

At all levels, the professional skill and commitment of educators are crucial to the success of school reform efforts.

In earlier chapters, we pointed to the need for a stronger, more focused, and more engaging educational system to take us into the 21st century. We noted the demographic shifts, the changing social fabric, new knowledge about learning and teaching, and the importance of electronic technologies. We have suggested how schools might change to better address such new realities.

In Chapter 6, we developed a set of principles about good teaching. Now we show how the conditions of teachers' work often constrain their ability to live up to these principles, and we suggest ways to overcome some of these barriers. We examine and make recommendations about teacher selection, preparation, and on-going professional development. We also address the important issue of performance evaluation of educators. Finally, we examine school and school-board leadership, describing the tasks, skills, and knowledge required, and the kind of preparation and professional support we believe would ensure that principals and supervisory officers are well trained for leading schools and school systems into the 21st century.

We envision an expanded professional role for teachers and principals in the schools of the future, who therefore will need strong professional preparation and
support. As schools draw more on outside resources, teachers will increasingly have to work with others who are outside the field of education. In addition to their regular classroom responsibilities, teachers will be acting as continuing advocates and guides for a small group of students, and will have greater responsibilities for assessing and reporting on student learning, including contributing to each student's cumulative educational record. Principals will, in the schools we envisage, play the leading role first, in sustaining the instructional focus of the school, and second, in building strong and effective community partnerships.

The key to success of the reforms is the professional capacity and will of educators. Significant improvement in schools will occur only if educators "teachers and administrators" are strongly committed to professional growth, from the beginning of their careers to the end, and if they assume collective responsibility for ensuring the highest quality of student learning. We also believe that educators should take more of the responsibility for setting the standards of their profession.

ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
©Copyright 1994, Queens Printer for Ontario
Chapter 12: The Educators

The most important question...has to do with what conditions of schooling are most enhancing of teachers' work. The workplace is the key, and we...argue that it is currently a workplace designed for people of a different age and for ideas of management and control no longer viable.

Michael Fullan and Michael Connelly
Teacher Education in Ontario: Current Practice and Options for the Future, 1987

In this chapter, we explore one of our levers for change, what we term "teacher professionalization and development." There are four distinct parts to the chapter, corresponding to four important areas relating to educators:

Section A: Professional issues
Section B: Teacher education
Section C: Evaluating performance
Section D: Leadership

At all levels, the professional skill and commitment of educators are crucial to the success of school reform efforts.

In earlier chapters, we pointed to the need for a stronger, more focused, and more engaging educational system to take us into the 21st century. We noted the demographic shifts, the changing social fabric, new knowledge about learning and teaching, and the importance of electronic technologies. We have suggested how schools might change to better address such new realities.

In Chapter 6, we developed a set of principles about good teaching. Now we show how the conditions of teachers' work often constrain their ability to live up to these principles, and we suggest ways to overcome some of these barriers. We examine and make recommendations about teacher selection, preparation, and on-going professional development. We also address the important issue of performance evaluation of educators. Finally, we examine school and school-board leadership, describing the tasks, skills, and knowledge required, and the kind of preparation and professional support we believe would ensure that principals and supervisory officers are well trained for leading schools and school systems into the 21st century.

We envision an expanded professional role for teachers and principals in the schools of the future, who therefore will need strong professional preparation and support. As schools draw more on outside resources, teachers will increasingly have to work with others who are outside the field of education. In addition to their regular classroom responsibilities, teachers will be acting as continuing advocates and
guides for a small group of students, and will have greater responsibilities for assessing and reporting on student learning, including contributing to each student's cumulative educational record. Principals will, in the schools we envisage, play the leading role first, in sustaining the instructional focus of the school, and second, in building strong and effective community partnerships.

The key to success of the reforms is the professional capacity and will of educators. Significant improvement in schools will occur only if educators "teachers and administrators" are strongly committed to professional growth, from the beginning of their careers to the end, and if they assume collective responsibility for ensuring the highest quality of student learning. We also believe that educators should take more of the responsibility for setting the standards of their profession.

ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
©Copyright 1994, Queens Printer for Ontario
Chapter 12 - Section A: Professional issues

A statistical snapshot

In 1992, there were approximately 120,000 full-time teachers in Ontario, with another 10,000 designated as part-time. Over the past several years, about 3,000 new teachers have entered the profession each year. Of the active teachers in Ontario, 84 percent hold at least one university degree.

Approximately 62 percent of all full-time teachers in the province are women - a percentage that is expected to remain constant or even to grow in the next few years. However, only 31 percent of Ontario principals or vice-principals are women, and among senior school-board personnel, the percentage of women is even lower: approximately 20 percent of supervisory officers, and 5 percent of directors of education are women. Beyond the issue of gender, there has been significant concern about the under-representation of minority groups in the profession. Although no provincial data exist, some board employment equity surveys show few minority and aboriginal teachers, and we have no reason to believe that this is not a province-wide phenomenon.

A recent cross-country survey of over 17,000 teachers, conducted by Alan King and Marjorie Peart for the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), indicates that significant numbers of teachers are experiencing difficulties with, and have second thoughts about, teaching. In this regard, however, teachers may not be significantly different from members of other professions: changing societal conditions and decreased faith in social institutions have created new pressures and uncertainties for many people in all fields.

In its most profound form, teachers' stress is manifested in a concern about their physical safety in the school. In a 1991 survey conducted by the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF), teachers were asked to respond to the statement: "I worry about being physically injured by some students in this school." Twenty percent responded "yes," with frequency ranging from "sometimes" to "almost always." The study cited 441 reported major episodes of student abuse of teachers in the preceding three years in Ontario. In the study, major abuse was defined as physical assault or threatening with a weapon. The same study listed 6,300 cases of minor abuse.

Why they become, and stay, teachers

According to the CTF survey, the majority of teachers consistently maintain that they enter and remain in the profession primarily for reasons related to the nature of teaching itself. When asked to rank why they entered teaching, 55 percent rated "to work with young people" as very important; 36 percent rated "to render an important service" as very important; and 35 percent rated "interest in subject area" as very important. "Length of school year" was rated as very important by 21 percent, while 5 percent rated "status" as very important.
Other research studies support the finding that most teachers tend to enter, and remain in, the profession because of the satisfaction of relating to students.

**The culture of teaching**

I was invited to a very large suburban high school to discuss *The Common Curriculum* with the staff and to help develop implementation strategies for the school. Before I began my presentation to the teachers, a brief election was held for next year’s faculty council. Prior to the distribution of the ballots, a senior staff member read aloud the names of the seven nominees. The teacher could not properly pronounce the names of three colleagues and asked two to stand up so that the staff would know who they were. The date was May 30, just one month before the end of the school year. The staff had been together for virtually an entire year, and teachers’ names were not known and their faces were not recognized. I began my presentation with a discussion of the culture in the school which would permit such anonymity and disconnectedness.

A report about a professional development day

The "culture of teaching" refers to the deeply embedded but not always recognized patterns that shape the nature of work in schools. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the culture of teaching is that it is regulated by the annual cycle of the school year and by the compartmentalization of the school day. Ironically, despite the highly structured context for teaching, the task is, by its nature, open ended and not clearly defined. Collective agreements and contracts establish minimal working conditions, but the majority of teachers go far beyond these requirements. The personalities, gifts, and needs of the unique combination of students a teacher encounters each year determine the real working conditions of the teacher, namely, what goes on in the classroom.

As schools and school days are currently organized, teachers tend to work, plan, and teach individually. Teacher successes and failures, unless they are spectacular, tend to be private and largely anonymous. While this laissez-faire structure allows gifted teachers to shine, they often do so in isolation. It does not encourage creative interaction with colleagues and does not foster a spirit of excellence. Teachers in difficulty frequently struggle in silence, and generally do not benefit from a coherent program of formative professional assistance. This may account for the CTF finding (cited earlier) that a positive relationship with administrators is more central to teacher job satisfaction than a positive relationship with colleagues.

According to many researchers, several characteristics of the culture of teaching inhibit professional growth and co-ordination of staff energy to resolve broad-based school problems. The same characteristics were also consistently described by teachers during the public hearings and in subsequent written submissions. It is clear that any effort at educational reform must address these concerns.

The isolation of individual teachers within the profession is the most frequently identified characteristic of the culture of teaching. The implications of this isolation, for the teacher and the system, are profound. It limits access to new ideas and better solutions; makes recognition of success difficult; and, according to Ontario education writers Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves, permits incompetence to "exist and persist to the detriment of students, colleagues and teachers themselves." Others suggest that in a system where "shared problem-solving rarely occurs and teachers are expected to work things out on their own," it is to be expected that possibilities for stimulation and growth will be limited.
Of course, teachers need autonomy and discretion to make professional judgments or decisions independently. However, rigid school timetables and structures often minimize professional interaction, and make the formation of collegial staff groupings almost impossible. Both research and teacher experience indicate that the best professional development of teachers, no matter what their experience or skill level, takes place in the context of shared planning and problem-solving with other professionals. According to Judith Warren Little, a noted Californian education writer:

...colleagues teach one another about new ideas and new classroom practices, abandoning a perspective that teaching is "just a matter of style" in favour of a perspective that favours continuous scrutiny of practices and their significances.(6)

The way teachers relate to their colleagues has a substantial impact on their beliefs about good teaching, and on their development as teachers. The demographics mentioned earlier (120,000 teachers currently in the profession and 3,000 new ones each year), indicate that it would be better to direct energies and resources towards improving current teacher practice, rather than relying solely on transforming the way new teachers, who constitute less than 3 percent of the profession, are trained.

The second problem characteristic of the culture of teaching is the pervasive sense of overload that teachers experience. Expectations of the school system have increased dramatically, without any clear identification of priorities or adequate professional development. Many teachers feel unable to carve out a degree of manageability in their work; the result is a siege mentality.

Elementary-grade teachers in particular can no longer reasonably be expected to cover all areas of the curriculum by themselves, and even those who are most knowledgeable and adaptable cannot be expert in all subjects. Teachers are beginning to feel overwhelmed by the pressures, by the combination of academic, behavioural, and emotional needs. It is an almost laughable understatement to say that we are expecting a great deal of our teachers.

This sense of overload has been compounded by the educational reforms and restructuring experienced over the last decade in particular. The destabilization of the education system by imposed educational initiatives has become a particular problem in Ontario. In the CTF survey, teachers were asked to respond to the statement: "Teachers in this province have meaningful input into the formation of educational policies in this province/territory." Ontario ranked last in the country, with only 14 percent of teachers responding in the affirmative.(7) This is in spite of the fact that many teachers are involved in the development of Ministry guidelines and documents, rounds of consultation about educational reform initiatives, and consultations between government and federations. One of the aggravating factors, of course, is the sheer size of Ontario. It is difficult for a group as large as the 120,000 teachers to feel they have meaningful input into provincial policy.

When the issue of overload is combined with professional isolation, the understandable result may be teachers who are somewhat defensive about issues of professional growth and evaluation, or reluctant to initiate reform.

A final characteristic of the culture of teaching is that teaching is structured as a flat career. Progress within the profession involves leaving the classroom and moving into an administrative position, or into a position with a teachers' federation. This frequently deprives classrooms of superior teachers and has skewed formal professional development toward administrative credentialism.
These observations suggest that emphasis should be placed on expanding and strengthening professional support for teachers. We must encourage excellent teachers to remain in the classroom, and provide them with continuous opportunities for professional growth. Recent research shows that schools differ in the extent to which they provide "school-level structures...to foster planning and problem-solving" and "a supportive school-level professional community and opportunities for reflection."(8)

Although large numbers of teachers succeed in maintaining high professional standards and enthusiasm for students and the classroom, there are obviously legitimate concerns.

**The teacher and time**

Teachers in North America are generally expected to spend their working time in classrooms with students, although collective agreements in Ontario now provide for some preparation time. However, the situation is quite different in China, Taiwan, and Japan, where teachers are given time to work with colleagues on a daily basis. An eight-hour day is structured so that they are in charge of classes only three-fifths of their time in school, and teaching is itself a group effort. They spend their time together discussing teaching issues, reviewing and improving lessons and problems for students, and otherwise working at becoming better at what they do.

Are there ways to free up time for Ontario teachers to work collaboratively this way? One possibility relates to another of our engines for change, our emphasis on building stronger links between schools and communities. We suggest that the overloaded curriculum, especially at the elementary level, be addressed by distinguishing between the mandate of the school and the responsibilities of the teachers within it. Throughout our report we recommend drawing more on community resources for delivery of some programs and activities.

We have made clear that we believe it is reasonable to expect the school, and the educational system of which it is a part, to educate all students effectively, and to include such non-academic "social" issues as drug awareness, sex education, AIDS education, and so on. However, we say that responsibility for education on these issues should be shared with other social and health agencies, rather than being solely that of the teacher.

The school may be the ideal large organizational unit within which to discuss these issues with young people, and may even be the best environment for large-group discussion. But, as both a community resource and a part of the community, schools should benefit from, and have access to, other community resources.

Shifting the primary responsibility for teaching non-academic social issues from teachers will have several benefits: it will allow teachers to focus on clearly defined common curriculum areas; teachers will be able to work together to co-ordinate, plan, and improve their collective work; finally, the shift will clarify the educational responsibilities of the school and diminish the number of expectations and burdens placed solely on teachers.

This shift is not intended to, nor will it, lighten the teachers' workload; rather, it is intended to strengthen the academic impact of teachers' work by ensuring that their efforts are focused primarily on developing each student's intellectual competence, and that they engage in on-going professional planning and reflection with their colleagues.

**Reaching into the community**
Although teachers must have a solid understanding and appreciation of the social, health, political, and economic issues that affect children and schools, we propose that those in the school’s network of alliances/community services assume greater responsibility for delivering some non-academic programs to students. Throughout this report, we propose ways to strengthen school-community links; for example, such agencies as parks and recreation departments and health-service agencies could work with students in the school setting, either during the regular day or in an extended school day.

Such arrangements would be more difficult for French-language schools, given the paucity of social, health, and recreational services in French; but there may be ways of providing access. One possibility would be to have a French-language team travel across the province to provide these types of services. As a start, an information package could be developed for French-language teachers and schools, informing them of various programs and services available in the French-speaking community. Whatever the result, problems and possible solutions for francophone schools would need to be thoroughly examined.

**Recommendation 57**

*We recommend that the Education Act be amended to allow instructors who are not certified teachers to supervise students, under specified conditions and circumstances, and to deliver certain non-academic programs. Instructors might be health, recreational, and social-work personnel, or other members of the community, as designated by the school's principal.*

**School-based professional development**

We know that teachers need to continue to learn and develop throughout their careers, and it turns out that one of the best vehicles for such growth is the school itself. One of the most effective ways of promoting both teacher growth and student learning is for teachers to work in a school setting that emphasizes two things: continuous improvement of teaching, and regular monitoring and feedback about results. In other words, a "collaborative culture" focused on instruction and student achievement is a powerful force for improving schools.

Since time for collaborative work is scarce, we suggest that community instructional time might provide opportunities for teachers and school administrators to organize such school-based professional development. We believe that the principal, working with teachers, the extended school community, and with the support of senior administrators, should be responsible for designing a systematic plan of staff development for the year. Such time should give teachers the opportunity to plan, design, study, and work collegially, thereby strengthening school programs.

With regard to secondary schools, because the organizational context is somewhat different from that of elementary schools, arrangements for in-school professional development might also be different. The departmental structure has the potential of providing more manageable working teams, but it also tends to split the staff into isolated, even balkanized, groups.

We suggest that it is possible to capitalize on the strengths of the departmental system by having departments take collective responsibility for such initiatives as working with student-teacher interns, supporting new teachers in their subject areas, investigating and learning new teaching approaches, reviewing courses, and ensuring that links are made between courses.
At the same time, inter-department initiatives can build collective responsibility beyond department boundaries, and break down the walls that too often divide teachers in large schools. Our school-within-a-school concept (introduced in Chapter 9) would provide multiple opportunities for teachers to work together on issues such as improving the rate at which students remain in the school, planning a new program for a particular group of students, or improving links with parents. Again, what is most important is that teachers together work on the continuous improvement of teaching.

Both elementary and secondary schools must be learning organizations for teachers if they are to be effective learning organizations for students. It is crucial to ensure that such collaborative groupings are not experienced as contrived or imposed; not unreasonably, teachers who do not feel they are working on a genuinely important task will find ways to drop the project.

It is up to the school board to set priorities within the Ministry's broad guidelines. Schools can then collectively decide how they are going to address these priorities, given the particular school context. The flexibility introduced by relying more on community, social, and health resources might provide some schools with the necessary time for such staff development and planning. Others might find further measures necessary. We would encourage both schools and school boards to consider more flexible schedules, and strategies such as combining classes occasionally to free some teachers for collegial work.

Regardless of how the time is allotted, however, we agree with the recent report of the American National Education Commission on Time and Learning, that "...time for planning and professional development is urgently needed - not as a frill or an add-on, but as a major aspect of the agreement between teachers and [boards]."(10)

We also agree with the report's comment that teachers' needs should not be met at the expense of students' learning time. The need for time, for both student instruction and professional matters, may necessitate considerable reworking of current schedules and agreements. The Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association, in its brief to our Commission, argued in favour of setting aside time during the school year for teachers

...to engage in the task of formal co-operative curriculum and pedagogical development activities...[and that] discussion among key participants be held to remove the constraints to achieve this needed period of time.

We believe that greater flexibility in the use of time is long overdue; schools must move out of the constraining effects of often rigidly defined schedules.

Concerns of teacher federations

We recognize that teacher federations will have some objections to proposals to allow instructors who are not certificated teachers to supervise students, and to some proposals about revising schedules, because of the implications for collective bargaining agreements. We believe, however, that the professional benefits and clarified responsibilities that would accrue to teachers in the classroom constitute a genuine improvement in their work life.

Supportive technology

We suggest one further way to help teachers - giving them access to technological support. It is hard to think of another group of professionals who, for instance, are expected to function without the use of a
telephone. At the same time teachers are being urged to communicate more regularly with parents, any number of them are expected, in many schools, to share one phone in the staff room. Not only is privacy difficult under such circumstances, it is hard to find time, given most teaching schedules, even to get to the phone.

**Teaching: The vision and the reality**

Throughout this report, we propose and advocate a vision of learning, of the teaching profession, and of the school as a professional environment. Such visions, however, are often in conflict with the reality of schools as they exist: clearly, there is a considerable difference between the image of teaching we outlined in Chapter 6 and our observations here about the actual conditions in schools.

**Teacher organizations and professionalism**

Over the past 50 years, teachers have looked to their federations for assistance and support. Under the Teaching Profession Act (TPA), passed in 1944, the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) was established. All teachers in Ontario, as defined by the Act, are required to belong to the Federation, which is the official voice of the teachers of Ontario, and is the formal liaison between teachers and the Ministry of Education and Training.

There are five affiliate associations: the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO, established 1918, membership 41,800); the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF, established 1919, membership 38,900); the Ontario Public School Teachers Federation (OPSTF, established 1921, membership 14,500); the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO, established 1939, membership 6,700) and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA, established 1944, membership 32,200).

Once a teacher has been hired by an Ontario school board, the OTF assigns him or her to statutory membership in one of these affiliates, in accordance with the OTF's by-laws.

Because four of the affiliates were independent voluntary associations prior to the creation of the OTF, the federation was constructed as an umbrella whose affiliates retain a high degree of autonomy as exercised through their individual affiliate constitutions. Each affiliate offers services directly to its membership in areas such as professional development, counselling, and collective bargaining. In fact, the day-to-day life of a teacher in Ontario is affected more by the actions of the specific affiliate than by those of the federation.

**Collective bargaining rights**

Under Bill 100, the School Board and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act, passed in 1975, local branches of the five affiliates were identified as bargaining agents for their respective memberships. Bill 100 embedded into law the collective bargaining rights of teachers, established dispute resolution mechanisms, and granted teachers the legal right to strike.

With the passage of Bill 100, the salary and working conditions of teachers improved dramatically: in 1950, the average salary of a teacher in Ontario was $2,365; in 1990 it was $51,735. Within the professional lifespan of a single generation of teachers, they went from being members of the lower-middle class to becoming members of the upper-middle class. The consequences of this transformation have been enormous on both the profession and the OTF.
Professionally, better salaries and working conditions have attracted better-qualified candidates to teaching: Ontario teachers are among the best educated and trained. New teachers entering the profession today bring solid academic credentials and relevant life experiences to help prepare them for their new careers.

While the affiliates of the Ontario Teachers' Federation deal with both professional and union issues, their role in collective bargaining has gradually emerged as their essential defining activity. We think that teaching young people is one of the most important tasks within our society; obviously, teachers deserve to be well paid and their profession deserves respect and recognition as a crucial societal service. The question is: Has the orientation toward collective bargaining issues occurred at the expense of the development of teaching as a profession?

All the OTF affiliates, as well as OTF itself, have done substantial professional work on behalf of their membership through such services as publications, conferences, workshops, and courses. These have helped teachers deal with some of the complex issues facing Ontario's educators, and should be recognized and affirmed. They represent substantial commitments by the federations, of both resources and personnel, to professional development.

However, there are constraints within the OTF and affiliate structure that limit the participation of both levels in promoting teaching as a profession and in addressing broad-based educational issues. The dual nature of the affiliates, existing both as unions for collective bargaining and as the only professional bodies for teachers, creates competing internal priorities and concerns: as unions, the associations work to enhance the salaries, working conditions, and narrowly defined best interests of their members. However, union contractual imperatives may sometimes undermine professional interests and educational reform.

A College of Teachers

The Commission believes that the teaching profession in Ontario must now be considered equal to other established professions. Structures such as the Ontario Teachers Federation and its affiliates are in place to protect the economic interests and workplace rights of teachers. They also respond to some of the professional development needs of teachers, but not to the need to develop the profession of teaching itself.

There is no comparable structure to view broad-based educational issues from a purely professional perspective. In the mid-1980s, Bette Stephenson, then the Minister of Education, proposed the establishment of a College of Teachers for Ontario. The idea was dropped after it was rejected by the teachers' federations, primarily because of concerns related to collective agreements.

Although we acknowledge that there were difficulties with that proposal, we believe that the complexity of contemporary education in Ontario, and the best professional interests of educators, dictate a transfer of governance issues to a newly created provincial professional body. Giving teaching full professional status is a logical extension of trends in education and developments in the teaching community. While the vast majority of Ontario teachers conduct themselves with a high degree of professionalism, teaching itself cannot truly be called professional because an essential characteristic of a profession in Ontario is the exercise of self-regulation, under statute.

The Education Act and the Teaching Profession Act regulate admission, certification, and practice for teaching in Ontario. Governance is currently exercised under the Acts by universities through admission
to faculties of education and control of the pre-service teacher education program; and by the Minister through authority over certification and decertification, and post-certification qualifications. As long as these crucial areas of governance in teaching remain outside the control of teachers, the profession of teaching will remain in a state of limited development.

In order to promote teaching to full professional status, we propose that a provincial self-regulatory body, a College of Teachers, be established. The College would be responsible for determining standards of teaching practice, regulating initial and on-going teacher certification, and accrediting teacher education programs, both pre-service preparation and on-going professional development. A majority of members of the College would be professional educators selected by their peers, but there would be substantial representation from the public, that is, non-educators. The fuller details of membership should be determined by the Ministry and education stakeholders, with the aim of achieving a balance between education providers and consumers.

**Experience in other jurisdictions**

Such professional bodies of teachers exist in other jurisdictions. For example, under the Teacher Council Act, Scotland established the Scottish General Teaching Council (SGTC) in 1966. The SGTC is governed by a council, the majority of whom are registered, full-time teachers, directly elected by their peers. Other councillors are appointed from a variety of interested parties such as universities, directors of education, employers, and churches, with a small number nominated by the secretary of state from among parent groups, the business community, and other professional organizations.

We see two crucial features in the way the SGTC is constituted: first, a clear majority of councillors are registered teachers, ensuring that the Council and thus the profession are truly self-regulatory. The second is that significant representation is accorded to representatives of other educational stakeholders and to the community at large. This ensures that the Council serves the professional interests of its teacher members and the broader community they serve. Both these conditions would have to be met in a College of Teachers in Ontario.

Under legislation, the SGTC is assigned jurisdiction over key areas of teacher self-governance: it accredits all courses for teacher training. To be used toward a teaching credential, a course must be identified as "acceptable to the General Teacher Council." Effectively, this means that the Council has control of admission to the profession and of standards within it.

These features ensure that initial certification of teachers and in-service programs rest with the profession. Because it regulates admissions to the profession, the Council maintains a register of all qualified teachers, and is thus able to advise on the supply of teachers available to the system.

Finally, the SGTC is responsible for the exercise of disciplinary matters within the profession, including suspension and decertification. For purposes of comparison to a proposed Ontario College of Teachers, it is important to note that the SGTC has functioned effectively for 28 years in the context of pre-existing teacher associations and unions. While there are undoubtedly areas of overlap and complementarity between the SGTC and the unions, their responsibilities and tasks are quite distinct.

We envision an Ontario College of Teachers with a comparable mandate to that of the SGTC, including jurisdiction over teacher certification at both the pre-service and in-service level, maintenance of a register of teachers and their professional credentials, and disciplinary matters up to and including
A College of Teachers was established in British Columbia in 1988, and is responsible for certification, professional development, and discipline. Membership is automatic for all teachers, principals, and supervisory officers, although they may opt out by making a formal request to do so. The College is governed by a council of 20-15 elected by members, two appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, two by the Minister of Education, and one by the deans of British Columbia's faculties of education.

Critics of the British Columbia College assert that it is too directly connected to the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, and would function more effectively if it had a more arm's-length relationship with the BCTF, and had a broader membership base.

This criticism brings us to an important point regarding teacher membership in the Ontario College. Having said that professional educators should form the majority of its governing council, we do not see the college as an extension of the teacher federations and associations. Certainly, some of the educator councillors could be elected from their membership by OTF affiliates during their individual annual general meetings. However, we think it very important that the college reach out to educators through other mechanisms: direct elections might be held, or representatives might be selected by provincial subject councils, by curriculum co-ordinator groups, and from private schools. There are many potential vehicles for broadening the base and interest profile of the College's councillors. Whatever mechanisms are adopted, it is critical that no one interest group have undue influence in the College.

In proposing a College of Teachers as a professional body of teachers at arm's length from the federations, the Commission seeks to complete the development of teaching as a mature self-governing profession. We believe that practitioners in the profession are most qualified to establish what is required for a teacher to function effectively, and decide which programs constitute appropriate professional preparation and in-service. Finally, we believe that teachers themselves, in partnership with the broader community, should define professional conduct and practice. We are providing the blueprint for such a College; we believe the actual model should be developed through consultations by the Ministry with federations and other interested parties and stakeholders. In order to set up the College, the 1944 Teaching Profession Act and the Education Act would have to be amended to allow establishment of an Ontario College of Teachers.

**Recommendation 58**

*We recommend that a professional self-regulatory body for teaching, the Ontario College of Teachers, be established, with the powers, duties, and membership of the College set out in legislation. The College should be responsible for determining professional standards, certification, and accreditation of teacher education programs. Professional educators should form a majority of the membership of the College, with substantial representation of non-educators from the community at large.*

---

**Endnotes (Chapter 12, Section A)**

2. See, for example:

3. Writers who have addressed such issues include:
   - Michael G. Fullan and Andy Hargreaves, *What's Worth Fighting for in Your School?* (Toronto: Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, 1992). In this section, we use their characterization of the culture of teaching.

9. See, for example, Andy Hargreaves, *Changing Teachers, Changing Times: Teachers' Work and Culture in the Postmodern Age* (Toronto: OISE Press, 1994); and Rosenholtz, Teachers' Workplace.
Chapter 12 - Section B: Teacher education

You cannot improve student learning for all or most students without improving teacher learning for all or most teachers.\(^{(12)}\)

The goal of teacher education is not to indoctrinate or train teachers to behave in prescribed ways, but to educate teachers to reason soundly about their teaching as well as to perform skilfully.\(^{(13)}\)

We turn now to the challenge of teacher education, which is actually several challenges: how to select candidates, how to prepare teachers, how to support their entry into teaching, and how to ensure on-going professional growth throughout their teaching careers.

Throughout the chapter, we use the terms "education" or "development" more often than the word "training." We believe that the phrase "teacher training," although commonly used, can be misleading, because it suggests that mastering technical teaching skills is sufficient. Although skill development is obviously important for educators, what is even more critical is that they develop professional judgment about when and how to use those skills.

After summarizing the key messages about teacher education in submissions made to us, we briefly describe teacher education in Ontario today, identify some of the key issues, and suggest directions for the future.

We believe that faculties of education, federations, and school boards should have considerable autonomy in developing programs to address priorities we have identified, but that this development should be carried out in collaboration with the College of Teachers.

The gist of our recommendations:

Pre-service

A longer and more substantive program for initial teacher preparation, delivered both by faculties of education and schools. Why? Because teaching is difficult and complex, and teachers cannot be well prepared for the challenges of today's schools in a one-year program. The second year should be somewhat like an internship, with increasing levels of responsibility in schools.

Support for beginning teachers

Using a variety of means, including workshops and assistance from experienced teachers or consultants. Why? Because the transition to full responsibility for teaching students is crucial, and in the long run, students and schools will benefit if new teachers get the best possible start to their careers.
Mandatory professional development

For educators, with educators themselves having considerable freedom to decide what form that professional development should take. Why? Because continual growth is an integral part of professional life, and teachers should have the responsibility for shaping their professional development. Much of this professional development should be integrated with the on-going work of the school, rather than be tacked on as an "extra."

What did we hear?

Many briefs to the Royal Commission alluded to teacher education or professional development. A number of presenters said that teacher preparation programs are too short to include everything that is necessary, and that student teachers should spend more time actually working in schools.

We heard that teachers, both new and experienced, need to know more about dealing with ethnic and cultural diversity and with students who have special needs. We also heard that they need more expertise in teaching early reading, mathematics, and science, as well as greater facility with electronic technology, in order to take advantage of new teaching possibilities.

Submissions from representatives of the Roman Catholic school system stressed the need for those preparing to teach in their schools to learn enough about the history, philosophical approach, and the system's curriculum. Representatives from French-language schools had similar concerns about preparation of teachers for their schools.

Teachers themselves expressed frustration about mandated changes, such as destreaming, being introduced without adequate resources for professional development. They were also concerned about problems resulting from funding cuts.

Other briefs expressed concern about the composition of the teaching force, or about criteria for admission to faculties of education. People wanted applicants selected less on the basis of academic standings, and more on the basis of personal qualities. Some called for changes in selection procedures to increase ethno-cultural and racial diversity.

Historical context

In Chapter 2 we alluded to the modest amount of training received by prospective teachers throughout the 19th and much of the 20th century. With compulsory schooling, and as the result of Egerton Ryerson's work, the importance of training teachers in pedagogy was increasingly accepted. The first "normal school" (teachers' college) opened in 1847, with more added throughout the next few decades for the training of elementary school teachers.

Secondary school teachers, who were expected to have university degrees, received their teacher training at a separate provincial college of education. The situation for training teachers for French-language schools was quite unsatisfactory: until 1927, when the Ottawa Ecole Normale was established, schools had to hire either poorly prepared Franco-Ontarian teachers, or teachers from Quebec. There appear to have been no French-language facilities in the province, prior to 1970, for training secondary school teachers.

In the 1970s, the provincial government gradually transferred teacher education to the universities, and
from 1974 on, all teachers in the English-language system required an undergraduate degree and a Bachelor of Education degree. The same requirement became effective for teachers in the French-language system in 1986.

Although teachers are now better educated and receive more substantial preparation than in the past, the demands and complexities of teaching have also increased dramatically. We briefly describe the current situation in teacher education, and make recommendations about what we believe teachers will require by way of general education and professional preparation if they are to meet, effectively, the needs of students in Ontario schools of the future.

**Current context for reforming teacher education**

Although there have been a number of changes in both pre-service and in-service teacher education over the last five or six years, it seems to us that the process of reform has become somewhat stuck. Each of the parties continues to go its own way.

In 1987, a position paper on teacher education, commissioned by the Teacher Education Review group and written by Michael Fullan and Michael Connelly, both of whom were at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at that time, was circulated widely throughout the province. A number of innovative proposals were put forward to improve teacher education.

The report made specific recommendations about pre-service programs, support of new teachers, and on-going professional development, as well as about rethinking the roles of faculties of education and the other "teacher education stakeholders" including the Ministry, school boards, and federations.

For example, in regard to beginning teachers, the report recommended a process by which they would have a period of internship and apprenticeship. During that time they would receive additional training and support. Although the paper had considerable influence on much of the thinking about teacher education in Ontario (and beyond: the document has been extensively referred to in publications in other provinces and other countries), very few of its recommendations were actually implemented in Ontario.

Other unsuccessful attempts have been made to create a more accountable system for organizing and operating teacher education. (We noted earlier that the proposal for a College of Teachers was dropped after being rejected by the teachers' federations.) The Teacher Education Council, Ontario (TECO), was set up in 1989, partly in response to the Fullan and Connelly position paper, with representatives from faculties, the Ministry, the federations, and school boards.

A review of several reports on issues of admissions, pre-service, induction, in-service, and faculty renewal suggests that in spite of some good research and the best intentions, TECO had difficulty affecting policy and practice. For example, TECO's reports to the Minister often made various recommendations that different stakeholders get together and discuss or review their plans and programs. However, no groups seemed willing to move beyond defending their own turf.

Similarly, one recommendation of a 1988 Task Force, set up to make suggestions about common pre-service courses to prepare science teachers, was that faculties review their science offerings. In other words, over and over again discussion seems to take the place of action. Although there are many examples of innovative and collaborative programs in Ontario, such initiatives remain the exception rather than the norm.
In the light of such a history, it is difficult not to conclude that the "teacher education stakeholders" are somewhat rigidly wedded to structures that may be anachronistic, and that vested interests and disinclination to change have held sway for too long. Faculties of education hold closely to the notion of university autonomy and, in the opinion of many observers, do only what they please; federations resist anything they see as intruding on collective bargaining and the exclusive role of teachers in the schools; and the Ministry maintains a system, which has been discontinued in other provinces, of controlling the content of various in-service courses.

In this context, coherent public policy is impossible. The Ministry's nominal control over teacher education is no guarantee of quality.

All these stakeholder groups have what seem to them good reasons for the positions they take. Collectively, however, they have prevented the reform of teacher education. We suggest what programs and directions make sense in terms of student learning and teacher growth, and only then look at the political barriers to implementation.

**Pre-service teacher preparation in Ontario today**

**Current programs: Description and issues**

All teachers trained in Ontario receive their initial training (referred to as "pre-service") through one of ten faculties of education (two of which have programs to prepare teachers for French-language schools). Close to 6,000 student teachers are enrolled in pre-service programs, most of which are one-year courses that follow a first undergraduate degree.

Teachers usually receive about 20 weeks of instruction at the faculty, and are required to spend at least 40 days in a school under the supervision of an experienced teacher (although there is considerable variation, with an increasing number of programs having student teachers spend as much as half their time in schools).

Successful candidates receive a B.Ed. from the university, and are then granted a permanent Ontario Teaching Certificate by the Ministry of Education and Training.

Pre-service programs in Ontario vary in terms of how professional teacher training is sequenced with general liberal arts or science education. In concurrent programs (offered in only some faculties, and involving a small proportion of students studying to become teachers), candidates study simultaneously for a B.A. or B.Sc. and a B.Ed., and tend to spend longer blocks of time practice-teaching in schools.

By contrast, students in consecutive programs (offered in all faculties) enter a faculty of education for a one-year B.Ed. after receiving an undergraduate degree. Several universities have recently developed a "hybrid" program, with elements of each: undergraduate students in subjects where there is a high demand for teachers, such as French, mathematics and science, or early childhood education, take particular courses, and undertake some supervised field experiences; they are then guaranteed admission to the faculty of education one-year program.

Although program components are to some extent determined by Ministry regulations, faculties have considerable flexibility in delivery models and course content, and have recently developed a variety of program innovations. There is now significant diversity among the ten faculties, in mode of delivery and in program content.
Requirements for pre-service programs:

The relevant regulation in the Education Act defines "a program of professional education" as including:
(a) study of the
   (i) primary and junior divisions;
   (ii) junior and intermediate divisions, including one teaching option;
   (iii) intermediate and senior divisions, including two teaching options; or
   (iv) technological studies, including two teaching options;
(b) study of teaching methods designed to meet the individual needs of pupils;
(c) the acts and regulations respecting education;
(d) a review of Ministry curriculum guidelines; and
(e) at least 40 days of practical experience (in schools).

Traditionally, faculties have assumed full responsibility for the programs, with the exception of the 40 days of practice teaching in schools. During those days, student teachers are supervised by associate teachers, who are regular teachers in the schools. The difficulty is the absence of a particular process for selecting associate teachers, who have rarely been given any special training or preparation. Expectations about their role are not clear, and the criteria on which they are to evaluate student teachers may be vague. Furthermore, the responsibility is not acknowledged in any significant way: the $7.50 per day allocated for supervising student teachers would seem more of an insult than a reward.

Pre-service programs are frequently criticized as being too academic and "theoretical," with little opportunity for student teachers in faculties of education to learn from their own experience. Student teachers, all of whom are university graduates (average age 30), report they are sometimes treated like adolescents, with trivial "make work" assignments that do not contribute to professional expertise.

Programs tend to be fragmented: because faculty courses are not linked to the school experience, there is little sense of coherent professional preparation. The program may be diffuse and superficial, trying to cover philosophical, technical, and content areas in a sometimes disconnected manner. Although an Ontario survey of recent graduates showed a relatively high degree of satisfaction,(17) further analysis revealed that participants find their experience in schools the most valuable aspect of the program. Comments about the faculty courses were often negative.

However, the winds of change have blown through at least some of the province's ten faculties of education. Increasingly, they are working more closely with school personnel to integrate the theoretical and practical elements of pre-service programs. For instance, some are now based entirely off-site, in schools where associate teachers play a much larger role in planning what and how student teachers should learn.

Many student teachers are spending more time in school classrooms, often working in small groups with fellow students. We have been told that with intensive school experiences and an emphasis on working together on various projects, student teachers are more likely to report that faculty programs prepared them well for teaching and to give these programs higher ratings. Such reaction from student teachers may suggest directions for reform, emphasizing the need for better integration between the theory and practice, with more solid grounding in the work of schools.
However, too many student teachers have no school experience beyond their formally required practice teaching sessions, and as we have noted, supervising associate teachers usually have little or no interaction with university faculty members.

Faculties of education have developed a variety of specialized programs, including one at York University that prepares people to be teachers of the deaf (at least one faculty member and several students are deaf). Several faculties, such as those at Nipissing, Queen's, and Lakehead, also offer special programs that prepare aboriginal teachers and aboriginal teaching assistants, often in programs located off campus, in or near aboriginal communities. Other programs prepare teachers, whether aboriginal or not, to teach in aboriginal schools.

The diversity of programs across the province is seen by the faculties of education as a strength in responding to local needs, as well as building on particular faculty expertise. But it also raises questions about the extent of commonality in the preparation of teachers for Ontario schools. Given that the province now has *The Common Curriculum Grades 1-9*, coupled with provincial standards in language and mathematics, we need to be certain that teachers, wherever they are trained, have the knowledge and skill to teach the common curriculum.

**Those who teach teachers**

What about those who teach the teachers? A report by Professor Laverne Smith for the Teacher Education Council, Ontario, provides a good overview. As of 1992, there were slightly more than 500 full-time faculty members in all ten teacher education faculties, 87 percent of whom are in English-language programs, with the remainder in French-language programs.

Of the full-time faculty members, about 70 percent are permanent appointments (either probationary tenure stream or tenured appointments). These professors are hired on the basis of their qualifications as both researchers and teachers. Very few are appointed to these permanent positions without having completed a doctorate in education. Although most have considerable experience teaching in elementary or secondary schools, this is not universally so. Recent hiring patterns suggest that research expertise is becoming an increasingly important criterion.

In addition to the tenure-stream appointments, about 30 percent of faculty members are non-permanent appointments, either seconded from school boards or hired on contract. In either case, such temporary appointments are usually for one to three years.

About 36 percent of faculty members, but only about 21 percent of those with tenure, are female. At the time the data were gathered for the 1992 report, only 11 faculty members across the province were identified as being members of visible minorities.

There is an on-going tension in faculties of education (similar to that in all professional schools) between teaching and research, and between the demands of the university and the demands of the field. In some cases, this tension is productive, leading to more practical research, and teaching informed by research. Too often, however, it results in unproductive conflict that sees the two as incompatible.

One difficulty for faculties of education is that the public and, to some extent, the school system - is unaware or unappreciative of the need for research and scholarship as well as for teaching. In a paper written for this Commission, Patricia Allison of the University of Western Ontario reminds us that:
It is one of the functions of universities to provide a place wherein those with both the desire and the aptitude can study and research a subject and contribute to the growth of human knowledge. Scholars in professional schools study and research aspects of the profession, as a service to the profession...and use their study and research to inform the preparation of future members of the profession.(19)

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education is quite distinct from the ten faculties of education, having a different mandate and very different functions. As of this writing, it does not offer pre-service teacher education programs, and its 146 full-time faculty members teach only graduate programs, although they are expected, in addition, to be heavily involved in research and/or field development. Most students in graduate programs, particularly in M.Ed. programs, are practicing teachers. Many of OISE's doctoral graduates go on to teach in faculties of education, either in Ontario or elsewhere. The proposed merger between OISE and the Faculty of Education of the University of Toronto, if successful, would no doubt alter OISE's programs.

Judging the effectiveness of programs

Very few teacher education programs, here or elsewhere, are evaluated on any basis other than satisfaction of student teachers or the success of graduates in finding teaching positions. In some cases, faculties of education survey school employers as well, to evaluate the level of satisfaction with graduates of their programs. There would seem to be no systematic assessment of the knowledge and skills of current Ontario graduates.(20)

If there are agreed-on expectations of beginning teachers, it makes sense to suggest some form of accountability for faculties of education. We believe that a more thorough and systematic evaluation and accreditation of pre-service programs should be developed in Ontario.

We suggest that teacher education programs be accredited, in a process similar to that often used with some other professional and graduate university programs, both in Ontario and elsewhere. In this process, an independent body assesses programs, considering, for instance, course content, resources, performance standards, delivery mechanisms, qualifications of faculty members, and in some cases quality of graduates.

The independent accrediting body might be a professional association or an accreditation board set up solely for that purpose. The process has apparently been effective in maintaining high standards, and because programs are accredited for a limited period (usually between three and seven years), there is a built-in safeguard against complacency or resistance to change.

In education faculties, information is usually gathered through site visits to the faculty of education and its associated partner schools, and through interviews with professors, students, and, presumably, also with the school board that employs graduates.

It is crucial that the process have substance: there must be consequences for faculties whose programs do not measure up to accepted standards. The usual procedure would be to put such faculties on notice, with a period of two to three years for improvement. Should improvement not take place, programs would be no longer be accredited. This would mean that graduates would not be eligible for the Ontario Teaching Certificate.
Given the principle of having teachers take responsibility for governing their profession, we suggest that responsibility for accrediting teacher preparation programs be assigned to the College of Teachers. Although the process to be used would then be determined by the College, the accreditation or review teams might include members of the College of Teachers, representatives from Ontario faculties of education, and outstanding teacher educators from outside Ontario and even, perhaps, outside Canada. This would ensure that the process had credibility with the public and with professionals. We assume that the College, in developing the process and criteria for the accreditation reviews, would be sensitive to the university culture, to current research and scholarly work in teacher education, and to Ministry of Education and Training policy directions.

**Recommendation 59**

*We recommend that the College of Teachers, in close co-operation with faculties of education, develop a framework for accrediting teacher preparation programs offered by Ontario faculties of education, and that the College be responsible for carrying out such accreditation processes.*

**Teacher education for the future**

Our recommendations about teacher education for a strengthened schooling system begin with several basic assumptions about teacher education, based on recent research about how teachers learn. We are guided by the principles of learning and teaching outlined earlier in Chapters 5 and 6.

We accept five dimensions (developed in Chapter 6) as defining good teaching and offer guidance for planning the focus and direction of pre-service programs and professional development initiatives. That is, we hold that good teachers:

- care about students, and are committed to students' learning;
- know their subjects and how to teach them;
- organize and monitor student learning;
- work effectively with others, including other teachers, students, parents, and community;
- critically examine their practice, and continue to learn throughout their careers.

Although these principles do not provide a blueprint for designing teacher education, they are a starting point. The implications are clear: if teaching is difficult and complex, teacher education cannot be dealt with as an afterthought. We also make two further assumptions about teacher education:

- First, pre-service training cannot produce fully finished expert teachers, but it should give graduates the skills and knowledge necessary for a successful entry into teaching, and provide them with a solid foundation on which to build throughout their careers.
- Second, educational reform and teacher education must go together. Because changes in schools will not take place without the involvement of teachers, teacher development is part and parcel of school improvement, with benefits for schools and for students.

Becoming competent as a teacher requires more than technical skills or subject knowledge: it requires drawing on these skills and knowledge to meet the special demands of many different situations and problems. For example, a teacher not only needs to know how to manage the behaviour of a class of six-year-olds, but may need to do this while teaching them to read, adjusting questions and content to suit the different levels of understanding in a class that may include recent immigrants, aboriginal children,
and children from a range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Although it is neither feasible nor reasonable for us to make specific recommendations about all the content areas of pre-service programs, several key priorities need to be addressed if our recommendations in other areas are to be implemented. We would expect the College of Teachers to make more specific recommendations, but to leave flexibility for faculties of education.

Although we have not developed separate lists of requirements, arrangements may differ, depending on whether student teachers are preparing for careers in elementary or secondary schools.

**Selection: Who should become a teacher?**

As we have already noted, the issue of admission to faculties of education is a thorny one, primarily because faculties of education operate as the first gatekeepers to teaching. Concerns focus on two factors: first, there is a belief that admission is too dependent on academic background, specifically undergraduate grades, rather than on personal qualities; second, there is the fact that too few candidates from minority groups are admitted.

Since faculties have many more qualified applicants than they can accept, there will always be dissatisfied people. According to faculties of education, although academic background is an important criterion, other factors are also significant, particularly relevant experience with children and adolescents. Special attention is also given to ensuring places for candidates from previously under-represented groups, such as aboriginal candidates, those from ethno-cultural and racial minorities, and those who have physical disabilities.

**Personal qualities:**

Many people believe that personal qualities of character should be the most important criteria for admission to teaching. We agree in principle: the difficulty is that these personal qualities, which are not easily influenced by training, are notoriously difficult to assess in the admissions process.

Judgments about candidates' academic backgrounds can be made with relative ease, but judgments about their character are more difficult. Furthermore, efforts to do so through the use of reference letters, interviews, or aptitude tests have been largely unsuccessful. In addition, the numbers of applicants and the number admitted in several faculties are so large, interviews are impractical. The Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto, for instance, admits approximately 1,000 students each year, out of several thousand applicants. In her paper for our Commission, Patricia Allison cites evidence that demonstrates "that interviews are inherently unreliable."(21)

**Selection as a process:**

However, because we agree that personal qualities are critical, we suggest that selection be seen as a process rather than as an event. Faculties can make initial judgments based on academic criteria and experience (plus the way the candidate reflects in writing on that experience), but may not be able to make adequate appraisals of personal qualities until the candidate is in the program. At that time, however, judgments can and should be made.

Faculty members and associate teachers in schools have been hesitant to exercise their authority as gatekeepers to the profession, apparently being more comfortable with supporting rather than evaluating student teachers. We agree that student teachers who are having difficulty should be helped by professors
and by school staff. If such assistance does not improve performance, however, unsuccessful student teachers should be directed to other career possibilities, and not be recommended for teacher certification. We believe that the right of children to a good education is the most important consideration.(22)

Judgments about suitability should be based on clear understandings about teachers and teaching, and should be acknowledged as a responsibility to be shared by faculty and by the schools where student teachers do their field work.(23) We recognize that both faculty members and teachers find it difficult to make such judgments when student teachers are proving unsuitable. We believe, however, that it is crucial for them to recognize their obligation to future generations of elementary and secondary school students.

**Recommendation 60**

*We recommend that faculties of education and school staff who supervise student teachers be accountable for ensuring that those recommended for Ontario Teaching Certificates have the personal qualities required for admission to the teaching profession, and that those candidates who do not show such qualities be advised to leave teacher preparation programs.*

We assume criteria would include evidence that the prospective teacher cares for students, is committed to student learning, and supports generally accepted professional ethical standards. Teachers intending to teach in Catholic and francophone schools should be assessed by the faculty and by the schools as to their recognition and support of the goals and traditions of these education communities.

Encouraging minority group members to become teachers:

We have noted the under-representation of teachers from various ethno-cultural and racial minority backgrounds, as well as those who have physical disabilities. Increasing the number of teachers from diverse backgrounds is important for several reasons. Minority youth benefit from having visible role models in their schools, but beyond this, all students in a multicultural society benefit from schools in which staff come from a variety of backgrounds: it ensures that diverse viewpoints are recognized and included in school life.

Efforts to increase the diversity of the student teacher group have taken place in most faculties, and have been given a boost by the Ministry's recent policy initiatives in the area of anti-racism. Implementation of these should lead to more minority teacher candidates being admitted. An initial list of pilot projects shows that considerable progress has been made, at least on paper. Whether the changes will be substantial enough is another question.

The recently enacted Employment Equity Act will require school boards, as employers, to develop and implement plans to increase the representation of target group members (racial minorities, aboriginal peoples, women, and persons with disabilities). Ensuring a pool of qualified teachers from a range of backgrounds will be essential to meeting such requirements.

However, increasing diversity is a recruitment as well as a selection issue, and requires that all education partners work together. In addition to continuing current initiatives in faculties of education and school boards, more needs to be done to expand the pool of qualified applicants from minority backgrounds, and to ensure that more of them are well prepared to enter teaching. Such efforts are already under way in a few instances, but need to be much stronger and more widespread.
Faculties of education, school boards, and teachers' federations can and should actively encourage young members of minority groups to consider teaching as a career. One strategy in secondary schools is to establish "Future Teachers Clubs," through which students find out about teaching as a career, visit faculties of education, and have opportunities to gain the kind of experience with children that will be necessary for later admission to faculties of education.

Schools can set up cross-age tutoring programs that help all students - both those who tutor and those who are tutored learn. Schools can also assist students who are considering teaching to apply for relevant summer jobs, such as day-camp counselling or assisting in summer school programs, to give them a chance to develop their skills and assess their interest in teaching as a career. TVOntario/La Chaine might produce videos that could be used to highlight the attractions of a career in education.

Such initiatives should also be extended to allow adults from minority groups, who are interested in a career change, to gain experience relevant to teaching.

The francophone community may also find such attempts worthwhile, because there have been fewer applicants for each position in French-language faculties of education than in English-language institutions.

**Recommendations 61, 62**

*We recommend that faculties expand their efforts to admit more student teachers from previously under-represented groups, including ethno-cultural and racial minorities, aboriginal communities, and those who are disabled, and that they be accountable to the College of Teachers for demonstrating significant progress toward achieving this objective.

*We recommend that faculties of education, school boards, and teachers' federations develop joint programs to encourage more young people from minority groups to consider teaching as a career, and to ensure that minority youth and adults interested in teaching have opportunities to gain the necessary experience with children and adolescents.

**Pre-service preparation**

Pre-service preparation, including the content and organization of programs, should be guided in general by the concepts of teaching we propose, and by common understandings about professional skill and knowledge. We discuss and make recommendations about the control and location of programs, their length, and their content.

**Control and location of programs:**

We have noted that Ontario faculties of education have recently increased the involvement of schools in pre-service programs, having student teachers actually working in classrooms over long blocks of time, and being more involved in the entire life of the school. It has been suggested that perhaps this concept might be taken even further, and that initial teacher preparation be based entirely in schools rather than in universities; in this model, school board staff would take primary responsibility for delivery of the program.(24) Student teachers, the argument goes, have already spent four years in universities doing their undergraduate degrees. To prepare for teaching, they should become apprentices, learning their craft by watching experienced teachers, acquiring the necessary skills and techniques, and practising those skills in the real setting of classrooms.

Although we believe that schools should, indeed, play a larger role in initial teacher preparation (and we
will outline just how we think this should happen), we also believe that such apprenticeship programs, if run entirely by schools and school systems, would have serious limitations in pre-service preparation of teachers.

There are certainly many practical skills and routines that student teachers can and do learn from observing experienced practitioners. However, learning the essential "nuts and bolts" is not enough. Teachers also need to understand why they are doing what they do, and be able to explain why they have chosen certain content or methods. They must learn how to teach their subjects. They must be familiar with research on child development and how children learn. They must understand how learning is affected by social and emotional factors.

Specific skills related to classroom management or lesson planning must be seen in the broader context of professional knowledge and practice. "Cookbook" learning is not enough. As part of their preparation, student teachers should begin to understand the organizational, political, legal, and ethical contexts in which they will work, and discuss competing ideas about the nature and purpose of education. Although schools can do some of this, they are unlikely to provide sustained support for thoughtful consideration of issues. As well, the top priority of schools is (and should remain) to teach students and help them learn. If schools were given responsibility for training teachers, it could create conflicting priorities - teach teachers or teach students? - and add another burden for our schools.

Apprenticeship models really only make sense if the goal is to reproduce the current realities of schools and teaching - in other words, to prepare teachers for schools as they exist at present. But, as we have argued, this is not enough. Although there are many pockets of excellence in schools throughout Ontario, there could be improvements to the status quo.

What universities can bring to professional preparation, in addition to a solid understanding of the knowledge base for teaching, is their commitment to scrutinizing and questioning accepted practices and ideas. The challenge, of course, is to ensure that universities actually do so, but this challenge will not be met by bypassing these institutions.

At the same time, we believe that the responsibility for both planning and implementing the program should be shared with schools. Faculties of education have no monopoly on ideas to improve teacher preparation.

**Professional development schools:**

We believe that partnerships in teacher education between faculties of education and school boards must become the norm rather than the exception. We suggest that each faculty of education develop partnership agreements with school boards, through which some schools can be designated as "professional development schools." Such schools would operate much like teaching hospitals, combining the best of theory and practice to create learning communities for the children, the teachers, and the student teachers. (25)

In professional development schools, university faculty and practising teachers would work together in planning and implementing a program, through which student teachers were guided to professional competence. Although teacher preparation would be based in the university, much of the program would be delivered through these school settings, with the involvement of both faculty members and practising teachers.
Student teachers would be assigned in small groups to these selected schools for significant blocks of time, perhaps two days each week during the year, or for a month or more. Not only would this provide opportunities for sustained and thoughtful interaction with school staff, it would also encourage student teachers to work together as they learn about teaching. Such experiences go a long way to break down the walls of isolation that have kept teachers cut off from rich sources of collegial stimulation. Student teachers would thus learn to work collegially rather than in isolation.

Professional development schools would be located in the public, Roman Catholic, and French-language systems, to provide adequate opportunities for teachers to be prepared to teach in all Ontario schools.

In such a partnership arrangement, the school and the school board would share in the responsibility to guide the professional socialization of student teachers, with the participation of the majority of teachers in the school. We would expect that one teacher (or the vice-principal) would agree to take the lead in co-ordinating teacher preparation efforts, and deployment of the student teachers in the professional-development school. This co-ordinating role would be recognized as part of the person's responsibilities for that year.

Groups of approximately seven or eight student teachers would be assigned to each school on a continuing basis. Although scheduling arrangements should be flexible, we would expect student teachers to spend significant blocks of time in the school.

The learning objectives for each block of time would be jointly defined by university faculty members and teachers in the school. The expectation is that school experience would be explicitly linked to concepts discussed in the university courses, so that student teachers could relate what they see in classrooms and schools to theoretical frameworks.

**Recommendations 63, 64, 65**

*We recommend that faculties of education establish partnership arrangements with selected school boards and schools in the public, Roman Catholic, and French-language systems that agree to work with faculties in preparing student teachers. In such designated "professional development schools," staff from faculties and from the schools would be jointly responsible for planning the program, and for guiding student teachers through their learning.*

*We recommend that school staff with responsibility for student teachers be selected jointly by the faculty of education and the school principal, and that they participate in a significant and well-designed preparation program themselves, to ensure that they have a fully developed understanding of the process of learning to teach, and a shared understanding of the skills, knowledge, competencies, and values that beginning teachers should have.*

*We recommend that school staff supervising student teachers have significant input into recommendations for certification.*

**Length of pre-service programs**

We have noted that the purpose of pre-service is not to produce a "finished professional" but to ensure that teachers are prepared for a good start in their profession, and have a foundation for continued professional growth. Nonetheless, given the vision of teaching we propose and the kinds of skill and knowledge teachers require, we do not believe that a one-year program, from September to April, is sufficient to provide student teachers with a solid foundation on which to begin teaching. This conclusion
is supported by many presenters to the Commission, as well as by many teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and practitioners.

How might the program be extended? There are three different strategies: going back into undergraduate programs, lengthening the time in pre-service, and moving some learning forward into the first year or more of teaching. Our recommendations involve all three strategies.

The first suggestion for relieving the pressure of a one-year program is to require more prerequisites for entry into faculties of education, thus moving some of the necessary learning back into the regular undergraduate program. Queen's University, for instance, now requires all applicants to its faculty of education to have some background in mathematics and science, but most other faculties do not.

Faculties have resisted suggestions that prerequisites be standard across the province, on the grounds that it is up to each university to set its own admission requirements. Although we recognize this concern, we believe that it is reasonable to require some common undergraduate preparation prior to the teacher training program.

The issue is different for elementary than for secondary preparation programs. It seems more reasonable to require a variety of subject prerequisites for elementary school teachers, who are expected to teach a broad range of topics. On the other hand, secondary school teachers are generally expected to teach two subjects in considerable depth; broad prerequisites might be difficult for them, and perhaps unnecessary.

Areas that might be considered essential for elementary teachers, in particular, include mathematics, science, English (or French for French-language schools), and the arts. For all teachers, reasonable prerequisites would include developmental psychology, competence with computer technology, and perhaps sociology. Although such prerequisites may make it difficult for older candidates switching to teaching from another career, we believe that such difficulties are substantially outweighed by the need for some common undergraduate background. Increasing the prerequisites is not a full solution to the problem of an overcrowded pre-service curriculum, but it will help.

Some of the courses that aspiring teachers might be asked to take do not exist in all universities. Courses exploring key concepts in mathematics or science, for instance, or on the sociology of schooling, could be developed by faculties of arts and science in collaboration with faculties of education. In fact, some are already being developed; York University, for instance, has one in mathematics, and is developing at least one in science.

Although teacher education is often seen as the purview of faculties of education, it should be a priority for the rest of the university as well. Faculties of arts and science have a role to play in strengthening the undergraduate education of prospective teachers, and should be seen as partners of faculties of education.

**Recommendations 66, 67**

*We recommend that common undergraduate prerequisites be established for entry to pre-service teacher preparation programs, with decisions about specific prerequisites to be made by the College of Teachers, with input from faculties of education and school boards.*

*We recommend that faculties of arts and science be encouraged to work with faculties of education to develop suitable undergraduate courses, where these do not exist, in subjects that are prerequisites for entry to faculties of education.*
There is little doubt, however, that a longer pre-service program is necessary. The current period is too brief to provide sufficient opportunity for developing all the skills and knowledge teachers need for teaching in today's schools, let alone those of the future.

Preparation for teaching should be as rigorous as for any other profession. Not only do prospective teachers need to build knowledge and skill, they must develop enough expertise, comfort, and understanding of the educational system to move from being students to becoming independent professional teachers. We believe that the consecutive program should be substantially restructured and extended to two years, while the concurrent programs should be similarly extended by one year.

Lengthening the program, of course, substantially raises the costs of teacher preparation for candidates, and the per-student cost for the government. Unless faculties of education are expanded, which we do not suggest, it also decreases the supply of new teachers. We are aware of these problems, but believe they are outweighed by the benefits of a two-year program. The decreased supply of new teachers is not likely to be an immediate problem, since only about half of the graduates actually find teaching positions each year. We recognize, however, that in the future the demand for teachers may increase as educators retire. Should this occur, the province would have to be ready to make arrangements to meet the demand, perhaps through temporary increases in the numbers admitted to faculties of education.

Although the increased cost might act as a disincentive for low-income applicants, we suggest that this should be addressed through strategies for providing financial support, for example by extending the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

We believe there should be considerable flexibility in the way the teacher preparation program is organized, but that throughout the two years, student teachers should take on increasing levels of responsibility in schools. The second year would be somewhat like an internship, in which student teachers are able to work in schools as "fledgling teachers." They would contribute to the work of the school, allowing more flexibility in teacher scheduling, but be under the guidance of experienced teachers, who, backed by specific training, have responsibilities for continuing development of novice teachers.

We have recommended that professional development schools, in partnership with faculties of education, work with small groups of student teachers. It is likely that most of the first year of the program would be based at the faculty of education, while much of the second year would be in the school, with regular seminars led by faculty members and teachers. The Bachelor of Education degree would be awarded by the university on successful completion of the second year. Presumably, in concurrent programs, the B.Ed. would be awarded after the sixth year of combined arts and education.

The Ontario Teaching Certificate is currently awarded to teachers when they complete the B.Ed. degree. Faculties of education recommend candidates to the Ministry of Education, which awards the certificate. Under the system we propose, faculties would recommend certification to the College of Teachers. We believe, however, that the initial certificate should be provisional, being made permanent on completion of one year's successful teaching in an Ontario school. Our reason responds to concerns expressed about ensuring the highest calibre of teaching in our schools. It makes little sense to give a permanent teaching certificate to someone who has never been employed as a teacher. The certification process would be quite distinct from the employing board's decision concerning probationary and permanent contracts.

Recommendations 68, 69, 70, 71
We recommend that the consecutive program for teacher education be extended to two years, and that one year be added to the concurrent program. We recommend that the Bachelor of Education degree be awarded on successful completion of the two-year program or, in the case of the concurrent program, on completion of the equivalent of the two-year education program.

We recommend that the current practice-teaching requisite of 40 days be replaced by a requirement that student teachers spend at least that much time observing and working in designated professional development schools during the first year of the B.Ed. program, and that they spend a substantial portion (at least three months) of the second year working in schools, under the supervision of school staff. We recommend a similar requirement for students in concurrent programs, over the length of the pre-service program.

We recommend that faculties of education recommend to the College of Teachers that those who have been awarded B.Ed. degrees be given a provisional Ontario Teaching Certificate.

We recommend that the Ontario Teaching Certificate be made permanent on completion of one year's teaching in Ontario, on the recommendation of a qualified principal or supervisory officer. However, this certification process would be quite distinct from the employing board's decision concerning probationary and permanent contracts.

Teachers who have been prepared and certified in programs outside Ontario should be required to satisfy the College of Teachers that their qualifications are comparable. Once they had done that, they would then be granted a provisional Ontario Teaching Certificate, which would be made permanent after one year's successful teaching in an Ontario school.

Content of program:
The program priorities that we believe are most important are grouped according to the five principles that define our image of good teaching:

1. Caring about students, and being committed to students' learning
Critical as this area is, it does not easily lend itself to inclusion in a formal program of study. Although faculty and school placements can and should strengthen a student teacher's commitment to students, it is not simply a matter of explicitly increasing knowledge and skills.

Nonetheless, a good pre-service program will help student teachers build effectively on the concern and commitment to young people, which probably attracted them to teaching in the first place.

We stress again that faculties of education and the schools in which student teachers work have a responsibility to counsel those who lack the necessary commitment to reconsider their choice of career.

Student teachers should

- learn to be mentors and advisors to their students, and understand the importance of respect and care in working with students;
- understand and appreciate the linguistic, religious, cultural, and social differences among students, and become aware of how to build on the strengths students from different backgrounds bring to school;
- become sensitive to the effects of the hidden curriculum, and be willing and able to question their own attitudes and modify their own practice accordingly;
- understand the importance of teachers having high expectations of all students.

2. Knowledge of subjects and how to teach them
Student teachers should

- understand the subjects they are expected to teach; for elementary school teachers in particular, this requires the development of courses that focus on the methodology and key concepts in areas such as mathematics and science. For secondary school teachers, who have considerable knowledge of the subjects they expect to teach, courses should lead to an understanding of key principles and concepts in their subjects in ways that help students understand them;
- become familiar with recent research on learning and teaching, in order to make judgments about how best to teach their students;
- understand how students develop literacy, in the broad sense in which we use the term, and the importance of oral language development, particularly in a minority-language environment;
- understand enough about first- and second-language learning, and how cognitive development relates to language learning, to appropriately support students who come to school not being able to speak English or French;
- be well equipped to teach children to read;
- develop skill in using various teaching methods appropriately, capitalizing on the advantages of each approach while minimizing the disadvantages;
- be able to relate the teaching of various subjects to the Canadian context, recognizing Canada as a bilingual country; acknowledging the history, culture, traditions, and contribution of aboriginal people to Canadian society; as well as the contribution of the groups originally from other countries who have enriched Canadian culture over the past 300 years;
- develop skill in using electronic technology to support student learning, including using the most common software packages, and facilitating students use of telecommunications for access to information.

3. Organizing and monitoring student learning

This encompasses planning the curriculum (the year's work), setting learning objectives for groups and for individual students, managing the classroom, monitoring student learning, and intervening appropriately when students need additional help or have to be challenged.

To do so, student teachers should

- understand the process of children's cognitive, emotional, and social development, in order to plan programs and set reasonable expectations for students;
- understand the sequence of curriculum, to know what has gone before, and what will follow;
- learn to encourage positive behaviour in students, and know and be skilled in using strategies to deal effectively with inappropriate behaviour;
- be aware of the normal range of behaviour and ability, and learn to recognize academic, emotional, and social developmental difficulties among youngsters, being familiar enough with available resources to get assistance for them when it's needed;
- develop understanding and skill in assessing student learning using a variety of strategies, developing skill in selecting, using, and interpreting different methods to meet different purposes;
- learn to communicate effectively about student learning to students and parents; explaining objectives, indicating what has been learned, and making suggestions for further learning, with input from students and parents.
4. Working effectively with others, including other teachers, students, parents, and members of the community
Building a more collaborative professional culture begins with student teachers.

They should, therefore,

- learn and be prepared to use strategies for increasing and maintaining the kind of parental involvement that supports student learning;
- become accustomed to working not only alone with students, but also in team situations with other teachers, to set priorities, identify needs, plan curriculum, and initiate other action in their schools;
- become acquainted with parents and others in the community, and be ready to use those resource people to strengthen student learning.

5. Critically examining teaching practice and continuing to learn throughout their careers
Because on-going professional growth and continuous improvement are integral to professional work, these norms should be reinforced in the preparation programs for teachers.

Student teachers should

- develop the habit of examining and learning from their own experience;
- understand that as teachers, they themselves must be lifelong learners who will build on and extend their initial learning as they move into teaching careers;
- become critical consumers of research so they can choose knowledgeably among options to ensure optimal learning for all their students;
- understand the changing social and economic contexts of education, and the role of educators in debates about educational issues.

In addition to these general requirements, student teachers who hope to teach in particular settings have a number of more-specific needs. Faculties of education must ensure that candidates are adequately prepared, with both content knowledge and significant experience in appropriate school settings. We look specifically at Catholic schools, French-language schools, aboriginal schools, adult education, and technological studies.

Student teachers planning to teach in the Catholic separate school system need a knowledge of its distinctive features, history, philosophy, values, and some familiarity with pedagogy and educational methods of religious education programs in these schools.

In addition to strong French-language skills, student teachers preparing to teach in French-language schools need an understanding and appreciation of the minority-language context of Ontario's francophone community.

Student teachers preparing to teach in aboriginal schools must have an appreciation and knowledge of aboriginal culture and traditions, and should have at least some facility with an aboriginal language.

Student teachers interested in adult education need knowledge about and experience with adult learning settings, and with the ways adult learning needs differ from those of younger students.

Prospective teachers of technological studies may not have all the technical skills required. Therefore, teacher education programs may need to develop both substantive technical expertise as well as teaching
strategies.

There are two further issues in relation to pre-service programs: preparing to teach early childhood education programs, and preparing to teach diverse student populations.

**Teachers for early childhood education:**
A key recommendation in our report is for enhanced and expanded early childhood education programs for young children. We recommend that the publicly funded schools move toward offering full-day programs for children beginning at age 3. At the moment, there are two separate systems for preparing child-care workers and teachers, and persons licensed in one system are not recognized by the other.

In order to provide fully trained and qualified teachers for these programs, therefore, changes will have to be made in the current preparation and certification process. A proposal made to the Deputy Minister of Education and Training in 1993 provides a model that is a good starting point for considering what a new program might involve.(27)

The proposal is for a program to be collaboratively delivered by a college of applied arts and technology, a university, and a faculty of education. The program would stress the "interdependence of care and education in the lives of young children."

Although it may need some revision in the light of our early childhood recommendations, the proposal offers one possible long-term solution for the problem of how best to prepare teachers for very young children. In the early stages of implementation of the school readiness program, however, we need a different framework. Our main concerns are, first, the status of those currently licensed as Early Childhood Educators, and those currently certified as primary teachers; and, second, the need for retraining either of these groups might have in light of changed programs.

The details would need to be worked out and approved by the College of Teachers, working closely with college and university faculty members, and with representatives from both the early childhood and primary teaching groups. However, we assume that teachers currently qualified to teach kindergarten would be able to teach the three-year-olds, as would those currently qualified to teach in early childhood programs - although it is likely that both groups might require some additional professional development.

We suggest that they be deemed to be qualified to teach in the school readiness programs for three- and four-year-olds, contingent on their participation in appropriate professional development programs, as defined by the College of Teachers in consultation with university and college staff and with representatives of early childhood educators and primary teachers.

**Recommendations 72, 73**

*We recommend that the College of Teachers develop a set of criteria for certifying staff for school readiness programs, and that whatever preparation and certification requirements are adopted, teachers in early childhood education programs have qualifications equivalent to other teachers, and be equal in status.

*We recommend that the College of Teachers consider how to recognize staff members who are currently licensed as early childhood educators or certified primary teachers and who will be affected by the establishment of school readiness programs for three-year-olds in publicly funded schools.

**Teaching diverse student populations:**
Although all student teachers must learn about teaching diverse student populations, this is particularly
true of those who expect to teach in urban areas characterized by diversity in race, culture, language, and religion. A great deal is known about ways to enhance the success of culturally and linguistically diverse students, but teachers may lack this information. As noted by Geneva Gay, an African-American writer:

*Teacher preparation for equity means learning how to differentiate the means of instruction to make high status knowledge and academic success accessible to culturally, ethnically and socially different students as to students who are members of the majority culture ... Teaching with equity means first helping children gain fluency in their natural and individual ways of knowing - ways of studying, asking, answering, understanding, cogitating, expressing, and engaging with others and then challenging and assisting them to learn other forms to broaden their repertoires.* (28)

Fortunately, there are many effective approaches for all students, including building trust, using a variety of different teaching strategies, giving effective feedback, maintaining high expectations, using curriculum or examples that relate to various backgrounds and experiences, and establishing good relationships with parents. (29)

**Professional development and lifelong learning**

**In-service programs today**

The training or continuing education of practising teachers, usually referred to as professional development or teacher in-service, is characterized by such scope and diversity that it is almost impossible to describe briefly. There is no provincial mandatory professional development requirement for Ontario teachers. Local school boards or schools, however, may mandate in-service programs in relation to provincial or board priorities.

Additional Qualifications (AQ) courses for teachers have been perhaps the most popular and well-known form of professional development in Ontario. These, provided for in provincial legislation and leading to salary increases (through category changes) or to promotional opportunities, were formerly funded largely by provincial grants to universities, although most were actually taught by school personnel hired on a part-time basis by faculties of education. In 1993, the Ministry announced that funding would be phased out over three years, not only as a way of reducing government expenditures, but as part of a shift toward user fees for many government services and programs. The government action has resulted in both higher fees and lower enrolment and, in at least one university, the cancelling of AQ courses.

Although courses were usually well rated by participants, most observers felt the program was of variable quality and not linked to school improvement. Tying professional development to salary increases fosters the sense that teachers are motivated more by financial rewards than by an interest in upgrading. In other words, it was time for change, and the government's funding decision might well be seen as an opportunity for developing a new and better provincial framework for teacher professional development - one that takes into account the complex world of teaching as well as research findings about effective professional development.

For the past year a committee, comprising representatives of faculties of education, teachers' federations, and the Ministry, has been meeting; as yet no agreement has been reached on a co-ordinating framework for professional development for the province. It is interesting to note that in contrast to Ontario's AQ courses, in most other provinces, graduate study programs alone are recognized for salary and promotion
School boards provide a wide range of professional development activities, although these vary tremendously according to the board's size and resources. "One-shot" information sessions are still common, although there is abundant evidence that these are of limited value.

However, schools and school boards are beginning to draw on research findings about how to make professional development more effective. As a result, programs focus on priorities that have been identified as important for student learning; teachers participate in school teams rather than as individuals; and workshops are supported by follow-up activities in the schools. With the financial crisis, and particularly because of the Ontario Social Contract provisions, time and money for such professional development have been reduced, perhaps a reflection of the importance they are perceived to have.

A variety of workshops, brief courses, summer institutes, and professional conferences are offered by teachers' federations and other agencies. Some are of general interest, while others may be more specialized. The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, for instance, offers a religion course for those in Catholic schools. Regional consortia, usually involving school boards and universities, have increasingly played a major role in offering a variety of programs. Such professional development activities are usually made available to educators on a cost-recovery basis, although federations may subsidize members for their programs.

Subject councils (e.g., provincial associations of teachers of mathematics or of history) make substantial contributions to the on-going development of their members, through conferences, newsletters or journals, and through professional development programs. This is particularly true for secondary school teachers.

TVOntario/La Chaine has taken a role in teacher professional development, with programs devoted to a variety of educational issues. TVOntario/La Chaine provides an electronic bulletin board for education, where teachers and others can raise questions, share ideas, and debate issues of importance to them, in either French or English.

Regional offices of the Ministry of Education and Training also play a role in providing on-going support and professional development for English- and French-language schools, particularly in the North, as do OISE field centres (although these have been cut back recently for financial reasons). Such resources are particularly important for smaller or isolated boards. OISE's Centre de recherches en education franco-ontarienne (CREFO) and the Centre de recherches en education du Nouvel-Ontario (CRENO) offer support to the French-language educational community.

The other major form of professional development is graduate studies, either in subject areas (such as history or mathematics), or in education. Graduate degrees in education are offered through faculties of education and through OISE. All faculties now offer M.Ed. programs, and some offer M.A. programs as well. Currently, however, doctorates are available only through OISE and the University of Ottawa.

French-language doctoral students can complete their programs in French at either OISE or at the University of Ottawa. A few universities offer courses by distance education, both through teleconferencing and computer networks. These programs have proved to be particularly valuable for the francophone community, because they overcome difficulties associated with small numbers of people, often in somewhat isolated pockets spread over vast distances.
Continuing professional development: present issues

Although many teachers are engaged in professional learning, others are not. There are no professional development requirements for teachers (other than the professional development days that are part of collective agreements). We believe, however, that professional development should not be an option: it is essential.

Second, while some programs are of high calibre, others are not. It is not clear what standards are being used to judge professional development activities, or even whether they are always systematically evaluated.

Third, withdrawing funds from the AQ courses has further destabilized the situation. But it has created an opportunity to move away from a system based largely on paper credentials, and to rethink how best to support teachers' career-long professional growth.

Finally, and as indicated earlier, teachers are feeling overloaded - a situation made worse by recent financial cutbacks. There is little time available for professional development, and little or no money available for supply teachers to cover classes so that colleagues can participate in professional development. That means much of it has to be done after school, on weekends, or during the summer. Although many teachers are willing to give up their time, others are not, or, because of personal responsibilities, cannot. The issue continues to cause problems for federations and for school boards.

Professional development policy and programs (continuing education for practising teachers) should be guided by the same principles of good teaching, and the same understanding of how teachers and other adults learn, as outlined in our discussion of initial teacher preparation.

Good professional development keeps people up to date, revitalizes them, and encourages them to reassess their own practice in the light of changing circumstances in society and in their schools. This is particularly important when many teachers are middle-aged, and may have been trained years earlier.(30)

Our description of current professional development programs is an indication of the rich but somewhat chaotic state of the field. Although some degree of co-ordination would probably be helpful, we are concerned that the imposition of bureaucratic control is more likely to stifle than to stimulate provision of professional development.

The experience with Additional Qualifications courses suggests the danger of building bureaucratic structures that cannot respond quickly to changing circumstances. For instance, continuing to tie AQs to category changes and pay increases constrains the development of more meaningful alternatives.

Professional development for the future

How do teachers learn to teach better? It is extremely difficult for teachers to go beyond their implicit understandings of teaching (usually based on their own experiences as students). In other words, the most powerful determinant of how teachers teach is their own experience as students over a period of 15 to 20 years. Such a finding suggests caution about any "quick fixes."

Teachers need to reflect on school experiences. We referred earlier to the "hidden curriculum" - what schools teach without necessarily intending to. We want teachers to become aware of, and critically consider, the unintended hidden curriculum in their schools.
Research also shows the limitations of mandating change in teaching practices. Unless teachers see good reasons for change, and unless they get support for the change in their schools, few make substantial alterations to their teaching. If we are asking teachers to perform new tasks, to perform old ones differently, to work together with their colleagues and others, and to understand how each change in practice is likely to affect many other aspects of the school, it is clear that a radical new approach to professional development is required.

We make recommendations around supportive beginning teachers, ensuring adequate professional development, and encouraging opportunities for personal and professional renewal. We then briefly discuss how professional development might be organized, the importance of school-based professional development, and the role of graduate studies programs as vehicles for professional development.

Supporting beginning teachers:
Beginning teachers are faced with difficult challenges. All too often they are forced to learn to swim by being thrown into the water. That is not good enough. In addition to experiencing uncertainty about how to actually put into practice all that they have learned, they may be given the most difficult classes, or the teaching assignments no-one else wants. In their eagerness to participate fully, they often end up with heavy extra-curricular responsibilities as well. Schools and school systems need to be sensitive to such difficulties, and avoid exploiting new teachers.

In the past few years, most school boards in Ontario began offering more support to their new teachers, usually through what are termed "induction programs." Brief orientation sessions are increasingly supplemented by a series of workshops on issues such as classroom management, report cards, and meeting with parents. A few boards have gone further, setting up "mentoring programs" in which beginning teachers work with selected experienced teachers who agree to act as mentors or guides. Some assign a consultant to work with beginning teachers, usually visiting them in their schools. Some beginning teacher programs may provide up to three or four days release time for participants, while others do not.

Evaluations of support programs for beginning teachers generally show benefits to both the novices and the experienced teachers who participate. Unfortunately, these are the programs that are vulnerable to cutbacks in the current context of financial constraint. We believe it is time to reconsider priorities, because the first year of teaching is crucial in determining later commitment and expertise.

We believe that with flexibility and good will, it is possible to develop and operate a program that has significant benefits for beginning teachers, schools, and students. First-year teachers could be provided with a program in August; there would be some additional costs to the system, but we do not anticipate these would be great. Even informal support eases the transition into professional life, yet requires few additional funds, and can be provided with little or no change to formal responsibilities.

Teachers will be much better prepared following a two-year pre-service program, particularly when the second year is similar to an internship in having significant school responsibilities. It is still important, however, to build appropriately on this foundation of pre-service preparation.

**Recommendation 74**

*We recommend that school boards be required to provide appropriate and sustained professional support to
all first-year teachers, to ease their entry into full-time teaching.

Although many boards already have such programs, it is time for support to be available to all teachers. Materials could be collaboratively developed, with a core or common part developed by the Ministry and faculties of education, and local materials developed by school boards, based on their particular circumstances. Small boards could work in consortia, and perhaps use distance-learning technology to supplement what schools can provide to new teachers in remote locations.

Where possible, first-year teachers should be provided with support from mentor teachers or consultants, who have received appropriate preparation. It is critical that the responsibility of helping to socialize a beginner into the profession be seen as the serious and challenging responsibility it is. All too often, such work is somewhat demeaned and seen as less important than many other school functions.

**Continuing professional development:**
We suggest the continued expansion of a full range of professional development options, with the participation of teachers' federations, school boards, faculties of education, TVOntario, and teachers' subject associations, but with others as well: colleges, other university departments, community organizations, student groups, social agencies, and perhaps business and industry. These programs would serve different purposes, including providing information and networking, developing expertise in a particular area of knowledge, changing instructional practice, or supporting school reform. Types of programs that are effective for one purpose will not necessarily work for another.

We also suggest that there be a distinction between recognized professional development programs and what might be termed professional renewal, which is a more personal and individual notion. The latter is critically important for educators, but is difficult, if not impossible, to incorporate into any kind of framework for regulating and recognizing programs.

The situation with regard to more formal professional development is somewhat different. We have already said that we do not support linking professional upgrading to category changes and salary increases. At the moment, teaching certificates, once granted, are permanent, with no requirement for upgrading or renewal of certification. This situation is unlike that in some other jurisdictions, where some kind of evidence of professional growth is required for ongoing certification as a teacher.

There is little doubt that involvement in professional development should be expected of teachers as professionals, and we believe that, on a mandatory basis, all teachers should engage in significant professional development.

The most effective way of monitoring this may be to recertify teachers, perhaps every five years, on the basis of their having completed some recognized professional development activities. This would be best organized through the new College of Teachers, and could then be monitored by school boards, which would, in turn, report results to the College.

**Recommendation 75**

*We recommend mandatory professional development for all educators in the publicly funded school system, with continuing certification every five years, dependent on both satisfactory performance and participation in professional development recognized by the College of Teachers.*

The regulatory framework and detailed provisions would be worked out by the College of Teachers, with
participation by federations, subject councils, school boards, the Ministry, and faculties of education. The College would decide on requirements and criteria for continuing certification or re-certification, with consideration given to maintaining high standards with maximum flexibility.

Those who teach in private schools would also have to meet the criteria for continuing certification. We assume the College of Teachers would decide how the regulatory framework would apply to private schools.

Although we want to encourage flexibility, we do not suggest a laissez-faire approach: rather, we suggest that professional development be required, but that educators have considerable autonomy in deciding what form of professional development would best serve their needs and those of their schools.

We believe that school board/employers should be responsible for supporting and monitoring mandatory professional development. In effect, many boards do this already, by developing school improvement plans and providing professional development to support them, or through programs in which teachers set improvement objectives related to their classroom practices.

Although the details would be worked out by the College, we suggest that there be some framework through which the College would either recognize particular programs or perhaps particular providers of programs, such as universities, teachers' federations, school boards, or private consortia.

There would be no automatic salary increments associated with completion of programs, nor would there be any particular qualification the Ministry (or the College) would require teachers to have. Employing boards would have the responsibility of judging whether applicants for particular positions had the training and expertise to do the job. There might be a variety of possible kinds of qualification for such positions as teaching Special Education, perhaps an M.Ed. or some combination of courses given by recognized providers. In other words, rather than relying on paper qualifications to "pre-sort" applicants, employing school boards would be expected to make judgments about whether applicants had the knowledge and skills required for a particular position. As part of that evaluation, they would assess applicants' training and experience in the light of the skills and knowledge required for the job.

Other professional renewal initiatives:
Throughout our report, we have repeatedly demonstrated that teaching is a difficult, demanding, and complex job. The frequent professional isolation, the sense of overload, the barrage of competing and often incompatible demands, the pace of change all these make it difficult for teachers to continue month after month, year after year, without suffering from stress and fatigue. It is critical that teachers have as many opportunities as possible for professional and personal renewal.

A variety of activities beyond traditional course work or workshops might be powerful influences in professional renewal. Teaching in another country, working for a time in a business setting, taking on a study project in another jurisdiction, participating in a graduate studies program, teaching a different age range or in a different school - all these bring fresh ideas and perspectives to educators, and can enrich subsequent classroom teaching.

Such experiences should be encouraged, although it would be difficult to have some of them recognized as official professional development activities to meet the requirements of the College of Teachers. Instead, we would hope that the Ministry and school boards would set policies to encourage such flexible professional renewal initiatives. We are convinced that such initiatives will be of benefit not only to
teachers, but also to the school system as a whole.

In some cases, teachers may benefit from a variety of short-term leaves or mini-sabbaticals. If all attempts at professional renewal were unsuccessful, pre-retirement offers might be considered.

Other enabling policies to support professional renewal would include provision for self-funded leaves, support of exchange programs of various sorts, and workload flexibility to accommodate professional commitments and opportunities, such as making presentations at conferences, editing professional newsletters, or being involved in research or professional writing. Such opportunities should be available to teachers and administrators in all school boards.

**Recommendation 76**

*We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training, school boards, and federations, in collaboration with the College of Teachers, investigate and encourage various ways of providing opportunities for professional renewal for teachers and school administrators.*

Guidelines with regard to organization and coordination:
We do not specify in detail how professional development should be organized, believing that arrangements should be flexibly developed between providers and participants. However, we identify a number of suggestions that should be noted.

Because it can be assumed that both employers and teachers would benefit, we believe that costs should be shared between them, with arrangements to be worked out through the College of Teachers.

The current move to consortia and partnerships should be expanded and strengthened. School boards, faculties, federations, and other groups bring particular strengths and insights; if they work together, the result is likely to be innovative and high-quality programs.

Electronic technology should be utilized far more than is currently the case. The use of interactive video and electronic conferencing, for instance, can help overcome difficulties of distance and scheduling.

Given the plethora of opportunities and providers, some agency probably the Ministry and the federations - should provide information to all schools about the range of options. This might be done through circulars, via computer networks, in regular publications, and by highlighting particularly noteworthy programs.

**School-based professional development:**
Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the culture of teaching, and stressed the importance of teachers having time to collectively plan, discuss, and evaluate with their colleagues. We emphasize again here that the most valuable professional development is embedded in the on-going life of the school. Teachers' active involvement in a vital professional community, with on-going discussion of curriculum, teaching methods, and student assessment: this is the professional development that will make the most significant difference to student learning. As teachers collectively examine their own school's current practice, they are motivated to seek ever-better ways of meeting student needs. As Andy Hargreaves and Lorna Earl point out when reporting on their recent research in Ontario schools,

*Teachers are much more likely to seek and accept solutions to problems they discover for themselves, than to problems identified by others.*(35)
In many school boards, all schools are required to develop "school growth plans," setting out their school plan for the coming year or several years. Such school growth plans would be based both on the stated priorities of the school board, and on staff assessment of the local school context. Teachers and principals agree on school priorities, and then plan staff action and professional development accordingly. In most cases, schools decide to focus on instruction or student assessment. The chosen topics would provide direction for planning both individual and whole-staff professional development, drawing on resources outside the school as well as the knowledge of staff members. The expectation would be that teachers would be applying their new learning in classrooms on a regular basis, and would continue to learn from their own experiences and those of their colleagues in the school. A critical mass is created with the involvement of many teachers in the school, greatly increasing the effectiveness of the improvement efforts.

Graduate studies:
AQ courses will no longer be the main vehicle for officially recognized professional development. Given this change, we suggest that faculties, with input from federations, school boards, and the Ministry, consider how M.Ed. programs might be more closely related to school and teacher priorities. Some faculties of education are beginning to move in this direction, but have been constrained by a variety of factors, including rather cumbersome regulations governing additional certification arrangements for experienced teachers (which we recommend be eliminated).

In most other provinces graduate studies provide a variety of flexible specialization programs. Teachers can pursue graduate degrees related to their specific professional interests and needs, but also upgrade their qualifications in a way that strengthens the links between theory and practice.

Graduate programs provide particularly good opportunities for teachers to take time out to research, reflect, and pursue topics in depth. If they were developed in collaboration with school systems and federations, there would be greater opportunities for teachers, perhaps collaborating with colleagues, to work with university faculty on issues that would have real benefits for schools and students. One example is an M.Ed. program at York University in which teachers can focus on issues related to urban education. The program is linked to a partnership with the North York Board of Education.

Teacher education: Summary
In our recommendations about teacher education, we see pre-service preparation, transition to teaching, and lifelong professional learning as a continuum. This means that pre-service programs should provide the foundation on which teachers continue to build, first as novice teachers, and then throughout their careers. Through lengthened and strengthened preparation, as well as through closer alliances between faculties of education and professional development schools, student teachers will not only learn the skills required for effective teaching, but will also develop the professional judgment necessary to teach in the demanding and complex world of today's schools. On-going professional development, in our view, is absolutely essential for all educators, and we have thus recommended mandatory professional development, but with maximum flexibility about how such requirements can be met.

Only teachers for whom continuous learning has become a way of life are likely to create the kind of stimulating and supportive classrooms we want for all of Ontario's students.
Endnotes (Chapter 12, Section B)


20. In Britain, the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools regularly evaluates 300 randomly selected newly qualified teachers in primary and secondary schools; the assessment is based on a one-day observation of each teacher, supplemented with questionnaire data from the teachers and their principals, as well as with interviews with new teachers, principals, and any teachers responsible for assisting the beginning teachers. The survey report, produced by the British Office of Standards in Education, provides demographic and workload information, judgments about teaching performance, assessments of the quality of preparation, and detailed comments about strengths and weaknesses.

22. John I. Goodlad, Educational Renewal: Better Teachers, Better Schools (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), p. 58. Goodlad, who has written extensively on reform of schools and of teacher education, suggests a similar process of what he calls "formative evaluation focused on both the program and the student." He believes that those responsible for the program, whether in universities or schools, should be asking themselves, "Is this person living up to our expectations of what is necessary progress to date?" and asking the student, "How do you feel about your present state of readiness to become a teacher?"

23. Ideas about the personal qualities necessary in a good teacher usually start with the idea that they fundamentally care for children and young people. As summarized by Kenneth Howey and his colleagues at the University of Ohio, who have co-ordinated a large study of characteristics of good preparation programs for teachers, they may go on to include: enjoyment of interacting with others, empathy, tolerance of ambiguity, and consideration of different perspectives in thinking and decision-making. Some would add to this list more traditional character traits such as honesty, fairness, and integrity.

24. In England, in fact, the government has moved most teacher training into schools. Institutions of higher education now play a much smaller role.

25. Professional development schools, or similar models, have become an increasingly important component of educational reform over the last decade. The following references represent some of the research and writing about such approaches to teacher education:

- Goodlad, Educational Renewal.


This external review of teacher preparation programs in Nova Scotia recommended a two-year program. British Columbia and Quebec also have some two-year programs.


33. Some of the research showing benefits of providing support programs for beginning teachers:


34. We suggest an exception for administrative positions (vice-principal, principal, and supervisory officer). As outlined later in this chapter, we are recommending that an M.Ed. plus successful completion of a provincial principal qualification course be required for appointment to vice-principal or principal positions, and a master's degree and completion of a provincial supervisory officer qualification program for appointment to a supervisory officer position. For these positions, then, particular formal qualifications would be required.

Chapter 12 - Section C: Evaluating performance

Figure 1 shows our proposed plan for teacher education, from undergraduate preparation through initial certification and on to continuing professional development.

What are the issues?

Many of those who spoke to the Commission addressed teacher evaluation: parents, students, and other members of the public tend to believe that schools and school boards do not give enough attention to evaluating teachers and principals, or to acting on the results of such evaluation. Students believe that they have important information to offer in the teacher evaluation process, and want to be asked for feedback on their experiences with their teachers. Parents, too, want their views to be taken into account.

Many people who made presentations to the Commission focused, perhaps understandably, on dealing with teachers they saw as incompetent or as failing to treat students with respect and care. Many members of the public appeared to believe that more attention to teacher evaluation would be a relatively simple solution to such problems, particularly dealing with unsatisfactory teachers.

From the perspective of the school system, the issues related to performance appraisal are complex, and there appear to be no simple solutions. High teaching standards must be maintained, but teachers must also be protected from arbitrary judgments.

Administrators do not usually consider identification of ineffective teachers the issue (principals and superintendents believe that they know quite well which teachers are having problems), but find that dealing with such teachers is difficult and time consuming.

The teachers' federations are responsible for protecting teachers' rights, and making sure their members are fairly treated. To this end, they have negotiated procedures that guarantee due process to teachers, ensure that teachers are given notice of problems, provided with assistance, and protected against arbitrary action on the part of school personnel.

An Ontario research study in the 1980s showed that few people in school boards thought that performance appraisal was a useful process. Rather, people were "going through the motions" with little or no indication that any improvement in performance resulted.

One difficulty is the lack of agreement on clear and meaningful definitions of good teaching and how it might be assessed. If, as was the case for many years, teaching is seen as a relatively simple matter of using standard methods of transmitting basic knowledge and controlling a class of students, assessing performance is also relatively simple, depending primarily on judging the extent to which teachers follow prescribed procedures. When effective teaching is seen as involving complex professional judgments that are based on broad knowledge and skill related to content, teaching strategies, and children, assessing
performance becomes more difficult.

If professional judgments of performance depend on shared professional knowledge, there may be limits to what can be expected from principals and vice-principals in evaluating subject expertise - for instance, an administrator with no knowledge of physics evaluating a physics teacher. Some principals would argue that in-depth knowledge of the subject is not necessary, but many teachers would disagree.

When it comes to subject-specific issues, colleagues with similar subject specialization are probably the best sources of feedback. Arranging such feedback, however, is difficult except on a purely voluntary basis, such as a team teaching arrangement, because federation regulations do not allow teachers to make evaluative comments about the performance of other federation members. Ideally, this feedback would come from the department head.

No one source of information offers definitive answers to how well someone is teaching. Just as we need a variety of indicators for assessing programs and school systems, so too do we need a variety of indicators for assessing teaching. Observation by principals or vice-principals is one source of information. Measures of student learning provide another. We believe that student feedback is necessary to provide a perspective that otherwise might not be heard.

Students may not always be aware of the intentions, the planning, and the explicit strategies teachers use. They are, however, well aware of classroom climate, the extent to which teachers treat students with respect and care, and their own perceptions of how much they are learning. Parent input can also be valuable, with an understanding that parents are not being asked to evaluate teachers' performance, but simply to give feedback concerning their experience and that of their children. Rating forms, similar to those in universities, could be used in secondary schools and with parents, while a simpler questionnaire should be devised for elementary school students.

**Purposes of performance appraisal**

**Accountability**

First, performance must be monitored for purposes of accountability, to ensure that standards are maintained. Internally, schools and school systems want to be certain that staff are performing well. Just as we have recommended systematic data-gathering about a range of indicators in schools and school systems, it is important to gather data systematically about the work of teachers and administrators, to satisfy the public and others that schools are doing what they are supposed to do.

**Improvement**

Yet another purpose is important: assessing performance so people can continually get better at what they do. Evaluation thus is a recognition of what is being done well, and a boost to even higher levels of performance.

Teachers and principals, for instance, need prompt and relevant feedback about how well they are teaching and how well the school is operating. Ideally, teachers and administrators jointly set objectives and priorities, rather than these being imposed from above. Again, given the complex and difficult work of teaching, teachers' own professional judgments are important. In evaluating how well objectives are being met, the perceptions of parents and students are relevant, as are data on how well students are
Decisions about probationary employees and promotion

Performance appraisal is necessary when decisions must be made about new teachers, who are hired on probationary contracts. That contract becomes permanent after the beginning teacher has taught successfully for two years, or after one year for those who have taught in another board.

When candidates are interested in promotional opportunities, they are evaluated according to current job performance and their suitability for promotion. In both cases, it is especially important that those being evaluated know clearly what the expectations are, and what criteria will be used to evaluate them.

However, in addition to the evaluations used to make decisions, beginning teachers need assistance and helpful feedback that is not part of the formal evaluation process. This is best offered by a supportive colleague, either a teacher designated as a mentor, or, in secondary schools, perhaps the department head, who is ideally placed to provide feedback based on knowledge of the school, the students, and the subject being taught.

Dealing with unsatisfactory performance

As we have indicated, schools and school systems must identify and assist staff members who, for whatever reason, are ineffective. If attempts to improve their performance fail, such teachers and principals may be moved to positions where they are expected to perform better, if such positions are available. However, if all these efforts fail to result in improvement, unsatisfactory employees must be dismissed.

Those who spoke at our public hearings believed that this responsibility was not being carried out as well as it ought to be. Difficult and painful as dismissal decisions are, the rights of students to a good education must take priority. Termination must be justified and defensible, with employees treated fairly. At the very least, fair treatment involves informing employees of standards and expectations; alerting them to deficiencies in their work that, if not corrected, may lead to dismissal; and giving them assistance (and reasonable time) to improve in areas of deficiency. The necessary practices are spelled out in teacher contracts. Very few teachers, however, are actually dismissed, whether or not their performance actually improves. It is impossible to get reliable data on the number of teachers who are not performing satisfactorily and who are not dismissed. Estimates suggest that the numbers are low, but we believe that even one such teacher in a school is too many.

A 1986 research study for the Ministry suggests that schools, like other organizations, resist dismissing ineffective employees because it is "too much trouble." The nuts and bolts are seen as so time-consuming and the costs so high, in terms of time and legal fees, that the effort is not worth it.\(^{37}\)

We are not aware that there have been any significant changes to this pattern since 1986. There is no doubt that costs associated with the dismissal process are high; we are more concerned, however, with the costs of failing to deal decisively with ineffective or incompetent educators.

First, they make the work of others more difficult. But our main concern is with students: a year with an unsatisfactory teacher may have a serious detrimental impact on a young child's learning and development. An adolescent struggling with school will find an insensitive and incompetent teacher
making the struggle even more frustrating and difficult. Furthermore, the credibility and reputation of the school and school board suffer if they do not appear to actively defend high standards of teacher performance.

We believe that through collective agreements, the defence of teachers' rights may have overridden the need for students to be protected from incompetent or uncaring teachers, who may be unable or unwilling to do a good job.

What can be done about the problem? We believe that leadership from the top is crucial: directors of education must communicate clearly that the system will make every effort to help teachers improve their performance if it is unsatisfactory, but that unless there is sufficient improvement after a reasonable time (within a year), principals will be held accountable for ensuring that appropriate action is taken.

There are situations in which teachers or administrators who are unsuccessful in one setting may be more successful in another the "fresh-start" approach. If, however, the problem re-emerges in the new setting, definitive action must be taken. Problem employees cannot be circulated through a variety of schools, damaging the education of countless hapless students.

**Recommendations 77, 78, 79, 80, 81**

*We recommend that all school boards make information available to the public about their performance appraisal systems, using newsletters or other means, so that students, parents, teachers, and the public are aware of the basis of performance appraisal and the guidelines being followed.*

*We recommend that all school board performance appraisal systems include provision for systematically and regularly seeking input from students and parents in regard to teaching, classroom, and school atmosphere, and to related matters about which they may have concerns or suggestions.*

*We recommend that beginning teachers have an opportunity to get helpful performance feedback from colleagues other than the principal or vice-principal, understanding that such information will not be used for decisions about permanent contracts. Designated mentor teachers, or in secondary schools, department heads, could provide this assistance.*

*We recommend that the College of Teachers, the Ministry, and school boards emphasize that principals are accountable for satisfactory teacher performance in their schools, and that supervisory officers are responsible for ensuring that principals take appropriate action in dealing with teachers whose performance is not satisfactory.*

*We recommend that the Ministry, teachers’ federations, and school boards reach agreement on any changes required to ensure that policies and practices related to dismissal effectively balance the rights of teachers and the rights of students.*

---

**Endnotes (Chapter 12, Section C)**
Stephen B. Lawton and others, "Development and Use of Performance Appraisal of Certified Education Staff in Ontario School Boards," vol. 4 (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education, 1986). The authors concluded:

"One of the general findings from our study, in fact, is that, while a great deal is known about what makes an effective set of appraisal policies and procedures, many school systems in Ontario have not implemented such practices consistently" (p. 5).

"While there is an enormous amount of effort put into evaluation by administrators in many boards, we could not really say that the results are used to any great effect. Personnel files are filled with thousands of reports that are never really used, once they have been written" (p.40).

Chapter 12 - Section D: Leadership

In a society undergoing radical and fundamental changes, people have become more demanding of their educational system and more likely to challenge authority. Educational leaders are caught in the midst of this shifting world, at a time when the public is increasingly vocal about perceived shortcomings of the schools.

Up to this point, we have said little about those who are charged with leading and managing schools and school systems. In this section we examine the crucial and challenging roles of principal, department head, and superintendent or supervisory officer.

We describe their roles and examine what we know about successful educational leadership. We look at the criteria for selecting school leaders, describe the way they are now prepared, and make recommendations for the future.

Principals

The job

Principals are charged with leading and improving schools, making a difference to the school and its students - but to do so, they must rely on (and mobilize) the talents and skills of others. At the same time, these leaders have to follow provincial and local policy directives, respect the professional opinions of other educators, acknowledge the primary role of parents, understand and respect various community values, and be conscious of making effective use of tax dollars. In carrying out their responsibilities, principals influence their schools, but are also influenced by them.

There are approximately 4,800 principals in Ontario, and some 3,300 vice-principals. In 1992, according to Ministry data, they were paid, on average, slightly more than $75,000.(38)

The position of principal is indeed challenging, requiring an ability to balance many priorities and demands. As outlined in the Education Act, formal responsibilities have changed very little, but expectations, and the context in which principals work, have changed dramatically over the last ten to fifteen years.

The official duties, laid down in the Education Act, are of both an instructional and an administrative nature. The former category includes supervising the instruction in the school and advising and assisting teachers. Principals are responsible for ensuring the quality of teaching in the school. Administrative duties centre on care of the students, especially in regard to their safety, ensuring that they are properly supervised whenever the school is open to them, and responsibility for the school's physical facilities.

Principals are the key to linking the school to the rest of the educational system, to other schools, and as
As well, the principal plays a crucial role in linking the school to the community, not to parents only, but to business, labour, social agencies, neighbourhood residents, and others with a stake in education. As stated in the Education Act, the principal is to "promote and maintain close co-operation with the residents, and with the industry, business, and other groups and agencies of the community." Principals must be sensitive to community and parental values, even when these differ in some ways from the principal's own.

Given our emphasis on school-community connections, this Commission particularly stresses the principal's role in guiding and co-ordinating the school's relationship with the broader community.

The principal's working day is characterized by many interactions, and a wide variety of contacts. These may include conversations, meetings, or phone calls with school board personnel, teachers, support staff, students, parents, school neighbours - the list goes on. This means that good principals can think on their feet and carry out several tasks simultaneously.

In a large school, it would not be unusual for a principal to be a member of two dozen committees, operating at the board and school level. Because in their drive to cut costs in recent years, boards have reduced the number of curriculum co-ordinators and consultants, principals have assumed greater involvement in board-level curriculum work.

A second characteristic of the principal's work, which appears to contradict the specifics of the job description under the Education Act, is that it is open-ended and not regimented by the school clock. This, combined with the huge variety of tasks already described, means that the principal exercises a degree of discretion in choosing what to do and how to allocate time.

What is not always fully appreciated is that the choices the principal makes are a dominant, if not the dominant, factor in shaping the school learning environment. His or her personal style and professional priorities inevitably create a ripple effect that influences the activities of the school staff and their perceptions of themselves.

Some principals, uncomfortable with delegating responsibility or uncertain of their staffs, choose to focus on the managerial, administrative dimension of the job, which can easily consume the entire working day. There are more than enough meetings to attend, enough paper to move, and more than enough mini-crises that require a response. However, a managerial orientation may lead the principal to neglect more important, but less immediate, dimensions of the job - leadership in curriculum, for example. And that certainly does not engage teachers in school management, often resulting in a "vision vacuum" for staff.

A third factor is that principals work at the point where the interests of various educational stakeholders intersect. Teachers see principals as the primary presenters and enforcers of board policies, the people who introduce Ministry initiatives, and who are most responsible for shaping the quality of the teacher's professional life. Principals carry out this work while remaining members of the same federation as their teachers, whose professional practices they must assess.

The principal is the first board representative parents encounter and, therefore, often the first person to hear about any concerns they have regarding the school, the quality of its teachers, and the state of their child's education. To the school board, the principal is the front-line administrator and its most potent local public-relations person.
The result is that as principal, one person is simultaneously colleague/supervisor, agent of the board/member of staff, union member/member of management, and bureaucrat/educator. Given competing pulls and pushes, it is hardly surprising that principals frequently land squarely in the middle, and need remarkable diplomatic skills in order to perform effectively.

Finally, the working life of the principal is one of professional isolation. Unlike teachers, the principal has no peers in the school, and therefore lacks sources of informal collegial assistance and support that teachers can find over a staff-room coffee. A principal who needs help or advice can, of course, call another principal or the superintendent, but too many calls of this order can easily be interpreted as a lack of self-confidence or ability.

While this is not a comprehensive description, it is meant to give a sense of the nature of the job, of its importance to the school, and to indicate the personal qualities and professional preparation required to be an effective principal. This province's principals will be crucial in initiating and maintaining any of the educational restructuring and reforms we are proposing.

**What is good school leadership for the 1990s and beyond?**

In the 1990s, the role of principal has taken on multiple dimensions: efficient administration and good instructional leadership are vital, but principals need, as well, to understand processes of change, and must create and sustain organizations in which the best teaching and curriculum flourish. Education practitioners and writers have been influenced by the business world, which urges an educational system that is more responsive to a society in transition, and they have identified many factors that seem to be important for school leadership. (39)

Leaders are increasingly expected to "challenge, inspire, enable, model, and encourage." (40) In collaboration with the teachers, principals formulate a vision for the school, develop consensus about goals for improving it, set clear expectations, and ensure that staff are supported in their work. The ideal principal might be capable of creating organizational theorist Peter Senge's vision of the "learning organization," where people continually expand their capacity to create results, where new patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is high, and where people are continually learning how to learn together. (41)

The principal plays the crucial role in extending the school community: (42) as the boundaries between schools and their external environments become more permeable, principals spend more time with parents and community members. Although they may not always be successful, today's good school leader tries to create school organizations that foster a collaborative work culture and support links with the parents and community, always keeping the focus on improving instruction and curriculum.

If reports from teachers and parents are reliable (and we believe they are), the older form of leadership, in which the principal acts as the "captain of the ship," often in an authoritarian manner, is still practised by many principals in Ontario. However, in today's world that kind of leadership is less effective.

Participative leadership should never be confused with the laissez-faire approach: a good leader takes responsibility and is accountable for what happens in the school, actively involving others through both pressure and support. That kind of leader does not need to rely solely on hierarchical authority to get things done, but affirms the crucial role teachers and the community have in the success of the school.
Although flattening the hierarchical structure and governing by consensus may slow decision-making, the challenge is to maintain administrative efficiency in a participatory framework.

As instructional leaders, principals need knowledge about teaching, learning, assessment of student learning, and evaluation of school programs, as well as skill in supervision and collaborative planning. As guides for constructive change, they need a clear sense of direction, an understanding of how to bring about change in schools, and the interpersonal skills to mobilize teachers, parents, and students. As administrators, they need skills in budgeting and in solving on-going problems with minimal disruption to the teaching and learning processes of the schools.

When the school opens its doors to involve parents in their children's learning, the principal and teachers need sensitivity and knowledge of community values and culture, and sufficient creativity to be able to involve these groups in ways that will benefit the students.

As we have noted throughout this report, schools have several, often-competing, purposes, but the primary focus should be on students. The quality of teaching and of learning provides the touchstone for all school activities and, therefore, is the basis on which leadership is judged. Although principals are the link between schools and the larger education system, and between schools and their communities, their top priority must always be the learning environment in the school itself. With all the competing demands on them, good principals will always find time to be in classrooms to talk with teachers and students.

### Preparation and continuing education of principals and vice-principals

Principals are increasingly expected to provide collaborative, change-oriented leadership. Management researchers believe that leadership skills can be learned; they recommend that prospective leaders broaden their base of experience, learn through education and training, and develop "people skills" from working with and carefully observing a wide variety of people.(43)

Throughout our report we recommend a variety of changes, some of which involve more decisions being made at the local school level. These obviously will affect the role of the school principal, who may have greater decision-making power, and will be engaged in new and different tasks. The skills required of principals and vice-principals will therefore have to be reviewed, as will preparation and professional development programs. As we describe later in this chapter, the changes require a similar review of the responsibilities of supervisory officers, and of the preparation required for those positions.

### Current preparation:

Ontario is unusual in requiring all principals and vice-principals to hold a certificate, gained by successful completion of a Ministry-prescribed course. The essential paper qualifications a candidate must have for the two-part course are described in the Education Act, and include a valid Ontario Teacher's Certificate, teaching experience in Ontario, and at least half of the coursework for an M.Ed. degree.

Candidates now pay a fee to take the principal's course, formerly offered by the Ministry of Education; it is given at several of the faculties of education and at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. The Ministry sets the objectives of the two-part course and lays down the number of hours required; it issues the certificate on the recommendation of the course director or the dean of the faculty of education delivering the course.
How courses are presented at different universities varies within Ministry guidelines. The elements include readings, guest speakers, and written and oral assignments. According to one prospectus, "success in the course will hinge on the extent to which candidates play an active role in the course, and the professional growth experienced by the person consistent with the image of the effective principal."\(^{(44)}\)

Nonetheless, the most important criterion for successful completion of the course may be attendance. Although there are substantive criteria for recommending certification, which are explicitly stated by most programs, and we assume that all candidates complete required assignments, it should be noted that failure in the course is virtually unheard of.

Assignments usually include working on leadership skills, chairing sessions, and completing various writing tasks. A partial completion of a practicum (a planned, practical experience related to the core objectives of the Principal's Qualifications Program, during a school year, under the supervision of an experienced practising educator) is necessary as well.

The current situation has some disadvantages. Many professional educators see it as overly regulated and bureaucratic. Some faculties of education no longer offer the principals' courses, for a variety of reasons; some simply see few advantages or incentives for them to continue to do so.

This situation may hamper candidates who do not live within comfortable commuting distance of a facility that offers the courses (especially the already hampered candidates in northern Ontario). Setting up distance-education courses would require some alteration to collaborative and participative elements, but teleconferencing, or preferably videoconferencing, could overcome this problem.

Although the courses seem to touch on all the areas we identified as important, their length (fewer than 30 days) gives little time to develop the substantial knowledge and skill required.

On the other hand, the principal certification courses also provide certain advantages over other forms of administrative preparation. In their practice components, the better programs offer opportunities for aspiring principals to take on significant practical school improvement initiatives in their own schools, linking the practical work with the theoretical frameworks they are learning.

Another advantage of the courses is that they bring together talented personnel and future education leaders from all over the province. Given Ontario's diverse population, and the tendency in large boards to promote from within, a common professional learning experience in which colleagues actually come together is valuable in breaking down insular school board tendencies. (This could be arranged if the courses were given through distance education.) Course participants often comment that one of the most valuable parts of the experience was the opportunity to meet and share ideas with educators of different backgrounds and from different places.

**Are principals' certification programs necessary?**

Given that few jurisdictions, in Canada or elsewhere, require this type of program or certificate for promotion to the position of principal, are such programs really necessary, or could Ontario's school administrators be better prepared in some other way?

An examination of jurisdictions that do not require formal preparation for leadership candidates appears to show that the result is principals who are often unprepared for the position.\(^{(45)}\) They try to learn on
the job, but the job is now too complicated. Given the current growing responsibilities of schools, and the complexity and importance of the principal's role, we do not recommend this as an alternative.

Rather than requiring a government certification course, many jurisdictions require that vice-principals and principals complete a graduate education degree - usually a master's degree in educational administration - before they can be appointed.

There are advantages to this system. If universities controlled the programs, they might be encouraged to work more intensively with school boards and principals' associations to develop courses and requirements appropriate to current and future educational leadership roles.

However, the province would lose control, and universities, under the rubric of university autonomy, usually resist attempts from other groups to influence their programs. As well, universities generally are opposed to doing specific skill training for a particular professional role.

Although universities that reject the current model would welcome the graduate studies alternative, on balance we do not see that alternative as sufficient. We believe, however, that in place of the current requirement that at least half the course work for an M.Ed. degree be completed, candidates should complete an M.Ed. This would ensure the theoretical and academic knowledge, which could be supplemented through the principal course.

Broadening experience and outlook:

One of the persistent difficulties with programs for reform in the training of administrators is the tendency to improve managerial behaviour in ways that are far removed from the ordinary organization of managerial life. Unless we start from an awareness of what administrators do, and some idea of why they organize their lives in the way that they do, we are likely to generate recommendations that are naive. (46)

Made 20 years ago, this comment is valid today. That is why we believe that the principal certification course should be supplemented by systematic efforts to broaden the experience and outlook of candidates or of those who have just moved into vice-principalships. Some school boards do encourage such efforts, but they should be available to all aspiring principals. In particular, we see four strategies as having particular value.

First, internships or job shadowing should be part of the formal preparation program, as should opportunities for systematically and critically reflecting on experiences during these assignments.

Second, exchanges outside education should be encouraged, especially in a business or a social service context. This will foster knowledge of other organizations, including their needs, contexts, and strategies, and, ideally, lead to greater appreciation of how the educational system appears to those who are not inside it.

Third, internship or secondments should be available in a number of different educational settings, especially for candidates whose experience has been geographically, culturally, socially, or economically limited.

Fourth, there should be an organized rotation of vice-principals to different schools and different positions - for example, in curriculum development - to enable them to get a wider perspective on the principal's responsibilities.
We also believe that the principal certification courses ought to be rigorously and thoroughly evaluated, not by the Ministry, but by an external review team composed of both practising administrators and academicians. Such reviews would ensure that courses address current issues, and take account of the specific needs of different sectors of the publicly funded system.

We recognize that courses currently have advisory committees, with membership drawn from various educational constituencies. However, we do not believe that they carry out rigorous evaluations of the type we are recommending. We believe that review teams should have no continuing connections with the courses and programs they are evaluating, and that they should always include at least one person from outside Ontario.

**Recommendations 82, 83, 84**

*We recommend that an M.Ed. degree be a requirement for appointment to a position as vice-principal or principal.*

*We recommend that the provincial courses to prepare candidates to become principals continue, but that they be regularly evaluated, starting immediately, by an external review team, composed of practising principals, supervisory officers, academicians in the field of educational administration, and at least one member from outside Ontario. The review should be rigorous, to assess how successfully the course addresses the skills and knowledge required, as well as the needs of the system. Continuation of any courses would depend on a satisfactory evaluation.*

*We recommend that school boards create a variety of structured experiences through which aspiring and junior administrators can learn leadership skills. Such experiences would include internships or job shadowing, exchanges outside the education field, secondments to a number of different educational settings, and organized rotation of vice-principals to different schools.*

We believe that these recommendations retain the benefits of the current system, while providing additional training that could substantially improve the preparation of administrators, and ensure that they are ready and able to tackle the challenges ahead of them successfully.

Finally, we need to consider the needs of school principals and vice-principals who have held their positions for some time. Although principals' refresher courses exist, there is no requirement that school leaders take them. We believe that they must take part in serious professional development, to update their knowledge and broaden their perspectives, and to exchange ideas of current issues with colleagues.

Continuing certification of principals, like that of teachers, should be linked to participation in professional development. We recognize that many school boards limit a principal's appointment in a particular school to five years, but we go beyond this to recommend that continuation as a principal or vice-principal in any school should be contingent on evidence of on-going participation in professional development.

**Recommendation 85**

*We recommend that appointment to the position of principal or vice-principal be for a five-year term, continuation of the appointment to depend on evidence of participation in, and successful completion of, professional development programs satisfactory to the employing school board, and on satisfactory performance.*

*Department heads*
Before we turn to the role of supervisory officers, we want, however briefly, to discuss the vital role played by department heads in secondary schools across Ontario.

The department head is involved in curriculum leadership and in teacher development and, especially in larger schools, it is impossible to conceive of quality teaching and learning taking place in the absence of heads of departments: principals would be overwhelmed with committee work and out of touch in many subjects; teachers, particularly more recent ones, would be deprived of experienced support; and programs would suffer from a lack of cohesion and continuity.

Through their department affiliations, many teachers participate in subject councils and other discipline-based professional organizations. These organizations provide valuable professional development opportunities throughout the province.

While we believe that the role of the department head is necessary for purposes of administration and subject focus, we note areas that should be improved.

Ontario's 800 or so secondary schools have about 9,100 department heads, who make an average salary of approximately $67,000. A closer examination of these numbers reveals some schools in which the department head is also the sole subject specialist or works directly with only a few teachers. We think that some economy is prudent in regard to the number of departments each school feels is necessary. In many schools, departments might be organized by broader categories than is now the case (see Chapter 17 for a fuller discussion of this).

We also believe that more cross-pollination of concepts and methods across the curriculum would be beneficial for both teachers and students. Secondary schools can use such cross-disciplinary links to reduce the fragmentation and isolation that often accompany departmental structures. Other organizational strategies that cut across department lines include having a team of teachers take responsibility for a group of students, or setting up school-wide task forces to work on issues such as revising report cards or rethinking scheduling procedures. Retaining departments and a subject orientation for administrative and teacher-support purposes should not preclude flexibility in curriculum and school organization.

Recent and proposed curriculum reform suggests the possibility of regrouping some subjects into broader categories. This might mean, for instance, that a department of science could include what are now separate departments of biology, chemistry, and physics; in smaller schools, a department of mathematics, science, and technology might incorporate what are now several very small departments.

We noted earlier the importance of supportive, school-level professional communities. In secondary schools, the department tends to be the professional community of greatest significance to shaping teachers' attitudes about teaching and students.(47) The challenge is to build department and school communities in which the focus is on developing strategies to foster student learning.

In the section of this chapter devoted to teacher evaluation, we expressed concern about the lack of an evaluative role for department heads, particularly in relation to teachers in their own departments. We find that opposition by the teacher federations to "teachers evaluating teachers" is misplaced in this context.

We look to department heads to provide substantive, curriculum leadership in secondary schools, and it is difficult to see how they can do this thoroughly without evaluating the quality of teaching on a
departmental basis. The evaluation by a department head should be recognized as complementing that by the principal. We also expect that department heads will help new or struggling teachers in their departments.

Given the changes already experienced in secondary schools, as well as those we recommended in Chapter 9 in regard to secondary school programs, we suggest both a review of the role of the department head, and some provision for professional development programs specifically targeted to them, so that department heads can perform their varied roles more effectively.

**Recommendation 86**

*We recommend that in the light of recent and proposed changes in the nature and organization of secondary school programs:

a) the role of department head be reviewed, with a view to reducing the number of department heads where appropriate;
b) responsibilities of department heads include supervision and evaluation of teachers in their departments; and
c) appropriate professional development be provided for department heads.*

**Supervisory officers (SOs)**

**Their role**

Supervisory officers or superintendents, including the director of education, the board's chief executive officer, are the senior administrative level in school boards.

In 1992-93, school boards employed 901 supervisory officers; in 1993-94, that number was 864. Presumably, the reduction was due to downsizing efforts to control costs.

The Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association (OPSOA) estimates that the average salary for 1994 is approximately $90,000 to $92,000. Ministry figures for 1993 show that 97 percent of supervisory officers earn $84,000 or more (as do all directors); slightly more than a third of directors earn at least $114,000.

Some of the expectations of supervisory officers can be found in the Education Act, which states that the supervisory officer's prime duty is to bring about improvements in the work done in classrooms, by inspiring teachers and pupils and by "assisting teachers in their practice."

**Background of the superintendency in Ontario**

The hierarchical structure of Ontario's education system was established by Egerton Ryerson by the 1870s. His system was "characterized by massive centralization and external regulation through a primarily unitary system of administration staffed by a professional corps of public servants."(48)

For many years, responsibility for supervision was exercised primarily by a team of provincially appointed inspectors, charged with maintaining quality by inspecting the work of teachers. In Catholic schools, supervision was handled by both the church, for religious instruction, and the Department of Education, for secular instruction.

Inspectors' classroom visits, a source of considerable tension for teachers, were intended to evaluate teachers, examine the progress of students, and be sure that the prescribed curriculum was being taught.
Judgments were usually based on explicit criteria related to an approved way of running a classroom. Teachers were expected to follow the set curriculum, and to keep order in their classrooms.

With the consolidation of school boards in the late 1960s, responsibility for supervising teaching was shifted to the school boards, and the corps of provincial inspectors was eliminated. The term "supervisory officer" replaced the old "inspector," and by 1974 the Education Act specified details of examinations for the certification of supervisory officers.

Although responsibility for teacher supervision was transferred to the local supervisory officers, their visibility in the classroom has diminished as they assumed extensive administrative and political tasks.

**What supervisory officers do**

Several research studies in the late 1970s and the 1980s showed that there was great variety among supervisory office jobs, but that there were some common themes. There is no single way to capture what supervisory officers do: researchers and supervisory officers themselves have used lists of tasks, job profiles, or reports of "a day in the life of..."

One study, by a three-university Ontario team, reported that tasks ranged from the mundane ("chairing a committee, or developing a board policy on pediculosis") to the visionary ("building an organizational consensus about the kind of education we provide and the values we hold"); it also included "briefing trustees," "salary negotiations," "arranging the purchase of property for an outdoor education centre," and "acting as a last resort in dealing with irate parents."(49)

In larger boards, supervisory officer positions could be grouped into general categories, each involving somewhat distinct duties: director of education (the CEO), business (responsible for the financial aspects of the board), central office (responsible for curriculum, personnel, or special education, and so on), or area (responsible for supervising a group of schools). In some boards, these are combined. A somewhat surprising finding was that the nature of work done by supervisory officers across Ontario in different boards was more similar than conventional wisdom would suggest: being an supervisory officer "in the North" or "in this board" meant dealing with different issues, but the tasks and skills needed were not all that different.

Supervisory officers are responsible for liaison with schools and with the community, and through the director, with trustees. They are involved in planning, personnel management, resource allocation, collecting and disseminating information, public relations, evaluation of principals, and day-to-day management and operations. The typical supervisory officer works in what often appears to be a fragmented and disjointed manner, with many interruptions, dealing with problems and crises as they arise.

The brief the Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association submitted to our Commission confirms that supervisory officers are expected to deal with an astonishing variety of problems and challenges. They describe incumbents dealing with trustees, the public, the media, parents, teachers, other staff, the Ministry of Education and Training, and other ministries and government agencies, businesses, colleges, and universities. In fact, the only way supervisory officers can accomplish any of their objectives is by working with others. Interpersonal skills are obviously critical for success in the job.

Usually, the supervisory officers who have direct contact with principals and teachers are the area
superintendents, who have responsibility for a group of schools. Central office supervisory officers, especially in the larger boards, are somewhat more removed from direct contact with schools, because their work tends to be determined by system needs more than by local school needs.

The position of supervisory officer can be stressful, with long hours and frequent evening meetings, but much of the stress is caused by the surrounding controversies: supervisory officers are caught in the centre of conflicting positions and demands. Trustees, the community, the media, other supervisory officers, the schools - all these people and groups put pressure on school board administrators.

A particular source of tension is the confusion and overlap between the roles and responsibilities of trustees on the one hand, and supervisory officers on the other; the latter have been greatly affected by changes in the roles of the former. Although distinctions are made between policy-making (the responsibility of trustees) and operations (the responsibility of supervisory officers), the distinction does not seem to apply to the actual activities of either group. Trustees have become increasingly involved in the day-to-day work of schools, dealing with a range of issues previously left to the professionals. The lack of clarity about respective roles and responsibilities creates on-going problems for both trustees and supervisory officers. We address this issue further in Chapter 15.

**Impact**

What impact do supervisory officers (SOs) have on education and schools? Members of the public, and many teachers, question what SOs do and whether it makes any difference to schools. Even if the role of the SO is clarified, many observers are not convinced that there would be much effect if some supervisory officers disappeared.

Nor does research make it much easier to assess the impact of supervisory officers. In one study, SOs themselves were not convinced that elimination of their roles would have a great deal of effect on educational programs, but did believe that board-wide co-ordination would suffer.\(^{50}\)

Research by Peter Coleman and Linda LaRocque in British Columbia compared more and less successful school districts (as measured by student achievement tests), concluding that frequent interaction between schools and central office (school board) administrators is related positively to school success, and is particularly helpful to schools trying to make changes or improve their programs.\(^{51}\) Karen Seashore Louis found that central office administrators can help schools achieve desired change by protecting them from too many rapid policy shifts, providing resources, cutting down on excess rules and regulations, and maintaining frequent communication with schools.\(^{52}\)

Recent experience in some Ontario school boards (e.g., Halton and Durham) seems to confirm such results. Reports from these boards suggest that when supervisory officers provide leadership focused on clear directions when they ensure that school personnel develop the knowledge and skills they need, when they link schools with other schools, with the research community and with other resources, and when they keep attention on monitoring results, there seem to be real payoffs in terms of schools attaining their goals.

Although it is not possible, on the basis of the research, to make definitive judgments about the contributions of supervisory officers, there are suggestions that at least some of their work (drafting reports, initial phone calls, correspondence, regular meetings of some task committees) could be done effectively by less highly qualified employees.\(^{53}\) In many boards, however, such assistance is not
available, and if tasks cannot be handled by a secretary, the supervisory officer must do it. Such arrangements seem an ineffective and inefficient use of personnel.

**Skills required by supervisory officers**

The skills required for supervisory officers are similar to those required of principals: creating and sustaining a focus on instruction, guiding change, administering, and linking to the community. Supervisory officers have more extensive managerial responsibilities, with greater emphasis on relating to the broader community, to the Ministry of Education and Training, and in dealing with political issues and trustees. The scope of action is greater, but the possibility of being distracted and unable to set and follow priorities also seems greater.

It seems that for successful leadership in the 1990s and beyond, supervisory officers are being asked to

- ensure quality programs and high standards;
- meet the needs of students and parents;
- demonstrate fiscal responsibility by improving quality with fewer resources;
- create alliances; and
- focus on results.

However, there appear to be a number of problems with the career paths of school board administrators:

> ... many of the skills that supervisory officers considered vital were ones that they were unlikely to be exposed to in any systematic or developmental fashion. The career path followed by the majority of supervisory officers was marked by a high degree of uniformity and by narrowness of experience. Supervisory officers were frustrated by the heavy demands of the role, and by the difficulty of finding time and opportunity for professional development.(54)

The duties of supervisory officers, as well as of principals, have expanded dramatically. With the Commission's emphasis on community alliances, both groups will be expected to establish links with other school boards in sharing arrangements, and with local businesses and community organizations. Aspiring educational leaders should be encouraged to broaden their experience, rather than spending virtually all their working lives in one school board.

**Preparation and training of supervisory officers**

As we have noted, the appointment, duties, and responsibilities of supervisory officers are found in various sections of the Education Act. Generally, all supervisory officer candidates must have a Master's degree in education (or its equivalent); a valid Ontario Teacher's Certificate; seven years of successful experience as a teacher, at least two years of which were in Ontario; and one of seven other qualifications, the most common of which is an Ontario principal's certificate.

Candidates for superintendents of business and financial affairs are required to have somewhat different qualifications.(55)

A principalship is not formally a prerequisite for becoming a supervisory officer, and it is sometimes possible to be promoted through the consultant/co-ordinator path, a practice that, if encouraged, should result in the appointment of more supervisory officers with curriculum expertise.
Because of legislation that restricts senior levels of administration to those who have Ontario teaching certification and experience, however, it is unlikely that any out-of-province person could become an supervisory officer. There also appears to be a trend in large boards to "train and promote our own." Smaller boards will, of necessity, hire from other Ontario boards.

The current promotion ladder seems to be somewhat closed (both at the board and provincial levels) and comfortable. The people being promoted may fit the culture of the particular board because they are used to it, but they will also have to provide innovative and appropriate leadership in a rapidly changing environment. If a good understanding of the process of change and the need to be sensitive to differences is important in leadership positions, people in the province might be well advised to look critically at the current systems.

The pattern of promoting "those who look like us" has resulted in ranks of supervisory officers that are disproportionately male (80 percent), although the teaching profession is female dominated. Until recently, this was considered normal, and the "old boys' system of promotion" might still be in full force if the Ministry of Education and Training had not required that 50 percent of positions of responsibility be held by women by the year 2000. Already, it is clear that some boards will have difficulty in meeting the requirements of this mandate on time. (56)

Although the Ministry does not report on the ethnic or racial background of administrators, a glance around administrator meetings suggests that minority groups are very much under-represented. Efforts must be made to develop, support, and promote educators from minority backgrounds.

The Commission strongly supports both the employment equity initiatives of the provincial government, and the anti-racism initiatives of the Ministry of Education and Training, both of which would be expected to have an impact on the appointment of supervisory officers.

We suggest that there must also be incentives to encourage school boards and prospective administrators to consider broad experience, in different school boards, and in fields outside education, as a desirable background for senior administrators. We believe that at least some of those appointed should have worked outside education at some point in their careers. As well, we suggest that the current restrictions on those eligible to take the supervisory officer course be adjusted, to allow persons from outside Ontario to become SO candidates. Doing this would allow fresh perspectives to influence the system.

Prior to the introduction of the Supervisory Officer Qualifications Program (SOQP) in 1990, candidates completed written and oral examinations aimed at assessing, first, their knowledge of the Education Act and Regulations, and, second, their ability to apply this knowledge and experience. (57)

However, there was a feeling that the examination was not appropriate, because it did not seem relevant to assessing how well aspiring supervisory officers would actually perform on the job. Some candidates complained that they could not get information about the examination process. There was a high failure rate; in fact, in most years, more than half the candidates failed. (58) No preparation or training was available except for study groups formed by the candidates themselves. Many people felt that the old system was not much more than an artificial hurdle, but many also felt that the preparation was excellent for what the job entailed.

The Supervisory Officer Qualifications Program, now offered in place of the old examination process, is designed to focus on relevant skill development. Program modules are offered on a cost-recovery or
profit basis by various providers; and if there is not sufficient enrolment to cover costs, the program is not offered. It is given in a number of modules by school boards, universities, or by teacher federations under contract to the Ministry of Education and Training, according to Ministry guidelines.\(^{(59)}\)

There is a program for educators in the Roman Catholic system, and one is offered in French for those from the French-language system. Both are slightly modified to take account of different priorities and needs in those systems.

The current course was outlined by the Ministry in 1990, and is now being revised. The model was designed to assist program planners to develop a course that will be of value to supervisory officers as they carry out their responsibilities.\(^{(60)}\) The course is built around three program areas:

- skills (personal and professional development, and integrative practice skills);
- knowledge (system perspective and the theoretical foundations); and
- a practicum that involves participation in a realistic supervised activity, working as an intern in various administrative settings.

How well does the SOQP prepare people who want to be supervisory officers? Feedback from participants suggests that it is an improvement on the older system; in fact, their ratings of at least one program are highly positive. Some academic observers, however, suggest caution, expressing particular concern about a lack of rigour in the program. Course content is defined and specified by the Ministry, which also conducts program evaluations. Originally, these were to be conducted by external teams, but apparently because of cost, the plans were dropped and evaluations are being done by Ministry staff.

On the basis of the guidelines, as well as in curriculum material from one program, the course appears to address the skills and knowledge needed by supervisory officers. As in the case of the principal's course, however, it would appear to be difficult to cover the content adequately in the time available, if sufficient time is given to analysis. It is not clear whether such issues have been addressed in the Ministry evaluations; although no solid data are available, it may be that the quality of the SOQP varies depending on the provider.

Given some uncertainty about the new program, as well as its relative newness, we suggest that programs be evaluated by a team external to both the providing agency and the Ministry of Education and Training. It should include practising supervisory officers and academic researchers in the field of educational administration, with at least some members from outside Ontario. As we suggested in relation to the preparation program for principals, the continuation of the SOQP should depend on satisfactory evaluations of the courses by the review teams. It is obviously important to ensure that senior school board administrators are well trained for their positions.

As with the preparation courses for principals, we know that Supervisory Officer Qualification Programs have advisory committees, with membership drawn from various educational constituencies. But, again, we suggest more rigorous evaluations of the programs, by review teams who are not involved with the programs they are evaluating, with the inclusion of at least one person from outside Ontario.

Even more important than the formal qualification programs, however, is the need to broaden the base of experience for potential supervisory officers. We believe school boards should provide and encourage exchanges and other opportunities to work in varied settings, including those outside education. In making opportunities available, school boards should pay special attention to issues of gender and
minority-group representation, to ensure that women and persons from minority groups get the practical experience needed for senior administrative positions.

Although such provisions should result in better-prepared supervisory officers, we believe that new opportunities would also benefit from carefully structured support in their initial months in that role, as Fullan, Park, and Williams recommended in 1986. We believe that newly appointed supervisory officers should continue the kind of learning that takes place in the SOQP, and we suggest that they be provided with release time during the first year in order to do so.

Current supervisory officers also need opportunities for professional renewal and upgrading to ensure they are able to deal with difficult issues and to appropriately support others in the educational system.

**Recommendations 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92**

*We recommend that school boards review the responsibilities of supervisory officers in light of the changes in governance and organization recommended in this report, with a view to reducing the number of supervisory officers as appropriate, as current incumbents retire and, if necessary, changing responsibilities assigned to supervisory officers to suit changed organizational needs.*

*We recommend that the Supervisory Officer Qualification Programs continue, but be regularly evaluated, starting immediately, by an independent review team, which would include supervisory officers and academics in educational administration, as well as some members from outside Ontario. The continuation of programs should depend on a satisfactory evaluation from this team.*

*We recommend that requirements for admission to the Supervisory Officer Qualifications Program be adjusted, to make it possible for school boards to appoint administrators from outside Ontario as supervisory officers.*

*We recommend that school boards provide current and aspiring supervisory officers with increased opportunities for varied experiences, both in and outside the educational system, including exchange programs with government and business.*

*We recommend that newly appointed supervisory officers be given a minimum of 15 days release time during their first year in the position, for participation in structured professional development activities such as: a) working with other supervisory officers to increase their understanding of their new roles; b) taking part in a study group or series of workshops with other newly appointed supervisory officers.*

*We recommend that supervisory officers be appointed for a five-year term, with a continuation of the appointment dependent on successful participation in professional development recognized by the employing board, and on satisfactory performance.*

**Conclusion**

Rather than suggesting a radical new approach to teacher education and administration, we are recommending in this chapter that Ontario take seriously the ideas and innovative proposals that have been made over the past ten years. It is time for rhetoric to be followed by reality, and for the exceptional programs and schools that can be found across the province to become the norm.

Ontarians need a well-articulated and coherent approach that links selection, preparation, certification, and on-going professional support, for all educators. Considerable progress has been made toward achieving this goal, but progress is uneven.

We believe that one key to ensuring a consistently high-quality approach is a more thoughtful framework
for planning, evaluating, and accrediting professional preparation programs, including pre-service
teacher preparation, professional development, and certification courses for principals and supervisory
officers.

But even more important, in our view, is a fundamental shift in thinking about teachers and their
professional contexts. For too long, educational reform initiatives have focused on curriculum and
student assessment as though these areas could be understood in isolation from the teachers involved.
George Radwanski, for instance, in his 1987 report, barely mentioned teachers, although he was
recommending radical changes in organization and programming. All too often, even when the need for
professional development is recognized, it is mentioned as an afterthought.

We believe strongly that it is time for teachers to have a stronger collective professional role through an
independent College of Teachers. With the College, control of professional standards will be transferred
from the Ministry of Education and Training to the profession itself. Teachers will have greater
autonomy, and also greater responsibility, with input from others in the community, for deciding on entry
requirements, accrediting programs, and generally determining the standards for professional teaching
practice.

At the school level, the leadership of the principal is critical for success, but the principal is only
effective by mobilizing the efforts of others, including teachers, students, and parents. And it is at the
school level that teachers and principals can work together to continue to improve their programs and
their teaching.

---

Endnotes (Chapter 12, Section D)


39. Kenneth Leithwood, Diana Tomlinson, and Maxine Genge, "Transformational School Leadership,


Doubleday, 1990), p. 3.

42. Joseph Murphy, "Redefining the Principalship in Restructuring Schools," *NASSP Bulletin* no. 3


44. OISE, Principal Certification Program, "Criteria for Candidate Evaluation, Principal Certification

45. Kenneth Leithwood, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, conversation with Nancy Watson,
June 1994.

46. J.C. March, "Analytical Skills and the University Training of Education Administrators," *Journal of
47. L. Siskin, "Different Worlds: The Department as Context for High School Teachers" (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching, 1990), quoted in McLaughlin, "What Matters Most?"


50. Fullan, Park, and Williams, Supervisory Officer, p. 87.


53. Fullan, Park, and Williams, Supervisory Officer, p. 94, 169.

54. Fullan, Park, and Williams, Supervisory Officer, p. 186.

55. They require seven years' experience in business administration, an acceptable university degree or appropriate professional certification as an accountant, architect, engineer, or lawyer, and completion of an approved program in school management. Because business administrators are generally not teachers, they cannot become directors of education. Allison and Wells, "School Supervision in Ontario," p. 84.


Introduction to Volume IV

The fate of school restructuring is in large part a function of how actively various political interests ... solve education and social problems, and the degree to which they are willing to orchestrate their actions around a common agenda that takes the conditions of teaching and learning seriously.

Richard Elmore, Restructuring Schools, 1990

Now that we have outlined our vision of a renewed education system, we must confront the challenge of making it happen - of moving from vision to reality.

In Chapters 13 and 14, we introduce and discuss our final two engines or levers of change - information technology and community education. These are strategies powerful enough to shift the status quo in schools, making significant improvements possible in student learning. They are, in our view, crucial to accomplishing reform.

Information technology can change the process of learning and allow students to move beyond dependence on their teachers. Along with many others in education, we are enthusiastic about the potential of information technology to make learning more relevant to young people, and to foster higher-order thinking. In Chapter 13, we outline the conditions necessary to integrate information technology into teaching and learning, we discuss student assessment and technology, and we propose the supports needed for effective use of technology in schools.

Chapter 14 introduces the crucial but often difficult strategy of strengthening the ties between schools and communities - a process that may involve building a new sense of community. We believe that unless some of the extraneous, non-academic burdens are removed from teachers, it will be increasingly difficult for them to do their jobs well. It is only through closer links (among educators and other service providers, both at the local and provincial levels), that schools will get the support they need to focus effectively on the academic needs of students.

Throughout the report, we have alluded to the special constitutional status of the Roman Catholic and francophone communities in Ontario, as well as aboriginal groups. In Chapter 15, we discuss how funding and governance structures must change to support the constitutional rights of these groups.

In Chapter 16, we extend the discussion to other communities. Representatives of particular religious, racial, and ethnic groups expressed some of the same concerns regarding funding, organization, curriculum, and student learning as do those
communities discussed in Chapter 15. We make recommendations designed to overcome some of the problems faced by these communities and their young people.

How the education system should be organized has been a particularly contentious issue. Our recommendations in Chapter 17 are intended to strike a more appropriate balance among the various groups and institutions in the education system. Some readers may be surprised to find that we do not support some of the changes, such as drastic reductions in the number of school boards, proposed by various individuals and groups. Although we do not advocate radical changes in governance, we do make several recommendations that should result in significant improvements in the future.

The thorny issue of educational funding is dealt with in Chapter 18, with recommendations for a more equitable funding model for Ontario schools, minimizing current disparities. Funding must be equitable. We propose, as have several recent inquiries into educational finance, that for all school boards in Ontario, the main source of funding should be provincial rather than local. Boards would be allowed to raise only a small amount through local taxes.

Chapter 19 examines the important question of accountability who accounts to the public for what happens in schools. Two types of accountability are relevant: fiscal and program. We look briefly at each, and then discuss what additional measures should be taken to satisfy the public that the educational system is operating as it should. A publicly funded system must be publicly accountable.

Finally, we address the crucial challenge of implementation - how to transform ideals into reality. After reviewing some of the lessons learned about management and mismanagement of educational change, we suggest actions. Although we focus particularly on the provincial government and the Ministry of Education and Training, we offer suggestions for those at the heart of our education system - teachers, parents, and students. They all can and should participate in the process of reform. We are convinced that change is necessary and that it can be carried out successfully.

Throughout our report, this Commission has stressed that, above all, schools are for learning. The value of our recommendations should be judged accordingly - the criterion of success is student learning.

ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
©Copyright 1994, Queens Printer for Ontario
Poorly motivated students, of whom our system has more than its fair share, are poor students. Information technology can become the link between the school and the real world of Ontario's young men and women - the component that makes schools, at long last, seem relevant to their lives, and that provides the motivation to re-think their attitudes to learning and the education system.

*Technology stands out in our classrooms as a symbol to teachers, parents and students that schooling can and will change, that classrooms may have some bearing on the 21st century after all.*

When this Commission began its work, the concept of an information superhighway was familiar to only a handful of Canadians; well before we had finished our work, no-one could escape media focus on it. When we began, CD-ROMs were a series of letters decipherable mainly by "techie" insiders; now CD-ROMs are barely avoidable, and it is widely understood that we have only begun to scratch the surface of the capabilities of interactive, multimedia technology. Who knows? One might even have Royal Commission reports in the form of CD-ROMs. (In a recent cartoon, one youngster announces to his pal: "I'm only attending school until it becomes available on CD-ROM.")

When we started, the *Toronto Star* did not have a weekly section devoted to the world of technology. Nor was it possible to submit a letter to the editor of the *Ottawa Citizen* through the National Capital Free-Net (based at Carleton University) or the world-wide Internet, nor to access our entire report, at no cost, on a brand new Toronto Free-Net.

In fact, at the beginning of our work some members of the Commission, like many Canadians, did not have the remotest notion of how information technology could influence the education system. But awareness among Canadians is growing: according to a 1994 Gallup poll (reported in the FreeNET conference on TVOnline), 54.4 percent of Canadians are aware of the information highway and, among the services of interest to them, education ranked first.

This report, like much of our work, was written (and it is being produced) electronically. We received e-mail on our computers, whether in the office and at home (although we found that e-mailing at home can be a wondrous, but sometimes frustrating, endeavour).

We teamed up with TVOntario to sponsor a computer-based, on-going conference on education issues, where more than two thousand messages were posted. Each of us had a voice-mail system, and we checked our messages from as far away as North Bay. We also used voice-mail in conjunction with our 1-800 number, as another way for people to share their views with us.
We received submissions on audio cassettes and videos, and sponsored both a tele-conference when we were in Timmins, and a video-conference, linking groups in Ottawa and Toronto.

Like a rapidly increasing number of people world-wide, we recognize that the revolution launched by the microchip is permanent; it will only accelerate from here, at a pace that is unimaginable to most of us.

But, while technological innovations revolutionize every aspect of life, and while some Ontario schools have begun to recognize the promise information technology holds, much of our education system remains relatively untouched by it. We are persuaded that, if it were introduced and organized properly, and if teachers were adequately prepared, information technology would have a wonderfully positive role in education, right from the earliest grades of elementary school.

This chapter discusses that potential. We define information technology as one of our four engines (see Volume I: Introduction), and think that in the classroom its essentials comprise a computer, printer, CD-ROM player, and modem, although it does not necessarily follow that each computer needs all that equipment at all times. There are, of course, expansion components, such as stereo speakers which enhance sound quality, and plotters for certain kinds of computer-generated drawings.

Certainly, there are other technologies that may be useful for instruction, such as the relatively new videodisks and that old standby, the overhead projector; as well, there are technologies used for other school-related purposes, such as voice-mail to allow parents to verify homework assignments; and there are specialized software programs for everything from planning the school bus routes to controlling energy use in the school. For the purposes of this report, we refer to these broader instruments and applications as instructional technologies.

We begin by identifying information technology in the context of educational reform, based on what we heard and read about the way technology is driving world changes - though less in education than in other areas. We note the conditions needed to integrate information technology successfully into teaching and learning, and then consider more specifically how computers help students learn, teachers teach, and all learners link with each other and with experts on-line.

We discuss student assessment, students using networks to gather information, and the natural affinity students seem to have for information technology. We also talk about the networks that are linking teachers together, allowing them to learn more easily from each other and to share lesson plans and teaching strategies.

We develop a plan with some fundamental elements: developing teacher knowledge and skills, providing appropriate hardware and high-quality software that has Canadian content and perspective, and linking such computers to local and regional networks. We look at other instructional technologies, such as interactive video, and note the importance of TVOntario in this field. Finally, we group our recommendations to emphasize the co-ordinating role we would like to see the Ministry play.

Before proceeding, however, we want to emphasize that we are talking about information and other instructional technologies as tools for learning and teaching. Almost as a by-product, students also learn computer literacy, how to use the intimidating box that sits on the desks of too many managers unable to turn it on. Our children will learn the skills to exploit its full range of capabilities.

In Chapter 8, we recommended that computer literacy become one of the five foundation skills in the common curriculum. (New Brunswick has already established a computer literacy requirement for
graduates of high school and community college, starting in 1996.) This will provide students with the crucial skills needed to use technology in the workplace - and, increasingly, in the home. Moreover, "technology education is more than computers,"(2) which is why our discussion of curriculum includes the place of broad-based technology.

**A new environment**

While we are concerned that information technology has barely had an impact on Ontario schools, it does not mean we are suggesting that technology is an automatic good in the learning process. As Professor Ursula Franklin reminded the world in The Real World of Technology, the 1989 CBC Massey lectures:

> Many technological systems ... are basically anti-people. People are seen as sources of problems while technology is seen as a source of solutions ... When students are seen as not sufficiently competent, it is likely to be computers that the school purchases rather than extra teachers' time and extra human help. (3)

We acknowledge that machines must be at the service of humankind - not the reverse. That is why we insist so vigorously that, without appropriate teaching strategies, information technology will not do the job required.

> To realize any vision of smarter schooling by using technology, [we] must prepare teachers to use the technology. Apart from funding considerations, adequate teacher preparation is probably the most important determinant of success. (4)

We are also wary of the excessive claims made for technology's potential contribution to learning. We were told of a claim made in the United States that "over 20 years of research shows that when technology is used to enhance the instructional process, teacher productivity doubles and students experience at least 30 percent more learning in 40 percent less time at 30 percent less cost."(5) Such statements, with their precise quantification of uncertain qualitative processes, do little to add credibility to the genuine case that can be made for the role of technology in education.

Used improperly, a computer in the school is nothing more than a wasted resource. As one brief put it, "The educational technology road of the last two decades in this province is littered with the wrecks of unused and ineffectively used equipment."(6)

Clearly, this is not just an Ontario phenomenon: at least one American educator and futurist asserts that "many schools are barely entering the Information Age. They are using computers as data processing devices. Whenever any technology comes into education, it's generally used to do the old job better."(7) We saw classes in which inadequate teachers were using computers and educational television, but still teaching inadequately.

However, the new information technologies do offer the first qualitative change in the potential for learning since Gutenberg, whose book-based information technology structured the education process for half a millennium.

McLuhan's global village has finally become a reality in the world of education: learning need no longer be bound by time and place, and continuing education is transformed from rhetoric to reality.

Something new is happening, with profound consequences for our schools; the only question is whether
we harness it, or it overwhelms us. "In the space age, an improved horse and buggy remains a horse and buggy."(8)

Understandably, overloaded teachers may view information technology as just the latest set of bells and whistles that complicate their daily lives. They may recall that educational television, which does offer some programs teachers can use, was once over-zealously promoted as the classroom of the future, where there would be no need for teachers. Or they may remember the new math, and open-concept classrooms, both of which came and went.

The fact is that many - probably most - schools are barely in a position to make a serious commitment to information technology. As a study for UNESCO points out:

> [Information technology] can also be a source of frustration within the present tight and rigid organizational structure of education. Work pressure, lack of (hardware and software) facilities and the frequent lack of proper integration within the syllabus have a negative effect.(9)

That is why the Association for Media and Technology in Education in Canada (AMTEC) is so persuasive when it stresses that, "it is time that educational technology be presented to teachers as a useful tool with appropriate supporting resources rather than an additional burden for the teacher to master."(10) We agree with the AMTEC member who insists such technology is "a teaching tool, not a teacher."

But if many schools and teachers are not yet ready for the brave new world of information technology, two other key players in our society demonstrably are. The education system has become a major target of the gigantic information technology industry, which has a huge stake in every kind of software and hardware, and is taking aim at schools across the continent in an effort to expand its markets.

While the Canadian push is being led by such large firms as Rogers, Southam, Corel, Unitel, and Stentor (an alliance of Canadian phone companies), the international drive is being conducted by some of the most powerful corporations in the world: Time Warner, Paramount Communications, Microsoft, the computer manufacturers, as well as the dominant players in the gargantuan computer and video-games industries.

Indeed, some of the biggest Canadian concerns have formed links with vastly larger American corporations; AT&T, in concert with Rogers and CP, owns 20 percent of Unitel, while Stentor has a marketing agreement with MCI Communications Corporation.

There is a second, often-ignored stakeholder in the school "business" who is more than ready for the information technology culture: the "client" - the student. "It is not entirely facetious," according to some educators, "to say that Sega and Nintendo are in control of our children's educational future."(11)

There is a portrait of today's family that has a certain ring of truth: the child can set the VCR and play video games, while parents, however many university degrees they may possess, are left baffled.

However, not all youngsters have expensive Super Nintendo games at home, and certainly not all have home computers, with or without CD-ROMs; it is estimated that about one in four homes now has a computer, and that as many as two in three will do so by the end of the century. Obviously, children who already have the greatest socio-economic advantages will be the most likely to have the latest, and the
best, information technology.

But, regardless of background, children know about Game Boys, television, music videos, VCRs, video cameras, CDs, portable CD players, and the like; especially among boys, even in poor neighbourhoods, arcades open to them the world of video games and multi-function remote controls.

Children do not regard these as marvellous or breath-taking, but as part of the furniture - in precisely the way their parents were brought up to regard telephones. Indeed, even in the quintessential low-paid, dead-end job, the McJob at McDonald's itself, everything depends on computerization. "This technology, in their minds, is and always has been."(12)

This goes a long way, as the UNESCO report notes, "to explaining why teachers armed with chalk and a blackboard are no match for these powerful new media."(13) And it is why York University's committee on technology in education organized a 1994 conference, "Chalkdust to Chips."

Nonetheless, we are aware of schools in Ontario where students at the senior elementary level have a computer class only once in each six-day cycle, with two youngsters sharing a single machine for 35 minutes. Furthermore, if the computer classes fall on a holiday, or when a student is absent, the opportunity to learn computer skills can occur perhaps once every three weeks.

This kind of scheduling may be done in good faith, but it is a bad joke for students, especially because of the strong affinity this generation shows, under the right circumstances, to moving from games to the most sophisticated computer applications (e-mail, world-wide bulletin boards, computer-animated graphics, electronic file transfers, computer-assisted instruction, etc.).

While it may be difficult to credit - for those who have never had an opportunity to observe school children working with computers - we saw many remarkable classes and some schools where technology is real and is having an impact on both teaching and learning.

At River Oaks in Oakville, an experimental elementary school that begins at the junior kindergarten level, we were stunned by the sheer energy and enjoyment we observed. We later wondered why every Ontario school should not generate the same sense of excitement.

This seemed an especially sensible question because our personal impressions are apparently borne out by academic evaluation. Professor Ron Owston, associate dean of the Faculty of Education at York University, and director of the university's Centre for the Study of Computers in Education, recently completed a three-year analysis of the effect of computers on the writing skills of River Oaks students from Grades 3 to 6. Compared to a control group who wrote without use of computer technology, Owston found that "computers improved the structure and organization of students' work both in narrative and personal writing."

By Grade 6, students with keyboarding skills were writing 3,000-word stories and were impressive in their ability to organize these very long tales. Finally, their ability to access information through the Internet or on CD-ROMs - atlases, encyclopedias, image banks, "conversations" with peers in Japan allowed them to create richer works. "Interestingly," Owston says, "while the quality goes up, so do the students' expectations."(14)

However, it is crucial to note that River Oaks is far more than a high-tech school: it is a highly structured operation based on a cogent philosophy of learning that is shared by all its staff. As principal Gerry
Technology is a tool to help realize a school philosophy that is qualitatively different from most schools in this province. Restructuring the curriculum has been the major focus of River Oaks since its inception. Curriculum should be meaningful and relevant. Curriculum should focus on a blending of theory with practice. There should be provision for both the "old basics" and the "new basics" such as accessing, managing and processing information, collaborative and co-operative working skills, problem-solving and learning how to learn. Learning should be integrated. Children need to learn with context.

Associated with our curriculum restructuring are the three E's. The curriculum should be able to engage, enable, and empower students to achieve their full potential. That's why we can't stress too forcefully our conviction that computers used improperly are merely another wasted frill and a poor investment in a time of relative scarcity.(15)

At the Lambton County Roman Catholic Separate School Board in Sarnia, we saw a board-wide information technology project that was similarly impressive, and we looked on as students at Sir Wilfrid Laurier High School in suburban Ottawa used their spare periods to practise high-level computer graphics. We heard descriptions of enviable programs across the province, from Thunder Bay to Lively to Scarborough, where innovative teachers are ensuring that female students are full partners in technological areas that, traditionally, were assumed to be masculine enclaves.

We've seen highly cost-effective experiments, such as the one at the Wellington Separate School Board's Holy Family Centre: timetables at three area schools are co-ordinated, and school buses provide transportation so that students, including some younger students, can use the centre's computer classroom.

We had compelling briefs detailing how computer-based technology could be used, for example, to individualize a child's education from age 4, based on special needs and aptitudes. In Cochrane, a Grade 11 drop-out who is now involved in computer training for adult learners, told us how her three-and-a-half-year-old grandson uses a computer to do word recognition exercises.

Of course, computers are used for distance education. We were told that the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education has experimented with a course taught exclusively on a computer network. With disks and CD-ROMs, courses can be distributed to students who have access to computers. Where correspondence courses used to consist of books and, more recently, audio and video tapes, the 1990s calls for files and data to be downloaded from networks.

We studied reports of a large number of information technology projects and experiments in American schools, which those involved describe as transforming the nature of learning for kids and teaching for teachers.(16)

**Possibilities and concerns**

At this point, it is useful to step back in order to indicate our concerns about the entire area of information technology and education. There are, of course, some limitations related to the current state of the art of computers - limits over which we have no control and which will shrink constantly as science and technology progress. But we are looking at those caused by the system and, therefore, within
our ability to affect.

First, most of the success stories we have described involve specific projects, carefully prepared and operated by intensely committed and often knowledgeable individuals; the projects have usually received special funding. Therefore, it requires quite a leap of faith to extrapolate from their findings to a system of mass learning. And there are many other conditions that will need to be met before we can reasonably expect all classrooms to reflect the successes of the few experimental ones.

"Technology is not likely to have a qualitative impact unless it is deeply integrated into classroom purposes and activities."[17] In other words, information technology by itself does not lead to change: the determinants are the ways it is used and integrated into all learning and teaching, the quality and appropriateness of the software that is chosen, and the abilities and interests of teachers.

Higher-order learning skills, for example, are not developed unless the right software is being used in the right way. Similarly, traditional didactic approaches are left behind only if there is enough equipment and if the particular teacher using the technology feels comfortable with the changes involved.[18]

In sum, all the changes in innovative schools across Ontario and elsewhere are the result of new approaches to learning and teaching, facilitated by the introduction of information technology.

Second, we want to emphasize that, in the end, computers and the related technology are nothing more than machines - even if their ability to process information still dazzles the human imagination. In fact, we doubt they will ever replace the joy of reading a great book as a form of continuing education.

Paradoxically, however, technology's very dynamics, and the furious pace at which it is being pushed, leads to a fear that the ability to control its evolution is already beyond our control. Is technology in the saddle, riding humankind? Perhaps not yet, but unless we attempt consciously to harness it for socially useful purposes, we may soon be overwhelmed.

Third, major questions remain unanswered about decision-making on the information highway. Indeed, the fascinating issue, given our mandate, is whether we are talking about an information highway, where the public interest prevails, or about an information mall, where commercial concerns dominate. Who will decide whether the interests of the public and the community or of the private sector will be paramount?

There are also very important equity issues related to the educational use of information technology, which must be subject to the same high levels of equity we expect in all areas of education.

We are concerned that, unless it is handled sensitively, the introduction of information technology may well reinforce, not minimize, artificial barriers to learning.

Common sense tells us that financial constraints determine students' access to technology; obviously, children from poorer families are less likely to have computers at home than those who are more privileged. Statistics Canada reports that 23.3 percent of Canadian households have computers, excluding those used only for games or business, but that this figure doubles in households with incomes of more than $60,000.[19] In that sense, schools equipped with information technology may give poorer students far greater equality of opportunity than they have now.

We believe that all schools need adequate numbers of up-to-date computers and that all schools must be
part of a net. The only disparity that might exist between and within boards should favour communities where fewer homes have computers.

Unless we find a way for poorer children to have access, outside the school, to information technology equipment (linked to a network), it is quite likely they will eventually fall behind. The possibility of creating a new class of technological literates, with disproportionate privileges, is only too real. And, of course, this new class comes disproportionately from the more affluent sections of society. That is why schools must offer all students the opportunity to master this literacy. Indeed, whether high school students choose the more applied or the more academic focus (as we describe the new options), it is certain that almost every conceivable future work possibility - even at McDonald's - will require knowledge of technology and its uses.

In developing and using software, we must ensure that negative stereotypes are not reinforced. If software were assessed centrally, using the skills of professional educators across Ontario, it could eliminate the need for every school board or school to carry out such assessments. This would probably ensure that all software in Ontario classrooms, whether distributed directly by the Ministry, the Ontario Software Acquisition Program, or simply recommended as a resource, was of high quality and was balanced. It is important that the effects of information technology on various social groups be monitored.

There is some concern that boys may grasp much of the new technology more eagerly than girls, presumably for the same socially conditioned reasons that girls are less comfortable with science and math. The introduction of information technology to all school children when they are very young, as a routine and integral part of their lives in school, should go a long way to making technology gender neutral; if necessary, particular interventions should be considered to accomplish this. In positioning computers as centres of learning, we must take care that girls are not relegated to the periphery, or to mastering only the superficial aspects.

Astonishing work has been done in developing software specifically for students with learning disabilities. But it can hardly work if these youngsters lack access to the proper tools. Therefore, teachers in information technology programs geared to individualized instruction can guide all students who have special education needs. Gifted children can move ahead at their own pace, and can even become mentors to their peers perhaps even to their teachers.

Another concern is a vital component of schooling, its social aspect. Our aim is not to have students retreat into themselves, talking only to the computer. We were pleased to see many situations in which students work in teams, teaching each other on the computer. This is important. It is also important that they have the opportunity to learn the implications of computer technology: how is society dealing with automation in the workplace? in leisure? in learning? Students should be exposed to the ethical dilemmas of all technologies. "A technologically literate person must ... understand the relationship between technology and social change." And we emphasize again how much we want students to read books, not just computer screens: books have a different smell and feel that must not be lost, no matter how attractive technology may be.

Infusing our schools with information technology equitably and using its impact to re-create schools, curriculum, and teaching will not occur overnight. There are costs to consider, the need to develop skills and knowledge among educators, and the development and acquisition of software. And, of course, we
want to create a network (or "net") to link schools together, so that they can learn and share as a global community.

The next part of this chapter deals with the elements of a successful transformation of the school system, driven by the engine of information technology. We note the need for co-ordination, so that networks can speak to each other, so that software is evaluated only once. We discuss the kinds of software needed in our schools, emphasizing that - like books and other teaching materials - there must be a strong Canadian presence in information technology; and, of course, we discuss the need for more and better hardware in our schools. But first we bring this and another engine - teacher development - together, because teachers have a key role in bringing computers to life in our schools.

Information technology's contribution to learning

Information technology makes a number of singular contributions to the world of learning. First, as is abundantly clear from all the examples we have described, it makes schools feel relevant in a way that nothing else has or can. Student after student appeared before us complaining persuasively about the irrelevance of schooling to their lives. "Nothing motivates students to higher performances," writes Professor Graham Orpwood, of the Faculty of Education of York University, "more than a sense that what they are studying is of real relevance and importance to themselves, their lives and personal aspirations ... the key to a door to rewarding work or exciting opportunity ... [a] link to the real world of students."(23)

Poorly motivated students, of whom our system has more than its fair share, are poor students. Information technology can become the link between the school and the real world of Ontario's young men and women - the component that makes schools, at long last, seem relevant to their lives, and that provides the motivation to re-think their attitudes to learning and to the education system.

American educators use almost identical language to describe the consequences of strategically introducing information technology into schools where they teach, supervise, or have studied. "Teachers reported and were observed to interact differently with students - more as guides or mentors and less like lecturers," one writes about high school. "At times, students led classes, became tutors, and spontaneously organized collaborative work groups."

After several years, "significant change" was observed in the way students thought and worked. In fact, the greatest difference between students in a carefully planned and structured information technology program and those in conventional schools is "the manner in which they organized for and accomplished their work. Routinely they employed inquiry, collaborative, technological and problem-solving skills uncommon to the graduates of traditional high school programs."

At the same time, teachers, "began teaming, working across disciplines, and modifying school schedules to accommodate ambitious class projects," while, in elementary schools, "traditional recitation and seat work have been gradually balanced with inter-disciplinary, project-based instruction that integrates the same advanced technologies in use in high school."

No wonder the writer concludes that "the catalytic impact of technology in these environments cannot be under-estimated. We have watched technology profoundly disturb the inertia of traditional classrooms. For example, technology:
- encourages fundamentally different forms of interaction among students and between students and teachers;
- engages students systematically in higher-order cognitive tasks; and
- prompts teachers to question old assumptions about instruction and learning. (24)

While the Commission largely avoids the cliche "paradigm shift," it is surely appropriate in this context. Certainly, such changes in a school environment, if real, constitute nothing less than a transformation of the learning culture for those involved. Education is being re-invented for them.

Other researchers make equally irresistible claims. The heads of the Institute for the Reinvention of Education at Pennsylvania State University insist that new technology can help students learn and develop at different rates; make them proficient at accessing, evaluating, and communicating information; foster an increase in the quantity and quality of students' thinking and writing; help them learn to solve complex problems; make them globally aware and able to use resources that exist outside the school; create opportunities for them to do meaningful work; and even nurture artistic expression. (25)

In an earlier chapter, we pointed out that computers have a role in giving students immediate feedback on their progress. Computer-mediated assessment can allow students to test themselves, checking to see if they have mastered a new skill or have the knowledge required to move on to other work. There is evidence such techniques teach students that they have the capacity to improve, while immediate feedback has been shown to motivate students who might otherwise have very little interest in school.

Students who get into the habit of checking their own learning and understanding are self-assessing, an important skill at a time when, increasingly, people are required to consider how well prepared they are for jobs and a society that changes rapidly around us. As students take greater responsibility for assessing themselves, the pace of learning changes and becomes more individualized. All of this may unavoidably alter the way schools and learning are organized. We believe it is vital for schools to manage this process rather than simply being bystanders to it.

However, our discussion would be only half complete if we were to focus solely on how students make use of computers to learn more, better, and faster. The other half of learning in school is teaching; teachers have shown that they can make innovative uses of information technology to change the way they teach, responding to more student needs, and facilitating the better learning we have been discussing.

Of course, it is probable that good teachers always want to use direct instruction, as needed, to convey certain lessons. Nevertheless, we are satisfied that information technology can be beneficial in fostering the diverse techniques of teaching/learning that the best teachers employ.

No doubt it is true that neither all teachers nor all parents will welcome the greater role for student initiative and independent learning that is virtually the guaranteed result of using any good software program. They, after all, allow the user to navigate through the material independently, exploring directions and pathways well beyond any teacher's possible control or planning. We welcome this new capacity, and are confident that the overwhelming number of children in our schools, if directed by well-versed teachers, will be able to use it productively and constructively.

With these tools, we can "move classrooms away from conventional didactic instructional approaches, in which teachers do most of the talking and students listen and complete short exercises on well-defined,
subject-area-specific material. Instead, students are challenged with complex, authentic tasks, and reformers are pushing for lengthy multidisciplinary projects, co-operative learning groups, flexible scheduling, and authentic assessments.

In this kind of reformed classroom, "authentic tasks are completed for reasons beyond a grade. Students also see the activity as worthwhile in its own right." This attitude is greatly facilitated because students "take great pride in using the same tools as practising professionals," not to mention producing work that often resembles that of a professional.\(^{26}\)

In the longer term, the increasing independence of most students should provide teachers with some relief from time pressures, time they might then dedicate to students having difficulty.

Vicki Hancock and Frank Betts of the Education and Technology Resources Centre of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development stress that, in information technology programs, teachers "expect far more of their students and present more complex material. The range of learning experiences extends far beyond those offered in traditional classrooms."\(^{27}\) At the same time, more individual attention by the teacher is possible, allowing different learning styles to be accommodated.

Teacher-centred classrooms tend to evolve into student-centred ones. The teacher acts more as a coach than an information dispenser. More collaboration and small-group work occurs.

Another computer specialist, this one in Maine, tells of a school that cancelled the computer classes in its lab and integrated computers into its curriculum, so that students would not just learn to use computers but would learn ideas. The exciting results: "Students have become even more actively involved in their work ... [and] ?average' students grew as involved and interested as 'gifted' students."\(^{28}\)

Similarly, an English and journalism teacher in San Diego reports that the use of technology in her classes has led "all students, from gifted to special education, to take control of their learning." In a community with high drop-out rates, she found students fully engaged, and notes that "co-operative learning is encouraged," enabling her to spend "more of my time as a facilitator of learning rather than an all-knowing expert."\(^{29}\)

These findings are entirely consistent with our impressions of Ontario schools we visited, as well as with what both teachers and students throughout the province say about their own reactions.\(^{30}\)

From their experience, educators in the Netherlands add that while "the computer will never replace the teacher ... it will change the role of the teacher to increase the time and attention that can be spent on groups of pupils who are often neglected at present - exceptionally gifted children and pupils who lag behind."\(^{31}\)

In its brief to us, the Association for Media and Technology in Education in Canada (AMTEC) described studies that concluded:

\begin{quote}
Educational technology can create new avenues for social exchange and co-operative learning. Fears that computers will result in students working in isolation removed from all forms of human interaction can be dispelled by watching students in classrooms organized to promote peer interaction. Students solve problems collaboratively, often with their teachers as partners.\(^{32}\)
\end{quote}
They also discuss a 1990 project of the University of British Columbia and the Educational Technology Centre of British Columbia, to integrate computer-related technologies in 12 schools. The result was that teachers found the computers had a positive impact, not only on children's learning but also on their social and emotional growth. "There was a feeling," according to the report of the project, "that the motivational aspect of the computer encouraged the students to spend more time at the computer, which led to developing skills in critical thinking, creative thinking and problem-solving."

Moreover, when multimedia programs were used, "teachers commented that children put more effort into their learning and reached high success levels." Those who have seen a group of Grade 8 boys at River Oaks - hormone-hoppers, as they are quaintly known ignore the lunch-hour bell so that they can continue working on a collective project will recognize this rare school syndrome.

The British Columbia project also concluded that computers positively enhanced students' attitudes toward learning in general, and belief in themselves as learners:

> There was some speculation that the intriguing mechanical/technical aspect of computers was a factor in motivating children, but more often teachers felt that the contribution computers could make to building self-esteem, empowering and enabling the learner, and building confidence and feelings of success were what really sustained the high interest and use.

> With the tools of technology, students can dramatically raise knowledge levels, learn problem-solving techniques, develop the skills required to manage massive amounts of information, analyze concepts from several different perspectives, and develop the hard-to-quantify higher-order analytic and critical thinking skills that are required in the global marketplace.\(^33\)

We know that individuals learn at different rates, and, while Howard Gardner's theory - that each of us has many different kinds of intelligence\(^34\) - has gained widespread acceptance, in the real world of a large classroom, it is extremely difficult for a teacher to act on this knowledge. Information technology begins to make it feasible to order learning to fit the individual child's characteristics.

Further along the continuum, a digital electronics program at Humber College in Etobicoke has resulted in a computerized learning infrastructure that made it possible to offer individualized instruction, continuous intake of students throughout the year, and computer-managed learning (CML). According to the creator of this program, "perhaps the most important advantage of individualized instruction is the fact that students are forced to learn how to learn on their own ... Most become confident learners and are very pleased with themselves."

Under CML, each student progresses through his or her courses. The program

*delivers homework assignments, supervises examinations, checks answers to assignments and examinations, provides students with reports on test achievement, allows entry of grades from faculty graded projects such as labs, checks data gathered from lab measurements, and provides comprehensive statistics of the student's grades, classes, objectives, and test-question success.\(^35\)*

In addition to enhancing student learning, information technology offers teachers ample opportunities for
using computers (and the communications networks they access) to share ideas, learn from each other, and form collaborative networks of professional educators.

The Commission learned a great deal from the Culture of Change Electronic Village, a province-wide network of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, which allows teachers to link to each other. OTF has structured the network so that, in many Ontario communities, it is only a local call; the system features "conferences" of all types, where teachers can discuss issues, share lesson plans, and pose questions.

According to Globe and Mail education writer Jennifer Lewington, who solicited comments from participants, the results are encouraging.(36) Said one teacher, "It is one of the best sources of professional development that I have come across and made use of in the past 18 years." An external evaluator commented that the network "is one of the most powerful tools for policy feedback."

We envision this network growing, increasing the number of teachers involved and expanding the topics for discussion. We also foresee the possibility of school boards, education faculties, and others using the net to send educational research, the material for an in-service course, or new Ministry curriculum guidelines. The possibilities are exciting.

Making it happen

Teacher education

Almost all reports of successful projects in information technology describe its profound transformative effect on the role of the teacher. In the long term, UNESCO reports, the teacher goes from "know-all to guide, from soloist to accompanist."(37) He or she tends to become more of "a facilitator: someone who creates the conditions for learning and organizes the learning processes."(38)

What gives these many diverse reports credibility in our eyes is the sensitivity they show towards the teacher's place in the new world of information technology. Virtually all the researchers believe that information technology can work only if teachers are intimately involved. Some wax almost poetic:

Some things only teachers can do. Teachers can build strong, productive relationships with students. Technologies can't. Teachers can motivate students to love learning. Technologies can't. Teachers can identify and meet students' emotional needs. Technologies can't. Technology-based solutions can, and must, free the teacher to do the important work that requires human interaction, continuous evaluation, and improvement of the learning environment.(39)

But no-one, however excited or knowledgeable about technology, believes that teachers can play their new roles without professional development. "Our teachers need training," the Council of Directors of Education of Ontario told the Commission. "We are asking professionals, educated in a paradigm of the teacher as information dispenser, to be cognizant of the powers and potentials of the [new] technologies. Without funding and support, teachers will not likely be able to equip themselves with the tools necessary to be an educator in the 1990s and beyond."(40)

Teachers, says an American educator, must be given the opportunity "for not only learning how to use the technology but also learning strategies for using technology with students."(41)
The first step is to make current teachers comfortable with information technology - using it themselves, teaching with it, and selecting the software that will best fit their courses. In fact, a number of teachers are already familiar with the world of educational technology. But the majority, quite naturally, are probably as intimidated by the new technology as people elsewhere - including those on this Commission.

We do not expect tens of thousands of Ontario teachers suddenly to be transformed from techno-peasants to techno-pedagogues, able to turn traditional schools into cybercentres where teachers and students surf the techno-waves.

But there is no reason why all teachers cannot learn to be modestly at home in the world of information technology, as long as appropriate time and resources are made available to prepare them properly. Nonetheless, we have been told that the commitment to teacher in-service is woefully inadequate in most school boards across the province. While some are taking necessary action, it appears that most boards, already resource challenged, do not provide anything like sufficient resources for technological development. (42)

The other step is to provide more and better technological education to all those entering the teaching profession. We can surely take for granted that most of them will already have some considerable knowledge of the world of information technology: at the minimum, all are likely to have prepared their university essays on word processors, and each new year's crop can be counted on to take the latest technology more for granted. But, as they undergo the long process of becoming really accomplished teachers, it is crucial that they know about technology and especially how to teach with technology. That is true whether they intend to teach in elementary or secondary schools, or whether they become calculus or literature teachers.

In earlier chapters on teacher selection, initial preparation, and on-going development, we recommended that students' prerequisites for entry to a faculty of education include a demonstration of a basic familiarity with information technology. The definition of a basic familiarity will change as more and more applicants see computers as just another tool; however, we would suggest that all applicants should be able to use a word processor (and use it regularly to do papers), know how to use other types of software, such as databases and drawing or painting programs.

Given our emphasis on computer-based communications networks, all applicants should have used communications software to link to an electronic bulletin board. Happily, there are hundreds in this country, including many that are school based, school-board based, or public.

With student teachers who are equipped with this background, the task in initially preparing them for their profession is to give them knowledge and skills in applying information technology in the classroom. This means knowing how to integrate computers in all areas of the curriculum.

While we are not suggesting that teachers know a given educational software program, we do argue that they need to know how to select high-quality software, appropriate to the age of the students and their current tasks, which might be available in a school or board resource centre. Teachers, with the assistance of their school boards, the Ministry, teacher federations, and education faculties, must develop a level of comfort with information technology.

We emphasize that this is a joint effort: teachers must see the value of information technology in their
work and in their daily lives, while school boards must see the importance of computers in the classroom. We suggest that teachers take advantage of the educational discounts for computer hardware and software available to them, as well as to training courses provided by school boards and others. Each person must take responsibility for achieving a level of technological comfort and expertise necessary for being a teacher in Ontario's modern school system.

But we also suggest that the range of courses be enhanced to give practising teachers the knowledge and skills to use computers in the classroom successfully. Aside from schools in which there is a shortage of computer equipment, all teachers not now using computers in the classroom should be expected to modify their teaching strategies and to become involved.

> There is nothing irrational about teachers being afraid of looking stupid in front of students who know more about computers than they do; similarly, the difficulties of integrating computers into daily classroom practice with no system support are not imaginary.\(^{43}\)

Teachers who regularly use computers in their regular classroom work, should have opportunities for advanced study. Universities, school boards, federations, and the Ministry must work together to ensure that both types of professional development are available.

Throughout this report, we have attempted to demonstrate how the four engines assist each other synergistically; in this instance, the relationship between technology and teacher preparation must be organic.

At the same time, if we are correct in believing that early childhood education predisposes children to learning, schools that offer the kind of motivation provided by strategically directed technology are building welcoming institutions. And as more and more homes computerize, the possibility of families working together on technology-related projects becomes increasingly likely; this makes the availability of computers especially important for students from poorer families who, while they may not have computers at home, will at least be systematically introduced to information technology at school.

**Hardware**

Common to much of what we heard and read is the matter of access. Unless both the software and hardware become widely available throughout Ontario schools, the bright promise of technology will remain a dead letter for the great majority of Ontario students. It appears that, in the past, the government saw meeting this need as a high priority. Paul Ryan, a Windsor teacher and president of the Educational Computing Organization of Ontario, told us that

> There was a time when the province of Ontario, through the Ministry of Education and Training, provided vision, and leadership, and the funds to make things happen. The development of the Icon computer; a comprehensive computer science curriculum; the initiation of the GEMS [grant-eligible micro-computers, those that met the Ministry's criteria and were, therefore, jointly financed by the school board and the Ministry] to allow schools to purchase hardware and software; the encouragement of the development of Ontario software for Ontario schools by Ontario companies; [and] the establishment of a Ministry department to facilitate technology use across the curriculum helped us leap ahead of other provinces and states. The result was not only a significant improvement in the classroom experience for both students and teachers, but a burgeoning of Ontario’s
high-tech industries.

Over the last few years, though, the vision has clouded, the drive has been lost, and the funds are drying up. Schools are hard pressed to continue existing programs, and Ministry policies created through hard work and consultation with educators and industry are downgraded to "suggestions" ... The recent decision to cut the existing GEM grants by 50 percent was not a positive move. (44)

Of course, funds are drying up for all manner of worthwhile programs, and it is hardly surprising that the computerization program suffered its share. As aware as we are of the financial realities, we strongly urge the Ministry to give priority and budget increases to policies and programs for acquiring information technology, as well as for the development of networks in classrooms, and that it maintain a separate budget line in this regard.

But we are all perfectly aware that financial constraints will remain, and that, for the foreseeable future, the provincial government cannot realistically be expected to computerize the province's education system on its own. In fact, it is not possible to equip schools for the technology revolution without the full participation of the wider Ontario community. As the Information Technology Association of Canada said in its "Education Statement" of January 1994:

All levels of government, industry and the academic community must work to equip Canadian classrooms with the necessary tools (modern computers, communication capabilities, qualified educators and a learning infrastructure) to make IT (information technology) a serious learning tool. (45)

Given that everyone knows government alone cannot afford to cover these costs, we see this as a direct challenge above all to the business community, which has the opportunity to use its resources to back its often-stated educational concerns. Business demands that schools produce graduates who are creative, thoughtful, and problem-solvers. Because so many business spokespersons believe that future Canadian prosperity depends on the ability to exploit high-tech's new tools, we assume they will want to help schools technologically enter the 21st century. Otherwise, it is almost impossible to see that happening.

In fact, while we were very impressed with the computer environment at River Oaks, we could hardly fail to realize that it is very much an experiment, apparently made possible only through donations from the private sector. The Holy Family program - a pilot project whose concept can be adapted to families of schools, school and public libraries, and school boards serving the same geographical area - was also able to acquire hardware at special prices.

Lambton County, whose information technology project impressed us so greatly, sacrificed its music program in order to move toward the information superhighway - a Hobson's choice in a world that already has far too few good music programs. Education partners in this province must find ways to provide all students with cost-effective, technology-based learning, without having to sacrifice other valuable learning experiences.

There is a need for more, and more up-to-date, computers. We have seen the way computers are distributed in Ontario's schools, and we are less than convinced that computers dating back to the early 1980s are going to help us move into the next millennium. Many very creative teachers are successfully using the 20,000 Commodore 64s and Pets (including SuperPets and 128s) that, according to Ministry
data, were in schools in 1993.

While it is better for students to have some familiarity with computers than none at all, these old machines even lack hard drives, let alone have the capability of running today's software or connecting to CD-ROM players and modems. A Commodore 64 built in 1983 has the same relationship to today's basic desk-top that a horse and buggy has to a jet plane; it becomes increasingly difficult for these primitive machines to play the role we believe is potentially possible in transforming the very nature of learning.

In 1993, the federal Department of Industry, Science and Technology announced it would redirect surplus government computers and processing software to school systems across Canada. As of September 1994, some two hundred computers had been delivered to those Ontario school boards designated by the national advisory board that had been established to oversee the allocation process. (A survey carried out for the program showed that more than 100,000 computers were requested nationally.)

Although we have some concerns that equipment considered obsolete by industry is not going to help schools stay on the leading edge, we think it a worthwhile project for the Ontario government and the business community, many of whose members regularly discard large numbers of used computers. As it happens, computers donated to schools may be considered a charitable donation for the purposes of federal tax.

Of course, the private sector can do more than simply contribute computers it no longer needs. Just as they come together in the Learning Partnership (formerly the Metro Toronto Learning Partnership), computer companies and others can help to ease computers into schools. While competition may drive the economy, it is not always the best way to support schools. Companies that refuse to work together, for example, which leads to different and incompatible operating systems, do not help schools. We are encouraged, however, that computer companies are part of the Learning Partnership.

It also seems to us that students who have access to computers after school, on weekends, and in the summer have access, in effect, to the school. They can continue their learning as if they had never left the building, while those without access may be left behind. Therefore, we are heartened by such examples as the North York Public Library's Children's Computer Centre, which consists of nine computers in three branches, used by children during library hours. While some 25,000 did so in 1993, the centre is not linked to a net, and a library is not the same as having access at home.

In the meantime, we believe that as part of a community's support system, such facilities and services as community recreation centres and public libraries should have computing centres where families can learn about and through computers. While we have been told that such a program existed some years ago, we are not certain that it was given the resources and priority required to establish it for the long term. Such centres might well be located in schools but, wherever they are, they must be accessible for extended hours.

The best hardware is just a great paperweight unless it can run excellent software: the instructions that tell computers how to compute, that make up the programs which tell them what function to carry out, and that are necessary for communicating with other computers.

There are two types of software for schools: first, the many programs that have been developed especially for schools and that revolve around some particular part of the curriculum (geography or problem-solving, for example), and second, the kinds of programs that are widely used at home or in the workplace: word processing, databases, CADD, communications, graphics, and machine control, for
example. Both are needed in our schools; relying on only one is not in the best interests of students. Educational software can become outdated and boring very quickly, while business or personal software can help students learn or practise certain skills, but is not directly linked to the curriculum.

We are concerned about the quality of software, educational software in particular, and about who creates that software. The Ministry has taken a very positive step by making CorelDraw and ClarisWorks available in every school, but much more needs to be done. It appears, for example, that software is not reviewed for quality, appropriateness, and bias in the way books are in the Circular 14 process.

Software is shared haphazardly, and teachers do not have effective ways of sharing their evaluations of software with each other. We know that individual boards are dedicating scarce resources to writing software and selling it to other boards, when joint projects or provincial initiatives might be more appropriate.

It seems to us that if a piece of software is effective, there is no justification for it being used only by boards that can afford it; there is a need for far more cost sharing and co-ordination in this area.

Above all, a wide range of high-quality Canadian software is needed: using American-oriented software is no more acceptable in Ontario schools than using American-oriented textbooks. When Microsoft Corporation and Sega decided to produce educational software, as they have done aggressively in the past year, we can be confident that the Canadian perspective will not be among their priorities.

For that reason, we agreed with the suggestion of the Minister of Culture, Tourism and Recreation that Circular 14, the list of texts approved for Ontario schools, be broadened to include other learning materials, such as videotapes and software, and that it focus more on Canadian materials. (46)

We note that some progress has been made. For example, the Ontario Software Acquisition Program (OSAP) exists to obtain educational discounts on selected software and to distribute a catalogue of these titles to school boards. Its advisory committee includes teachers from across the province who recommend exemplary software to the Ministry, based on suggestions from school boards. OSAP also arranges for discounts; individual school boards are free to buy the software they deem most worthwhile at the discounted price.

Through its role in distributing master copies of the software, TVOntario is a partner is this process. We believe this model has a good deal of merit, and we hope it can be the main vehicle for software acquisition in Ontario.

While we do not want to prohibit the use of software from other jurisdictions, we do want to ensure that students have access to software with Canadian content and a clear reflection of the Canadian perspective. There is a strong federal regulatory process for the electronic media, which ensures minimum levels of Canadian content. We believe that nothing less should be acceptable for educational software. We considered two routes: either to provide incentives for software development in Ontario or Canada, or to contract with Ontario or Canadian software companies to develop software that meets the curricular needs of schools. Given our earlier recommendation that the Ministry take direct responsibility for developing a provincial curriculum, we are drawn to the latter option.
On-line: Learning it on the grapevine

At the beginning of the century, the little red school house contained more knowledge than the surrounding community; today the opposite is true. Schools leading in this area are creating links using the technology to these information resources using modems and networks.(47)

The potential educational value of such networking should not be underestimated. It opens up a way of exponentially expanding the physical limits of the school. Some students and teachers already have access to other students, teachers, experts, and resources, including the Internet. Although such networks as the OTF Culture of Change Electronic Village (to be further developed into the Educational Network of Ontario), TVOntario's TVOnline, the LearnLink Network, and SchoolNet exist, and the Ontario Education Highway is "under construction," most schools and students are not on-line.

We believe that, while every school should probably have its own net, every school - every classroom, in fact - should have access to at least one net beyond the school, one that has a link to the Internet.

Another wonderful example is the writers in electronic residence program (WIER). Begun in 1987 by Trevor Owen, then a high school teacher but now teaching at York University's Faculty of Education, it began with two schools and was originally networked through Simon Fraser University. Today, the program has links with 70 schools, where 2,500 students from as far away as Baffin Island and the Northwest Territories can ask any one of seven distant poets and novelists to critique their efforts. Owen calls it an electronic literary salon.(48)

One of the exciting implications of such a program is that it is genuinely equitable. As anybody on the Internet knows, social leveling is intrinsic to information technology; Trevor Owen calls it "on-line equity." Suddenly, students are not judged on where they live, what they look like, what gender or race they are, or on anything other than the quality of their communications. However unintended, this is potentially an enormously gratifying consequence of information technology.

It is worth noting that, aside from other benefits, networking schools and school boards can produce significant cost savings. By making documents such as curriculum materials, policy documents, and news releases available on-line, the Ministry could reduce expensive printing and distribution charges - a good example of working smarter.

The investment in the creation of a province-wide "electronic highway" would guarantee small schools in remote parts of the province or schools with limited library budgets the same access to the information source as large schools in affluent, major, urban areas.(49)

The Ministry's announcement, in mid-1994, that it would be providing $5 million to link existing computer networks in the education community is a positive first step to strengthen existing alliances among education partners. But it is only a first step.

The private sector has been active in this area. Rogers Cable Systems is testing the use of cable (in place of telephone lines) in delivering access to information networks in schools in North York, Ottawa, London, and Woodstock.

Their competitor, Bell Canada, is working in communities around Sault Ste. Marie to enhance their ability to access networks.
School and public libraries must be one of the major resources for storing and transmitting electronic information. Some of the most valuable software is expensive, and cannot and need not be duplicated in each classroom.

In either case, students and teachers should have access to such information, and both school and public libraries should be developed as public access points. It may also be possible for software to be located physically in one building but be accessible by modem to a family of schools.

We have already recommended that the provincial government support the establishment and operations of community computer centres. If these are to achieve their full potential, they will have to have access to national and international networks at rates they can afford. The public libraries of Ontario have already signalled their interest in developing and participating in networks to provide every Ontarian with access to information.(50)

Other instructional technologies

As we said at the beginning of this chapter, we focus on information technology as one of the four engines for change, recognizing the power of the computer, especially when it is linked to computer networks beyond the school.

However, there are other technologies that are potentially useful. Most students and teachers are already familiar with overhead projectors, film projectors, video cassette recorders, tape recorders, and calculators. There are, in addition, other technologies that are, or should be, used in classrooms.

We are particularly excited by the potential contribution interactive telephone and video-conferencing can make to learning. Where there are too few students in one school to warrant a course in a specialized field of enquiry, interactive conferencing offers a solution. If schools are equipped with a conferencing facility, one teacher might be able to teach students in a number of schools, thus giving them the opportunity to take the course without incurring the high cost of human resources.

Naturally, there is an advantage if students can both see and hear each other, rather than just hearing their peers. We believe there is room for the development of an interactive video-conference facility, perhaps in every secondary school in the province, starting with those that are small or isolated.

A more mundane use of technology involves the telephone. We have all faced the sometimes-daunting task of climbing through a voice-mail tree, trying to reach the right person. However, we believe that, despite sometimes negative experiences, voice-mail can be a very useful tool for schools. It might, for example, provide a menu of recorded messages for parents with such information as a schedule of report cards and parent-teacher interviews, plans for an open house, or other events. Or the system might be structured to allow parents and students to verify the evening's homework.

Another device, now being used by some schools, is recorded messages on public libraries' telephone lines. This, too, might be used to give parents important information.

Here is a role for the private sector - the phone companies in particular - if these technologies are to become a reality in the education system. Schools can be given special rates, for example - also an important element in achieving the networking of Ontario's schools that we described earlier.
There are other technologies that are familiar today or will become so in the future, including videodisks, which are superior to videotapes. (As we note later, TVOntario is working with videodisk technology.) Computers equipped with software and hardware that convert text to speech are useful for students with disabilities. There are other innovations, such as pen-based computers, computers that recognize speech commands, and others. Each may have a role to play in enhancing learning.

We cannot overlook the usefulness of technology in the business side of schooling - administration, human resource management, busing, property management, etc. Already, the Ministry has taken a leadership role in this area, working through the Educational Computing Network of Ontario (ECNO), a partnership with Ontario school boards, which can use the software ECNO develops. We laud this initiative, and encourage the Ministry to extend it, in order to eliminate any existing duplication in the development and purchase of software that could be centrally developed and distributed.

Because they reach beyond local communities, conferencing facilities are an important component of distance education, which is an area where others around the globe share our concerns. UNESCO, for example, is very interested in the uses of technology, including communication technology such as video-conferencing, in promoting adult education and distance education. It is encouraging governments to "[enable] large groups to take part in education irrespective of time and location."

Contact North is an interesting example of what is possible. It is a tele-conferencing (auditory) network in Northern Ontario used by secondary schools, community colleges, and universities to offer courses and other instruction to a student population that is sparsely distributed across a vast region.

Moreover, interactive conferencing facilities can make a major contribution to the professional development of teachers. Imagine a consultant or professor of education offering a course in acquiring a second language (or even in the use of computers in history classes) from one central location, and teachers "plugging into" it in the local high school's conferencing facility.

Like the collaborative networks being created on the Culture of Change computer network, a network of conferencing facilities has the potential for sharing and joint learning. It might even allow the board director or the Minister to address the profession directly when announcing major changes to the system. (It remains to be seen whether this would alleviate the sense many teachers have that innovations do not always reflect their concerns or needs.)

The New York Times reports that North Carolina is pushing ahead to make the best use of interactive video technology in schools. From a base of 16 schools in a pilot project, recent legislature-approved funding will extend the network to more than one hundred high schools and community colleges across the state, where it will be used for teaching and for planning among teachers. The pilot project included the teaching of Japanese, Latin, and marine oceanography.\(^{(51)}\)

Among Canadian provinces, New Brunswick appears to be taking the lead, with TeleEducation courses offered in 50 sites by interactive video.\(^{(52)}\) We are also aware that the University of Ottawa is using an interactive video network, and that other universities are probably doing so now or are on the verge of using this technology.

We believe that it is important to move ahead to support a network of interactive video-conferencing facilities. At the same time, the opportunity also exists to build on the equipment base already present in many high schools offering communication technology, funded through the Ministry's Technological
Let us now turn to the means by which the great potential of information technology for learning, teaching, communicating, and evaluation can be made real.

**Realizing the potential**

Frequently in this report, we call for the Ministry of Education and Training to take a leading role in reforming Ontario's education system. This is particularly true in the area of information technology. We want to avoid the folly of establishing networks that do not allow students and teachers to talk across school or school board lines. (We discovered that individual ministries of the provincial government developed their own networks and some still cannot send electronic mail to others.)

We want to avoid duplication while, at the same time, ensuring that all students have access to more and better computers and software that speaks of Canadian life and Canadian perspectives. And we want to cut costs. For example, by bulk buying of software and purchasing the rights for all schools to use programs, we can effect economies of scale.

Our recommendations for the use of information technology in schools are directed, for the most part, to the Ministry because of the central role it must play in co-ordination and implementation, if we are to achieve significant progress before the turn of the century.

The Ministry must ensure that school boards move swiftly to get computers, loaded with high-quality software, into classrooms supervised by well-prepared teachers. It must help to guarantee that there are networks through which students and teachers can communicate, to seek information and work together.

The first priority, then, is clearly for overall co-ordination of all these many aspects. This, it seems to us, is the natural responsibility of the Ministry. It should set up a co-ordinating body to bring boards and community partners together to equip schools with necessary software and hardware, and to create much-needed networks. It would also ensure a co-ordinated approach to software development, assessment, and distribution, and could significantly help with the continuing education of teachers in these matters. (We believe TVO/La Chaîne has an important role to play in distributing software and contributing to the on-going professional development of teachers.)

The co-ordinating function would also include bringing together all the public- and private-sector partners to plan, implement, and monitor introduction and on-going use of information technology in schools.

Co-ordination, from our point of view, needs to go beyond the plans school boards are now required to develop and submit annually to the Ministry; it must actually lead to real change in the use of computers by teachers and students. Therefore, accountability must include setting measurable outcomes that allow progress to be evaluated effectively. In other words, success is not to be measured by the number of available computers, or even the amount of work students produce on them. It is the quality of the work that seems to us the key measure of whether the new technology is being used according to its potential.

**Recommendation 93**

*We recommend that the Ministry be responsible for overseeing the increased and effective use of information technology in the province's schools, and that its role include*
a) determining the extent and nature of the computer-related resources now in use in schools across Ontario;
b) functioning as an information clearing house for these resources, ensuring that all boards are privy to such
information, and preventing unnecessary duplication of effort;
c) facilitating alliances among the Ministry, school boards, hardware and software firms, and the private sector;
d) developing common standards jointly with system partners, for producing and acquiring technology;
e) developing license protocols that support multiple remote users accessing centrally held software in a local
area network (LAN) or wide area network (WAN) structure; and
f) co-ordinating efforts, including research and special projects, to refine effective educational assessment
programs.

We stress that we see the Ministry as having a role in co-ordinating various aspects of information
technology related to education. But we are not suggesting that it focus on a single model - even River
Oaks, for example - and impose it on all boards in Ontario. First, the province's very diversity makes this
unthinkable: what works in Oakville may not be appropriate on Manitoulin Island. Second, one of
technology's great strengths is that it encourages creativity because it can encompass variety, rather than
requiring a lock-step approach to education.

We need to learn what works best.(53) We believe that the way to make significant changes is to proceed
as quickly as is prudently possible to establish centres of innovation in what we hope would be a
trans-Canada partnership. Only then can Ontario, and indeed all Canadian schools, benefit from the
broadest possible range of experiences in funding, structuring, and implementing information
technology. (We know there already exists a number of projects on which such a network can build.) To
be effective, of course, the work on best practices must be made known to rank-and-file teachers.

Recommendations 94, 95

*We recommend that school boards in co-operation with the Ministry, the private sector, universities, and
colleges, initiate a number of high-profile and diverse projects on school computers and learning, to include a
major infusion of computer hardware and software. These projects should reflect the province’s diversity,
include a distinct and comprehensive evaluation component, and be used for professional development,
software design, and policy analysis.

*In addition, we recommend that the Minister approach colleagues in other provinces, through the Council of
Ministers of Education of Canada, to establish a national network of projects on computers and learning, which
can inform teaching and learning from sea to sea.

Our next recommendation focuses on teachers because, as we have stressed, computers aren't teachers,
they are teachers' aids. But it would be unreasonable to assume that most teachers can use them
effectively today. On the other hand, already a heartening number of Ontario teachers have become
leaders and resources for information technology in their schools and on their boards, and we are
confident that, given proper preparation, many others will emerge to play innovative leadership roles.

Recommendations 96, 97

*We recommend that the proposed College of Teachers require faculties of education to make knowledge and
skills in the educational use of information technology an integral part of the curriculum for all new teachers.
*We further recommend that teachers be provided with, and participate in, professional development that will
equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to make appropriate use of information technology in the
classroom, and that acquisition of such knowledge become a condition of re-certification.
We then focus on the use of computers in schools. There is an urgent need for many more modern computers, stand-alone or linked in a LAN, loaded with excellent and balanced software that has strong Canadian content and perspective, tied together in local, regional, and international networks. We have been told that a wealth of computers of good quality, regularly being replaced by the private sector, could be available for use in Ontario schools. Business representatives told us repeatedly of the need for schools to develop in their students the most up-to-date skills; here is a practical way business could help schools achieve that goal, and receive a tax benefit at the same time.

We have also emphasized the social danger: information technology can easily become yet another tool by which more affluent students can further enhance their learning advantages over poorer students. For that reason, since we understand that not every school can be fully computerized immediately, we believe the Ministry must assure that schools with students who are less likely to have computers in their homes receive priority in the allocation of new technology.

**Recommendation 98**

*We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, working through learning consortiums and existing federal government programs, co-ordinate efforts with the Ontario business community to distribute surplus computers through Ontario school boards, and that, as more computers are introduced into the school system, priority be given to equipping schools serving low-income and Franco-Ontarian communities.*

For the potential of information technology to be realized, it is important to ensure that there is sufficient high-quality educational software, that it be Canadian in content and perspective where that is appropriate, and that it be fair and unbiased in its approach to subject matter.

**Recommendations 99, 100, 101, 102**

*We recommend that the Ministry increase the budget allocated for purchasing software on behalf of school boards in Ontario, and that it increase boards’ flexibility in using funds to permit leasing or other cost-sharing arrangements, in addition to purchasing, in acquiring information technology equipment.*

*Computer software and all other electronic resources used in education should be treated as teaching materials for the purpose of Circular 14 assessment (for quality, balance, bias, etc.).*

*The Ministry, with the advice of educators in the field, should identify priority areas in which Canadian content and perspective is now lacking.*

*In addition, we recommend that the Ministry exercise leadership with the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada to initiate a program promoting production of high-quality Canadian educational software by Canadian companies and other appropriate bodies, such as school boards, universities, and colleges.*

Finally, computers must reach beyond the walls of particular school buildings - into other schools, libraries, and databanks. They must connect students with each other, with teachers and with experts in various fields. We believe it is crucial that every classroom in every school be part of the information highway.

**Recommendation 103**

*We recommend that the Government of Ontario, working with school boards and other appropriate agencies, commit itself to ensuring that every classroom in every publicly funded school in Ontario is connected to at least one local computer network and that, in turn, this network be connected to a provincial network, a national*
network, and to the Internet.

Having developed the necessary components of a computer-use strategy in schools, we turn our attention to computer access after school hours, on weekends, and during vacations and holidays. Since children who have computers at home have a distinct advantage over those who do not, access to computers at school for the latter becomes a matter of utmost priority. But we remain concerned about the increased likelihood that access to networks and to the Internet will be commercialized; in fact, companies are already charging for access, and we are troubled by the prospect of access being limited by economics.

**Recommendations 104, 105, 106**

*We recommend that school boards, in co-operation with government ministries and appropriate agencies, establish in neighbourhoods where personal computer access is less likely to be prevalent, community computing centres, possibly in school buildings or in public libraries, and provide on-going funding for hardware, software, and staffing.*

*We also recommend that the Ministry support boards in pilot projects that extend the opportunity for learners to access funded programs and equipment outside the defined school day.*

*Furthermore, we recommend that the Government of Ontario advocate that public facilities, such as public libraries and schools, and such non-profit groups as "freenets," be given guaranteed access to the facilities of the electronic highway at an affordable cost (preferably free for users of these facilities).*

We should also say that while most parents are enthusiastic about the use of computers in schools, by no means all of them are personally comfortable with computer technology. These parents - and it is no mystery from which socio-economic background most of them come - feel helpless to provide their children with support as they move into information technology in schools. Accordingly, we encourage school boards and other bodies to provide opportunities for parents to develop that comfort with computers. TVOntario, the proposed community computing centres, "freenets," community colleges, public libraries, and others have a role to play in this area.

We discussed earlier the education potential of interactive conferencing facilities, and referred specifically to the example of Contact North. Our view is that Contact North needs to be upgraded to an interactive video-conference network, as well as being available to all potential users, particularly small aboriginal communities, and meeting their demands for secondary school, college, and university courses, and for professional development of teachers. This upgrade would strengthen the link between students and instructors, substantially enhancing student learning.

**Recommendation 107**

*We recommend that the Ministry proceed to upgrade Contact North from an audio to an interactive video network.*

**TVOntario/La Chaine**

We could not complete our discussion of technology without mentioning TVOntario/La Chaine, which has been providing television services for teachers and students since 1970, and continues to play an important role in this area. In fact, those outside the school system might not know of the abundance of materials produced by TVO for schools that are never shown on-air.

Its most recent annual report identifies a number of programs for children at school in its children's and
youth programming department. In addition to series on television, these include material on videodisks, audio cassettes, and posters. It also provides distance education for adults, often in partnership with colleges and universities. It has joined with the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario and the North York Board of Education, among others, to distribute teacher development programs.

Our only TVO-related recommendation is that it continue to do what it does well. We hope that a common provincial curriculum will make it easier for TVO to develop programs, computer software, and such initiatives as TVOnline and videodisks, which support the learning objectives of the curriculum. It remains important for Ontario's education system that TVO continue its contributions to the learning goals of our schools, and in assisting students in reaching those goals.

Conclusion

On the basis of considerable and rapidly accumulating evidence that information technology is profoundly changing the nature of learning for children and must become incorporated into our teaching strategies, the Commission is convinced that information technology is one of the engines needed to drive the necessary transformation of the education system.

The point is that new technologies have already changed our lives in ways that would have been unimaginable only a few short years ago. Here is where an old cliche is unusually appropriate: the only certainty is change. We can count on today's leading-edge concept being outmoded tomorrow.

We acknowledge - and, in some cases, share - techno-logy-related concerns, but some simply do not lend themselves to ready solutions. Will computers lead to increased isolation among young people, or fail to recognize their emotional and spiritual needs? The evidence so far is reassuring, but we must pay attention. Will computers that respond to voice commands - and these already exist - undermine any motivation students have for learning to write and spell properly? Strategies - including computerized techniques - must be developed to prevent this unacceptable outcome.

Will schools as we have known them for the past century and a half finally become obsolete? If the virtual office is already becoming a reality - businesses whose employees work at home and communicate through information technology - why not virtual schools? But then where will the children of tomorrow learn all the many non-academic skills that schools teach along the way, such as dealing with other people in a constructive way? Will there someday be a school cheer rooting on good old Virtual High?(54) Here is one vision of the education system of the early 21st century:

_Gone will be the days when students were lumped into grades according to age, when learning took place solely in a classroom, and when school was out for the summer. Older students will be packing pocket computers instead of notepads, and the only apple on the teacher's desk will be a high-tech piece of equipment designed to communicate with youngsters at home, in the workplace, and abroad. Learning, widely accepted as a lifelong process, will take place much more outside the school as our youth experience the real reality - life in the community._(55)

It is a vision both exhilarating in its possibilities and daunting in its uncertainty - terrifying in the sense that much of it is being driven, not by human needs but by the imperatives of technology or commerce. But if society at least acknowledges the phenomenon, it can attempt to shape it.
In fact, no-one has the remotest idea of what tomorrow's schools will look like; we can confidently assert only that they will not look like those of today - thanks, in the main, to evolving technology. Indeed, we can predict with equal certainty that the report of the Royal Commission on the crisis in education of 2020 will find this entire discussion of today's state-of-the-art technology wonderfully quaint and nostalgic.

At the very least, we can now say that computer literacy has become one of the new basics, and that an inability to use a computer well is becoming as great a handicap as the inability to read.

In the broadest sense, the job of our schools is to ensure that children are computer literate, and it is a job that must be done well. Adding new machines to classrooms does not buy instant learning. But learning to use those machines well can help prepare our children for a new world that is already here. Perhaps this is the way to guarantee that our schools remain relevant to our lives, to the lives of our children, and to our communities.

Endnotes (Chapter 13)

2. As G.R. Cooke entitled his 1994 submission to the Commission, in critiquing the 1993 submission from the Council of Ontario Directors of Education.
5. Association for Media and Technology in Education in Canada (AMTEC), brief to the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning, 1994, p. 8, 9.
6. AMTEC brief, p. 2.
10. AMTEC brief, p. 8.
11. Hancock and Betts, "From the Lagging to the Leading Edge," p.27.
12. AMTEC brief, p. 2.
14. Quoted in Michael Todd, "Chips, Not Chalk," *Profiles, the York University Magazine for Alumni*

16. Many of these projects are described in 22 articles in Educational Leadership 51, no. 7 (1994). The theme of this issue of the journal of the American Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development was "Realizing the Promise of Technology."


18. Probably because their school lacked computers, only 35 percent of Lillian Elementary School teachers agreed that they had changed their teaching styles. This pilot project in the North York Board of Education acknowledged from the start that the school board did not have the resources to allow Lillian to match River Oaks' level of computer resources. See Sandra Sangster, "Implementation of Computer Technology Across the Curriculum: Lillian Elementary School, 1991-92," a research project for the North York Board of Education.


27. Hancock and Betts, "From the Lagging to the Leading Edge," p.28, 29.
32. AMTEC brief, p. 5-7.
35. Humber College, brief to the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning, 1993, p. 5.
37. GUEP, "Teaching in the Information Age," p. 3.
46. Letter from Anne Swarbrick, Minister of Culture, Tourism and Recreation, to Dave Cooke, Minister of Education and Training, 2 June 1994.
47. Memo from Ken Stief, superintendent, Curriculum and Instructional Services, North York Board of Education, to Commissioner Avis Glaze, 22 September 1994.
50. Ontario Public Library Strategic Planning Group, "One Place to Look: The Ontario Public Library Strategic Plan" (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications and Ontario Library
53. See Sheingold, "Restructuring for Learning with Technology," for a discussion of high-technology schools in the United States.
54. The Council of Ontario Directors of Education coined this phrase in referring to British Columbia's high-tech Wondertree school in their 1993 submission to the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning, p. 11.

ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
©Copyright 1994, Queens Printer for Ontario
Second only to exhortations about competitiveness, the proverb above was probably repeated most frequently during our public hearings. Teachers, school board administrators and trustees, community services, and others said time after time: "Schools cannot do it alone." Despite their heroic efforts, schools are encountering growing difficulty in responding to the increasing needs of children. Indeed, these efforts have diverted the energy of teachers and administrators from meeting their primary education objectives, and have caused them to focus on providing ancillary services for which they don't have the training, the time, or resources.

The responsibilities pushed on schools and teachers in recent years have become unrealistic and onerous. Under these circumstances, serious reform of schooling will be difficult indeed. Those responsibilities simply must be shared, the burdens reduced, if schools and teachers are to do the jobs we need them to do. It was this thinking that led us to name community education as one of the four key engines needed to drive the educational reform that this report advocates.

Schools must foster the healthy development of all students by harnessing the various resources of the communities they are a part of. Bringing these resources together in a new structure should make it possible to launch a series of local initiatives and programs, based in or around each school and designed to meet its particular needs. Teachers would be released to do the academic work that is their primary responsibility. Not surprisingly, this long-term strategy calls for a fundamental questioning not only of existing roles and organizational models, and especially the very way we think of schools and community. Our ambition should be to find new ways of supporting the raising of children, and in doing so to weave a new a sense of community.

Community building must become the heart of any school improvement effort. Whatever else is involved - improving teaching, developing sensible curriculum, creating new forms of governance, providing more authentic assessment, empowering teachers and parents, increasing professionalism - it must rest on a foundation of community building. (1)

In this chapter, after an analysis of the problem and its causes, we outline our proposals for helping schools cope with expanded pressures. We also address ways to successfully translate into action our ideas about community education.
The problem: The expansion of the role of schools

Our public consultations throughout the province and the submissions we studied underline that everywhere teachers, principals, and school boards have stretched their mandate for schooling today's children into various supports well beyond their traditional educational domain. Their reasons for expanding their role are understandable. We frequently heard that changing social conditions for families have compelled schools to develop more extensive support services for their students. The Ontario we discovered through our consultations is almost unrecognizable from the Ontario of three or four decades ago.

Since the 1960s, societal changes of all kinds have placed great stress on families as an institution and on parenting as a function. Once we could count on children walking home at lunch hour from the nearby school for a hot meal or on a parent helping the children with homework. Now, both parents work, even if they live together; they have less time for their children, unless they are unemployed. The discussions they should be having with their children about relationships and sobriety, highly awkward between generations at the simplest of times, have become infinitely more difficult lectures about sex, AIDS, drugs, and violence. It is evident that meeting all of the challenges of the 1990s is beyond the capacity of an increasing number of parents.

If changing socio-economic conditions of families have affected children, so have other socio-cultural factors such as the youth consumers' culture (and economy), or the anonymous urban life that has often replaced traditional communities' cohesion and support. Cutting across all social classes and cultures are the many barriers to learning created by emotional problems resulting from family breakdown, isolation, and loneliness, inter-generational confrontation, conflicting values, family violence, sexual abuse, sexism, and racism. These barriers may affect children and youth in any school, anywhere, any time. Most alarming are the increasing rates of pre-teen and teen suicides found in all segments of society. For example,

- the suicide death rate for teenage men has increased four-fold from 5.3 to 23.0 per 100,000 between 1960 and 1991;
- the suicide rate for young women also increased from 0.9 to 4 per 100,000 between 1960 and 1991;
- in 1989-90 the second leading cause of hospitalization for young women aged 15 to 19 is attempted suicide;
- girls 10 to 14 years of age are hospitalized for attempted suicide at a rate five times that of boys;
- the suicide rate among Indian youth was five times that of the Canadian population;
- large proportions of aboriginal people identified unemployment, alcohol, drug use, family violence, sexual abuse and suicide as significant social problems in their communities.(2)

As well, for too many families and neighbourhoods, additional barriers are created or compounded by poor socio-economic conditions: poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, chronic health conditions, substandard housing, and lack of recreational facilities/services.

Indeed, our consultations confirm the conclusion of other reports - Canadian families "are not the idealized haven we wish they could be, not the private places in which we retreat from society, but an integral part of society, and thus, intertwined with social changes in the wider world."(3)
What is more, as studies show, the structure of the family is changing, many more marriages are breaking up, and the number of single-parent families is increasing. More of these and other families now live in poverty than in past decades. According to Statistics Canada, 4.5 million people live in poverty - people who spend at least 56 percent of their income on food, shelter, and clothing.(4) One recent Ontario study found that "one in every six children is in a family receiving social assistance. About three-quarters of them are children of single-parent families, a majority of these parents being female. Child poverty in Ontario is on the rise, standing at 15.3 percent in 1990."(5)

Social policy analysts believe that the impact on families of economic restructuring caused by automation in the manufacturing sector has been significant and is escalating at a rapid rate. The greatest victims in the slide toward low-paying and temporary jobs are young families - those with parents under 25, who have seen their incomes drop from the 1980s by nearly 20 percent. Our conclusions have been influenced by the growing number of studies warning of the impact of these conditions on an increasingly impoverished generation.

Our consultations suggest that more than any other social institution, schools have felt compelled to address these problems in increasingly direct ways: by providing meals, family counselling, and mental health services. Where families are unable, or unwilling, to teach their children about human sexuality and human relations or about protecting themselves from the dangers of illegal drug use or sexually transmitted diseases, schools have stepped in and included these subjects in the curriculum of the classroom. Schools now carry most of the responsibility for orienting new young immigrants to Canada, teaching them English, and providing support for their culture shock. Many schools now provide a safe haven in the morning and late into the day for children whose parents work early and late. Some provide breakfast programs, and counsel children in single-parent families, and blended, re-combined, and same-sex families.

Schools have increasingly assumed responsibility for satisfying all but the most severe social needs of children and youth. However, these efforts have the potential to weaken the ability of schools to fulfil their primary educational objectives. The efforts of schools must be redirected to their intended focus on education.

These expanded services, which schools have adopted by default, have not always been of the highest level and quality. Despite their best efforts, schools face significant limitations in their ability to provide a full range of services. Educators do not have the specialized training required to develop and implement many social-service-type programs. School boards often lack properly trained professionals to supervise the development and implementation of these programs. Moreover, the use of school funding to provide expensive ancillary services may be a drain on program resources.

Despite positive intentions, the best efforts of schools to provide a broadened range of social services are often ineffective and inefficient. More often, the result is that the general social needs of all children, and the special needs of some children, are unmet. Successful interventions depend on the capacity for a flexible response by professionals, including teachers and other school personnel who share understanding of the child's real world. This requires, at the minimum, the co-ordination of the efforts of professionals providing services for children. More than that, it requires a rethinking of the relationship between schools and the parents, and other members of their communities, in order to enhance the capacity of the community as a whole to meet the needs of all children and youth.
Our response: Creating communities of concern

We believe it is now time to "re-invent" schools by drawing from, and enhancing, the strengths of their communities. Service systems must be a public responsibility shared with families, schools, and communities, rather than solely a government responsibility. We believe that "when communities are empowered to solve their own problems, they function better than communities that depend on services provided by outsiders."(6) The challenge is to overcome the isolation of potential partners and, by redirecting their resources, capacities and, commitment, develop communities concerned about raising our children. We must rethink the partnerships required in educating our children.

In our consultations in communities throughout the province, we found a number of school projects that open for students "a window on the world out there." We applaud the wonderful efforts that are encouraging students to participate in environmental projects, to interact with other students through computers, or to share in co-operative education. We believe these kinds of initiatives should be actively encouraged and supported. Some success stories are described in Chapters 7 to 10, giving our vision of what good teaching and great schools can be.

In this chapter, we focus on the need for schools to go beyond the clearly instructional partnerships -- for example, early remediation programs such as reading recovery -- which can and should be developed. This chapter is not about alternative schools or more imaginative special education programs, or projects for high-risk kids, or outstanding ways of enriching the curriculum through technology or work experiences. Although the form of community education that we advocate may encompass such efforts to enhance the instructional function of schooling, it requires, fundamentally, that schools assume a broader vision of the goal of schooling. In our vision, community education takes a distinct orientation, one that supports the raising of children and their healthy general development.

The needs we want to address with this key strategy of community education are common to all children and youth growing up in these challenging and changing times. If the needs are general, then the solutions will have to be universal. And when, in addition, more specific problems have been created by poor environments, these additional needs will call for more complex solutions, adapted to local priorities.

Community education, then, works by enlisting and, co-ordinating all the help offered. No longer can teachers be considered the only human resources involved in schooling. Within our concept of community education, many resources will be involved: business and industry, health-care institutions, and social-work agencies, municipal infrastructures and services, community associations, religious groups, and especially families. Teachers supported by these resources will continue to fulfil their own primary responsibility.

This pool of possible resources, which already exists in one form or another for every school, is usually located close to our elementary schools. There is, of course, a less obvious local community in the case of many high schools, especially in larger urban environments. When the available space does not permit the new partners to operate in the school building itself, mobile vans could offer needed services; nearby offices and facilities could be used; and provincial and municipal services might re-locate near the school. Students and their families should be able to look to the school building and its extensions as a place that responds to their various needs.

Our vision of community education is grounded in a society that recognizes a need to give high priority
to assisting all parents in the raising of their children. A web of on-going supports, articulated in and around the school, will be both preventive and remedial if they are locally based. This is a concept that insists "...strategies which focus on individual children must be integrated with strategies which improve each part of the environment within which children spend their time - homes, child care, neighbourhoods, and schools,"(7) and so are intended to benefit all children. It is a concept that serves society as a whole because it is built on the foundation of equitable educational opportunities for all children in Ontario.

A local focus for community education

The value of the school as a hub for the community and a focus for community education is not new. Already in 1973 the provincial legislature was aware that there were better ways to use school facilities. They acknowledged the centrality of the school in most communities, and the many ways schools could be of assistance to the life of the broad community.(8) However, community education is much more than that. Not only will schools open their facilities to the community, but they will also become the hub for all services that assist families in child raising. Schools in this vision are the physical centres, thus simplifying access to a wide variety of social, health, and recreational programs.

The recent report, Yours, Mine, and Ours: Ontario's Children and Youth,(9) from the Premier's Council on Health, Well-Being, and Social Justice, reinforced previous reports(10) by making clear that, at present, family services are unco-ordinated. The report also recognizes that often the school is the single, shared experience of most adults. Earlier, the Premier's Council had released its report People and Skills in the New Global Economy,(11) which recommended both school councils and community linkage committees at the school board level. The school lies at the heart of the community, and is the only resource that exists in practically every neighbourhood across the province. Therefore, schools should be the centre of the community and the focus point for providing a range of services to children and youth. The school building can be the site where community and social services, ranging from medical and dental services to daycare and public libraries, are provided.

Supporting and sustaining a diversity of models

Just as we recognize that community-to-school linkage is not a new concept, we also resist the notion of one single form of community education. The differing environments in which young people grow up and the wide diversity of factors that affect individual children demand a wide variety of models and types of alliances embraced within the concept of community education.

We have been guided to this view by the recommendations of the communities we consulted and by research on effective practices of promoting community involvement. We have considered the recommendations of authors of Better Beginnings, Better Futures Project, who suggest that models of community involvement be tailored to meet local needs and desires, since risk factors and protective factors vary from community to community. These authors observe, for example, that some communities have high rates of teen pregnancy, and some are bedroom communities with parents employed out of the community from dawn to dusk.

Our consultations confirmed that variability. We learned of the partnerships that made up the communities of concern in many schools. We highlight some such examples in the pages of this chapter. Some involved basic physical, material collaboration, such as the Stratford Education and Recreation Centre and the Welland Franco-Ontarian initiative, where good thinking linked building and facilities - a
Other projects express ways of creating multi-partner participation, including parents, social services, businesses and the community, in their search for a better approach to raising children and nurturing the growth of pre-teens and teenagers. Some of these local initiatives are top-down ideas originating with federal, provincial, municipal, or school-board levels of government, where schools were selected on the basis of their match with the goal of the programs. We found other examples where new community education initiatives were the result of the single-handed efforts of a dynamic school principal.

For some, community education means parental involvement or community use of educational facilities and perhaps co-operative education; for others, it involves alliances between many more partners including health-care givers; libraries; business, and industry; and recreational, religious, and social welfare groups. For yet others, and perhaps in its most sophisticated application, the concept of community education embraces the involvement of the community at large in the educational process, with a view to setting much of the social agenda of the community, particularly as this agenda touches the lives of children. The Sparrow Lake Alliance is a coalition of 250 members of 11 professions providing services for children, including experts from teaching hospitals and community health clinics as well as professionals from social services, with the goal of answering emotional and mental health needs of children and adolescents of Southern Ontario.(12)

We do not, therefore, focus on agencies only. We believe that there is every reason to include a range of community and neighbourhood people in the school. There should be a diversity of models of community education. We imagine, for example, as more and more children have less and less access to grandparents, that retired individuals in the community may be invited in to listen to children read, to read to them, and otherwise support their learning. Such forms of community education tell us much about the mutuality of learning and its value to all members of the community.

Similarly, a local community sports association might take over responsibility for giving children a period of physical activity every day, with the added benefit of releasing teachers to do planning, meet with parents, or have more time for professional development activities. We envision sports clubs or municipal recreation departments taking some responsibility for the students physical activities.

We imagine local businesses in another domain of community life expanding their links with schools beyond providing sites for career visits, to take responsibility for providing part-time jobs for students who need them. Businesses may lend staff to augment teachers' efforts in conveying certain knowledge in particular courses, co-ordinating workplace visits by students, providing schools with equipment that has become unnecessary at work. They may even promote healthy communities though their internal practices by developing family-friendly policies that assure time for employees who are parents to maintain regular contact with their children's schools.

We imagine a local college or university using a school as a teacher-development laboratory, thus placing more adults at the service of the children. The college or university may also work to forge links between schools and themselves through such means as campus visits.

These new forms of community education or alliances could give special prominence to the role of parents and families. Elsewhere in this report we emphasize that research, time and again, substantiates the intuitive wisdom that children do well in the school when their parents create, within the home, an
attitude that values learning. The linkage with parents by the schools and with the other alliance partners is crucial to any long-term success. But the attitude within the home remains the most difficult.

**Barriers to community education: Recognizing them and removing them**

The only way to provide services to children and youth, in an equitable and financially efficient fashion, is through the use of collaborative and co-operative models. The implementation of collaborative delivery models has, however, been a long time in coming. There are obvious reasons for this. Some relate to the different mandates, policies, and organizational models of the various ministries and agencies that serve youth; others relate to the natural tendency of institutions to build walls around themselves and to jealously guard their own areas of responsibility; and yet others relate to the variety of ways that child service institutions are funded.

Much work remains to be done to remove obstacles that inhibit the necessary flexibility, authority, and funding. Ways must be found to ensure that support staff or personnel have defined responsibilities for co-ordinating efforts and establishing liaisons between local groups and agencies; collaboration has not been the hallmark of inter-agency relationships. There are obvious needs for changes in the way local initiatives are supported through central funding mechanisms - changes that will be based on the recognized need to provide services that co-operate with each other rather than compete for the care and support of children and families. We recognize that, at present, advocates of children, whether they be child-care workers, educators, or social welfare people, are constrained by the institutional norms of the agencies in which they work in surrendering any of their turf. Experience tells them that their job is to advocate for their service agency, whether they be a clerk at the local level or the Deputy Minister.

The experience of collaborative child-service models and of community education in recent years reveals that where it has worked well, it has done so because of committed individuals at the local level. Educators and others who assist parents in the raising of children do not hesitate to say that the first indicator of the likelihood of success in co-operative or collaborative efforts in favour of children relates directly to commitment at the grass-roots level. Nowhere in recent years was this demonstrated more graphically than in the results of the research on local parent involvement done for Better Beginnings, Better Futures Project. One of the powerful findings gleaned from that experience and research was that local collaborative projects were successful only if there was "a minimum of 50 percent parents or community leaders on every major committee" and on the steering committee responsible for the initiatives.(13) We also learn from these Ontario experiences that real transfer of decision-making to such a local steering committee is also an essential ingredient of success.

Time, of course, is the other key factor. Often, in any given local community education project, the whole first year is needed for participants to build trust, a process that cannot be rushed; the second year is required to identify and solidify support for the project and to develop the necessary planning.

We also recognize the problems caused by the philosophical and administrative differences between ministries: those offering universal services, like education, and those whose services are directed to a specific clientele, like correctional services. These difficulties are further compounded by the ways that different ministries in Ontario are organized to provide services to children. There are effectively two kinds of services: those for "normal" children and those for children defined as straying from the norm in some way. The different clienteles of ministries make it more difficult to integrate services. The risk, of
course, is that the targeted groups of children are always further marginalized by services that should be helping them to avoid just such stigmas and labels.

We know that the pervasive effects of jurisdictional protection at the provincial level have led the authors of such studies as the *Ontario Child Health Study*\(^{(14)}\) and *Children First* to insist on the development of provincial policies that would mandate and reward co-operation between the various Ontario ministries concerned with children. Nonetheless, questions of jurisdictional turf, and dollar allocation, especially in times of economic constraint, continue to inhibit meaningful integration of services. As well as frustrating action provincially, "... resulting multiple lines of accountability among local service providers are a major impediment to service integration at the local level in the province."\(^{(15)}\)

A laudable initiative of the provincial government in response to the Children First report was the establishment in 1990 of the Interministerial Committee on Services for Children and Youth. It consisted of assistant deputy ministers and representatives from nine key ministries and several other provincial agencies\(^{(16)}\) with an interest in children. Originally it received staff support from within the Ministry of Education and Training, but over time, interest and support for the initiative dwindled, and the Integrated Services for Children and Youth Secretariat created earlier was disbanded in 1992.

Two years later, a new inter-departmental committee was reactivated, the Tri-Ministry Committee on Services for Children and Youth. Limited, by choice, to the three key ministries Education and Training, Health, and Community and Social Affairs - it has as current chair an assistant deputy minister of Community and Social Affairs who has sent a call to all interested parties (17 ministries or agencies replied). They are kept informed of the committee's work and might participate on an ad hoc basis. One of the lessons learned by government's responses to the challenges posed to bureaucratic structures by community education is that a separate, dedicated secretariat responsible for inter-departmental action and top-down links is a critical element of change.

We are proposing that to ensure an integrated approach to the care and nurturing of children, we think of the responsibilities of schools in a broader way and acknowledge the need for some restructuring in the delivery of not only educational but of all supports for children. This requires that together with families, a wide variety of community agencies, groups, and institutions can, and should, be brought to the table through the school so that they can determine how to best work together to support the development and learning of young people. It is not the school, and certainly not the teachers, who must assume prime responsibility for responding to the needs of young people. But, in our vision, the school must assume responsibility for bringing together the people, the groups, and the agencies who can respond to these needs. In other words, the school is the central player in this concept.

We are convinced, therefore, on the one hand of the importance of developing clear provincial policies that will encourage and support collaborative efforts in a variety of ways at both the provincial and the local level. On the other hand, community education and its alliances will take a wide variety of forms, depending on local circumstances. Because the needs vary enormously from school to school, so will the pace of change people are ready to accept, their various philosophies of what is good for the children in their care and, of course, the available local resources. In the final analysis, the solutions cannot come from the top - they can only come from the local school and its community of parents and other players. What "the top" must undertake to do is facilitate access by local schools and their communities to what are defined as the positive assets that will meet their needs.
Community education: Making it happen

For schools to become effective as centres for services offered by a community in support of children, they must become the primary agent in searching out partners who will form the community of concern. Schools must broker and cement the necessary alliances among the partners to ensure an integrated approach to the delivery of care and support for children. We have no illusions that the task is easy. This concept can be realized only if there is staff commitment within the school. This commitment, we believe, must start with the leader of the school, the principal. Because the role requires a broad sensitivity to the needs and resources within the community, we have recommended that school-community councils be formed to advise and assist principals.

...in schools

As a key strategy, community education involves changes in the role of the principal and in the training and attitudes of teachers. It also implies the addition of differentiated staff to schools - human-resource people who will not be certified as teachers, although they will be sharing in the education of students.

In keeping with our vision of a principal who knows and is involved in the community from which the school draws its students, we believe that together with the task of instructional leader, the principal must be the active agent in the development, fostering, and sustaining of the alliances that form the heart of community education. Principals are key to the success or failure of schools. Principals can be spark plugs for efforts to foster children's growth and development, by co-ordinating the services that help students. Our report and its recommendations ask principals to move out into the community both as ambassadors of good will, and, more important, as agents of change to establish a new understanding about the school and its responsibilities. Crucial to our recommendations, therefore, will be a clear redefinition of this new dual role of school principals.

Although through community education we hope to lighten the teacher overload of recent years, we believe that teachers must be able to recognize a wide variety of social needs among their students, and be aware of the various services available within the new community of partners. Ensuring that teachers are equipped for this becomes an important task for principals. Too often the very people who are essential to such new structures have not been prepared. Indeed, we often heard that teachers have been trained to close the door of their classrooms and do whatever they do without the benefit of colleagues and community. One result is that parents have often been kept outside. We see changing these kinds of attitudes as fundamental to the role of the principal in community education. In Chapter 12 we address the need for all teachers to learn to work in collaboration with their colleagues as well with parents and others in the community.

The notion of differentiated staff is key to improving education in Ontario schools and as an enrichment to school life. It may involve volunteer parents, paid or unpaid, helping in classes, or other professionals and para-professionals, as well as aides. But in fulfilling their new dual responsibility, principals will also need some assistance from school boards in the task of community development - assistance in implementing the recommendations of the school-community council and the initiatives developed by the principal.

...with families

There are still educators who say, "If the family would just do its job, we could do our job." That
statement represents a view of "separate spheres of influence." According to one researcher,

In effect, these people are saying, "Let's separate the family and the school in order to have the most efficient organization possible. If the family carries out its mission, we educators can teach the children what they need to know ... This has been the prevailing theory in sociology from the turn of the century until approximately the mid-1970s... As we began to study school and family partnerships, we found that the theory of separate spheres was not useful for explaining the effective organization of education for children. Rather, our data suggested the need to push the spheres together so that they overlap somewhat." (17)

All of the alliances that we are suggesting, the web of supports and resources, are to be at the service of the child. The child, then, is at the centre of our concept of community education. And connecting the child to this broad community of concern is his or her family unit. Given the increasing stresses and pressures on families discussed earlier, assuring the establishment of this vital link is the most difficult challenge of all. The efforts of principals, school boards, school-community councils, and provincial policy frameworks must be directed to ensuring the active participation of this essential partner.

As with community education itself, there is not one magic formula or strategy that adapts to all families. In light of the research linking student achievement inextricably to parental involvement in the child's education, participation must be encouraged. Though the kind and the degree of involvement may vary, it is essential to the success of the student.

There is no shortage of strategies to make schools "family friendly." Perhaps most important are those strategies that actively encourage parent participation. We have heard of schools approaching families in their catchment area, immediately following the birth of a child, to make parents aware of the school's interest in a future pupil. Other schools provide parent-education workshops to familiarize parents with their children's school programs and provide parenting advice. In the TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork) program, teachers design homework assignments in such a way as to encourage children to discuss their schoolwork with parents.

Because of the difficulty many parents have in attending teacher-parent interviews, many schools are using telephone calls or home visits to facilitate the involvement of parents. We even heard of schools where each teacher, each day, spells out the program of the day and the homework for the evening on a voice-mail message that parents can access easily at any time after school hours. The increasing use of technology in schools another of our main engines of educational reform - opens the door to a variety of new techniques to better link the home and the school.

...and the new school-community councils

At the heart of our conception of a new approach and commitment to community education is the recognition of the need for a local structure that will place the school at the hub to build community support of student learning. This is the school-community council that we have already referred to. Our arguments in favour of this new structure are much akin to those in favour of community education. We see this local structure as the vehicle for empowering communities close to a school to rediscover their assets: those of "commitment, understanding of local problems, a problem-solving rather than a service orientation, caring, flexibility and creativity, efficiency, shared values, and a focus on human capacity rather than deficiency." (18) We also believe that school-community councils will enhance the primary role of parents in the education, growth, and development of their children by putting parents in regular
contact, not only with teachers, but with the various community agencies that assist parents in their responsibilities.

To meet these cornerstone needs for supporting our vision of a new community education,

**Recommendations 108, 109**

*We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training mandate that each school in Ontario establish a school-community council, with membership drawn from the following sectors:

- parents
- students (from Grade 7 on)
- teachers
- representatives from local religious and ethnic communities
- service providers (government and non-government) - municipal government(s)
- service clubs and organizations
- business sectors

*We recommend that each school principal devise an action plan for the establishment and implementation of the school-community council.

We conceive of the school-community council as an essential underpinning or resource in aiding principals in the determination of the kind of alliances needed and resources available in a given community. We see principals playing pivotal roles in convening the council and in motivating its work. School boards and government ministries and agencies should define a support function and support services available to principals according to local needs.

Because of their representation from health care, social, and recreational agencies, families and business, these councils can be of particular assistance to principals by advising how parents in a given area can best be contacted and encouraged to participate more in the education of their children and in the life of the school. School-community councils bring together many of the partners in education to reinforce their understanding of how they can influence and complement one another in their efforts on behalf of children. Within the area of the school and among the networks associated with the school, these councils should play an educative role in making all aware of the necessity of this community approach to education, which we are recommending. They will liaise with the business community, health-care groups, municipal facilities, and the like.

In establishing the framework for school-community councils, we take for granted the principle that local decision-making must recognize the various constituencies represented in public and Catholic, English, and French schools. Although drawing on many common groups, services, and associations, schools differentiated by religion or language will also draw on specific groups that can be of assistance to their particular school.

**Recommendation 110**

*We recommend that school boards provide support to principals to establish and maintain school-community councils and that the boards monitor the councils' progress and indicate the progress in their annual reports.

*with school boards*
We see the role of the school-community councils as complementary to the role of school boards. We believe that these councils can provide the depth of response to local conditions that has been lost at the school-board level. Parents entrust their children to schools so that the latter can assist them in the task of child raising. This expectation lies at the heart of the trusteeship exercised by members of school boards. This responsibility can be fulfilled by trustees only if they share this task with the many other community groups who serve children. School-board trustees in most instances can best fulfill their chief task, that of policy setting, when they acknowledge the need for community alliances.

This reliance on community has obvious practical consequences. School boards must take the leadership in establishing regular, structured liaison among themselves, municipalities, business groups, health-care facilities, recreational and social agencies, religious and other groups to facilitate the development of the alliances and communities of concern. Principals and school-community councils must be encouraged by boards to develop the kind of alliances best suited to their area, and must be given substantial support by supervisory officers acting as leaders at the municipal/county level. Principals and school-community councils will therefore require greater local autonomy and budget control.

Achieving such a vision can in many instances involve the location of community services, other agencies, and schools in one building. Although Ontario is not currently in a school-building boom, new schools are being built, and older schools are being renovated, added to, or replaced. Now is the time to ensure that multi-purpose perspectives are taken so that we have multi-purpose facilities.

A collaborative approach to meeting the needs of children should also result in cost savings. Now, there is duplication between school boards and other services as schools try to cope with problems of a social, health, or psychological nature, with insufficient expertise, and spend considerable time trying to get other agencies to deal with the problem. Those agencies likewise spend time trying to get into schools, but an us-versus-them attitude sometimes intrudes.

**Recommendation 111**

*We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training, teachers’ federations, and school boards take whatever actions are necessary to ensure that community liaison staff persons are sufficiently available to assist principals in strengthening school-community linkages. These staff, who would not be certified teachers, would be responsible for helping to implement decisions and initiatives of the school-community councils as well as other school-community initiatives.*

...**with the provincial government: Adopting an agenda for redesigning systems to support community education**

*Government must become the leading partner in creating a public agenda for children and in establishing an integrated framework that ensures that the entitlements of children are met through a holistic system of supports and services.(19)*

Developing a strategy at the provincial level has proven to be difficult, not least because of entrenched bureaucracies. By their very nature, bureaucracies are resistant to change and to surrendering turf. Although precise recommendations to address the requisite new structures at the provincial level are beyond the mandate of the Commission and the time constraints under which we have been working, we raise a number of broad policy issues in regard to provincial government action.

We cannot ignore the criticisms of studies that document the effects of the fragmented non-systems of children's services in Ontario. Their crisis orientation focuses on remedy rather than prevention. Instead
of considering the interaction of causes and solutions for children and their families, professionals tend to rigidly categorize problems. The lack of communication among systems is well documented, as is the specialization of the service providers that often renders them unable to propose effective solutions to complex problems. Most troubling for our conception of community education is the failure of ministries to work towards a common goal of supporting children's learning. Ministries in Ontario, as in other jurisdictions, have created discrete local service systems characterized by differences and even contradictions in the assessment of child and family needs, and by solutions (to the complex problems of children) that are too narrowly focused. We are troubled by the tendency in these systems for clashes in approaches and by the tendency to ignore problems because they fall into another ministry's mandate.

One suggestion made to address the question of the bureaucratic divisions and confusions is found in the *Children First* report. The report recommends that a Ministry of the Child be established. Although we discussed this idea during our public hearings, and are in principle not opposed, our sense is that immediate action at the local level is more critical to the lives of children and their families. Such immediate local action must not wait for such complex provincial restructuring.

Obviously, provincial policy must address issues such as the funding of education programs dealing with sex, AIDS, and drugs if these are to be assigned to another community partner. If other agencies either deliver or assist in delivering fitness programs, job or career counselling, or other services, there must be new determinations for the allocation of human and financial resources. And in all of this, accountability mechanisms must be built in so that students in need of services do not fall through the cracks of integrated services, and so that principals have some guarantee of co-operation in seeking to build the necessary alliances for their schools.

If we want genuine collaboration, significant change in provincial structures is necessary, now or eventually. But it must not be the sine qua non for the development of community education. The provincial government must both get out of the way and give collaboration a push. By getting out of the way, we mean that legislative, regulatory, and administrative restrictions should not intrude in making the best decisions or providing the best services for children at the local level. By giving collaboration a push, we suggest that there should be incentives for local agencies and managers to work together. In fact, it may well be necessary for legislation to be enacted that clarifies the primary and secondary responsibilities of schools and the Ministry, and those of other ministries and agencies.

These conditions have led other provinces and states to initiate efforts to redesign and to even reinvent children's services systems. We recognize the difficulty of these efforts and the need to initiate change at the local community level. Our recommendations so far have taken this "bottom-up" approach. However, we have been warned by professionals from local agencies, schools, and school boards that bottom-up initiatives can only succeed if the constraints to collaboration and community outreach that have their source in provincial-level institutional structures are removed. We believe the time has come to set out the direction for long-term systemic reform of the multiple, hierarchical, children's service systems that have evolved in the province. The redesign initiative we propose reflects our conclusion that the expansion of the large children's service systems already in place does not promise greater well-being for our children and youth. We have in this chapter argued for a new direction that builds on the strengths of communities, families, children, and youth.

The systemic changes in provincial children's services systems that we believe are needed to fulfil our vision of community education require significant political leadership committed to redesigning existing
flows of authority, resources, skills, and capacities.

**Recommendation 112**

*We recommend that the Premier assign responsibility for reforming children’s services to a senior Minister, in addition to his/her regular portfolio; and that this senior Minister be supported by an Interministerial Committee of Ministers responsible for children's services; and that

a) the Committee be assisted by permanent staff;

b) the Committee include the systematic review and revision of

- service approaches taken
- quality of services provided
- funding mechanisms
- legislation
- regional organization of authority
- provincial structures;

c) the Committee establish, through the regional offices of the MET, a leadership and co-ordinating plan between the school boards and the other local providers of services to develop and help implement the mechanisms necessary to support the work of school- community councils.

Community education can only become an effective engine for changing supports for children's learning with strong leadership and co-ordination at the regional and local levels.

We believe that a review of present legislation and regulations would lead to the removal of impediments to the kind of alliances we are advocating. Also needed is a policy framework to clarify how partnerships might be structured and funded. Such a review should also identify the necessary additional mandates to be given to ministries other than Education and Training and to agencies other than schools.

**Recommendation 113**

*We recommend that the provincial government review legislative and related impediments, and that they develop a policy framework for collaboration to facilitate partnerships between community and schools.

**Setting a timeline for action**

If these recommendations are to have effect, they must be supported by a timeline for action that recognizes the complexity of the changes proposed. We remind the government of the lessons from decades of research on the conditions required to support implementation.

**Recommendation 114**

*We recommend that the Interministerial Committee of Ministers, under the senior minister responsible, as its first task set a sustainable timeline for implementing community partnership, policies, and mechanisms, with specific points for reporting and disseminating the results of the efforts.

These recommendations should signal the importance we place on the need for long-term systemic reform of children's services.
Conclusion

Defining what we mean by community education has been a difficult part of our work in this Royal Commission. Our conception recognizes the variety of local influences that change the form and nature of community education. This is as it should be. Only by developing the capacity for communities to re-invent their relations with schools can student learning be supported and ultimately sustained. We recognize that the redesign of schooling we have proposed in this chapter is complex. It requires a change in what schooling means and what schools are for. It amounts to social change of the highest order.

Despite these difficulties, we are convinced that community education is central to education reform in the province. It is one of the essential levers to the changes we are recommending. Teacher education (Chapter 12) will remain a keystone of the profession only if it is based on the needs of schools as rooted in contemporary communities. Our recommendations regarding early childhood education (Chapter 7) find their genesis in the necessity of forging developmental links between schools and children's homes and communities. Information technology (Chapter 13) as a lever or strategy of educational change depends not only on children's being immersed in this new way of learning, but on many partners being brought together through this technology in what might be called electronic communities.

In short, it is the concept of community education ties together with the four key levers that we hope will provide the impetus for tomorrow's education in Ontario.

Community education is potentially powerful: it can provide the most economic use of the community's financial resources; schools can become more effective in supporting their students' academic achievements and general development; and if the pressure on teachers to meet non-academic needs is relieved, we can expect renewed commitment to teaching. Finally, parents with strong community support are likely to carry out their parenting responsibilities with greater confidence and skill.

Endnotes (Chapter 14)


10. The Better Beginnings, Better Futures Project was established in 1989 as a joint venture of three Ontario and two federal departments. It supports 11 pilot projects in Ontario schools.


16. The committee consisted of Assistant Deputy Ministers and representatives from the Ontario Ministries of Education, Health, Community and Social Services, Housing, Tourism and Recreation, the Solicitor General, the Attorney General, Correctional Services, and Natural Resources, as well as representatives from the Ontario Women's Directorate, the Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat, the Office of Disability Issues, and the Premier's Council on Health Strategy.


ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
Chapter 15: Constitutional Issues

In this chapter we focus on groups with special constitutional status who have concerns about funding, programs, and governance structures that flow to some extent from that status - Ontario's Roman Catholic, Franco-Ontarian, and aboriginal communities.

Many of the concerns expressed by these three groups with special constitutional status mirror those of the broader community, and thus are part of other sections of our report. For example, parents in these three communities share the concerns of parents of children in the public system about having greater involvement in their children's education and about effective communication between home and school. This chapter, however, deals only with issues that are the specific priorities of these groups.

Roman Catholics, who have constitutional rights to their own system, are concerned about barriers to equal opportunities for excellence: funding, preferential hiring of Roman Catholic teachers, teacher education, and structures in the Ministry of Education and Training. We make recommendations in three of these areas, while those related to funding can be found in Chapter 18.

Franco-Ontarians, who also have constitutional guarantees, are pressing for full implementation of their legally awarded right to manage their French-language education - a right that they believe is related to the opportunities for their students to reach a higher level of academic excellence, as well as to equity measures. Like the Roman Catholic community, Franco-Ontarians are concerned about having the resources to support and enhance their education system.

Aboriginal communities seek self-governance in education, and most of this concern must be dealt with at the federal level. However, aboriginal people articulated to us, and we responded to, several specific concerns about the quality of education for their children as it relates to language of instruction, curriculum content, resources, and teacher training - issues in which the province does have a role.

The Roman Catholic education system

During the public hearings, we spoke with a wide range of Roman Catholic educational representatives, as we did with public and francophone representatives. We found much in common among these systems, just as we discovered that each system has qualities and features distinctively its own. This suggested that while we must ensure equity and excellence in all three systems, their diversity means we do not have to have a one-size-fits-all approach to our strategies for educational reform.

The fact of the Roman Catholic system as a distinct educational community became particularly evident to us in a presentation by the Council of Ontario Separate Schools (COSS), an umbrella organization made up of the provincial associations of Roman Catholic parents, trustees, teachers, supervisory
officers, and bishops. In their joint presentation, these groups focused more on their common vision of education than on their different tasks and responsibilities within their educational system. They told us:

_This grouping of associations comes to you together because in the separate schools of the province we are a community. We consider ourselves as participants in a deeply held covenant. The philosophical and theological underpinnings of our approach to education hold us together in ways which the exigencies of daily operations cannot alter._

They went on to develop a series of common positions and declarations that had a high degree of congruence and agreement on the major concerns of the Roman Catholic educational community. Consequently, as a commission, we had very little difficulty in getting a clear sense of their priorities for educational reform.

**A brief history of Roman Catholic schools**

The first classes established by Europeans in Ontario were for Native children, offered by French Jesuit priests in Huronia in 1634, which can be said to mark the beginning of Roman Catholic education in this province. These classes were followed in the 17th century by classes for the children of settlers in New France.

Very early in the 19th century, one-room English-language Roman Catholic schools were opened, the first in Glengarry County in eastern Ontario. Under the leadership of Bishop Alexander Macdonell in Kingston, Catholic education expanded when the first Catholic grammar (secondary) school was established in Kingston in 1839; it still operates today.

Initially, Roman Catholic schools were made possible by religious communities of women and men who organized the settlers to establish the schools, and who ensured their financial support.

We were told that the contribution of these communities particularly the communities of sisters - to Roman Catholic education in this province cannot be overstated. Indeed, until the past quarter century, the history of Catholic education in Ontario is inseparable from the history of these communities and the people who led them: until the 1950s, their members constituted the majority of principals and teachers in Catholic schools.

This pattern of school development and organization created the distinctive three-part character of Roman Catholic schools in Ontario. Church leaders, with parents and educators, created these schools from a joint vision of the place of education in the life of the broader community. The schools existed only because of the conscious and deliberate effort of parents to establish and financially support them. Many Ontario Roman Catholics acknowledge that constructing these schools was possible only through the efforts of the local church, and operating them was affordable only through the contributed services and sacrifice of the religious communities who staffed them. Thus, the partnership of home, school, and parish was always the ideal that guided their development.

Pre-Confederation legislation passed by the united legislatures of Canada West (later Ontario) and Canada East (Quebec) gave more formal recognition and support to Roman Catholic education. Notably, the Tache Act (1855) and the Scott Act (1863), among other things, allowed the election of separate school trustees, established separate school zones, and provided legislative grants to separate schools.

By the time of Confederation, Roman Catholic schools were well established: 18,924 students were being educated in Catholic elementary schools in 1867. The existence of denominational schools became
a key feature in the discussions over the unification of British provinces into one country. The guaranteed maintenance of Catholic denominational schools in Ontario, and of Protestant denominational schools in Quebec, was part of the "historic compromise" that made possible the union of Canada.

Section 93 of the British North America Act (now the Constitution Act, 1867) said clearly that such schools were guaranteed, and it placed a constraint on provincial authority over education, an otherwise unrestricted jurisdiction.

Section 93:
In and for each Province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Education, subject to and according to the following Provisions:
(1) Nothing in any such Law shall prejudicially affect any Right or Privilege with respect to Denominational Schools which any Class of Persons have by Law in the Province at the Union;
(2) All the Powers, Privileges, and Duties at the Union by Law conferred and imposed in Upper Canada on the Separate Schools and School Trustees of the Queen's Roman Catholic Subjects shall be and the same are hereby extended to the Dissentient Schools of the Queen's Protestant and Roman Catholic Subjects in Quebec;
(3) Where in any Province a System of Separate or Dissentient Schools exists by Law at the Union or is thereafter established by the Legislature of the Province, an Appeal shall lie to the Governor General in Council from any Act or Decision of any Provincial Authority affecting any Right or Privilege of the Protestant or Roman Catholic Minority of the Queen's Subjects in relation to Education;
(4) In case any such Provincial Law as from Time to Time seems to the Governor General in Council requisite for the due Execution of the Provisions of this Section is not made, or in case any Decision of the Governor General in Council on any Appeal under this Section is not duly executed by the proper Provincial Authority in that Behalf, then and in every such Case, and as far only as the Circumstances of each Case require, the Parliament of Canada may make remedial Laws for the execution of the provisions of this Section and of any Decision of the Governor General in Council under this Section.

Constitution Act, 1867

The constitutionally guaranteed rights were confirmed in Section 29 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is part of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Section 29:
Nothing in this Charter abrogates or derogates from any rights or privileges guaranteed by or under the Constitution of Canada in respect of denominational, separate or dissentient schools.

Constitution Act, 1982

In the decades that followed Confederation - and despite substantial financial obstacles, particularly to the creation of secondary schools - Roman Catholic education continued to flourish. By 1900, there were 42,397 students in Catholic schools; by 1925, the number had more than doubled to 95,300 students. Religious communities of sisters, brothers, and priests continued to take the lead in setting up schools, including many secondary schools, with both residential and day students.

In 1969, provision was made for the creation of county and regional separate school boards, similar to
the provision made the previous year for public school boards. For historical reasons, these separate boards operated with some degree of public funding through Grade 10. Tuition fees were paid by parents of children in Grades 11, 12, and 13.

Through partnerships between the religious communities that owned and operated the schools and the newly created school boards, a small-scale secondary school system emerged - small not only in terms of the number of students it could educate but also in the limited range of course offerings it could make available.

Typically, Roman Catholic secondary schools at that time offered only core academic subjects such as math, English, science, and then only at the advanced level. Catholic students who could not afford the tuition, or who did not match the academic profile of Catholic secondary schools, either went directly to the local public secondary school or left at the end of Grade 10.

Furthermore, the fact that parents had to pay tuition fees in Grades 11, 12, and 13 ensured that a Roman Catholic secondary school education was a possibility for only the wealthier or most educationally committed families. This system could operate only on the basis of tuition fees paid by parents, lower salaries paid to teachers, and services and facilities provided by religious communities. Even this on-going sacrifice and commitment left the system on the verge of financial insolvency throughout this period.

In 1984, then-Premier William Davis announced his intention of completing the Roman Catholic education system by granting public funding through Grade 13 in Catholic schools. The Conservative government initiated the legislation, but the process was concluded by the minority Liberal government that won the next provincial election.

While Bill 30 was supported in its amended form by all three political parties, and was passed in the House on June 24, 1986, it was and still is the subject of much controversy. In a 1987 legal proceeding, the Supreme Court of Canada, in a 7-0 decision, ruled that the legislation was constitutional.

This completion of the Roman Catholic school system has resulted in both growth and change, especially at the secondary school level. With tuition fees abolished, children who previously could not afford to go to Catholic schools were given an opportunity to attend; this reduced the private-school, elitist image of Roman Catholic education, and made it authentically public and of service to all.

Moreover, improved funding made it possible to construct better facilities and to offer a wider range of courses. For the first time, Catholic schools had automotive shops and technical departments, as well as Latin programs and theology courses. The schools began to look more like the whole Catholic community, and not just a segment of it.

The development has brought substantial discussion in the Roman Catholic educational community on the issue of remaining faithful to its religious origins while being responsive to its public mandate.

In 1993, there were 621,143 students in Ontario Roman Catholic schools, 30 percent of the 2,042,710 students enrolled in the province. Of the total Roman Catholic student enrolment, 444,990 were at the elementary level and 171,153 at the secondary level. They were being educated in 1,343 elementary schools by 23,570 teachers, and in 201 secondary schools by 10,444 teachers.

Overwhelmingly, teachers in Roman Catholic schools today are not members of religious communities:
laypeople make up 97 percent of the teaching body. Whether they teach in the English- or French-language sections of the separate school system, these teachers have a shared vision of the education process.

**Issues and recommendations**

After we reviewed the four months of our public hearings, a group of issues of particular concern to the Catholic community clearly emerged. The following sections summarize these specific issues, some of which are also shared by the French community. Essentially these are related to the provision of resources and support services needed to preserve and enhance the Roman Catholic education system.

**Funding**

Without exception, every significant provincial Roman Catholic organization spoke to us of the need to reform education financing in Ontario. Trustees, parents, teachers, supervisory officers, principals, and clergy identified historic underfunding of Catholic schools as a province-wide problem and as an unjustifiable inequity, one that leaves hundreds of thousands of students without educational resources that meet generally accepted standards.

We were told that while there have been some recent changes in funding practices, several separate school boards hover on the edge of bankruptcy. Growth in the Catholic school system over the past two decades has compounded the problems caused by underfunding, and has resulted in inadequate facilities and permanent overcrowding.

Of the 40 boards in the province with the lowest per-pupil income from property assessment, 39 are Catholic. Of the 60 boards in the province with the highest such assessment income, only three are Catholic, and none of these three is among the top ten. This province-wide situation means profound disparities in programs and facilities between and within the same municipalities and counties.

We were told of a board that was compelled to choose between computers or musical instruments for its schools. The times being what they are, the board chose computers, but it was the kind of necessary choice that diminishes us as a society.

We were told of Catholic boards with schools in which, except for kindergarten, children spend their entire elementary level years in temporary facilities - a euphemism for portables - to be followed by life in a high school where lunch begins at 9:00 a.m. because the cafeteria holds only 300 of the school's 1,800 students. In this context, it is understandable that a sense of desperation was evident in some submissions from the Catholic community.

In Chapter 18, we discuss the present structures in education funding that have caused this situation, and make recommendations for comprehensive reform of education financing to eliminate these inequities.

**Section 136 of the Education Act**

As described earlier, Bill 30 did not accord funding to Catholic schools equivalent to that of public schools, but it did permit completion of the Catholic education system as a publicly funded education entity. Specifics of the revised funding are discussed in detail elsewhere; essentially, the Roman Catholic system became fully public in that it was funded totally from public sources.
Section 136 of the Education Act, covering hiring practices of separate school boards, was passed as part of the legislation enacted with Bill 30; it was an amendment to the original Bill, and, beginning in 1995, will have the effect of denying Roman Catholic school boards the right to favour Catholics in hiring teachers for Roman Catholic secondary schools.

At the time, the Catholic community strongly opposed this amendment, and it remains convinced that the section would be declared unconstitutional should any legal challenge be raised. During the public hearings, there was a clearly stated belief, expressed especially by trustees, that over time the very identity of Catholic schools is at risk if boards lose the right to hire, preferentially, Roman Catholic teachers.

Catholic schools have always hired a number of non-Roman Catholic teachers, and we encourage them to continue to do so. Most of these men and women are recognized by Catholic boards as excellent teachers who have made substantial contributions to their schools. However, these teachers have always been a small minority, and with the exception of the designated teachers who were transferred to the Roman Catholic from the public system after Bill 30 was passed, they were freely chosen by the boards that employ them. Thus the religious orientation and character of the Roman Catholic school was never at risk.

The concern of the Catholic community is that once section 136 comes into effect, the inability of the boards to guarantee Catholic teachers in the classrooms will erode the school's religious foundations. Parents who have specifically chosen to send their children to Catholic schools - sometimes at considerable inconvenience - have particularly strong feelings on this issue.

Central to the curriculum in any school is its culture: the sum of the dominant values, ideas, and beliefs that shape the learning environment and give the school its character and identity. It is evident that in Roman Catholic schools, religion is a core element of the school's culture and its reason for being. Throughout, this report has made clear the centrality of teachers in creating and sustaining the learning culture of the school. Thus, the religious commitment of the teachers in Roman Catholic schools is a vital element in establishing and maintaining their religious focus.

The declared expectation in Catholic schools is not that teachers will be spiritually neutral but that they actively attempt to blend their professional abilities and skills with their own spirituality. Presenters to the Commission frequently repeated that Roman Catholic schools attempt to be communities of faith as much as they attempt to be centres of learning.

In order for Catholic schools to maintain their identity and preserve their unique philosophy of education, Catholic school boards should not lose the right to favour hiring teachers who are members of the community of faith that is itself at the heart of the school.

The members of the Catholic education community have clearly stated that the potential introduction of large numbers of non-Catholic teachers into the system places the religious identity of Catholic schools in jeopardy. The maintenance and promotion of this identity is crucial to the work of the school and is part of the very reason it exists.

**Recommendation 115**

*We recommend that section 136, which restricts preferential hiring in the Roman Catholic school system, be removed from the Education Act.*
Representation in the Ministry of Education and Training

Many Catholic stakeholders told us that although Roman Catholic schools educate 30 percent of Ontario students, including almost 83 percent of all francophone students, and constitute a province-wide education system from kindergarten to OAC, that system is not appropriately represented at the Ministry of Education and Training.

This is particularly evident in two ways. First, the number of Ministry education officers with a separate school background is not always representative of the size of the Roman Catholic system; consequently, there is a lack of understanding by the Ministry of the Catholic system's priorities and concerns. Second, the Ministry has no "team" (formerly called a "branch") comparable to the French-Language Education Policy and Programs Team, which would be responsible for presenting the Catholic education viewpoint.

These numeric and organizational deficiencies account for the repeated references made during our public hearings to an inability by the Ministry to understand and meet the specific needs of the Roman Catholic education system.

*The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9*, released in February 1993, readily demonstrates the point. In the words of *The Common Curriculum*, "The outcomes in this document shall form the basis of the programs, learning activities, and specific outcomes that school boards develop for each grade."

Although it is supposed to be the province's core curriculum document for Grades 1 to 9, the 97 pages of the document contain one reference to Catholic curriculum - a footnote on the bottom of the first page. The subsequent version, written for parents and the general public later that year, contains no reference whatsoever to curriculum in Roman Catholic schools.

Without a Catholic Education Team, the document did not receive essential expert curriculum input from that perspective at the design stage. Therefore, before it is implemented, enormous work will have to be done by boards to make the document consistent with the education philosophy and priorities of separate schools.

This does not appear to us to be an appropriate curriculum development process for the Ministry to follow, especially in light of the added curriculum responsibilities that elsewhere in this report we recommend the Ministry undertake. The Catholic education community does not experience this as an isolated example of Ministry unawareness of the curriculum differences between public and separate schools.

We recognize that there are two English-language components in the province's publicly funded education system, and that each has a distinct curriculum orientation and philosophy. It is imperative that the Ministry, in the development of its programs and curriculum, be aware of these differences and be capable of meeting the needs of both components. While an element of Roman Catholic education comprises courses in religious education, the fact of this additional subject in Catholic schools is not the essential curriculum difference between public and Catholic schools: the essential difference is the philosophy and values that shape the rest of the curriculum.

At present, there is no structure in the Ministry to ensure that an appropriate curriculum is developed for a school system that educates one-third of Ontario students.

In order to meet the curriculum needs of separate schools, as well as other system-wide needs, it is
essential that the Ministry have adequate and influential representation of the Roman Catholic system among its education officers, senior administrators, and other professionals. Furthermore, the Ministry should have a team with the specific task of representing Catholic education concerns. Its responsibility could include co-ordinating Ministry policies related to Catholic education and maintaining liaison with the Catholic education community.

The focus of this discussion has been on curriculum issues, but assessment, teacher education, and governance are other areas where the Roman Catholic system perspective would vary from that of the public system.

**Recommendation 116**

“We recommend that, with reference to the role of the Roman Catholic education system, the Ministry of Education and Training ensure appropriate and influential representation from the Roman Catholic education system at all levels of its professional and managerial staff, up to and including that of Assistant Deputy Minister; and that the Minister establish a Roman Catholic Education Policy and Programs Team or branch in the Ministry.

**Teacher education**

The vision of education and the nature of curriculum in Catholic schools imply a specific professional preparation for teachers intending to work in the Roman Catholic system. If Catholic schools are to meet the mandate they have been given by their community, they not only require teachers who are Roman Catholic but people who are professionally prepared to teach in a Roman Catholic context and tradition.

Part of the pre-service formation of all teachers who wish to work in the separate school system should include at least one course dealing explicitly with Catholic education theory and practice, and there should be one course specifically for teachers who will be teaching religious education. The first course is described by the Catholic community as a foundations course, while the second is referred to as a religious education course.

At the present time, pre-service teaching programs at English-language faculties of education in Ontario do not differentiate in their degree requirements between teachers who wish to teach in the public school system and those who wish to teach in the separate. Programs offer mandatory foundation courses that do not adequately prepare teachers to work in the distinctive Catholic education context and thus do not meet the needs of the separate school system. Candidates aspiring to teach in Catholic schools need to be familiar with the history of Catholic education in Ontario, with the governance and organizations in the separate school system, and with the approach to curriculum used in these schools.

In the area of religious education, faculties currently have limited programs available, some of which are for credit and some of which are not. Courses vary in length from 15 to 40 hours, with program content differing substantially among faculties.

Characteristically, these pre-service religious education courses, accredited or not, are optional and taken in addition to a full academic program. This program and credit disparity causes problems for the Catholic education system because religious education in Catholic schools exists at all grade levels as a core subject area and is based on province-wide curriculum documents. The random, ambiguous status of pre-service religious education courses at faculties does not do justice to the importance of this subject in Catholic schools.
While the pre-service religious education courses are of value to student teachers and school boards, and while the people who teach them work very hard to provide the best possible programs, irregular credit status and content restrict their effectiveness in preparing religious educators.

If we take seriously the proposition that education in Roman Catholic schools is based on an educational philosophy and practice distinct from the public system, we must also conclude that the preparation of teachers for the Roman Catholic system must have distinctive elements.

In current pre-service programs, the Catholic component of teacher preparation is treated as an add-on and discretionary, not as fundamental and mandatory. In their programs, faculties of education do not reflect the reality that Catholic education philosophy is derived initially from a theological foundation, not from pedagogical theory, and they do not give student teachers exposure to this philosophy as part of their initial training.

Nor do faculties take seriously the fact that religious education is a core part of the curriculum in Catholic schools, and that teachers require professional preparation in order to teach the subject effectively.

The Ministry of Education and Training has a responsibility to ensure that professional preparation of teachers reflects the needs of the separate and the public sections of the publicly funded education system. Some people in the Catholic education community have suggested that to accomplish this effectively, a Catholic faculty of education with its own program is required for those preparing themselves to teach in Roman Catholic schools - although by no means does it seem to be a unanimous opinion in this community.

Having considered the various options, the Commission is of the opinion that in order to respond to the Catholic education community's legitimate request for professional preparation of its teachers, it is not now necessary to create a Catholic faculty of education, nor are two completely different tracks or streams required within faculties. However, we are convinced that faculties of education should respond to this request by providing a single core course (a foundations of Catholic education course) and a religious education course for all Catholic teachers.

Recommendations 117, 118

*We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training and the faculties of education establish a pre-service credit course in the foundations of Roman Catholic education, and that this course be available at all faculties of education in Ontario.

*We recommend that the religious education courses currently offered at faculties of education receive full credit status and be made part of the regular academic program.

Learning in French: Rights, needs, and barriers

More than 250 briefs and presentations were made to our Commission by Franco-Ontarians, both young and old. This is a clear indication that they participated fully in our deliberations. We also held a special day of consultation in Timmins for Franco-Ontarian associations involved in education, as well as a comprehensive video-forum in both Ottawa and Toronto with ethno-cultural francophones. Both individuals and associations spoke passionately of the history that has led to the development of their
schools and of French-language education in Ontario. They expressed hope for the Commission's recommendations, taking great care to clearly spell out their viewpoints and claims. They conveyed their vision of a French education system "from cradle to grave," even sharing with us plans for their budding community colleges and dreams of a francophone university.

Their presentations repeatedly echoed the injustices they suffered at the turn of the century, with the suppression of some of their rights in French-language education. Men and women, parents and educators, students of all ages - all spoke of their frustrations with an education system whose structures and management methods put them at a disadvantage, systematically trip them up, and paralyze their development. Again and again, they urged us to see to it that their rights are respected, thereby enabling Franco-Ontarian schools to play their role to the fullest in helping the francophone community achieve its highest potential. To a large extent, they attributed their high drop-out level, lesser academic successes and lower economic status of their adult population to the system's built-in inequities and restrictions. In a nutshell, they clearly conveyed to us just how critical a quality education in French is to the survival of their language, their culture, and their community.

We also learned from other francophones in Ontario - new Canadians and citizens from other provinces whose life experiences are different from those born here - that their perspectives, needs, and expectations do not always mesh with Franco-Ontarian objectives when it comes to their children's education.

Our mandate was very specific with respect to the constitutional rights of francophones and Catholics. While the reader will have observed the extent to which francophones' particular interests are reflected throughout this report, this section deals primarily with the administrative and political aspects of French-language education in Ontario from a management and governance perspective. Following a look at the historical, socio-demographic, and educational dimensions, we will address the issue of Franco-Ontarians' constitutional rights and the extent to which they are enforced, and conclude with an overview of the equity measures needed to ensure the future of this community.

**A glimpse of history**

French-language classes had been taught and courses given in isolation throughout Ontario almost a century before the end of the Seven-Year War in 1763, when all of New France was taken over by England. However, the first true French-language school - to be precise a Catholic and private school - in what is now known as Ontario did not come into existence until 1786, in Windsor, then known as L'Assomption du Detroit. The establishment of another French-language school then followed in Kingston. In practice - and this may surprise some - French-language education in Ontario had been on-going since the arrival of Europeans that is, from the moment the French arrived in the 17th century, which means well before Confederation in 1867 and the British North America Act, which granted provinces total and exclusive jurisdiction over education. Until then, French-language schools were treated in the same way as English-language schools, receiving the same type of funding and enjoying the same status. Usually established by the parish priest or a local group of parents and parishioners, these schools were partially funded by property taxes, even receiving, at the turn of the 19th century, government grants. However, as most French-Canadian schools were Roman Catholic, they, like anglophone Catholic schools, were subject to the same restrictions.

At the turn of the 19th century, the francophone population was centred in the southwestern region of Upper Canada, in both Essex and Kent counties. Around the 1830s, the population began to expand into
the southeastern region, into what is now the Prescott-Russell area.

It was during the decades immediately preceding Confederation, following the affirmation of Protestant Anglo-Saxon political-economic power with the infamous Family Compact in Upper Canada (Ontario) that the political issues in education in this province were crystallized, especially with respect to the constitutional rights of Roman Catholics. From 1846 to 1850, when legislation was passed to establish the basis of the current education system, and in the years that followed, education in the French language was for all practical purposes accepted by Ryerson, education superintendent for Upper Canada, thus recognizing de facto rights of francophones. Towards the end of the 19th century, less than 20 years after Confederation, Ontario began to systematically deny these rights. Regardless of their particular interpretation of the root cause of this injustice, historians agree in their identification of a link between the new restrictive language policies after 1885 and the increase of francophone immigration into Eastern Ontario from Quebec. In this regard, on November 24, 1886, the Toronto Mail published the following:

The Prescott and Russell schools are the nurseries not merely of an alien tongue but of alien customs, of alien sentiments, and, we say it without offence, of a wholly alien people. 

According to the historian Chad Gaffield, this same time period signalled the birth of the Franco-Ontarian identity. From 1885 to 1927, discrimination against education in the French language for Franco-Ontarians was actually being legislated, a measure that culminated in the notorious Regulation 17 of 1912, to this day an open wound in the heart of the community and a symbol of Franco-Ontarians’ fight for survival. (This regulation limited the teaching in French to Grades 1 and 2, forbidding it at any other level. In effect until 1927, Regulation 17 was not abolished until 1944.)

At the national level, the denominational rights of Catholic or Protestant minorities were recognized constitutionally in 1867, under section 93 of the Confederation Act of 1867 (the British North America Act), which were confirmed in section 29 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982. However, it wasn't until the 1960s that the linguistic rights of minorities francophones outside Quebec and anglophones in Quebec - were gradually recognized, and until the 1980s that they were enshrined in the Constitution. One can see the progression from the recommendations of the Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission to the Official Languages Act and the federally supported programs for linguistic minorities that followed it.

In Ontario, the creation of French-language elementary and secondary schools within public school boards was finally legislated in 1968. French-language high schools therefore have only a 25-year history in Ontario. However, as there was no funding for Catholic high schools, either anglophone or francophone, prior to 1986 and Bill 30, Catholic francophones often sent their children to public secondary schools. After Bill 30, most of these students and their schools were transferred en bloc to the separate - that is, Catholic - school boards. The Ontario Ministry of Education set up minimal francophone structures at the provincial level with the establishment in 1972 of the Conseil superieur des ecoles de langue francaise, an advisory committee to the Minister on French-Language education. In 1980, this committee became the Conseil de l'education franco-ontarienne (CEFO), or the Council for Franco-Ontarian Education, and then Conseil de l'education et de la formation franco-ontariennes (CEFFO), or the Council for Franco-Ontarian Education and Training, in 1993.

In 1977, the Minister of Education also appointed an Assistant Deputy Minister to be an advisor on French-language education. Since 1991, this function has changed to more direct responsibility for issues
in French-language education. In 1993, the position was broadened to include responsibility for other portfolios of interest to Ontario education in general, and therefore no longer officially designated as the Assistant Deputy Minister, French-language Education. Reluctant at first to accept this change that it perceived as a lessening of its status within the Ministry of Education and Training, the Franco-Ontarian community now sees that the positive result of this move is better representation of its interests.

**Who are the Franco-Ontarians?**

The Franco-Ontarian population is by far the largest thriving francophone minority group living outside Quebec and in all of Canada, followed by New Brunswick's Acadian community, which is half as large. If one refers to the OECD definitions, it could be said that the Franco-Ontarian community is made up of an "established minority" (Ontario-born) and of "new minorities" (new Canadians whose mother tongue is French). (5)

According to Statistics Canada's 1991 census data, which is confirmed in the latest study of the Association canadienne-francaise de l'Ontario (ACFO), the French-Canadian Association of Ontario, the Franco-Ontarian community can be described as follows:

*The Franco-Ontarian community consists of 485,390 members whose mother tongue is the French language - that is, one Ontarian out of 20. One quarter of Ontario's northeastern population is Franco-Ontarian; in the east, 15 percent of residents are Franco-Ontarians. The 102,695 Franco-Ontarians living in central Ontario make up only 1.6 percent of the region's population, and elsewhere in the province those whose mother tongue is French are few.* (6)

By adding to those numbers some 36,000 persons who declare French and another language as mother tongues, and by taking into account all corrective factors, the study points to an adjusted total of 503,568 Franco-Ontarians.

We are therefore looking at half a million people spread out in communities that are more or less francophone (with younger populations), first in eastern Ontario (Ottawa, Cornwall, and Hawkesbury) and then in the northeastern regions (Sudbury, North Bay, Timmins, Hearst, Kapuskasing, Kirkland Lake, and New Liskeard); or scattered elsewhere, throughout the anglophone population, with all the problems this entails for the school system. Despite the concentration of Franco-Ontarians in two of the province's regions (according to the Office of Francophone Affairs' own regional divisions; the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training divides the province into six regions), they still do not, except in northeastern Ontario, form a critical mass in the socio-political sense, although they are getting closer. (7)

We also note the existence of a number of mixed marriages, a natural sociological factor when a minority finds itself scattered throughout an overwhelmingly anglophone society. This marriage of francophones to non-francophones invariably has a bearing on the language spoken in the home and contributes to some children's lack of knowledge of French when they begin kindergarten in francophone schools. This explains why for some 200,000 people within the Franco-Ontarian population, French is not the principal language spoken at home. The highest level of linguistic stability is currently found in both eastern and northeastern Ontario, which have the greatest concentrations of francophones in the province.

In matters of education, a majority of Franco-Ontarian parents, i.e., 82.5 percent, favour Catholic schools, a choice that generally doubles the problems of non-recognition of their rights.

The problems encountered by Catholics has been referred to earlier in this chapter.
Given the absence of French-language secondary schools in Ontario until the 1970s, an often-forgotten fact, it is not surprising to learn that many in the current generation of adult francophones are under-educated or even illiterate. Indeed, numerous briefs submitted to the Commission convincingly illustrated the root causes of this phenomenon. "Nearly 18 percent of francophones have not reached Grade 9, whereas only 7.4 percent of anglophones have left school before Grade 9.\textsuperscript{(8)} Progress has been made, given that the percentage of francophones in this situation a few years ago stood at the 21.6 percent mark; however, the disparity between these two groups remains. "Under-education is one of the primary causes of illiteracy within the Franco-Ontarian community."\textsuperscript{(9)}

The drop-out rate is higher among francophones than among anglophones, and this rate is thought to be higher yet in mixed secondary schools, where students of both languages are taught under one roof, and which often have anglophone principals, as opposed to homogeneous French-language high schools with francophone principals.

Young Franco-Ontarians, as a whole, also achieve lower scores on tests than their anglophone counterparts. In the 1993-94 provincial Grade 9 French-language reading and writing tests, only 66 percent of students achieved or exceeded provincial standards, compared with 89 percent of anglophones. In the national mathematics test administered in 1993 to students aged 13 to 16, following a decision by the Council of Ministers of Education, scores obtained by francophones compared favourably to those of anglophones with respect to material learned, but their scores were considerably lower than those of Anglophones in solving complex problems. (It is noteworthy that young Quebeckers from the same age group achieved the highest scores in Canada in both respects). In 1992, the same trend was observed internationally in both science and mathematics tests (IAEP-2) administered to nine- and thirteen-year-old students: in sciences, thirteen-year-old Franco-Ontarians ranked 20 percent lower than Anglo-Ontarians, and in math, the nine-year-olds were at the very bottom of the international scale.

Francophone teenagers, when compared with anglophones, appear to have difficulty getting over the hurdle of Grade 11, but of those who do stay in school, the same percentage of francophones earn the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) at the end of Grade 12 as anglophones. However, of those francophones that do complete Grade 12 or OAC, proportionately fewer of them, by at least half, go on to community college or university.\textsuperscript{(10)} According to researchers at the Centre de Recherches en éducation du Nouvel-Ontario (CRENO), their participation at the secondary and post-secondary levels is linked to the availability of French-language programs.

Average individual earnings are 5 percent lower for Ontario's francophones than for anglophones.\textsuperscript{(11)} With a few rare exceptions, the Franco-Ontarian community is noticeably absent in Ontario's political or economic power structures, and under-represented at the management level of the Ontario public service.\textsuperscript{(12)} However, as with the educational statistics, economic indicators reveal that young Franco-Ontarians compare favourably to young anglophones. Tomorrow's generation appears to have a promising future, and this is undoubtedly linked to education.

New Canadians who speak French are also making an enriching contribution to the traditional Franco-Ontarian community. The ethno-cultural francophone community, a third of whom were born abroad, numbered 81,375 in the 1991 census, and all were of an ethnic origin other than French or British. At least 10,000 of them have settled in the province's northeastern region, with some 30,000 living in eastern Ontario, and their greatest recorded concentration is in the Metro Toronto area.
Were Ontario not the most heavily populated anglophone province in Canada, French schools would constitute a major component of its school system. "It is equal in size to half or more of the provincial education system of four provinces (Alberta, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan) and is larger than that of Prince Edward Island."(13) Within the Ontario French-language education system, students currently attending the 398 Francophone schools and the 37 mixed schools number 100,000.

The collective voice of Franco-Ontarian youth was heard throughout our public meetings thanks to their provincial association, the Federation des eleves du secondaire franco-ontarienne (FESFO), which represents some 25,000 students from the province's 71 French or mixed high schools and had undertaken to conduct a survey with some 8,650 students across Ontario. The Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO), the Franco-Ontarian Teachers' Association, and its local chapters, which represent 7,000 teaching professionals in Ontario, also submitted briefs.

The way that the francophone student population is divided into French-language instructional units differs from the division of the anglophone student population, with proportionally more francophone children in elementary schools (72 percent as opposed to 65 percent in anglophone elementary schools), but a number of factors could account for this situation.

Their constitutional rights

It is by way of denominational and not linguistic distinctions that the Fathers of Confederation decided in 1867 to protect Canada's minorities through constitutional rights, thus imposing on the provinces the obligation to provide education for Protestants and education for Catholics. The constitutional and linguistic rights of the francophone minority outside Quebec and of the anglophone minority in Quebec are still relatively recent. They are also very clear. These rights are firmly entrenched in section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which reads as follows:

Language of instruction

23(1) Citizens of Canada:
(a) whose first language learned and still understood is that of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province in which they reside, or
(b) who have received their primary school instruction in Canada in English or French and reside in a province where the language in which they received that instruction is the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of the province, have the right to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in that language in that province.

23(2) Citizens of Canada of whom any child has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in English or French in Canada, have the right to have all their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the same language.

According to this definition and based on the 1991 census, the Federation des associations de parents francophones de l'Ontario, a provincial federation of francophone parent associations, estimates that 163,695 Ontario children between the ages of 5 and 17, compared with the 100,000 registered for French classes, are the children of "rightholders," and thus constitutionally entitled to receive an education in French, under section 23 of the Charter.(14)

In subsection 23(3), which can be found in the endnotes of this text,(15) the Charter limits these rights by
the principle of "where numbers warrant." In Ontario, the provincial government eliminated this clause from its legislation. Under the Education Act (1990), which deals with French-language instruction in sections 288-308, the education rights of Franco-Ontarians go further than elsewhere. These rights read as follows:

288 The following definitions apply to this section ...

"French-speaking person" means a child of a person who has the right, under subsections 23(1) or (2), without regard to subsection 23(3), of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to have him or her receive their primary and secondary school instruction in the French language in Ontario; ("francophone")

"French-language instructional unit" means a class, group of classes or school in which French is the language of instruction, but does not include a class, group of classes or school created under clause 8 (1) (y) (French-language instruction for English-speaking pupils);

289(1) Every French-speaking person who is qualified under this Act to be a resident pupil of a board has the right to receive elementary school instruction in a French-language instructional unit operated or provided by the board.

Subsection 291(1) extends the same right to secondary education.

On the other hand, access to education in French for ethno-cultural francophones is not entrenched in constitutional documents, as the Charter provisions are based on the citizenship of the parents, and then on whether they fall into one of the three categories described in section 23. Consequently, this right is not automatically conferred. A number of immigrants or refugees who settle in Ontario know French, either as a mother tongue or as a second language, and want their children to maintain this tradition. In this case, subject to parental choice and local availability, the Education Act (1990) applies, providing a procedure whereby parents submit a request to the French-language admission committee of the appropriate school board. Made up of a school superintendent, principal, and teacher, this body decides whether to grant admission in accordance with the board's own set of established criteria, which may include the newcomer's knowledge of French or the parents' attitude with respect to the mandate of Franco-Ontarian education. Not surprisingly, ethno-cultural francophones feel insecure and often frustrated by their status in the Franco-Ontarian school system. "We are not tenants!" they stated during our video-forum. The lack of information about the rules of the game and the apparently arbitrary nature of decisions pertaining to the admission of their children could, in our view, easily be remedied.

Recommendation 119

*We recommend, with reference to the admission of non-rightholders to French-language schools, that:
  a) the Minister of Education and Training give the CEFFO a mandate in consultation with school boards, to propose and ensure the adoption of uniform criteria for the admission of "non-rightholders" or their children;
  b) the Ministry of Education and Training require school boards to assume responsibility for making information about these criteria available to the relevant communities, particularly ethno-cultural communities;
  c) the composition of committees to admit non-rightholders or their children include one or more Franco-Ontarian parents and one or more parents from ethno-cultural communities.

Briefs submitted to our Commission provided, for our benefit, lengthy analyses of the limits and delays
in implementing the Charter over the course of more than a decade. The following excerpt from a Sudbury presentation summarizes succinctly the current situation:

"Most francophone minority groups outside Quebec have had to resort to the courts to force their provincial governments to comply with the spirit and the letter of section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees their right to manage their schools. The Acadians of New Brunswick and Quebec's anglophone minority were the only exceptions to this rule. Although the Charter has existed for more than a decade, Ontario is only just beginning to timidly address the problem of autonomous French-language school boards and of community colleges." (17)

It is therefore understandable that in their briefs to the Commission, francophones often felt compelled to refer in great detail to historic judgments confirming the educational rights of the French-language minorities outside Quebec. They referred especially to the Supreme Court's two unanimous decisions, in the case of Mahe (Alberta) in April 1990 and in the case of Franco-Manitoban parents v. the Public Schools Act in March 1993, in which the Supreme Court explicitly upheld their educational rights as set out in section 23 of the Charter.

The recognition of constitutional rights

What exactly is the problem in Ontario today? The Report of the French-language Education Governance Advisory Group, also known as the Cousineau report, and often referred to in presentations to the Commission, details Franco-Ontarians' constitutional educational rights as follows:

These rights ... include:
- a) The right to a quality education in the French language equivalent to that provided in the English language;
- b) The right to educational facilities;
- c) The right to public funds to support French-language education programs, services and facilities;
- d) The right to manage and control such programs, services and facilities." (18)

While representatives of the Franco-Ontarian and ethno-cultural francophone communities also addressed the first three rights in their presentations, the fourth one, i.e., "governance by and for francophones," was unequivocally the subject of pressing recommendations throughout the province. Indeed, it was identified as the most crucial step in the recognition of the education right of the francophone minority.

In Ontario, school boards currently number about 170, 70 of which share the responsibility for the existing 435 "French-language instructional units" (FLIU), a term used by the Ministry of Education and Training to describe the province's French-language schools or classes, both small and large units. Four of these school boards are designated as French-language boards; they are located in Toronto (1), Ottawa-Carleton (2) and Prescott-Russell (1) and they are responsible for 110 French-language instructional units (made up of both classes and schools). One of the Ottawa-Carleton boards and the one in Prescott-Russell are Roman Catholic Separate school boards. The Prescott-Russell board was created in 1992, the other three in 1989. Their creation was made possible through the adoption of Bill 75 (1986), which amended the Education Act to affirm Franco-Ontarians' right to govern their own schools, and to Bill 109 (1988), the Ottawa-Carleton French-Language School Board Act.
Out of the other 66 boards responsible for French-language instructional units, 10 are practically French-language school boards, and are responsible for 155 such units. (One of these boards has neither an English-language school nor an English-language trustee.) Among these we find four small isolated school boards that manage one French-language school each, and, although they are not designated as such, these boards are for all practical purposes French-language boards. Three other small and isolated boards have mixed schools. However, 163 French-language instructional units are still being managed by 49 English language boards that include a francophone section made up of three trustees who sit on an 18- to 22-member board.

In addition to the 70 school boards operating FLIUs, nine other English-language school boards have no French-language instructional units, but they purchase French-language education from other boards. This formula applies in areas with fewer than 300 French-language students. It is up to these small francophone advisory committees working in entirely English-language boards to look after the French-language education needs of these communities. These committees, called FLACs (French-Language Advisory Committees), were heavily criticized before the Commission and were accused of being tools of assimilation. These "administrative variations on the same theme" make it more difficult to deal with the reality of the governance and management of French-language education with its hybrid and multiple forms.

The needs of francophone students and teachers could conceivably be understood by the anglophone administrative and political powers to the extent that these needs are perfectly identical to those of anglophone students and teachers. However, it would be naive or insensitive to believe that a majority could possibly be capable of putting itself in the minority’s shoes to really understand from within the specific issues and challenges related to being a minority, to find ways of solving them, and to place the minority’s interests ahead of its own. The probability of achieving such an ideal state of true understanding is further weakened by the complexity of issues such as the challenges born out of "the dilemma of bilingualism and socio-cultural identity," the need to revitalize the spoken and written language, cultural isolation, inter-community marriages, and the absence of a critical mass of francophones.

Furthermore, the majority group is not likely to analyze its own rules and procedures in order to find out how often they are structurally biased against the minority, whose interests are either arbitrarily swept aside or relegated to the lowest priority, either because of its small numbers or for some other "valid" reason. It is not surprising therefore that Franco-Ontarians insisted so strongly, in all their presentations to the Commission, on governance "by and for francophones," defining it as "their full right to make all decisions relating to education without being subject to ratification by the anglophone majority." The Commission also made passing note of the observations shared by the provincial auditor of Ontario in his 1993 annual report concerning the shortcomings of French-language education and of the criticism aimed at the Ministry. The following is an excerpt:

*Ministry reviews suggest that the quality of French-language education in Ontario may on average not be equivalent to that provided to English schools. The main difficulty is in trying to provide quality curriculum, teachers and facilities to a small, widely dispersed population in a cost-effective manner. One impediment is that the distribution of students entitled to receive French-language education does not frequently coincide with the boundaries of the Ministry's regional offices and the school boards.*
On this point, the provincial auditor concludes by underscoring the necessity for the Ministry of Education and Training to redefine the boundaries of its regional offices to meet Ontario's French-language education needs. In addition, he sharply criticizes the Ministry for the inadequate production of French-language learning materials, especially for the specialization years.

Francophone presenters were quite clear in noting that if on the one hand school governance is indeed a constitutional right, governance is not an end in itself. "Governance is a means of attaining a goal, that of providing a community with a system that favours empowerment and allows it to thrive."(23) Consequently, presentations and briefs sought not only to reaffirm the fundamental principle of governance "by and for francophones," but also to underscore the fact that a number of governance models are worthy of consideration, without necessarily offering the symmetry usually favoured by the bureaucracy.

With respect to governance models, the broad consultation on governance of French-language education carried out in 1991 by the French-language Education Governance Advisory Group cannot be ignored. Our Commission noted the general support expressed by the spokesperson of the francophone community during our public hearings, for the basic principles contained in its report (the Cousineau report) and their impatience in the face of government inaction. (The Cousineau report has yet to be implemented, and more than three years later, the government is said to be waiting for this Commission's findings before taking further action.)

The Cousineau report presented 57 recommendations relating to governance, supporting both the creation of new management structures and their implementation, as well as the establishment of conflict-resolution mechanisms. After stating that it was up to local communities to determine the fate of existing French-language sections, the report then went on to suggest the establishment of school boards at local, district, or regional levels, based on electoral representation in geographic areas defined differently from the current ones. More specifically, the report proposes the following as models for school governance:

a) the possibility of establishing up to two regional French-language school boards, one Roman Catholic separate and the other public, in each of the six administrative regions of the Ministry of Education and Training, with appropriate funding and complete authority;

b) the possibility of creating, within each of the Ministry regions, French-language area school boards each having, among other criteria, a resident day school population of 1,500 or more, all of the geographic area served by the participating school boards, and the capacity to offer French-language education from kindergarten through to the end of secondary school;

c) the possibility of creating, within the Ministry regions, local French-language school boards each having, among other criteria, a resident day school population of 1,500 or more (subject to some adjustment in sparsely populated areas or other special circumstances), the same geographical boundaries as the existing school board from which it originates, and the capacity to offer French-language education from kindergarten through to the end of secondary school.

The report also recommends that French-language school trustees must submit, for Ministry approval, a detailed plan including an analysis of the impact of the proposed changes on their English-language counterparts.
It is true that reverse situations, i.e., English school boards that are too small, could result from the recommendations of the Cousineau report, or from any other chosen model of French-language governance. The government will therefore have to ensure that the governance model chosen by a given community does not result in a critical deterioration of the local English-language board (or of the future district or regional French-language school board) that such a community might be part of. Administrative creativity and flexibility will be required. For English boards in this situation, consideration may have to be given to grouping or consolidating, while respecting the interests of the local communities, even if this should lead to the implementation of different structures that do not yet exist in the Ontario education system, or to a particular asymmetrical situation similar to what would apply to French-language education.

We also recognize that at first glance some may fear the proliferation of French-language school boards of various natures, which would not lead to desirable economies of scale. However, this fear is dispelled by a more in-depth analysis because present-day economic pressures are already pushing school boards (and all other funded institutions like hospitals, universities, municipalities) to develop consortia and other co-operative management ventures. (24)

A number of francophone groups, both formally and informally, have since developed their own innovative school governance models. For instance, Ontario's two French-language School Board Associations (AFCSO - public boards - and AFOCEC - Catholic boards) together reviewed the governance issue and developed a number of governance models, all of which are on record. A group of francophone directors of education have drafted a document that describes such a model. (25)

The stakes are very high and the problem can no longer be put off; that can never be emphasized enough. The solutions do exist and models have been designed. There is therefore no need to reinvent the wheel; the time has come for action. As our Commission had neither the mandate nor the resources to tackle this challenge, the responsibility lies with the government and compels it to ensure that the proposed/chosen model respects the rights of Franco-Ontarians and meets their expectations.

We have discussed Franco-Ontarians' constitutional rights and the existing disparity between these rights and today's educational reality. We could build a case on the issue of equity, as this is also a matter of basic equity. In light of this, and conscious of both the relative size of the francophone population and its geographic dispersement except in two regions, we put forth the following recommendations, whose synergy and impetus are essential to assure the continued vigor of the Franco-Ontarian community.

**Recommendation 120**

*We recommend that the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training give the Conseil de l’education et de la formation franco-ontariennes (CEFFO) the mandate to recommend to the Ministry, as soon as possible and on the basis of existing documents, school governance model(s) by and for francophones, encompassing education from pre-school to the end of secondary school without, however, seeking to define structures that are administratively symmetrical to those of the English-language system; and that the government, through the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, approve and diligently implement the recommendations submitted by the CEFFO with respect to school governance by and for francophones.*

Needless to say, having full governance without the appropriate resources currently being provided to the majority only represents yet another frustration, or one more injustice. The Ontario education funding system is not equitable, and as a result, Franco-Ontarians generally suffer in a number of ways as francophones, as Catholics, as residents of remote and isolated regions where their numbers are
proportionately higher, and as residents of communities with limited property tax revenue. The stakes are quite high for the Franco-Ontarian community, and this subject is dealt with in more depth in Chapter 18.

The future of a community

Beyond the family structure, school is an ideal milieu for the transmission of language and culture. Of course there are other agents that play a greater or lesser role, not the least of which are television, radio, and popular culture. Without a linguistic and cultural identity, a people in a minority situation languishes and slowly dies, swallowed up by the dominant culture. Earlier in this chapter, we underscored the high assimilation rate of the Franco-Ontarian community. In concrete terms, this means that francophone students often find themselves speaking English among themselves, in the hallways and at recess, because of the overwhelming appeal of the North-American anglophone youth sub-culture and its products. Even more troubling: many students in Ontario's French-language schools are unable to speak a word of French. As we have noted, some rightholders may not use the language at home.

We share the point of view of some researchers "that the assimilation of young people depends heavily on level of concentration of the francophone population." Without significant geographic concentrations or, better yet, the added protection of a Franco-Ontarian critical mass, it is the schools that become the preferred rallying points for the communities. In their briefs, francophones constantly referred to the Franco-Ontarian school as having both a pedagogical mission and a community mission. When francophones spoke to us of the necessity and the urgency for animation culturelle in schools, we were at first somewhat perplexed and not quite sure what it was all about, because this was obviously not an educational component of conventional schools. This concept, which was new to us, seemed akin to another often-cited and almost as mysterious a concept called projet éducatif. At the conclusion of our public meetings, the concept became clear. (Both concepts became clear!) In discussing the matter and further reflecting on it, we came to agree with the recent findings of a commission on young French-Canadians. In its report, this commission concluded that "we must create environments where life in French is possible."(26)

Contrary to what is often believed, the Commission believes that assimilation is not primarily a linguistic issue. Rather, it is a question of culture. Those who wish to maintain a language must also support the culture that makes it useful.

Therefore, it seems to us that Ontario's French-language schools must be able to play a pivotal role in "life in French" for young francophones from pre-school to the end of secondary school, as recognized in the preamble of the French-Language Services Act (1986): " ... the Legislative Assembly recognizes the contribution of the cultural heritage of the French speaking population and wishes to preserve it for future generations ..."

The ties between language and culture have also been defined in the Supreme Court decision in the Mahe case. Chief Justice Brian Dickson describes it this way:

My reference to cultures is significant: it is based on the fact that any broad guarantee of language rights, especially in the context of education, cannot be separated from a concern for the culture associated with the language. Language is more that a mere means of communication, it is part and parcel of the identity and culture of the people speaking it. It is the means by which individuals understand themselves and the world around them.(28)
He also quotes from another decision:

Language is not merely a means or medium of expression; it colours the content and meaning of expression. It is, as the preamble of the Charter of the French Language itself indicates, a means by which a people may express its cultural identity.(29)

With regard to schools he states,

... it is worth noting that minority schools themselves provide community centres where the promotion and preservation of minority language culture can occur; they provide needed locations where the minority community can meet and facilities which they can use to express their culture.(30)

These texts could not have better expressed what Franco-Ontarians advocate in terms of French-language education.

Like so many others, including the writers of the Cousineau report, the Association francaise des conseils scolaires de l'Ontario (AFCSO), a provincial association of French-language school boards, also embraced the following definition of culture, adopted by UNESCO in 1982. It is a definition we also adopt:

In its largest sense, one can say that culture is the whole of spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional characteristics that makes any society or social group distinct. These include not only the arts, but also ways of living, fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.(31)

We underscore here the work of the Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pedagogiques, the living embodiment of the relationships between language and culture within the education world.

To return to the concept of animation culturelle advocated in so many briefs, we were pleased to learn of the Guide d'intervention aux paliers elementaires et secondaires: Investir dans l'animation culturelle (1994), a guide for the implementation of cultural "animation" at the elementary and secondary levels. Published by the Ministry of Education and Training, this document is currently being reviewed in the Franco-Ontarian schools. It seems clear to us that while this concept may include a pedagogical component, its roots are nevertheless embedded in the community and consequently require resources. It is equally clear that the new partnerships with society that we see as one of the key strategies in reforming the Ontario education system (see Chapter 14), as well as the community school advocated by leaders of the Franco-Ontarian community, can converge, depending on local choices.

Ontario's French-language schools must not only nourish, correct, enrich, and transmit the language but also its cultural foundations. They must do this within a delicate balance, in classes that include natives of the province as well as ethno-cultural francophone immigrant children, who also need to embrace their own distinctive identities before embracing the culture of their new milieu.

During the video-forum, a teacher spoke of her difficulty in suddenly finding herself in a minority situation on her own turf, in a class of newcomers, and accepting the cultural differences. Parents, on the other hand, shared their anxiety about the culture shock and the two sets of values - the family's, and the schools' - which often send contradictory messages to their children. In only one year, 1989-90, the percentage of the Franco-Ontarian students in the population in one of Ottawa's large French-language high schools dropped from 80 to 30 percent.
The impatience and frustration experienced by newly arrived francophones is quite certainly legitimate, but the resistance to change or the slow pace of it among certain elements of the Franco-Ontarian community are also understandable in the provincial educational context. As a Commission, we do not have any qualms about the future; the briefs from key groups involved in French-language education all underscored the importance of opening up to ethno-cultural francophone communities. We endorse the recent policy document of the Ministry of Education and Training, Vers une nouvelle optique (1993), (the equivalent document for English-language schools is Changing Perspectives, released in the same year), and most especially the Guide pour l'élaboration d'une politique d'aménagement linguistique pour les écoles franco-ontariennes (1994), a guideline for developing language policies in Ontario's French-language schools.

The other danger that threatens classes in French schools, just as it does in English schools, is the ghettoization by ethnic origin and the division into closed groups that ignore or are opposed to one another. Franco-Ontarian schools are therefore advancing with the twin challenge of having to develop both their own future and an educational direction that integrates pluralism and heterogeneity.

We will not repeat here a discussion of the education problems that ethno-cultural francophones share with other newcomers to Ontario: the assessment and placement of their children, parental participation, the equity of services offered, and the necessity of a culturally inclusive curriculum and resources. Besides these problems, the Association interculturelle franco-ontarienne (AIFO), a Franco-Ontarian intercultural association, also points out in its brief the improvements required in the recruitment, training, and professional development of instructional staff. This subject is dear to us. We are sensitive to these issues and address them in appropriate sections of this report.

We will also not revisit the requests for education equal in quality to that of the province's anglophone majority, or other general issues that parallel those found in the various briefs submitted to us. A number of requests made by Franco-Ontarians overlap, for various reasons, the request of other presenters throughout the province - for example, the importance of early childhood education, or of a real partnership between the school community and social, cultural, and other community services.

Based on the collective responsibility of Ontario society toward its francophone minority community, and to ensure that its rights are truly protected and exercised to the fullest, we add to our previous recommendations the following three points.

Recommendations 121, 122

*We recommend that funding by the Ministry of Education and Training automatically include among its calculation of grants and weighting factors, for all French-language instructional units, the budgetary supplements required to allow these units to offer, according to the needs identified by the community:
  a) accelerated language retrieval programs (designed for recovery, actualization and skill and development); and
  b) the necessary animation culturelle in classes and schools.

*We recommend that for the early childhood education programs (children age 3 to 5), one of our key recommendations in Chapter 7, the provincial government give priority funding to French-language instructional units over every other school.

This section devoted to the issue of full recognition of Franco-Ontarians' education rights has sought to highlight two fundamental points in our report: without governance for and by francophones, the
Franco-Ontarian community is held back in its development and growth. It is further disadvantaged by inequitable access to funding and other resources. We also want to re-emphasize the urgency of exercising basic justice toward a minority community whose survival is essential to us all.

**Aboriginal peoples**

Currently, the federal government has responsibility for the education of aboriginal students living on reserves. However, a significant portion of the delivery of this education, especially at the secondary level, actually takes place in schools operated by provincial school boards, through purchase-of-service agreements between Native education authorities, bands, or councils of bands and various school boards. Even when education takes place on the reserve, in schools operated by the bands themselves, the provincial curriculum is followed.

When aboriginal people move off the reserves, their education comes under provincial jurisdiction through the local school board; therefore, whether aboriginal people live on or off a reserve, they have a considerable stake in provincial education policy.

Our recommendations here focus on aboriginal issues in relation to federal-provincial co-operation, programs, decision-making, and aboriginal languages.

**Who are the aboriginal peoples of Ontario?**

Like the rest of Ontario's population, the aboriginal people in this province are not a single, homogeneous group; there are 13 distinct Native languages spoken in the province, although some by only a handful of people.

The total number of aboriginal people in Ontario, approximately 244,000 according to the 1991 census, is approximately 2.4 percent of the province's population. About 88 percent of the total are North American Indian; 9 percent are Metis; 1 percent are Inuit; and 2 percent are of other multiple origins.

Ontario's aboriginal population is the largest of any Canadian province. At the same time, it should be noted that the proportion of children and youth in the aboriginal population is higher than in the general population of Ontario or of Canada; this has important implications for the future.

According to the Ministry's 1993 September report statistics, there were almost 3,000 Native elementary students in the province's schools, under tuition agreements with the Government of Canada or with Native education authorities; 3,029 Native students receive their secondary education under similar arrangements. This is a decline of almost 500 students since 1992 and reflects the increase in the number of secondary students continuing their secondary education in the 21 private secondary schools registered with the Ministry and controlled by Native education authorities.

Almost 6,000 students were enrolled in programs that teach Native languages as a second language, either in schools under provincial jurisdiction or in inspected private (secondary) schools. Another 866 students were enrolled in these language programs in continuing education provided by schools boards - more than twice the number enrolled in such programs the previous year.

**History of Native education**

The aboriginal peoples had their own system of education long before the first European arrived.
Aboriginal education was practical, begun almost at birth and continued throughout life, and it emphasized the transmitting of traditions and values.

From the time Europeans first began to play a major role in education here, aboriginal children followed European systems and concepts of education; schooling was in either French or English, although there was some instruction in Native languages. After Confederation, the British North America Act, 1867 (now the Constitution Act, 1867) gave the federal government jurisdiction over "Indians and lands reserved for Indians." The federal government initially carried out its responsibility for aboriginal education mainly through residential schools.

**Residential schools**

Most of these schools were operated by the churches, with financial support from the government. Schools were located in or near reserves with sufficient aboriginal populations, or in central locations for students from remote and small First Nations communities. As a matter of conscious government policy, these residential schools were completely segregated from regular schools and from the aboriginal communities, if not physically, then culturally and emotionally. Some continued to operate well into the 1960s.

A number of aboriginal people who made presentations to the Commission spoke of painful experiences and the influence the residential schools have had on their lives and on the lives of their parents. They talked about a particularly far-reaching impact of the residential school - the way it destroyed the relationship between parents and children and denied aboriginal culture and language.

**Integration**

In about 1950, the federal government, responding to widespread criticism from aboriginal people, made a major policy shift away from segregation toward a policy of integration of aboriginal children into the regular provincial school systems. By 1970, more than half of Canada's aboriginal children attended provincial and territorial schools, and by 1979 that had risen to two-thirds.

Even as that was happening, however, another tendency emerged. In 1969, at the height of the integration initiative, the federal government produced a White Paper proposing that Indian education be completely integrated into the provincial and territorial systems. The reaction of aboriginal people was vehemently negative. They did not see total integration as a desirable goal for educating their children and could not fathom how the specific needs of aboriginal students could possibly be met in an integrated provincial system. This Commission was told that while integration might have been an improvement over the previous policy of total segregation, many aboriginal people saw it as another way of denying the worth of their people and their cultures.

**Self-government**

In 1972, Native leadership published a response to the White Paper, titled "Indian Control of Indian Education." In it they outlined two goals for the education of aboriginal children: to reinforce their aboriginal identity, and to provide them with the education and training necessary to earn a good living in modern society.

They felt that to make this happen, parental responsibility and local control of education would be
essential. Within two months, the federal government accepted the paper as the basis for its new policy on aboriginal education, and it embarked on a process of turning over control of education to the First Nations' education authorities. This has not always gone smoothly, and in many places it has been much slower than the aboriginal community might have wished.

In the mid-1980s, recognizing that there were serious problems, the federal government funded a study conducted by aboriginal people under the leadership of the Assembly of First Nations. The result was a four-volume report, Tradition and Education: Towards a Vision of Our Future, which was published in 1988, and, at the request of the federal government, reviewed by James MacPherson, dean of Osgoode Hall Law School. MacPherson not only reviewed the most recent report, he also looked at some earlier events, and he identified a number of causes for the slow implementation of the 1972 federal initiative:

1) There is no definition of, or agreement about, the notion of "control";
2) Indian control so far has often meant nothing more than Indian management (or worse, mere participation in management) of federal programs and policies;
3) Greater Indian control of education will not lead to better education for Indian children if no provision is made for enhanced support systems and more funding to facilitate the transition;
4) Greater Indian control of education will not achieve the goal of reinforcing the Indian identity of Indian children if Indian-controlled schools simply mirror the curriculum, programs and policies of provincial schools because of a lack of support and funding necessary for promoting the programs which would encourage Indian distinctiveness;
5) Experience has shown that equating Indian control with local control is not appropriate in all facets of Indian education.(33)

While Tradition and Education clearly builds on the 1972 paper "Indian Control of Indian Education," prepared by the National Indian Brotherhood, there are some very important differences. First, while the major principle of the 1972 paper is "control," in Tradition and Education the emphasis is on "self-government." In the words of the paper:

Children are the most precious resource of the First Nations. They are the link to the past generations, the enjoyment of the present generations, and the hope for the future. First Nations intend to prepare their children to carry on their cultures and government. Because education shapes the minds and values of First Nations' young people, it is vitally important that First Nations governments have jurisdiction over the education programs which have such a lasting impact.(34)

"Jurisdiction" goes well beyond "control." In subsequent pages, Tradition and Education defines "jurisdiction" as "the rights of each sovereign First Nation to exercise its authority, develop its policies, laws, and control financial and other resources for the education of its citizens."(35)

The words "each sovereign nation" clearly indicate that the authors of the report do not see education to be governed by one central national policy for all First Nations. Rather, self-government is to be local and community based, an important concept for understanding the work that has taken place in Ontario in recent years.

The report also calls for the federal government to recognize the "inherent" aboriginal right to self-government in the Canadian Constitution. This view of inherent right is based on the fact that First
Nations were self-governing nations long before Canada came into being as a nation.

The Province of Ontario publicly recognized this right several years ago, and in January 1994 the federal government announced it was prepared to act on its commitment to respect the inherent right of self-government.

**Declaration of political intent (DPI)**

Ontario arrived at the recognition of the right of self-government in two stages. In December 1985, the Province of Ontario, certain Political Territorial Organizations (PTOs) of First Nations, and the Government of Canada signed a Declaration of Political Intent to establish a forum for tripartite negotiations to resolve issues relating to First Nations' self-government in Ontario. A committee for education was set up and discussions began on aboriginal jurisdiction over education on reserves or Crown lands.

Early discussions identified a number of important areas. As a result, working groups were set up to develop handbooks to assist First Nations and school boards in negotiating tuition agreements (these are purchase-of-service agreements previously negotiated by the federal government on behalf of the First Nations) to deal with the issue of Native representation on school boards and to develop First Nations education legislation.

Currently, Ontario is trying to focus negotiations so that self-government agreements can be in place by March 1996. In addition, the province agreed to include discussions on aboriginal jurisdiction in post-secondary education in the Declaration of Political Intent process, and said that when self-government agreements are finalized, it will consider including early childhood education in the negotiations.

Over time, the declaration process funded seven pilot projects that support different aspects of self-government. As James MacPherson said, one major problem with Native education was the lack of support services available for curriculum development, teacher professional development, counselling, and other support services for students in on-reserve schools; therefore, several of the projects focus on those areas.

Another project is the development of a local community-based First Nations Education Act, and still another is seeking to promote understanding of and a model for the self-government of education in the territory of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, which consists of many First Nations mostly scattered in isolated communities throughout northern Ontario. The intent is that these projects should result in the development of a number of practical models for achieving and supporting self-government in education by aboriginal people in ways appropriate to their particular areas and needs.

**Statement of political relationship (SPR)**

The second step in recognizing First Nations' rights to self-government was taken on 6 August 1991, when the Government of Ontario and representatives of First Nations of Ontario signed the Statement of Political Relationship. In it, Ontario explicitly recognized the First Nations' "inherent" right to self-government within the constitutional framework of Canada and pledged to promote the exercise and implementation of this inherent right in Ontario. The fourth clause is particularly important to education; it says that nothing in the Statement of Political Relationship "shall be construed as determining Ontario's
jurisdiction or as diminishing Canada's responsibilities towards First Nations."

**What we heard**

We made a special effort to hear from Native people themselves. We established an Aboriginal Working Group with representatives of First Nations and Native service organizations; it met several times over the life of the Commission to help us clarify key issues and offer suggestions for solutions. Native organizations and individuals made formal written or oral submissions in such places as Thunder Bay, Kenora, Sioux Lookout, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Timmins, Moosonee, Moose Factory Island, London, Windsor, and Toronto.

In Sioux Lookout, we visited a secondary school and the Wahsa Distance Education centre, both operated by the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council. We held hearings in a number of schools that had a substantial number of Native students under tuition agreements; we visited the Walpole Island Reserve and made a special trip to Moosonee and Moose Factory Island to visit the schools, which have very high percentages of Native students.

Given the diversity of Ontario's aboriginal peoples, there was not always agreement on all issues, but there were a number of key concerns in common. We learned that like the Franco-Ontarian community, First Nations are very worried about the survival of their cultures and languages. They also feel that appropriately recognizing and teaching their languages and culture will help their children develop a better sense of identity and enable them to participate more productively in their own and in the broader Canadian society.

A sense of urgency and even desperation pervaded many requests for help in rescuing languages and cultures before it is too late.

**Cultural values and traditions**

Aboriginal people also point out that recognition and teaching of the culture and contribution of aboriginal people should not be limited to aboriginal students and teachers: all students and teachers must be more knowledgeable about and sensitive to Native culture and history. Not only will this help all schools become more hospitable places for aboriginal students, but it will ensure also that Ontario society as a whole has a better understanding of aboriginal peoples.

Native people feel that as long as we teach and believe that Canadian history began with the arrival of the first Europeans on its shores, and that the aboriginal people living here had no languages, cultures, or traditions worth preserving, neither Native nor non-Native students will respect aboriginal people as important members of their own nations or of Canadian society.

Aboriginal parents and educators also feel that their students will be more successful if teaching and evaluation methods used in schools are more sensitive to their cultures and learning styles. They are concerned that aboriginal students are being suspended and expelled out of all proportion to their numbers. They feel that teachers and other students do not understand the problems and expectations of Native students. They also worry about outright racism that sometimes reveals itself in a school's lack of willingness to work with aboriginal students and help them gain dignity and a more positive sense of themselves.

**Support for students**
Representatives of the First Nations communities are convinced of the value of education for their children, but schools by and large are still not comfortable places for aboriginal students; their drop-out rate is extremely high, especially in northern Ontario. Many find it difficult to make the transition to off-reserve schools, especially when, at age 14 or 15, they have to move hundreds of kilometres away from their communities to board with people who are usually strangers. There were many requests for more counselling and support services for Native students.

It was suggested that more student residences such as those at Pelican Falls Centre, the First Nation-operated secondary school outside Sioux Lookout, would help. Aboriginal students live together in these residences and, with the help of house parents (often themselves aboriginal), support each other. It is also easier to provide special programs and services to students when they are together in residences.

**Teachers**

More and more aboriginal students on reserves are being taught in schools operated by bands, councils of bands, or Native education authorities. First Nations communities were pleased with the introduction of de-streaming and The Common Curriculum in Grade 9, which has made it easier for them to provide schooling for students in that initial secondary-level year, and delayed the need to send young teenagers off-reserve for their schooling. However, the added grade brings with it an increased need for already scarce aboriginal teachers, and teachers who understand aboriginal learners and who will commit themselves to First Nations communities for some time. Parents and leaders are concerned about the very high turnover of teachers in First Nations communities; they believe that if more teachers were members of those communities, they would remain and provide the continuity and understanding that are so important to any successful education program.

**Shared decision-making**

Although post-secondary education was not part of our mandate, representatives of First Nations communities frequently commented on the need for better post-secondary and training opportunities for their people. As part of their traditional view of education as a lifelong process, First Nations' aspirations for self-governance in education also encompass that part of the process.

Recently, Native people have made significant advances working together on plans to establish their own post-secondary institutions. We would expect that the provincial and federal levels of government would want to support such efforts and take them into consideration in their policies on funding and recognition of credentials.

Native people also identify a lack of constructive working relationships between their communities and schools and provincial school boards and teacher federations, as well as a lack of recognition by the Ministry of the authority of band councils and Native education authorities. They are asking for legislation that would permit more co-operative and reciprocal arrangements between provincial school boards and Native education authorities.

Aboriginal people feel that part of the problem may be that the Ministry designates band-operated secondary schools as private schools. At the moment, that is the only legislated mechanism available to the Ministry to allow it to inspect the school so that their principals can grant the Ontario Secondary School Diploma to graduating students.
Under the current legislation, Ontario school boards are allowed to enter into purchase agreements only with other Ontario school boards, not with private schools. Under legislation and policies related to private schools, the Ministry deals directly with the principals of those institutions; in the case of the band-operated private schools, this means that it bypasses the Native Education Authority.

But as aboriginal educators point out, their schools are not privately funded; they receive public money from the federal government and from bands. They are, therefore, also subject to public scrutiny from two levels of government.

Native people believe that band-operated secondary schools should be designated something other than private schools; this would allow the government to amend legislation to permit co-operative and reciprocal arrangements between aboriginal and other publicly funded schools in Ontario, without reference to private schools. They also want the legislation to properly recognize the role of the Native Education Authority in governing their schools.

In general, aboriginal parents also want to have more input into the schools their children attend. Some Native people feel this might be achieved by having more Native trustees on provincial school boards, or by being able to vote in school board elections, and others are looking for more direct involvement with their local school. Still others are more concerned about achieving full self-government and controlling their own education system from early childhood to post-secondary and adult education and training.

**Issues and recommendations**

**Federal-provincial co-operation**

While our mandate did not include education of aboriginal children on reserves, the educational experiences of students on and off reserves overlap a good deal, especially when students on reserves receive part of their education (usually elementary) on reserves, and part (usually secondary) in schools operated by provincial school boards.

Given the role of the federal government in aboriginal education, our recommendations for improving education for Ontario's Native children necessarily include some directed to the federal government. We see no reason why we should not remind the federal government of its obligations so that aboriginal students get excellent elementary and secondary education, regardless of where they receive it.

We have also directed some recommendations jointly to both levels of government; this is in order to promote co-operation rather than duplication of efforts. With more than half of Ontario's aboriginal students living off-reserve or attending schools under provincial jurisdiction off-reserve, this is an opportunity for greater co-operation between the federal and provincial governments.

**Recommendations 123, 124**

*We recommend that rather than having the two levels of government work independently of each other, and in order to avoid duplication, the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario jointly fund, for use in both on-reserve schools and schools under provincial jurisdiction, the development of curriculum guidelines and resource materials that more accurately reflect the history of Canada's aboriginal people and their contribution to Canada's literature, culture, history, and values, and in other areas to be incorporated throughout the curriculum.*

*We recommend the development of assessment and teaching strategies that are more sensitive to the
learning styles identified by aboriginal educators.

We also suggest that the federal government work with First Nations communities on reserves to provide additional support for students who have to live away from home in order to receive their elementary or secondary education.

We hesitate to recommend specific models or a great increase in off-reserve accommodation for students when, in future, more of their communities may well be able to provide better educational opportunities for them on-reserve.

**Recommendation 125**

*We recommend that the federal and provincial governments work with Native education authorities and the First Nations to provide better support to students who must live away from their communities to obtain elementary and/or secondary education.*

**Funding**

One of the complaints we heard frequently is that the variety of services to support students and teachers that are available in the province's publicly funded schools are not readily available in on-reserve schools. Aboriginal educators told us that the federal funding formula for on-reserve education does not recognize the additional expenditures for support services to the same extent as the provincial funding formula does.

When provincial school boards calculate charges to the Native education authority, First Nation, or federal government for the students educated in their schools, they use the provincial formula, which includes provision for support services. The Native education authority, First Nation, or the federal government may negotiate such additional services for aboriginal students as Native counsellors or an animator for Native culture in the school, which will increase the cost of the tuition agreement.

We were told that the federal government usually provides the full amount to the Native education authority to cover the cost of the tuition agreement, and that this amount is often higher than what it would give the authority if the students were educated on-reserve. It would therefore appear that less money is provided for on-reserve than for off-reserve education, and as a result the learning experiences for children in on-reserve schools are less effective than they could be.

**Recommendation 126**

*We recommend that the federal government review its method of funding education for Native students in on-reserve schools to ensure there are adequate funds to provide any necessary special programs to support aboriginal education and for professional support of teachers.*

**Teacher education**

Clearly, it is the responsibility of the province to ensure that teachers in Ontario's publicly funded schools receive the training they need to gain a better understanding of aboriginal students; to implement new curriculum, assessment, and teaching strategies; and to adapt existing programs. In the past few years, the province has funded a number of community-based demonstration pilot projects that address some of these needs. Such projects could offer useful models and strategies that should be shared with teachers
and education administrators, and that should help the province in implementing our following recommendation.

**Recommendation 127**

*We recommend that the province include in its requirements for pre-service and in-service teacher education a component related to teaching aboriginal students and teaching about aboriginal issues to both Native and non-Native students.*

**Programs**

There is another group of program-related concerns that First Nations communities share with other small schools and boards. They often find that limited resources restrict their ability to offer a full range of programs to their students; this problem is particularly acute at the secondary school level. Frequently, there are not enough students in any one school to warrant setting up a class in a particular subject; even when there are sufficient students, there may not be enough teachers available for highly specialized subjects.

With its Wahsa Distance Education School, the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council in Sioux Lookout has made a good start at addressing this problem; the program uses the Ministry's Independent Learning Centre materials as well as those specifically developed by the school. Teachers in a transmitting studio in Sioux Lookout connect with students in various remote communities via radio, telephone, and computer.

In many ways, the program works well and has significantly expanded available education opportunities not only to learners of compulsory school age but to adult learners. A number of learners who might otherwise not have been able to do so have earned their Ontario Secondary School Diplomas through the Wahsa program.

However, transmission problems are frequent. Furthermore, learning only through textbook and audio contact requires a lot of self-discipline by students, and it is not the most exciting way to learn. To overcome these drawbacks, at least to some extent, each community has an education co-ordinator to encourage and assist learners. Nonetheless, the program has its limitations.

A way to improve this kind of learning has been part of one of the previously mentioned community-based demonstration pilot projects: a technological studies course (that uses video) on small-motor theory, maintenance, and repair. The course was jointly developed by the Northern Nishnawbe Education Council, the Wahsa Distance Education Centre, the Northern District School Area Board, WaWaTay Native Communications Society, TVOntario, and the Ministry's Independent Learning Centre. The visual dimension helps students to understand the content of the course and to relate to a person they can see as well as hear on screen.

While it does not have the quality of interactivity that the live audio programs from Wahsa offer, the technology to do that is already in limited use in Canada. Even though current cable wiring does not support interactive video, there is technology that, when in wide use, will.

The use of CD-ROMs on computers will also increase the range of good learning opportunities available to students; this technology can also be greatly enhanced by computer networking, but here, too, there are barriers to its use in northern Ontario.
Recommendation 128

*We recommend that the federal government, which has responsibility in this field, give top priority to ensuring the availability of good telecommunications throughout Ontario in order to support education through the use of interactive video and computer networking.

Video would not only help make more courses available to senior secondary students throughout Ontario, including those in remote northern communities, but it could also be very useful in bringing together scarce resources to support the teaching of Native languages, especially those on the verge of extinction.

While developing most secondary school courses is clearly a provincial obligation, developing Native language courses that use videos and CD-ROMs, including story-telling and Native culture units, some of which could be incorporated into the common curriculum for all learners, would also fall within the responsibility of the federal government. Although fairly costly to develop, such courses might mean long-term savings and, in any event, would be well worth the investment.

Recommendation 129

*We recommend that both the federal and provincial governments provide resources to support the development of courses, initially video- and CD-ROM-based, that would use interactive technology when an adequate telecommunication infrastructure is in place.

Aboriginal languages

Members of aboriginal communities across Ontario expressed the need for more flexibility and assistance in teaching and using aboriginal languages in on-reserve and off-reserve schools. First Nations that operate their own schools do not really need provincial approval to introduce more Native language classes, and they can decide to have Native language immersion schools or classes. In fact, there are two immersion schools on the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, as well as immersion classes in some of northern Ontario's Native communities.

However, the issue is more complex. Many aboriginal students are still being educated off-reserve in schools operated by provincial school boards. Native education authorities want to continue offering the Ontario Secondary School Diploma, which means they must adhere to related provincial legislation and guidelines. At this point, however, that does not give them the flexibility they want in the use of Native languages.

There are other complicating factors. In Ontario, there are 13 languages traditionally spoken by aboriginal people, belonging to two linguistic families: Algonkian and Iroquoian. Of the Algonkian languages, three - Ojibwe, Cree, and Ojibwe-Cree - are still spoken extensively across northern Ontario. In "You Took My Talk," a report of the federal Standing Committee on Aboriginal Issues, these three were identified as being healthy enough to survive. However, they are not equally well preserved in all areas of the province, and the report describes the other ten languages as being on the verge of extinction.36

Because for the most part aboriginal languages have been transmitted orally, attempts are now being made to preserve them in written form, but much stronger efforts are needed while there is still time.
Aboriginal people do not have the necessary resources for this task. Since most of the Native languages are also spoken in other parts of Canada and the United States, the federal government also has a role to play in this area.

**Recommendation 130**

*We recommend that the federal government provide assistance to aboriginal peoples to develop language teaching resources co-operatively with communities that use the same languages, in other provinces and in the United States.*

Just as, in the Mahe case, the Supreme Court of Canada identified the French language as an essential tool for maintaining and nurturing French-Canadian culture, so aboriginal people see the preservation of their languages as essential to preserving their cultures and identity. It is understandable then that Ontario's aboriginal people look to the schools to help some of the First Nations reclaim already threatened languages and to prevent current languages from becoming extinct.

This is the reason that a number of presenters asked us to recommend that Native languages be eligible for use as languages of instruction, rather than just being subjects. While there are some classes of this type available in schools run by First Nations Education Authorities, it will not be easy to expand these programs, because of the lack of teachers and resource materials.

However, there are areas of the province where resource materials for some subjects already exist, especially at the early-education and primary level.

Secondary school students might gain stronger language experience if, for example, the schools were permitted to use the Native language in such optional courses as Native studies and outdoor education. If schools could group these with a course in a Native language, they could provide a one-semester immersion experience.

There are other provinces and countries where Native languages are being used as languages of instruction. These programs can be used to guide Ontario in implementing the following recommendation.

**Recommendation 131**

*We recommend that the province, in co-operation with First Nations communities and school boards, develop guidelines for permitting the use of Native languages as languages of instruction, where teachers and teaching resources are available.*

The province will have to continue and, if possible, increase efforts to train teachers of Native languages and Native studies. This is not simply a matter of making more places available at faculties of education, but also of assisting efforts to obtain qualified staff to teach such programs, and helping aboriginal students become qualified to enter them. There are successful programs at Lakehead, Nipissing, and Queen's universities. Where it is appropriate, the federal government should also support efforts to increase the number of teachers able to teach Native languages and Native studies.

The federal and provincial governments have helped fund various programs for development of teacher in-service and classroom materials that improve the teaching of Native languages and Native culture throughout Ontario. It is important that resources be widely shared by boards and band-operated schools across the province, to avoid duplication of effort and to make best use of scarce resources.
Recommendation 132

*We recommend that the provincial and federal governments continue their programs to develop resource materials that support the teaching of Native languages and culture for teacher in-service and for classroom use in on- and off-reserve schools, providing such materials are made available to other boards and schools.

**Decision-making**

Other concerns expressed to the Commission centred on Native people's input into the policies of schools that aboriginal students attend and that are under provincial jurisdiction. Some First Nation representatives suggested that this can best be done by appointing additional trustees to represent the concerns of aboriginal students, and by permitting aboriginal people on reserves to vote in school board elections. (37)

There are other First Nations that do not see the need for additional trustee representation: rather than negotiating educational issues with a school board, they are more concerned about pursuing self-governance and negotiating educational issues on a government-to-government basis.

We believe that as long there are school boards, the interests of aboriginal students should probably be represented at that level in a more on-going way than is possible through the annual negotiation of tuition agreements. Such representation should be equal to the representation of electors of the board; however, some adjustments could be made where the number of aboriginal students is relatively small, even if that means a lower trustee-to-student ratio for aboriginal students than for other students.

Some agreements in this area were reached as part of the negotiation process for the Declaration of Political Intent mentioned, but the Ministry appears to be reluctant to implement these agreements, pending the publication of this report. We acknowledge that the DPI proposal may need to be revised, given our discussion on the number of school board trustees. (See Chapter 17.)

**Recommendation 133**

*We recommend that the Ministry and the representatives of the First Nations review the Declaration of Political Intent proposal on Native trustee representation, taking into account possible changes in overall board structures that could follow the issue of this report, and that at the earliest opportunity the parties implement the agreement that results.

We believe, however, that the really significant input into the education of the aboriginal learners can occur only at the local school level. As with other students, parental activity that makes a difference to the level of achievement of aboriginal children depends on good communication and interaction between the school and the parent. We feel, therefore, that the recommendations we make in the next chapter, concerning the interaction between teachers and parents, and between the school and its community, will have a more significant impact on the success of aboriginal learners than will any adjustments made at the board level.

The community alliances we identify as one of the four levers for education reform are as important for improving education for aboriginal learners as for any other learners in Ontario.

**Self-government**
We also support the wishes of Ontario's aboriginal people to govern their own education. We recognize that there are many ways in which the First Nations are now limited in their ability to set a course for their own education system. Ultimately, there is no reason why First Nations could not decide to have their own secondary school graduation diploma requirements. It may be that for practical reasons, they will choose to stay close to provincial requirements; but if self-government is to mean anything, Native peoples should be able to make that choice for themselves.

**Recommendation 134**

*We recommend that the federal and provincial governments continue negotiations that lead to full self-governance of education by the First Nations.*

**Recognition of band-operated schools**

Band-operated schools should be permitted more flexibility to interact with other publicly funded schools in reciprocal arrangements, rather than under the one-way arrangement that is now the only possibility.

**Recommendation 135**

*We recommend that the province develop a different way of dealing with band-operated elementary and secondary schools than it now has. Such a method would:

a) recognize that they are publicly funded schools of a First Nation, governed by a duly constituted education authority, and

b) permit more reciprocity and co-operation with provincial school boards.*

**Conclusion**

We believe that in addition to our recommendations for improving the learning experience of all Ontario learners, the issues we address in this chapter and the recommendations we make will, when implemented, ensure that the educational opportunities for Roman Catholic, Franco-Ontarian, and aboriginal children are more equitable than they are now. Not only do our recommendations address some specific program concerns, but they also focus on giving these communities a greater voice in the governance and management of the education of their children.

**Endnotes (Chapter 15)**


4. The Council's mandate has remained more or less unchanged since 1980, except for the addition of the skills development component in 1993. The chairmanship is now a full-time position held by a
well-known figure in the Franco-Ontarian education world, the sociologist Rolande Faucher.

5. This categorization provides little help when it comes to including "Canadian-born" francophones from other provinces, especially from Quebec, a province with a francophone majority and where the status of minority at the national level is viewed quite differently than in other Canadian provinces.


7. Political analysts who studied women in Scandinavian politics believe that a minority group constitutes a critical mass and can, subsequently, form a balance of power and influence the agenda of the majority when it consists of 30 to 33 percent of the total number of people in question. Among other works, refer to:
   In his own work on language minorities, sociologist Jacques Leclerc speaks of 20 percent as being a critical mass. See Leclerc, "Language and Society," *Mondia*, p. 171.


12. For instance, there have been only two francophone deputy ministers in Ontario's history: Gerard Raymond and Donald Obonsawin.


15. Section 23(3) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms reads:
   The right of citizens of Canada under subsections (1) and (2) to have their children receive primary and secondary school instruction in the language of the English or French linguistic minority population of a province
   (a) applies wherever in the province the number of children of citizens who have such a right is sufficient to warrant the provision to them out of public funds of minority language instruction; and
   (b) includes, where the number of those children so warrants, the right to have them receive that instruction in minority language educational facilities provided out of public funds.


24. See, as an example, the study entitled, "Consortium des conseils du Nord," prepared by J. Raymond Chenier and others for five school boards, Timmins, 1994.

25. One of the most recent is the work of four francophone directors of education and has since been adopted by all of the province's francophone directors of education, although the document is only at the first-draft stage. Andre Lalonde, Roger Brule, Paul St-Cyr, and Pierre Marcil for the Forum of Directors of Education, French Section, Toronto, 1994.


32. It is difficult to get completely accurate statistical information on aboriginal populations. Statistics Canada data do not include those who live on reserves and refuse to be enumerated, or those who resided in institutions at the time of the census. Data from the Indian Registration Program, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), tend to be more accurate as far as aboriginal people living on reserves is concerned. Data given here on the general population comes from the 1991 Canadian census, while the information on First Nations and bands comes from INAC 1991 data.


35. Assembly of First Nations, Tradition and Education, p. 82.

37. Under current legislation, where aboriginal students taught under tuition agreements number 100 or more, or make up 10 percent or more of the total enrolment in a school board's jurisdiction, the board must appoint a Native trustee named by the council of the band or bands. A second trustee must be appointed if the number is more than 25 percent of the total enrolment of the board's jurisdiction. If the number is fewer than 100 (or 10 percent of the total enrolment), then the appointment is at the discretion of the board. This is the main area of contention. Another problem arises when there are several bands involved who each want their own trustee to represent them. Except for the lack of representation when there are fewer than 100 aboriginal students enrolled, and a few situations where the majority of students enrolled are Native, the proportion of Native trustees on school boards in Ontario tends to reflect fairly closely the proportion of aboriginal students enrolled in the board.
Chapter 16: Equity Considerations

In Chapter 15 we dealt with the concerns of communities that have special constitutional status; however, there are some minority communities without special constitutional or historic status who also raised issues concerning governance, funding, and special programs to support academic achievement. Therefore, in this chapter we address certain concerns of religious, racial, and language minorities, and make a variety of recommendations.

Ontario's rich diversity is not limited to Toronto: people from many backgrounds have settled in communities large and small. Whether born here or elsewhere, Ontarians share one home but have different religions and languages, ethno-cultural and racial backgrounds.*

We can expect this diversity to increase, as we continue to have relatively high rates of immigration from parts of the world that, in the Canadian context, produce religious, linguistic, ethno-cultural, and racial minorities. For example, Statistics Canada estimated that, in Ontario in 1992, there were 1,297,605 "visible minorities" - 13 percent of the provincial population.(1) Although it is always dangerous to make population projections, we think it safe to say that the proportion and number of racial minorities are, at the very least, likely to rise, at least for the next decade.(2)

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides all Canadians with basic protection from discrimination "based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability," while also allowing for "affirmative action programs." The Charter requires that it be "interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians"; this is an extension of the federal government's announcement in 1971 of a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework; later, a Canadian Multiculturalism Act was passed into law.

The Commission takes with utmost seriousness the school system's mandate to serve all students. It means that the system needs to ensure that every school is welcoming to students of every faith, first language, ethnocultural background, or colour. Ontario must not only build inclusive schools and curricula but, because a student can be formally included but still marginalized, the province must also create schools and curricula that place the views, concerns, and needs of all students and communities at the very centre of the teacher's work.

We believe the Commission has done this throughout our report when dealing with issues such as those related to curriculum, teacher staffing, training, and parental and community involvement.

At the same time, we recognize that it may be necessary to include a section dealing with matters related to specific communities, based on data that indicate the children of those communities are collectively
performing "below the norm," at least as compared to students from other communities or to the board average.

A small number of school boards have compiled data that allows these types of comparisons; for example, they have analyzed the proportions of students found in the advanced, general, and basic streams in secondary school. They have also looked at drop-out rates and various indicators of "risk": we know, for instance, that if students fall significantly behind in the number of credits they earn, they are more "at risk" of dropping out.

These data are broken down according to gender, class, ethnic, and racial categories, so that it is possible to see which groups are better represented in, for example, the advanced level that leads to university, and which groups have higher drop-out rates. It is clear from the data that there are substantial differences identifiable for some groups.(3)

In a paper prepared for this Commission, University of Western Ontario Professor Jerry Paquette makes a very strong case for monitoring the educational benefits derived by various sub-populations.(4) As he points out, it is not possible to assume that all individual students are equal and that all will achieve at the same high degree. Rather, "the equality dimension of public education should take aim ... at an equitable distribution of educational excellence across lines of demographic difference. That is the real and singular challenge of equality of educational opportunity..." In other words, we can expect that, in a truly equitable system, roughly the same proportions of each community will excel, do satisfactorily, or do poorly, as in the total student population. If, as is currently true, they do not, the system needs to be fixed.

We believe that the benefits of learning from and about each other more than justify meeting the challenges of providing an educational system that is sensitive to diversity.

We heard from minority groups who feel their religious beliefs are not sufficiently accommodated in the publicly funded school system. Some of them asked for more consideration and support for their differences so that their children can be educated in the public school system in a manner that recognizes and respects their needs.

Others do not feel that they can expect the public system to provide an education that is consistent with their values and beliefs, and have therefore established their own private education systems. They asked for various degrees of financial support to alleviate the financial burden of maintaining their own schools, and want the government to recognize their different needs when it develops and implements education policies.

**Religious minorities**

Members of religious minorities expressed two major concerns. First, they argued they should be in the same position as Roman Catholics, whose children are educated within a Roman Catholic framework through the publicly funded system. Sikhs, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and members of other groups asked for public financial support for separate schools or school systems based on their religions.

Second, they said that religious minorities are not understood and respected, either because of negative or inadequate representation in the curriculum or even because of curriculum content; they believe that all students should receive more information about a range of religions.
Public funding for religious schools is a thorny issue in Ontario. There is no consensus and there are rather convincing arguments on both sides. Although, in 1986, the Shapiro Commission looked at public funding for Ontario's private schools in Ontario, including those that are religion-based, and proposed funding them through a public board with which the school would be associated. The model was not accepted by government; moreover, support for it by members of religious minorities has been mixed, on the grounds that it does not create autonomous systems, with taxation powers and control over their own schools.

In 1990, the ruling of the Ontario Court of Appeal in the *Elgin* case prohibiting the teaching of a single religious tradition as if it were the exclusive means through which to develop moral thinking and behaviour(5) left some doubt about the possible legality of the Shapiro model. A court challenge is outstanding on this issue.

Early in 1994, as we were in the midst of our deliberations, the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled unanimously against a coalition of Jewish and Christian schools requesting provincial funding. The judgment held that, because public funding of Ontario's Roman Catholic school system (as of Quebec's Protestant school system) was agreed to at the time of Confederation and was part of the Constitution Act, 1867, non-funding of other denominational schools does not constitute discrimination against them. Because the issue is not one of contravening the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, funding of other schools was a matter for political decision.

After considerable discussion and debate, the Commission decided to leave the question there. We are conscious that our report argues forcefully in several places, either explicitly or implicitly, in favour of schools that respect the diversity of learners in Ontario's pluralistic society. We insist elsewhere that ethnic heritage and traditions must be explicitly included in the school curriculum. We argue for schools that are inclusive.

We realize as well - and several times mention this in our report - that curriculum includes both what is said and what is unsaid, what is supported and what is not supported, what is dealt with and what is ignored in school programs. It has been argued that the silence of the public school curriculum on matters of religion runs the risk of devaluing students' beliefs and of conveying the idea that religion is alien to the wonder and the task of learning.

But, whatever our personal opinions, and despite presentations from individuals and representatives of minority groups at our public hearings, we do not find ourselves able to recommend changes we consider beyond our terms of reference. In keeping with our mandate, our analysis and recommendations are based on the existing collective minority rights and privileges enshrined in the Constitution: the right of Roman Catholics (and of the Franco-Ontarians) to management and public funding of their education systems.

While the *Elgin* decision prohibits religious instruction of a doctrinal nature, it permits teaching about religion. We believe it makes sense for all schools, including Roman Catholic schools, to include more about religion, using a multifaith approach: a program that educates students about a range of religions and faiths, their basic tenets, and the way they organize themselves is quite appropriate.

The Ministry has recently released a curriculum resource guide for school boards to use in developing courses about religion for the elementary level.(6) Some schools might include education about religion in the 10 percent of the curriculum which is to be determined locally in our proposal for curriculum in
Grades 1 to 9.

Although not mandatory, education about religion might be offered at the secondary level through the world religions course already available. We note, however, that the recent curriculum resource guide for elementary public schools provides a stronger multifaith focus that could be used as a model for revising the world religions course.

We recognize that a course about religions must be delivered sensitively, with respect and generosity in discussions and descriptions of diverse religious traditions. We do not minimize the challenge in doing so; there are, after all, people in other parts of the world killing each other over matters of religious belief. Nonetheless, we feel that courses on religion, taught at some depth, rather than treating the subject superficially in the hope of avoiding school or community clashes, are important.

Finally, we take seriously the concerns of members of religious and other minorities who believe they are portrayed inaccurately or who have concerns about curriculum content; the latter may come from a difference between values held by the newcomers and by members of the society they have come to - for example, in relation to the role and status of females in Canadian society.

The Commission feels that taking the time to explain different views is the best way to bridge gaps in cultural understanding, including religious differences. Strategies designed for better understanding and acceptance would include pre-service and in-service education of teachers, to ensure they are better informed about the differences within and among religions, as well as improved partnerships with the community and more sensitive leadership at all levels.

**Language, ethno-cultural, and racial minorities**

Members of several language, ethno-cultural, and racial minority communities came to the Commission concerned about lost opportunities: too many of their children are failing, are in special education or non-university streams, or are dropping out of school.

Schools can and must serve all students. As we have already said, while some of our recommendations will benefit all students directly, some groups of students have special needs that deserve attention. We have proposed improvements in language acquisition support for members of linguistic or ethno-cultural minorities.

We have argued that, in serving the needs of students from ethno-cultural and racial minorities, there must be significant changes in curriculum, initial teacher education, and on-going professional development; there must also be fair testing and strengthened partnerships with the community. However, we are concerned that even this may not be sufficient, and we are suggesting interventions that, we believe, would more fully respond to the needs we heard.

Because it is important to keep track of the educational attainment of different groups in society, we have already recommended that this be done. Given that we know that children of single parents, children whose parents are poor, or children from some minority groups do not do as well as others, the school system has a responsibility to identify barriers to success and, where it can, take action to remove those barriers. This means conducting studies and audits, in partnership with communities, to identify problems that exist. Then, schools and school boards (and the Ministry) must develop action plans and implement them once more, of course, in partnership with parents and the communities concerned.
Finally, the circle would be closed by monitoring achievement levels for improvement, and by taking further remedial action if necessary.

In his report on race relations, Stephen Lewis was moved by what he heard concerning education. As he said,

... it's as if virtually nothing has changed for visible minority kids in the school system over the last ten years ... The lack of real progress is shocking. And I believe it signals the most intractable dilemma, around race relations, in contemporary education: How do you get the best of policies and programs into the individual classrooms? It raises searching questions of communications and accountability. (8)

The Lewis report recommended that the Ministry monitor the implementation of employment equity in schools and in the Ministry, and that faculties of education review their admissions criteria to attract and enrol more qualified members of minority groups. In our discussion of teacher professionalism and development in Chapter 12, we discuss the need for faculties of education and other partners to ensure the existence of a pool of qualified teachers from a variety of backgrounds.

Less than two years ago, an Anti-Racism, Equity and Access Division was created in the newly restructured Ministry of Education and Training; representatives of many groups told us they have high expectations for this initiative. The division, led by an Assistant Deputy Minister, has responsibility for responding to the recommendations of Stephen Lewis's report, and for implementing the anti-racism and ethno-cultural equity provisions of Bill 21.*

In Chapter 17, we return to the issue of the best way to represent the interests of particular communities in the Ministry.

**Recommendation 136**

*We strongly recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training always have an Assistant Deputy Minister responsible, in addition to other duties, for advocacy on behalf of anglophones, francophones, and ethno-cultural and racial minorities.

Other government initiatives, such as the recent proclamation of Bill 79, the Employment Equity Act, should also have an impact on the education of children of minority groups. It is expected that, as a result of this legislation, boards will employ a more representative workforce at all levels, and that, therefore, more children will be able to find role models from their own background in the adults who are part of their school communities, and interact with more adults who have an in-depth understanding of their cultural background.

We want to ensure that all these local people have the capacity to implement the anti-racism education agenda.

**Recommendation 137**

*We recommend that trustees, educators, and support staff be provided with professional development in anti-racism education.

We also believe it is imperative that performance evaluation for supervisory officers, principals, and teachers should explicitly make implementation of anti-racism policies an important criterion.
would ensure that professionals at all levels are involved in the implementation of anti-racism initiatives; it would also ensure that all students in the province receive the education they deserve.

**Recommendation 138**

*We recommend that the performance management process for supervisory officers, principals, and teachers specifically include measurable outcomes related directly to anti-racism policies and plans of the Ministry and the school boards.*

In our view, part of the solution to ensuring that policy becomes classroom reality is to involve the community in the implementation and monitoring process: schools and boards should seek input from the community to decide on the measurable outcomes of anti-racism policies and plans.

As part of the monitoring process, schools and boards should receive feedback on whether these outcomes had been achieved, and should make the report public and easily accessible to parents and other members of the community.

In Chapter 17, we deal with the improvement plans schools should be required to develop, and in Chapter 19, we describe the kind of public report the Ministry should require school boards to make annually. These accountability measures should include a full report, not only on implementation of the anti-racism policies and plans, but also on the way parents and the community were involved in the process.

**Recommendation 139**

*We recommend that, for the purposes of the anti-racism and ethno-cultural equity provisions of Bill 21, the Ministry of Education and Training require boards and schools to seek input from parents and community members in implementing and monitoring the plans. This process should be linked to the overall school and board accountability mechanisms.*

Earlier in this report, we discussed the need for teachers to have curriculum and assessment tools, including texts, tests, software, and audio-visual materials that are unbiased - not just in terms of race and ethnicity, but also on the basis of class, gender, sexual orientation, and religion.

**Recommendation 140**

*We further recommend that the Ministry and school boards systematically review and monitor teaching materials of all types (texts, reading materials, videos, software, etc.), as well as teaching practices, educational programs (curriculum), and assessment tools to ensure that they are free of racism and meet the spirit and letter of anti-racism policies.*

Our hearings also alerted us to educational issues related to particular communities - especially the black and the Spanish and Portuguese-language communities. Of course, the previous recommendations apply to all groups, and should lead to great improvement in the learning experiences of their children; but we want to examine the particular needs of the three groups, and make recommendations designed to ensure that children from all minority groups are able to achieve as successfully as other students.

Black students, teachers, parents, and community leaders came to the Commission and expressed serious concerns about the achievement levels of their young people. They expressed frustration over a lack of improvement over the years, during which time they have voiced their concerns to school boards and to
the Ministry. They are concerned about the future of young blacks who, without a secondary school diploma (let alone a college diploma or university degree), face limited job prospects, social marginalization, and personal defeat. These presenters argued forcefully that the education system is failing black students, and that there is an education crisis in their community.

While the Ministry of Education and Training does not have province-wide data on the achievement patterns of students according to sub-population, there are a variety of good, reliable data from individual boards. Provincial analyses, such as that conducted by the Child, Youth and Family Policy Research Centre for the Ministry of Citizenship in 1989, use reports from individual school boards.

Probably the most comprehensive data are those available from the Toronto Board of Education. These indicate that 9 percent of its secondary school students in 1991-92 were black; in that year, they made up only seven percent of students in the advanced level, but 16 and 18 percent of the general and basic levels respectively. Between 1987 and 1991, there was a slight increase in the proportion of black students studying at the advanced level.

Data showed that 36 percent of black secondary school students were "at risk," based on their grades in English and math courses; this pattern was repeated when only students in the advanced level were considered and when the black student category was broken down into those born in Canada, in Caribbean countries, and in Africa. Even black students who have university-educated parents, or parents in professional occupations, or who live with both parents, continue to do disappointingly, according to the Toronto data. On the other hand, compared to 1987 data, there has been a statistically important improvement, mostly by Canadian-born and African-born black students, although black students still remain significantly behind their peers.

In a separate analysis, the Toronto board tracked students who were in Grade 9 in 1987 and analyzed their record of achievement, based on results at the end of 1992. It found that 42 percent of the black, 1987, Grade 9 students had left the system by the end of 1992 without graduating. Even among those whose parents were in semi-professional occupations, black students were more likely to drop out.

Black parents are concerned that the large proportion of black students in the general- and basic-level courses (as opposed to advanced-level courses) not only limits their opportunities to enter post-secondary education programs, it also increases the risk that they will drop out. This is confirmed by the Toronto board data, which indicate that the non-completion (or drop-out) rate of all students is: 21 percent from the advanced level, 48 percent from the general, and 64 percent from the basic.

The Board of Education for the City of York has also compiled comprehensive data on the achievement levels of various sub-populations. Their data also found that black students are less likely to be taking advanced-level English and, in particular, are less likely to take math courses. Only 44 percent of black students were in the advanced math course, compared to a significantly greater percentage of other students.

When the place of birth is considered for racial groups (where numbers are large enough to permit analyses), Canadian-born black students of Caribbean descent are over-represented in basic- and general-level math courses, but equitably represented in the various English course levels. Foreign-born black students of Caribbean descent are over-represented in basic- and general-level English and math programs. On the other hand, foreign-born black students of African descent are more equitably represented at each level.
The North York Board of Education collected data on the basis of country of origin, and is now planning to do so based on racial backgrounds. Thus the information base to help identify the needs of students from different communities is widening.

Although we know that a good number of black students do very well indeed - and we heard from and worked with some of them the overall situation is hardly in dispute.

Based on the strong, even passionate, presentations from the black community, and on the available data, we agree that "there is a crisis among black youth with respect to education and achievement." Our sense is that this problem is not limited to the Greater Toronto Area, but that the data could likely be extrapolated to other communities in Ontario, perhaps more so in such urban areas as Hamilton and Ottawa than elsewhere.

[Black] parents see the "drop-out" problem as a major issue for the black/African-Canadian community. They are concerned about their kids making the grade, and particularly about the youth who no longer see education as a tool to achieve their life ambitions and dreams.(14)

George Dei

Others have been similarly convinced. We have already mentioned Stephen Lewis's "Report on Race Relations." In *Towards a New Beginning*, the report of the African-Canadian/Four Levels of Government Committee, the authors found that "virtually every facet of Ontario's education system needs to be examined critically, if it is to be made more responsive to the needs of those who fall outside the mainstream. Teacher training and recruitment, curriculum revision, employment equity, anti-racism education: all these must be the subject of closest scrutiny.(15)

Though almost every submission and presentation to the Commission from the black community included recommendations directed to existing schools and school boards, a number also called for the establishment of what have been called Black Focused Schools (BFS), or more recently, African-Centred Schools (ACS), and Inclusive Schools. (We use BFS to refer to all three.)(16)

Since 1992, when Black Focused Schools (the terminology used) were publicly recommended in the *Towards a New Beginning* report, there has been considerable debate on the subject, both within the black community and outside it. Our public hearings and submissions became yet another forum for that discussion.

Lennox Farrell, one of our presenters, speaking on behalf of the Black Action Defence Committee, described Black Focused Schools as not necessarily black schools - any student could attend. Nor would all the staff have to be black, but they would have to have an interest in or be experienced in teaching black students, and be willing to ensure they succeed. He went on to say that BFSs are "defined by the staff who will be empowered themselves to empower black students. [They are] not to teach black history, but to teach realistic history ... in essence, to do what education should already be doing: to be realistic, not Euro-centric or Afro-centric in that sense."(17)

The arguments in favour of BFSs are centred on building the prerequisites for academic achievement. Parents and teachers argue that, despite their attempts to bring about systemic change, not enough has been done or accomplished, and there is a need for more dramatic, potentially faster, action.
However, we recognize that we are in the middle of an on-going debate that raises fundamental issues about our values as a society. To some, the notion of Black Focused Schools smacks of a return to segregation, to a time when, unbelievably even in Ontario,(18) black students were not allowed to attend "regular" schools.

Others are not only concerned about the divisiveness such a proposal creates between groups, they are of the opinion that a policy based on race, whatever its intent, can become a racist policy. They believe as well that, in practical terms, because blacks in Canada must operate in a mixed society, moving from mixed schools would be a mistake. Don't separate the black students, they argue: fix the schools.

Opponents also accuse supporters of BFSs of seeking a segregated school system. This is a very difficult issue for members of this Commission, each of whom has spent a lifetime working towards a genuinely multiracial Canada.

There must not be the slightest doubt that this Commission shares the great concern, the desperation even, of the black community, about the under-achievement of black students as a group. We can hardly stress too strongly our conviction that the school system must better accommodate the needs of black children and young black men and women. Schools must become more inclusive, staff must become more representative of our society as a whole, courses must reflect the perspectives and contributions of minority groups.

But even that is not enough. We must, as a matter of great urgency, mobilize the best talent available throughout Ontario to develop innovative strategies for improving the academic performance of black students.(19)

The idea of a "demonstration school" is one that we see as having great promise. In this context, a demonstration school is a school in which particular interventions are planned and carried out to boost the achievement of students. The hope is that lessons from successful models would then be replicated in other schools: challenging and relevant curriculum, innovative and engaging teaching methods, and stronger and mutually sustaining links between the school and its parents and community.

**Recommendation 141**

*We recommend that in jurisdictions with large numbers of black students, school boards, academic authorities, faculties of education and representatives of the black community collaborate to establish demonstration schools and innovative programs based on best practices in bringing about academic success for black students.*

Finally, as we noted earlier, concerns were expressed about the success levels of children, particularly those from Portuguese and Hispanic/Latin American communities. And, as we noted, the most important measure of educational equity is the level of academic success being earned (and enjoyed) by students from various communities.

When data indicate a collective problem of underachievement among the children of a particular group, it behooves schools and boards to pay attention and take steps to improve the situation.

Analyzing the data on Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking students requires care. In the former case, current reports do not distinguish adequately or at all between Central American and South American students; there is a similar lack of specificity between Portuguese-speaking students from the mainland
and those from the Azores.

We do know, however, that, as the result of changing immigration and refugee patterns, more recent Spanish-speaking immigrants have been predominantly from Central America; we believe, as well, that most Portuguese immigrants to Ontario come from the Azores.

Clearly, the data on Hispanic/Latin American students and on Portuguese students should be interpreted to reflect diverse and continuously changing immigration sources, including changes in the original socio-economic levels of the immigrants and refugees.

We turn once again to data on the academic achievement of students in Ontario schools. The Toronto Board's reports are the only data we have that clearly identify Portuguese and Hispanic/Latin American students. They show that, in 1991, while 74 percent of all Grade 9 students were taking courses at the advanced level, only 53 percent of Portuguese students and 61 percent of Hispanic students were doing so.

Like aboriginal students, Portuguese students had the second highest proportion of learners in the basic level. The Toronto Board data also identifies students "at risk" of failing, as indicated by low marks, and the slow pace at which they are accumulating secondary school credits: Hispanic students, at 38 percent, and Portuguese, at 33 percent, were among the most at risk.

Based on "home language," it was also found that Portuguese-speaking students have a high drop-out rate: in 1992, using the same study described earlier, 48 percent of Portuguese-speaking students who had been in Grade 9 in 1987 had graduated, and another 11 percent were still in Toronto schools. In other words, 41 percent of Portuguese-speaking students had left school without graduating (compared to a third of the overall population), among the highest of any group the board analyzed.

When the family's socio-economic status was factored in, the pattern remained the same: in comparisons of children of semi-professional parents, Portuguese students were still more likely than others to drop out. Comparing Portuguese-speaking students born in Canada with those born outside this country, those who are Canadian-born had slightly higher levels of achievement but, in the measures we have discussed, even they were below the average for the system.

Alerted by the student achievement data, we attended a Portuguese community meeting, in addition, of course, to welcoming representation from that community at the public hearings. Speakers expressed frustration with the percentage of their students being streamed into non-university courses and/or dropping out, the perceived status of Portuguese as a "heritage," rather than a useful international language, and the low expectations teachers have of their children and young adults.

They called for more Portuguese-speaking teachers, a curriculum that better reflects the presence of Portuguese-speaking people in the classroom and in the world, support for students in need of assistance, and active attempts to reach out to parents.

Presenters argued that some students need support in English (and Portuguese) language development, but that withdrawing them from the regular class to attend special classes in these areas is not necessarily the best solution. Some also asked for more analysis of the situation of Portuguese students, so that the community has information on which it can monitor improvement and interact with school boards and the Ministry.
We will indicate ways of meeting these issues as well as those of all other concerned communities in our conclusion.

Conclusion

As is clear from the discussion so far, it is important that boards collect data that will indicate when children of a particular group are not achieving at the same rate as other students. Equally, it is clearly unacceptable to allow such a situation to continue; therefore, information needs to result in action.

There are various strategies that teachers can use to help students improve, just as there are ways the school community can assist the teachers, and the teachers can aid parents in helping and encouraging their children to learn.

Elsewhere in this report, we have described some strategies, such as the transitional use of the student's first language or peer tutoring, and there may well be other methods for helping these students, which are being used successfully by teachers and principals.

There are, as well, strategies that involve the entire school, such as the Accelerated Schools Project developed by Henry M. Levin, professor of education and of economics at Stanford University. The program was established there in 1986 after an exhaustive five-year study on the status of at-risk students in the United States. The study found that these students are academically behind from the day they start school, and fall further and further behind the longer they are in school. Therefore, the basic premise of the Accelerated Schools Project is that "at-risk students must learn at a faster rate - not a slower rate that drags them further and further behind. An enrichment strategy is called for rather than a remedial one."(22) Dr. Levin contends that, typically, schools have had low expectations of at-risk students.

To counteract that, the accelerated schools are built on three central principles: unity of purpose, empowerment coupled with responsibility, and building on strengths. Unity of purpose refers to an active collaboration among members of the entire school community, including parents, in setting and achieving a common set of goals for the school. Empowerment coupled with responsibility refers to the ability of the participants in the school community to make important educational decisions and take responsibility for implementing them, and for the outcome of those decisions. Finally, accelerated schools look for the strengths that all members of the school community can bring to the school, rather than trying to identify weaknesses in some participants that others have to help them overcome.

These school communities work together to create powerful learning experiences actively involving children in higher-order thinking and complex reasoning in the context of a relevant curriculum. Working together and using all available human and other resources - for example, the active participation of parents and the use of information technology - they integrate the curriculum content, teaching strategies, and supports.

Dr. Levin does not believe that the concept involves a large infusion of additional funds or new instructional packages. Instead, he concludes that

the ability to energize a school and to get it to focus productively on a common set of objectives, using the talents of staff, parents, and students, is far more important than any particular curriculum package or teaching method.
We strongly believe that implementing the recommendations of our report will move every school to becoming an accelerated school. We would expect that, over time, fewer and fewer groups of children would be identified as being at risk of having significantly lower levels of achievement. However, there are such groups at present, and there may continue to be as a result of future demographic changes.

We believe that school boards are responsible for identifying successful methods of helping at-risk children learn, and ensuring that their teachers and principals get needed professional development to acquire the skills and information to use these methods. Having done that, boards are in a position to insist that teachers and principals apply these methods to help all children achieve excellence.

**Recommendation 142**

“We therefore recommend that whenever there are indications of collective underachievement in any particular group of students, school boards ensure that teachers and principals have the necessary strategies and human and financial resources to help these students improve.

Our recommendations in this chapter are intended to remove barriers that prevent some students from being as successful as they could be, and to create conditions that will have a positive impact on them. We repeat what we have said elsewhere: people have to set high expectations for all students, and mobilize the strengths of all our communities to build the kinds of learning environments in which all students can attain higher levels of achievement.

---

**Endnotes (Chapter 16)**

1. 1991 census data, quoted in Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, "Environmental Scan" (Toronto, 1994).


3. Part 3 of the *1991 Every Secondary Student Survey*, when desegregating data by race and parental occupation or parent level of education or parental presence still found significant underachievement of black students compared to white and Asian students (Toronto Board of Education Research Services, report 205 [1993], p. 30). However, an "unapproved final copy" of the "Teenage School Dropout and Young Adult Unemployment Report," based on findings of the *Ontario Health Supplement*, found that neither immigrant nor cultural minority status distinguished dropouts from non-dropouts (p. 24). However, as Patricia Daenzer and George Dei note, "many of these studies are methodologically limited for our purposes since the sample categories are 'visible minorities' or 'racial minorities.' This conflating of the experiences of students from a wide range of cultures and ethno-specific groupings obscures scientific specificity." See Daenzer and Dei, "Issues of School Completion/ Dropout: A Focus on Black Youth in Ontario Schools and Other Relevant Studies," p. 1. Paper commissioned by the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning, 1994.

4. Jerry Paquette, "Major Trends in Recent Educational Policy-making in Canada: Refocusing and


12. Board of Education for the City of York, Planning and Research Department, *Report to the Standing Committee on Race Relations* (Newmarket, ON, 1994).


16. See George Dei, "Beware of False Dichotomies: Examining the Case for 'Black Focused' Schools in Canada," no date.


18. In Ontario, separate schools were established for black students under provincial legislation (The Common Schools Act, 1850). Separate publicly funded schools for black children were located in Amherstburg, Brantford, Chatham, London, Niagara-on-the-Lake, and St. Catharines in the 19th century, although the legislation was not repealed until 1964.

For more on the history of black education, see:

19. For a discussion on this issue, see Dei, "Beware of False Dichotomies," p. 21.

20. For an analysis of student performance on the basis of ethnicity, language background, race, class, and parental presence, see, for example, Cheng, Yau, and Ziegler, *1991 Every Secondary Student Survey*. 


Chapter 17: Organizing Education: Power and Decision-Making

In earlier chapters we articulated the basis of our vision of the school system and described the kind of schools we want for Ontario's young people. We now address the question of how the education system should be organized. Our recommendations are intended to strike an appropriate balance of power among the various groups and institutions in the education system, keeping in mind that the overall goal is to increase student learning. The system should therefore be organized to support the teacher-student relationship. The aim is to have an organizational design that furthers educational objectives, makes effective use of resources, redresses inequities, and gives all stakeholders a voice in important decisions about education.

Stakeholders and power

As with so many other educational issues, there are no simple or obvious answers to questions about who should make various decisions, what governance structures make most sense, how authority ought to be exercised, or even what criteria should be used in coming to conclusions. As well, there is surprisingly little research in the area of school governance that could direct us to firm conclusions.

Over the course of our work, we came to believe that the main organizational issues are, first, the high degree of uncertainty and confusion about who is in charge; second, the sense of imbalance in the sharing of power between the key players, with parents and students playing a very minor role. There is also a commonly held perception that the organization of the system is not furthering its goals, accompanied by a belief that drastic changes in governance are required. We carefully considered these concerns, and designed our recommendations to address the problems we identified.

The organizational changes we recommend are all aimed at supporting teachers and students in schools. We recommend giving a stronger voice to students, strengthening the relationship between parents and schools, and ensuring that principals and teachers have greater autonomy in the management of their schools. At the school board level, we stress the need to clarify the roles of trustees as distinguished from supervisory officers, and outline what we see as the school board's appropriate role to support schools in improving student learning.

We also stress the need for the Ministry of Education and Training to play a strong leadership role, setting overall direction for the province's education policy, and connecting education with other areas of public and social policy. We also explain why we reject some commonly suggested solutions, such as giving parents a direct role in managing schools, or drastically reducing the number of school boards in Ontario, or even eliminating school boards entirely.
Although we propose some changes, we found no reason to alter drastically the basic organization structure of the Ontario education system, comprising a Ministry of Education and Training, school boards, and schools. Although this system is not perfect, there is no evidence that any alternative system would be preferable in balancing competing interests, improving student learning, or being more democratic. Therefore, rather than radically changing the way education is organized, we recommend improvements that should make a significant difference for the future.

The ultimate stakeholder in publicly funded education is the public, whose interests must be taken into account. Publicly funded schools belong to everyone, and must serve society's needs. The best case for public education has always been that it is a common good - that everyone, ultimately, has a stake in education. Therefore, any organizational design must protect and promote public interests.

The players

Much of the history of schooling has been an account of how each of the many stakeholders tried to influence the direction and shape of the system. The key players have their formal roles and responsibilities set down in various statutes and regulations. The Minister of Education, for instance, is authorized to set diploma requirements and curriculum guidelines, certify teachers, and require school boards to have policies in specific areas. School boards must operate schools according to provincial legislation, provide educational programs for all students in their jurisdictions, and hire staff.

Principals, as we noted in Chapter 12, are responsible for managing their schools, particularly with regard to the content and quality of instruction and the discipline of students. Teachers are to develop courses of study, instruct and evaluate their students, and report on student progress. Parents and guardians must ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school, while students themselves are required to attend classes regularly, learn diligently, and act sensibly. Under the School Boards and Teachers Collective Negotiations Act, teachers' federations are mandated to conduct negotiations with school boards about their members' working conditions and pay.

It is obvious that some of the language of the Act, especially that referring to the Minister, to boards, and to principals, is often vague, and that a number of key functions (developing curriculum, for instance) overlap. This lack of clarity allows perpetual manoeuvering among players - including the Ministry, school board trustees, school board administrators, universities, principals, teachers, teacher federations, parents, the business community, even students themselves - to increase their own power. Although some ambiguity is inherent in the system, we have tried to clarify somewhat the various roles and responsibilities.

Allocating and exercising decision-making powers

At a practical level, the organization of the school system is a question of how decision-making powers are allocated and exercised. Finding an appropriate balance is a critical theme in our proposals for organizing the school system.

Ontario schools were originally established and controlled by local citizens. With an eye on efficiency and equality of opportunity, however, successive governments slowly developed larger units, culminating in 1969 with the amalgamation of more than two thousand small boards into less than 200 larger school boards, most based on the provincial county as the administrative unit. Today there are 172
Ontario school boards.

All through the 20th century, there have been conflicting pressures toward centralization and decentralization. In Ontario, the 1969 consolidation of school boards not only concentrated authority in a smaller number of larger boards, it also moved authority from the Ministry to these larger boards through the transfer of such functions as supervising and inspecting teachers.

The main arguments in favour of centralization are that a central authority can work out common solutions to educational problems, ensuring program quality across the province; that efficiency and economies of scale are possible with central control; and that central authorities are needed to ensure social justice and equity.

The main argument in favour of decentralization is that local communities should be able to control their own schools, and that they know best what policies and programs suit the community.

There are problems with taking either of these arguments to extremes. The challenge is to find an appropriate balance of power and control at the school, community, Ministry, and provincial levels. In the following sections we indicate how we believe authority and power should be re-allocated in the Ontario school system. In brief, we are recommending a stronger voice for students and parents; greater decision-making authority for principals, with involvement of teachers as well; clarifying the role of school boards; and articulating a strong policy leadership role for the Ministry of Education and Training.

**Schools**

Because schools are the heart of the education system they must be the centre of change in education. Change can only occur through a re-alignment of roles and responsibilities of the key players at the school level.

**Students**

In presentations to the Commission, students provided insight and perspective, making common-sense suggestions for improving schools. We believe the school system will benefit substantially by systematically seeking their views and taking their opinions seriously. While it makes sense to do this on an informal basis for students in Grade 6 and younger, we believe it should be formalized for those in Grade 7 and up.

There are three forums in which this should happen. First, all boards should include at least one student member, elected by fellow students. Student trustees should have input into and a vote on all board deliberations, subject to the usual conflict-of-interest and legal requirements. Several Ontario boards, for instance, the Kenora Board of Education and the Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry Board of Education, have student trustees, although under the current provisions of the Education Act, they cannot be regular voting trustees. Evaluations to date suggest that having student trustees has been successful and meaningful.

Second, student councils should, in addition to organizing social events, be responsible for gathering and presenting student views on schooling in a regular and systematic manner. This might be done through regular forums or surveys or other means, depending on what the student council decides. They should also provide on-going advice to student trustees.
Third, there should be a Student and Youth Council similar to the Ontario Parent Council which the
Minister recently created. The membership would include representatives of the three provincial student
organizations, a representative of recent graduates, and a representative of young people not in school. Its
mandate, like that of the OPC, would be to advise on all educational matters, and to seek further ways to
involve students in decisions that affect their lives. A formal training program should be instituted for all
students who are elected to be representatives, while part of the professional development of teachers and
principals would include training to work closely with the new student leadership.

Additionally, we also suggest that a Students' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, setting out clearly
the kinds of roles outlined above, be distributed each year to every student in the province, and that
school time be made available for the student council to ensure that all students are fully aware of the
contents and implications of the charter. Although students already formally have rights beyond merely
the right to a good education, such as the secondary school students' right to be told in advance about the
content of course work and methods of evaluation, we understand these are often ignored. Students need
clear statements and explanations of their rights and responsibilities, and of the school's code of
behaviour and discipline policies.

**Recommendations 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148**

*We recommend that all boards have at least one student member, entitled to vote on all board matters, subject
to the usual conflict-of-interest and legal requirements.*

*We recommend that student councils be given the responsibility for organizing students' views on all aspects
of school life, and for transmitting these views to teachers and principals with responses sent back to students
in a systematic way, and that they provide advice to student trustees.*

*We recommend that the Minister of Education and Training establish a Student and Youth Council, to advise
on all educational matters, to seek further ways to involve students in decisions that affect their lives, and to
sponsor research about what students can do to improve learning in schools.*

*We recommend that the Ministry organize a collaborative process for developing a Students' Charter of Rights
and Responsibilities, and that the process include a significant role for students. The essential elements of such
a charter must include a description of the kind of information a student is entitled to receive, the programs and
services to which a student is entitled, the responsibilities a student is expected to accept, the role that students
are entitled to play in the decisions made in the system, and the recourse available if students feel that their
rights have not been upheld.*

*We recommend that students be involved in developing and regularly reviewing codes of behaviour and other
selected policies and procedures that flow from the Students' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities at both
board and school levels. These policies and procedures may not take away from the rights and responsibilities
specified in the charter.*

*We recommend that information about the students' charter and all policies and procedures that directly affect
students be made available to all students in a way most students can readily understand.*

**Teachers and Principal**

Chapters 7 through 10 provide the Commission's vision of schools and of the program for students. In
Chapter 12, we outline our perspective on the role of principals and teachers in the operation of schools,
stressing the responsibilities of principals to stimulate and support improved teaching and learning in
their schools. If principals are responsible for creating and sustaining the conditions for effective
teaching and learning in school, they need to have the power, within guidelines set by the school board, to make decisions about certain central issues, such as staffing and how funds are to be allocated.

Teachers, as professionals on whom the success of the school depends, should also be involved in areas of school management, particularly those relating to curriculum, instruction, and assessment of learning, as well as to parents and the community. If teachers' professionalism is enhanced through stronger preparation and on-going development, as we suggest in Chapter 12, then their professional competence should be recognized through their participation in school decisions.

We believe that, in their schools, teachers and school administrators should have considerable professional autonomy to judge which school organization and teaching strategies are most likely to lead to high levels of student learning. At the same time, they must be held accountable for student achievement in the school and for reporting regularly to parents.

Throughout the developed world there have been, over the past decade or more, experiments with what is usually termed school-based management or site-based management, in which significant authority is delegated from the central authority, usually the school board, to the school. Various models have been established in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, and Britain, as well as in Utah and in Florida's Dade County.

It is important to note that the term school-based management might refer to delegation of authority either to the principal and teachers, or, in other cases, to school councils in which much or even most of the authority is vested in parents. At this point, we refer only to models in which staff have increased authority. The decision-making power may be vested primarily in the principal or be shared between principal and teachers.

In Canada, the most well-known example is Edmonton, which in 1976 became one of the first boards to shift some decision-making authority to the school. Many school boards, including some in Ontario, have since moved at least minimally in this direction. The Carleton Board of Education, for instance, expects schools to make many decisions about curriculum, evaluation, reporting, and school structures, as well as determine to some extent how the school operations budget will be allocated.

The arguments advanced for such a shift in responsibility vary somewhat, but are often framed in terms of freeing schools from the constraints of bureaucracy, so that they will be more successful. In Dade County, for example, schools request waivers to exempt them from various school board regulations and collective agreement provisions.

What has been the result of all this shifting of responsibility? Has it made a difference to students? In assessing site-based management, it is important to realize that, for the most part, the shift has taken place for political rather than educational reasons. Joyce Scane, of the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, has concluded that decentralization does not have substantial effects on school programs:

Looking at the research as a whole, there is no evidence that decentralization to the school level, per se, will lead to improvement in classroom practice and student achievement...(2)

The important words here are "per se." In other words, just because decisions are made at the school level rather than the board level does not necessarily mean they are better. Sometimes principals and teachers may focus on areas that have no payoff at all in terms of student learning, or may get so caught up in the day-to-day school management and administration that they are distracted from what should be
their main activity: providing meaningful educational programs to their students.

This is why, although we recommend that principals have considerable autonomy within their schools, we stress their responsibility to keep student learning as the top priority. Of course, with autonomy and responsibility comes accountability. Principals must not be diverted into focusing on issues that are only incidentally related to improving teaching and learning. Clear expectations from the Ministry and the school board set the overall priorities within which schools decide how to proceed.

Simply sharing power is not enough: schools and school systems must also be redesigned to ensure that teachers and principals actually have the knowledge and skills to make changes, that they get accurate and regular feedback about school performance, and that there is a clear focus on instructional improvement. Staff, under the leadership of the principal, must work together within a framework of agreed-upon goals and standards, to develop and implement their plans for moving toward their goals.

Principals and teachers must use their leadership skills to build and sustain school cultures that focus on student learning. Requiring each school to develop a school growth or improvement plan, articulating school objectives and plans for achieving them, can be an important tool in achieving this. Such school growth plans would be developed within the overall framework of MET and school board guidelines.

We have stressed the importance of linking more closely schools and community, and here too, we believe that principals should have considerable autonomy, deciding how to allocate school funds and design school initiatives to better meet local needs. To do this effectively, school staff must understand the community served by the school. With the help of the school-community councils we propose in Chapter 14, schools should be better able to meet unique local needs. Principals and teachers must reach out to the community to forge strong relationships and partnerships that will relieve some of the non-academic burdens that schools are increasingly shouldering.

As well, we believe that school boards must recognize principals as key members of the senior management team, with a major role in policy development as well as implementation.

Recommendation 149

We recommend that the Ministry phase in a policy requiring school boards to turn over an increasingly significant portion of the school budget to principals, on the condition that the school have a school growth plan; that this plan be monitored by the board; that teachers participate in decision-making concerning curriculum, assessment, professional development, and staffing; and that the school demonstrate how it reaches out to students, parents, and the community.

One more staff role that is relevant in secondary schools should be addressed. The departmental structure could be altered to help the principal meet new responsibilities in running the school. We heard stiff criticisms of some departments for their insularity and territorial mentality, a situation that can hardly be tolerated. Department heads are needed to provide leadership, both in the school as a whole and within their departments to create a collegial professional culture that is especially helpful to new teachers.

As we said in Chapter 12, we see three important new roles for department heads. In the first place, because of their subject expertise, we want them to assist the principal by helping to evaluate teaching performance as well as helping teachers improve. Second, they should assist the principal in managing the school. With many new responsibilities for budget management, school-based as well as board-wide policy development, promoting better relationships with parents and community alliances, principals
need to be able to rely on a capable group of department heads to assist them in all these areas. Third, department heads must take on a strong leadership role in developing and implementing the new curriculum we are recommending. Department heads together should encourage teachers to work co-operatively across grade levels and broader program areas. At the same time, their subject expertise will help them to ensure that the essential elements of each subject are strengthened, not lost, in the more collaborative and integrated approach to curriculum.

Parents

We believe that it is crucial for schools to work more collaboratively with parents. As we have stressed throughout this report, parents have a central role to play in the education of their children. In recognition of this role, we recommend the development of a Parents' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities.

The Ministry should develop such a charter, in consultation with the regular stakeholders, to be distributed annually to each student's family. The charter should clearly set out the rights of parents to be made welcome in the school, the kind of regular, personal contact they can expect from teachers, and the kind of support they can expect to enable them to be more helpful to their youngsters' school life.

Recommendations 150, 151, 152

*We recommend that a Parents' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities be developed at the provincial level as a result of collaboration among parents, teachers, administrators, and political decision-makers.

*We recommend that parents be involved in developing student codes of behaviour, and other policies and procedures that flow from the Students' and Parents' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities at both board and school levels.

*We recommend that information about the students' and parents' charters and all policies and procedures that directly affect students and parents be readily available to parents.

Parents vary in the degree to which they want to be involved in their children's schools, and also differ in the type of involvement they want to have. On balance, it appears that only a small minority of parents want to participate in school governance or decision-making. Most parents want to be able to communicate their concerns and aspirations, and to have schools respond in a respectful and helpful manner. Parents want, and are entitled to, information about the policies and goals of their child's school and board, and about their child's progress. If there are learning problems, they want to be informed and want the school to address such problems.

There are several kinds of problems that may arise between parents and the school. Some parents may be intimidated by unwelcoming or unresponsive staff members; some may be concerned about their own levels of education or their imperfect English or French. Some may have only small amounts of time because they work long hours. Many just want a meaningful relationship with their children's school. Whatever the circumstances, there is much that can and must be done to make schools more welcoming. Schools must continue to reach out to parents who, for whatever reason, are uninvolved or uninterested in their children's school life.

We believe all principals and teachers must become aware of the research on the value of parent involvement with their children's school life, and act upon it. Principals and teachers must learn and practice the many effective strategies for successfully reaching out to parents, particularly those who are
unlikely to become involved on their own.

Certain kinds of parent involvement pay handsome dividends: higher student achievement, higher aspirations, better attendance, improved classroom and school climate, and more positive relationships between parents and teachers - a welcome list of benefits indeed. The key activities that appear to lead to these happy results are, first, following the child's progress at school and helping at home with homework and projects; second, attending various school performances and sports events; and third, acting as a volunteer in the classroom. Research strongly suggests that such activities have a more direct and positive impact on the student's progress than does active participation in parent organizations, valuable though this may be for the school in general.\(^4\)

We believe it is crucial for schools to seek out parental opinion on important issues. Well beyond the occasional meet-the-teacher sessions, parents need regular mechanisms through which they can give input and raise concerns, not only in relation to their own children, but also in relation to education and other school issues. For instance, when choices are being made about the use of multi-age groupings, or about smaller class sizes as opposed to specialist teachers, parents should have a chance to give their views.

Although we believe that the school's teachers and principal should make decisions about staffing and instruction, their judgments should be informed by knowledge of parental preferences and concerns. In Chapter 12, we also recommend that schools and school boards develop ways of systematically eliciting parental opinion about teaching and school climate.

In Chapter 14, we recommend the formation of school-community councils, in which we see parents playing a vital role. But, because their mandate is primarily to forge community alliances, we do not see these councils as having a decision-making role in relation to school management, although we would expect them to participate and be consulted in many aspects of the life of the school.

In Chapter 14, we recommend the formation of school-community councils, in which we see parents playing a vital role. But, because their mandate is primarily to forge community alliances, we do not see these councils as having a decision-making role in relation to school management, although we would expect them to participate and be consulted in many aspects of the life of the school.

In terms of student achievement, there is little evidence to suggest that parent involvement in governance affects student learning in the school, although there may be other benefits and indirect effects.\(^5\)

This conclusion leaves a number of unanswered questions; for example, would the results be different if parent councils operated differently, or if parents and teachers were better trained for their new roles, or if other changes were made? Nevertheless, we have concluded that, at present, there is no solid basis for establishing parent councils as governing bodies for all schools in the province.\(^6\)

In reaching this decision, we carefully considered many factors. Only a small minority of parents seem to want greater decision-making powers in their children's schools, as suggested by the very small number who now are active in home-and-school associations and the relatively small number who indicated a...
desire for such active involvement. Also, there is little or no evidence that local parent councils improve learning - the touchstone for all our deliberations. The professional qualifications of the school staff suggest they are in the best position to know what constitutes good teaching and learning. Such councils would place an unneeded additional burden on principals. Furthermore, given all this, we feel that a parent council with a mandate to manage schools and make decisions would constitute a serious diversion of resources and energy from the real priorities that should mark greater parental involvement in schools. That being said, wise principals and interested parents can, and indeed must, find many ways to ensure that parents are involved in the life of the school, and to seek out parental concerns and advice.

Recommendation 153

*We recommend that all schools in Ontario be accountable for demonstrating the ways in which they have strengthened parents' involvement in their children's school learning.*

The school growth plan described earlier in this chapter is the most likely vehicle for ensuring that schools do this; at the next level of accountability, annual board reports will disseminate the information.

The community

The relationship between school and community is so central to our vision of reforming the education system that we have made it one of our four engines driving the change process. The school-community councils we recommend are new institutions that we believe will be absolutely essential if Ontario schools are to create an improved learning environment for all students.

In Chapter 4, on the purposes of schooling, we distinguished between primary and shared school responsibilities. While academic learning is the primary purpose of the school system, meeting the varied non-academic needs of children is a responsibility the school shares with the broader community. Teachers and schools can fulfill these social responsibilities only if they are supported by appropriate resources from the community outside the school. Helping to organize and mobilize those resources is the general function of these new school-community councils.

In a real sense they would be the eyes and ears of the school in the world outside. Led by the principal, and comprising teachers, parents, students, and community members, they would identify the needs of the school and of the community. They would create the alliances that serve the non-academic needs of the students, so that teachers could concentrate on better teaching. They would help carry out career-day programs, as well as help find students more opportunities and placements in co-operative education schemes.

School-community councils might recommend to the principal certain community themes for the school's locally determined curriculum content. We see these councils as monitoring the charters of rights and responsibilities for both parents and students. Inevitably they would want to advise the principal, in general terms, on ideas for school improvement. And finally, it only makes sense, given their mandate, that they would have the right to be consulted by the school board when a new principal was being chosen. But we stress that their role in relation to the management of the school is only advisory.

There are many benefits of collaborative links with the community. They

- strengthen school programs by drawing on new pools of expertise;
build public support for schools by giving non-educators direct knowledge and experience of schools;

- show students their school is important enough to motivate other adults to take time to contribute to it;
- contribute to a culture that encourages mutual concern about quality of life.(7)

For these reasons, among others, we identified school-community alliances as one of the levers of change, and recommended in Chapter 14 that school-community councils be created in all schools.

**School boards**

Between the province's schools and its Ministry of Education and Training stand the school boards. As in so many other parts of the education system, dealing in depth with boards is more complex than most Ontarians might expect. To begin with, depending on how they are counted, the province is divided into 172, 169 or 168 school board jurisdictions; of these, 128 operate more than one school. A board jurisdiction may be a municipality, a county, a region, or even a hospital treatment centre. Depending on the size of the total population it represents, a board can have from three to more than twenty elected trustees.

Boards range in size from the few that operate no schools at all (purchasing educational services for the few students in their jurisdiction) and boards such as the Murchison and Lyell District School Area Board with fewer than twenty students, to the Metropolitan Separate School Board with approximately 100,000 students, the largest in Canada. Some boards have no administrative staff beyond the school level, while others have large and highly sophisticated bureaucracies.(8) Most of the discussion that follows refers primarily to the 128 Ontario boards that have more than one school.

School boards, governed by locally elected trustees, decide on the facilities, programs, services, and resources that will be made available in a locality, and they also set the level of local education taxes. Their responsibilities are outlined in the Education Act, as well as in relevant Ministry regulations. School boards also hire teachers and other staff, and negotiate collective agreements. They develop and deliver programs and curricula for all students, including those with special needs. By setting budgets and requisitioning taxes, boards share with the province the responsibility for financing education.

School boards occupy a somewhat precarious place in the public consciousness. We suspect that few people know either the name of their local trustee or the nature of the trustee's role. In most urban areas, the media give little attention to the day-to-day operations of the school board, although they may publicize crises of various sorts. The voter turnout for school-board elections is notoriously low (even less than for other local offices), and, as an apparent reflection of public interest, many trustees across the province are not challenged in elections but are acclaimed with no opposition. These unfortunate realities may well call into question the legitimacy of the trustee role. This lack of public awareness seems particularly inauspicious, given that such a large proportion of taxes at the municipal level go directly to support education.

The term *school board* may refer to trustees, who are elected to represent local constituents for three-year terms. When the term is used more inclusively, it refers to the trustees and the staff in a given jurisdiction. In addition to the elected trustees, the other key people in the central offices of the school boards are the supervisory officers, including the director of education, who are the senior administrative
There are a number of contentious issues relating to school boards. They are:

- establishing whether school boards are needed, and if so, what their roles should be;
- the relationship between trustees and administrators;
- the remuneration of trustees;
- the number of trustees;
- the way school boards relate to schools; and
- the number of school boards.

**The need for school boards**

In many jurisdictions, school reform has involved eliminating or sharply curtailing the power of boards, regional decision-making, or administrative bodies in education. This has been the case in Britain, with its Local Education Authorities (LEAs), in New Zealand, as well as in the City of Chicago. The justification has been that eliminating a layer of bureaucracy increases efficiency and accountability and strengthens local control of schools. The effects of such changes are not always clear, but there is no compelling evidence to suggest that they are positive. It must also be noted that generalizing from one country or educational context to an entirely different one is dangerous indeed.

We do not support elimination of school boards in Ontario. Particularly in such a large and diverse province, we see no way in which five thousand schools could be administered either individually or by the Ministry of Education and Training. We regard boards as having an important democratic function; moreover, education is a significant enough public activity to merit its own locally elected representatives, with responsibilities that neither municipal councillors nor members of the provincial legislature can handle properly.

While we describe it in more detail later in this section, the relationship between school boards and their schools can briefly be described as crucial for creating and sustaining the kinds of schools we need. We also believe that local control of education is best exercised by the public election of trustees, who are expected to be knowledgeable about community priorities and local conditions.

Nonetheless, we believe it is important to clarify what the school boards' role should be, as distinct from that of the Ministry on one hand and individual schools on the other. We have recommended that more responsibility for determining school budget allocations be delegated to principals, and we see a strong policy leadership role for the Ministry. Therefore, school boards are necessary for translating provincial policy into local contexts, for setting local priorities, and for providing co-ordination and support for their schools.

**Clarifying roles of trustees and administrators**

Like so many elected office holders and civil servants, trustees and administrators co-exist in a state of almost permanent tension and mutual dependence. Trustees rely to a great extent on the advice and expertise of the supervisory officers, who are senior educators with board-wide management responsibilities. Although trustees are responsible for overall policy, and supervisory officers for administration, the line between the two functions is not always clear.
Over the last few years, the distinction has become increasingly blurred, and senior administrators frequently find their time taken up carrying out unimportant tasks for trustees, tasks that seem unrelated to educational issues. Overlaps, gaps, and competing obligations in both groups may detract from the main teaching and learning purposes of schools.

The difficulty for most school boards, therefore, is distinguishing between policy-making and policy implementation. Obviously, the two parties will disagree about what exactly policy is and what is administration. We were told that trustees tend to get too involved in the micro-management of operational details that are better left to supervisory staff. Moreover, the problem seems to be made worse by Ministry regulations that require school boards to ratify many decisions that staff could handle.

For instance, boards must now ratify all teacher hirings. It would seem to make more sense for them to develop and approve hiring policy, leaving staff responsible for hiring teachers within such policy guidelines. In turn, staff believe they often spend too much time preparing material for trustees, rather than concentrating on supporting education in schools.

It is time to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both the elected trustees and their administrations; therefore, drawing on considerable recent research and writing, we suggest a clearer distinction between them.(9)

In brief, trustees should not interfere in operational matters, but ought to set the broad parameters, and then let staff get on with managing the system within them. This includes articulating the mission or vision of the board, which usually includes some indication of the values the board wishes to infuse throughout the system. Good policy development does not prescribe how a policy is to be implemented, but does set some limits; for example, a board will specify a cost figure that is not to be exceeded, conflict-of-interest guidelines that are not to be breached, or ethical frameworks that are not to be disregarded. It is then up to senior administrators to find the best way to achieve the required results in different circumstances. Administrators can then be held accountable for the results they achieve.

Given that current regulations do not always support a clear division between the roles of elected and appointed officials, and in view of the complex issues trustees must face, we suggest that they be offered well-developed professional development programs, as is already the case in many school boards. We note the helpful Handbook for School Trustees in Ontario, published jointly by the province's school trustees' associations and the Ministry of Education and Training.(10)

**Recommendation 154**

*We recommend that the Minister of Education and Training, in consultation with the provincial trustees' associations, review and revise the legislation and regulations governing education, in order to clarify the policy-making, as distinct from the operational, responsibilities of school board trustees.*

**Trustee remuneration**

Our recommendation on clarifying trustee responsibilities has implications for trustee remuneration, a topic that has been a matter of public controversy for the past few years. Although elected school board trustees have frequently been accused of living high off the public purse, the facts, for the most part, paint a quite different picture.
While most media attention has focused on a relatively few boards whose trustees suddenly proposed to greatly increase their own stipends, in fact, in 1992 about half of all Ontario boards paid themselves less than $10,000 a year per trustee, and in many cases, far less.

In only 17 boards did trustees receive more than $15,000. And only in the following seven boards did they pay themselves as much as $20,000: Etobicoke, Scarborough, Peel, Metro Roman Catholic Separate, Metro French-language Board (all between $20,500 and $30,000), North York ($32,000), and the City of Toronto, far ahead of the field at $49,383.

The incomplete data available for 1994 indicate only small province-wide changes from the 1992 figures, including North York, where trustee pay has risen to $33,330, and Scarborough. Scarborough trustees decided to raise their pay from $22,000 in 1991 to $30,000 in 1992, which was then to have increased to $33,000 in 1993 and to $36,000 in 1994. When these decisions caused a media and public uproar, the trustees revisited their original decision and settled for $30,000.

In the midst of recent generalized attacks against high-priced trustees, too little attention has been paid to the fact that this province is blessed with hundreds of dedicated trustees who spend many hours a month carrying out their board duties, often for distinctly modest reimbursements.

Our view is that our recommendation that the Ministry clarify and distinguish more clearly between the functions and responsibilities of trustees and administrators will mean that the role of the trustee can be defined as part time. If trustees focus on their responsibility to articulate a vision or mission to guide the board and its schools to set overall policy, and focus on results rather than on process and management, there would seem to be little justification for treating their responsibilities as a full-time job.

Therefore, we believe that, as part-timers, all trustees should be paid accordingly. While most boards actually do provide remuneration consistent with the part-time nature of the position, we believe that other boards should follow suit; in our view, a reasonable maximum would be $20,000. To gain a perspective on this figure, we note that 95 percent of all trustees in Ontario fall below it - many of them well below.

**Recommendation 155**

*We recommend that the Ministry set a scale of honoraria for trustees, with a maximum of $20,000 per annum.*

**Numbers of trustees**

What should be the maximum number of trustees elected for each board? At the moment the numbers range between 8 and 23. Some research on effective boards suggests that, because large boards can become unwieldy, caution should be exercised in deciding on boards of more than seven people.\(^\text{(11)}\)

However, Commission members are not of one mind on the right size of a board; some of us feel strongly that between 8 and 12 trustees is the optimum, while others believe that any number is bound to be arbitrary. Certainly, two relevant factors in determining board size should be its geographic location and the population it serves. We conclude only that there should be continuing efforts to reduce the number of trustees, once consistent criteria have been developed.

**School boards and schools**
Important as it is to clarify the respective roles of trustees and administrators, there is still the question of the role of school boards in relation to the schools they administer. Aside from the obvious personnel and finance functions, including collective bargaining, what part do boards play in developing and implementing programs and instruction?

We noted earlier that, on their own, schools would find it difficult to sustain excellence and continue to improve; most need significant support from outside the school. In a province as large as Ontario with 5000 schools, it is not realistic to expect that such support can be directly provided by a provincial agency. This is where the school board, through its supervisory officers and other professional staff, has a role.

Some research suggests that school boards can be a significant factor in how successfully schools in their jurisdiction manage student learning. In general, the strategy seems to involve frequent communication between schools and the central office (as well as among schools), with little reliance on bureaucratic rules and structures. (12)

Through their supervisory officers and other professional staff, boards can provide direction and focus for schools, communicating clear policy guidelines and helping them set priorities, often among a multitude of conflicting demands. School boards can assist principals and teachers to establish professional networks outside their own schools, and can mediate in school-community conflicts. The increased emphasis on monitoring and reporting on student learning and on other indicators (as recommended in Chapter 19) will make it particularly important for boards to help schools act on the results of board-wide program reviews and student-testing programs. Schools will need assistance in using the results of such monitoring to improve their programs and teaching. Supervisory officers, as well as principals, may need to develop their own skills and understanding of these new roles.

Within Ministry and board guidelines, we believe that school boards should give principals maximum flexibility to organize and operate their schools as they see fit, with the considerable involvement of teachers, and always considering input from parents, students, and the community.

A commonly raised criticism of school boards and of the education system in general is that the system is top heavy, that too much money is spent outside the classroom and too high a proportion of staff are in non-teaching positions. (13) The validity of this criticism is difficult to establish, partly because the data on staffing allocations across school boards are rarely comparable. School boards do not always classify staff with similar functions in the same way.

Although making judgments about available data is not easy, the information we have suggests that the problem is not as serious as has been commonly claimed. In some boards, for instance, staff classified as non-teaching are classroom teaching assistants. Although such staff do not have teaching certificates, they work directly with students under the general direction of teachers.

We have already pointed out in Chapter 12 that the responsibilities of supervisory officers will have to be reviewed in light of our recommendations. Staffing decisions must be made with a view to strengthening teaching and learning functions, and there may well be room for further reductions in central office staff.

The number of school boards

Throughout our public hearing process, we were often told that there are too many school boards in
Ontario. Many, including the Minister of Education, have suggested that some boards should be consolidated to provide more efficient delivery of educational services. Other provinces - for example, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Alberta - recently have drastically reduced the number of school boards. Given the frequency of the suggestion and the vigour with which it was usually made, we examined this issue carefully.

At one time Ontario had more than four thousand small school boards, many responsible for only one school. Following a series of consolidations, the 1969 amalgamation reduced what were more than two thousand school boards to fewer than two hundred. Since then there have been further reductions in the number. Many people may be surprised to learn that, on average, school boards in Ontario are already larger than those in any other province. As shown in Table 1, Ontario has more schools per board and more students per board than other provinces. In a 1986 report on trustee apportionment, a research team from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education warned that large boards, those with more than 40,000 students, may be in danger of losing their connection to the community.(14) Ontario already has 13 boards in that category (see Table 2).

Table 1: School Boards in Canadian Provinces*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Number of boards</th>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Enrolment</th>
<th>Schools per board</th>
<th>Enrolment per board</th>
<th>Enrolment per school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nfld.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>120,460</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4,461</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.E.I.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>24,280</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4,856</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.S.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>168,430</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7,656</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.B.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>138,840</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7,713</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Q.</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>2,977</td>
<td>1,047,260</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6,628</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ont.</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>5,539</td>
<td>2,036,130</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12,048</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>209,430</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3,674</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sask.</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>204,650</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1,844</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alta.</td>
<td>141**</td>
<td>1,727</td>
<td>529,175</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3,753</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1,952</td>
<td>598,780</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7,984</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>783</strong></td>
<td><strong>15,568</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,077,435</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>6,485</strong></td>
<td><strong>326</strong>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** The number of school boards in Alberta was reduced in 1994 to 57, plus three francophone jurisdictions.
*** Means or averages.

The recent consolidation of school boards in other provinces has still resulted in boards considerably smaller than most of those in Ontario. Because of the size and complexity of this province, there is no reason to assume that the move to more centralized control elsewhere would be appropriate here. Ontario has 40 percent of the elementary and secondary students in Canadian schools, located in an enormous geographic area and in communities that are remarkably diverse.

Table 2 shows the size distribution of those 128 Ontario boards that have more than one school (as opposed to schools that purchase services from other boards, or boards that operate only one school, or special boards that run classes only in care and treatment centres).

Table 2: Size of School Boards in Ontario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student enrolment</th>
<th>Number of boards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
There is no formula, nor do there seem to be any objective criteria, that would allow us to conclude that there are too many school boards in Ontario. It is true that removing the French-language sections to form separate French-language school boards, as we recommend in Chapter 15, would result in some boards so small that their viability would be dubious, and we encourage such boards to amalgamate with those adjacent to them. In fact, the same may be true of some other very small boards. Here, as everywhere in this report, we encourage communities to use local strategies and solutions to fit local situations. Any more general consideration of amalgamation of school boards must take into account their incredibly varied nature and size, and must also consider mechanisms for sharing services, as well as for dealing with political representation.

**Service delivery organizations**

There are a significant number of areas where all boards should be seeking greater efficiency; indeed, many already do so. For example, a number of smaller school boards are not in a position to provide the kind of support teachers and schools need to provide good programs to all their students. Nor do they have the critical mass to deal efficiently with transportation, purchasing, payroll, and other business functions. In those same geographic areas, health and social services agencies also often lack the numbers needed to provide good services to school children in every school area. Recognizing this problem, some boards have already banded together in co-operative efforts, and in one project the Ministries of Community and Social Services, Education and Training, and Health have jointly set up a program to provide integrated services to children in the North.

Whatever their size, many school boards in Ontario and elsewhere are turning to co-operative alliances through which they can develop curriculum resources, co-ordinate services with other ministries, purchase such services as transportation or supplies, provide professional development, or focus on a range of other areas. We see this as a desirable development, and strongly urge school boards across the province to increase such joint ventures. We believe that in many boards there is scope for even greater efficiency through sharing such important but costly services, and by achieving economies of scale through joint purchasing. Such co-operative arrangements may make more sense than amalgamation. Money is saved, while local representation and control of schools is maintained.

Although such partnerships and alliances will be essential in meeting varied student and community needs in the years ahead especially given the remote possibility of any increase in financial resources - they are not problem free. Territoriality is a powerful force; sometimes a neutral third party is necessary to establish and maintain working alliances. As well, unless the responsibility for these alliances is specifically assigned to particular positions, they may remain reliant on the interest and good will of individuals, and thus become vulnerable to staff changes. Nonetheless, we strongly support the continued growth of a range of co-operative initiatives among boards, and between boards and other agencies.

**The case of the Metropolitan Toronto (Public) School Board**
The structure of education at the local level in Metro Toronto is quite different from other urban centres and was brought to our attention as an issue of concern. Metro public schools have a two-tiered system of governance: the Metro Board with representatives from seven area boards - Etobicoke, York, East York, North York, Scarborough, Toronto, and the Conseil des Ecoles Francaises de la communaute urbaine de Toronto (the French-language board). Separate schools for the whole of Metropolitan Toronto are governed by the Metro Separate School Board. Our comments here relate to the public school boards.

The Metropolitan Toronto School Board was established in 1953 to provide co-ordination of activities across all the public school boards in Metropolitan Toronto. Much of the justification related to the unequal bases for assessment in the different boards, with some capable of raising tax revenues much more readily than others. In order to equalize services across Metro, a decision was made to have a super-ordinate umbrella board, with trustees from each of the member boards, to apportion resources equitably and to provide a common level of educational service. Although the individual boards continued to make decisions about many areas of policy, the Metro Board made decisions about apportioning tax revenues.

The Metro Board is a steering committee of all seven boards, with legislated responsibility for teacher collective bargaining in relation to salaries and working conditions. Such an arrangement precludes local boards agreeing to quite different contract provisions for their teachers. The individual boards continue to have separate negotiations to deal with various local issues, as well as bargaining with non-teaching staff.

Currently, the Metro Board continues to collect and distribute tax revenue to achieve greater per-pupil equity across Metro, and also deals with capital grant allocations for building and renovating school facilities. As well, Metro continues to deal with collective bargaining. Although the board operated schools for the developmentally challenged, responsibility for these schools is being divested to local boards. The other function it serves is a co-ordinating one; a variety of co-operative initiatives are carried out through the Metro Board, including producing some curriculum materials and offering the Supervisory Officer Qualification Program for aspiring supervisory officers on a cost-recovery basis.

Although the proportion of Metro education costs for the additional tier of the Metro Board is not large, the yearly administrative costs are still considerable. Given the current financial constraints, as well as the public concern about value for money, is the continued existence of the Metro Toronto School Board justified? If the present funding situation continues, it would probably make sense for the Metro Board to continue as well, since it serves a valuable function in redistributing tax revenues across the local boards, and thus ensures greater equity. The fact that the local boards are part of the Metro Board lessens any feelings that redistribution is being imposed on them.

However, we are recommending significant changes to the funding structures in the province. If these changes are implemented, many of the Metro Board's functions would no longer be required. In Chapter 18, we recommend a shift in education financing so that funding would be determined by the Ministry, with very limited additional revenue raising permitted at the local level. With regard to capital allocation for building and renovating schools, the Ministry would also determine and distribute these funds. We have already noted that with the transfer of schools for the developmentally challenged, the Metro Board no longer has any direct program responsibilities.

With the removal of these responsibilities, it would seem both logical and efficient to gradually move to one level of public school board in Metropolitan Toronto. We believe there is every reason for the
individual boards to co-operate as much as possible, but through a consolidation and sharing of resources and services, rather than through another layer of political decision-making.

In the preceding section, we note and give our strong support to current initiatives in cost sharing among school boards. Co-operative arrangements are applicable to small and large boards. The Metro Task Force on Cost Savings Through Co-operative Activities, established by the Ministry in 1994, is intended to create such institutionalized co-operative arrangements. The task force - which includes the Metro Separate School Board, in addition to the public school boards - is currently investigating ways for the area boards to cut costs without cutting levels of service, by collectively purchasing resources and services, by centralizing some functions, and by sharing and co-operatively developing others. We fully support this work, which is an excellent example of the kind of service-sharing arrangement discussed above.

As well, we are particularly concerned that the advantages of collective bargaining with teachers should not be lost. If boards bargain individually, negotiation costs are higher for both boards and federations. If Metro is eliminated, provincial legislation should ensure that combined collective bargaining is retained.

On balance, then, we believe the two-tiered system of political governance will no longer be necessary, following the proposed changes in educational funding. In our view, an administrative consortium, rather than another layer of political decision-making, would better meet the needs of the public schools and school boards in Metropolitan Toronto.

**Recommendation 156**

*We recommend that following the proposed shift to the provincial government of the responsibility for determining the funding of education, the two-tiered governance structure of the public schools in Metropolitan Toronto be phased out, with the Metropolitan Toronto School Board being replaced by an administrative consortium of school boards in the Metropolitan Toronto area.*

**The Ministry of Education and Training**

**Role of the Ministry**

Considerable dissatisfaction has been expressed about the role of the Ministry of Education and Training. Both the public and the education community seem somewhat confused and uncertain about what part the Ministry plays and what part it should play, not only in relation to elementary and secondary education, but in relation to the other elements of its mandate: colleges and universities and workplace training. As well, there is uncertainty about the Ministry's responsibilities vis-a-vis other ministries that deal with children and youth.

Elementary and secondary education:
Much of the confusion about the Ministry's relationship to elementary and secondary education centres on control and the way it is exercised. The Ministry, like other government agencies, has traditionally exercised highly centralized control over Ontario education, relying primarily on regulation and monitoring to ensure compliance from boards and schools. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, control was so decentralized that school boards had a high degree of autonomy in the way they organized, set programs, and made a host of other educational decisions. Consolidating school boards, eliminating provincial school inspectors, and abandoning provincial Grade 13 examinations contributed to a shift of the balance of power toward school boards.
In addition, the Ministry no longer discharges all the responsibilities granted by legislation; for example, certification of teachers now seems to be semi-automatic, de-certification of teachers is almost non-existent, and there is a lack of follow-through on monitoring policy implementation in some areas.

In recent years, some large urban boards, especially in Metropolitan Toronto and Ottawa, have become financially independent of the Ministry, leading to further confusion about leadership in the education system. Because of educational funding provisions in Ontario, these boards raise money through local property taxes, and thus do not rely on funds from the province. This enables them to act on their own to some extent, without getting Ministry approval for all projects, or even to ignore Ministry policy directives. Some of these boards developed innovative educational programs, such as schools for the arts and for sciences, alternative schools, and other special programs which make them leaders in the province's education system. Although policy autonomy was not officially sanctioned, the Ministry seemed unable, or unwilling, to ensure compliance with many of its directives.

The result has been a considerable diversity of educational programs and experiences across the province. Although such diversity can be positive, if carried to extremes it has certain costs. In the opinion of many, there is too much variation in program and quality, and costs are not easily controlled.

During the '80s and early '90s, the Ministry also mounted a series of initiatives, such as destreaming and the Learning Program Secretariat, which seemed to further erode its credibility among various stakeholders. In the early '90s, many educators saw provincial policy as characterized by fragmentation, lack of coherence, lack of consistency, and probably most crucial, lack of accountability.

Although the Ministry has produced some excellent resource materials, these have less impact than might be expected. We were told that over the past decade the Ministry has prepared some remarkable documents: guidelines, resource guides, curriculum supports, and the like. The problem is that, reflecting the tensions between the Ministry and the school boards, the boards often pay little attention to the Ministry. As a result, few classroom teachers even know that this material is available, and students are denied the benefit of its existence.

We believe that in a province with the scale and diversity of Ontario, and especially in such uncertain times, there must be a clear and consistent direction for education, achieved through common learning outcomes, a common curriculum, and standards across the province. Therefore, the Ministry must play a clearer role.

However, it must exercise its authority thoughtfully and systematically, using the power and influence of a central authority to generate a sense of common purpose in the educational community. This will reduce the fragmentation of many local school boards and schools "doing their own thing," and ensure that there is some shared understanding throughout the province. The Ministry must strengthen the links between elementary and secondary education and the broader community.

The challenge for the Ministry is to respond to the need for local differentiation, while providing the necessary direction and clear expectations. It must set general policy guidelines to be followed by the system; setting the direction means setting the agenda for the province's education system. The Ministry must set the priorities for Ontario education, clarify goals, and define the desired outcomes. That would give everyone in the system targets to work towards, and criteria by which to decide among the many competing priorities.
The Ministry must also be responsible for providing equitable funding for all students across the province, setting guidelines to ensure that students' voices receive serious attention. They must ensure that teachers play a central role in running schools, that parents are welcomed into schools, that the common curriculum is followed, and that the system is truly accountable to the public.

By setting guidelines in these different areas, the Ministry can divest itself of direct control and the need to over-regulate. It also gives principals and teachers the mandate to make schools work better, and makes the proposed College of Teachers responsible for teacher education and professional development. Furthermore, by taking seriously the advice of advisory councils, such as the Ontario Parents Council and the student and youth council we recommend, the Ministry would demonstrate that real influence can be exerted on the system through consultation and without formal powers.

**The Ministry's accountability for elementary and secondary education:**
In our view, the Ministry must work in a more systematic and collaborative way than it has done in the past, with both old and new stakeholders. Right now, it often seems to operate in isolation from its clients and other stakeholders. It is seen as placing demands on the school system in a confused and disorganized fashion, with constant reorganization and major policy shifts, many of which are delivered without an adequate and compelling rationale.

Throughout the course of our work, we heard complaints about the many changes of direction made by the Ministry of Education and Training, and the additional demands it has placed on schools and school boards in the past few years. Educators are particularly concerned about the lack of professional expertise in the Ministry to ensure expert input into the Ministry's decision-making process and to help boards when they need assistance.

We sympathize with these concerns, and believe that the Ministry needs to pay attention to its constituencies and, as we have stressed, communicate clearly the overall direction of education in Ontario, as well as the intended outcomes of policies. At the same time, the Ministry has to take a leadership role, knowing full well that policy may have to come before consensus has been reached.

The Ministry must be more accountable to the public and to the education community. In Chapter 19, we propose a format for an annual report from the Minister that we believe will be an effective way for the public to get enough information to make informed judgments about elementary and secondary education in the province.

We caution educators and the public that they may be hoping for the impossible if they believe that the Ministry can issue a complete and unambiguous educational plan for the whole province that will receive universal acclaim.

In Chapter 20, when we discuss implementing reforms, we stress that although the Ministry must be clear and firm about the general principles of its educational vision, people on school boards and in schools will have to apply these principles in ways that make sense in the local context. And because the situation is dynamic it is difficult - if not impossible - to predict in advance just what circumstances will arise.

Teachers' unions in Ontario also belong in this discussion. Through collective agreements, negotiated locally with each school board, the federations have a significant influence on education practice at both the elementary and secondary levels. They affect policy in many ways and are actively involved in professional development for teachers.
The relationship between the Ministry and the federations is important but difficult. It seems obvious to us that, if the education system is to improve in the many ways we have prescribed, it is essential that both sectors must focus on building collaboration within the system. The Ministry, boards, and the federations must work together in the service of better learning for students.

**Recommendation 157**

*We recommend that the Ministry clearly set out its leadership and management role, especially in relation to school boards, teacher federations, and faculties of education, and that it develop a plan for more complete communication with all those interested in elementary and secondary education.*

Beyond elementary and secondary education:
In addition to schools and school boards, there are several other partners in the broader education community. All have interests in, and power over, some aspects of elementary and secondary education. None can be ignored.

In this regard it is important to note that in 1992 the Ministry of Education became the Ministry of Education and Training, incorporating the three former Ministries of Education, Colleges and Universities, and Skills Development. It now has responsibility for post-secondary education and, through the Ontario Training Adjustment Board, for training as well. The Ministry's broader mandate has significant implications in relation to its place in the elementary and secondary education system. The Ministry is directly responsible for policy governing education and training at all levels; this should considerably ease the difficulties of aligning related policy areas that, until recently, operated as distinct and separate entities.

The Ministry's responsibilities to the broader educational system also suggest to us that it must make a priority of better transition programs between the various sectors. We think it is important for the Ministry, in the next several years, to be actively involved in assuring a significant increase in partnerships and co-ordination among schools, colleges, and universities, so that educational services are better articulated and structured as an accessible continuum.

As well, through the training board, the Ministry has a strategic role in rationalizing education and training policies and resources. And, as a super-ministry responsible for one of the two largest areas of social policies and programs, it is a central and crucial part of the provincial government.

We strongly urge that the Ministry use its power to influence government planning so that the needs of learners of all ages are addressed in a more co-ordinated manner.

Colleges and universities are a powerful influence on elementary and secondary education. Beyond the particular interests of colleges and universities in relation to high-school students and graduates, universities - and faculties of education, in particular - have an impact through their control of many aspects of teacher education, including admission to teacher preparation programs and development of the curriculum for student teachers.

As we noted in Chapter 12, because they control admissions, universities and faculties of education act as gatekeepers to the teaching profession. The Ministry can make significant strides with these partners to bring about more collaborative action in support of educational reform.

Our proposed College of Teachers (see Chapter 12) will play a key role in the education system we
We recommend that an Ontario College of Teachers be established, with responsibility for setting professional standards for the teaching profession. This would include accreditation or recognition of teacher education programs and establish the requirements for initial and continuing certification. The formation of the college is intended to grant teachers control over many aspects of their professional lives. The college should not be controlled by any special interest group.

Given the mandate of the new Ministry of Education and Training, elementary and secondary education is now a force in the larger world of education and training. Educators in the Ministry's various sectors cannot afford to act in isolation, either fiscally or educationally. The era of autonomous sectors is gone, and all concerned must learn to take account of the wider education community.

With its very broad mandate, the Ministry of Education and Training is ideally placed to ensure that elementary and secondary education policies are more closely integrated with policy relating to higher education, with workplace training, and with lifelong learning.

**The Ministry and the rest of government - beyond education and training:**

Throughout this report, we emphasize the need for a more comprehensive approach to education. Learning takes place within a social context and, while educators must focus on their prime responsibility - ensuring intellectual development - we also discuss their shared responsibilities in meeting a whole host of needs that are part of the lives of children.

In Chapter 14 we discuss community education as one of the engines for change and define the roles and responsibilities of principals, schools, and school boards in creating community alliances to support the learning process. The Ministry also has a critical role and responsibility in this regard. Because it is responsible for education and training in this province, the Ministry is in a unique position to understand the needs of learners and particularly the blocks to a successful educational experience. We believe that a key priority for the Ministry must be the co-ordinated development of government policies, programs, and services to create a more effective network of support services for learners and their families as a means of ensuring the healthy development of all children.

This has a number of implications for the Ministry. Just as teachers cannot isolate themselves within the world of the classroom, the Ministry can no longer isolate itself within the world of education. It must have a significant interest in, and build the capacity to play, a key role in shaping all public policies related to the healthy development of children.

This includes policy areas with which the Ministry has traditionally been associated - social services and health, for example - as well as less familiar areas, such as recreation, employment, and culture. Just as principals and schools must be leaders in building community alliances to better support student learning, so too must the Ministry take a leadership role in building provincial alliances that better support learning in this province.

At the provincial level, that means active participation in reviewing policies, programs, and funding structures to create a more co-ordinated and comprehensive network of supports for children and their families. Locally, it means active participation in assessing local needs and planning local approaches to service delivery.

In the same way that all stakeholders in education must find new ways to collaborate, the Ministry must develop new collaborative approaches with other government players. Provincially, that involves assuming responsibility for developing collaboration among various government and provincial interests.
Locally, it means assuming responsibility for developing collaboration among various local interests and education partners.

**Minority participation and influence in the Ministry's decision-making:**

We know that some stakeholders do not perceive the Ministry as being representative and inclusive of all individuals and communities in the schools - not even of those formally granted constitutional rights, such as the Roman Catholic and Franco-Ontarian minorities. While we address the question of representation of our diverse communities in several parts of the report, here we consider the issue of sharing power within Ministry structures.

First, the formally recognized components of the education system must also be formal parts of the Ministry. Although, over the years, slow recognition of the Franco-Ontarian minority led to the development of what the Ministry calls a team, there is no parallel body for Roman Catholics. That is why, in Chapter 15, we recommend that a team be established with special responsibilities for and expertise in Catholic education concerns, similar to the francophone team. We hope, of course, that these teams will not be reduced to speaking only about their specific issues, but will become part of the Ministry's mainstream.

But we want to go further than such basic organizational recognition of minority constituencies. We also recommend that influential representation from the Catholic and Franco-Ontarian educational milieux be put in place at all levels of professional and managerial Ministry staff.

We note that the francophone minority has had an assistant deputy Minister (ADM) position for some 15 years now. But, as observation and experience show - despite titles and functions a structure can always informally marginalize certain players, especially those with responsibilities for minorities. The more significant the representation, the less likely the marginalization. Indeed, we believe that over the years such senior positions will be filled by individuals recognized as outstanding leaders.

It is therefore only natural that, in the near future, a person from the Catholic or francophone educational world will become the deputy minister of Training and Education for Ontario, with responsibility for managing the entire system.

As a group, assistant deputy ministers should be truly representative of the grassroots of the educational community. Although there is no magic formula for creating true political participation, we have already recommended that, at all times, ADMs should formally include one Roman Catholic and one francophone of influence. Of course, there may well be more than one of each - we are not promoting mere tokenism.

**Recommendation 158**

*In order to maximize their influence within the Ministry, we recommend that assistant deputy ministers representing particular constituencies be placed in charge of the portfolio of issues related to their respective constituencies, as well as being responsible for other important dossiers related to education for all Ontarians.*

**A Ministry presence at the local level:**

In a province as large and diverse as Ontario, the Ministry clearly cannot govern education entirely from downtown Toronto. As we note later, the Ministry must link with other ministries, as well as with others in the broader educational community, and must do so at the provincial and local levels.
As well as the central Ministry of Education and Training offices in Toronto, there are six regional offices throughout the province: central, eastern, mid-northern, northeastern, northwestern, and western. Because the offices are located in communities around the province, they are well placed to take a lead role in co-ordination at the local level, where as we stress in Chapter 14, action is most crucial. We would encourage the Ministry to make this a priority for all its regional offices.

The regional offices can also play a vital role in helping to foster better relations between the Ministry and the school boards. They can ensure that provincial policy directions are understood, that implementation takes local realities into account, that exemplary practices are shared, and that pressing problems are jointly addressed and resolved.

The provincial government

We have discussed the issue of co-ordinating the efforts of all those who deal with the needs of children and youth. The Ministry cannot act alone; the provincial government must play a significant part in co-ordinating the many ministries that have an impact on the well-being of children. Without commitment and co-ordination at the top, it will be impossible to succeed. There is no question that such inter-ministerial co-ordination is difficult to initiate, and even more difficult to sustain - as demonstrated recently by difficulties in maintaining an inter-ministerial committee established for the purpose of co-ordinating services for children.

Yours, Mine, and Ours, the report of the Children and Youth Project Steering Committee of the Premier's Council on Health, Well-Being, and Social Justice, was specifically concerned about ensuring such inter-ministerial links. It reported that

The provincial government, as legislator, regulator, policy-maker and funder, has a key role in encouraging positive change at the community level ... The Committee is asking the Province to act as a catalyst and enabler of change - [to] set standards; ensure equity; link resources to measurable results and evaluate success; encourage communities to build on current initiatives that are working; promote creativity and flexibility; and support communities to find their own innovative solutions. (15)

While we endorse this statement and urge the government to move ahead on these lines as quickly as possible, we go further. If large numbers of children continue to suffer the effects of poverty; if teachers and schools are made responsible for delivering an increasing number of social programs, in addition to traditional academic programs; if agencies funded by other departments of government continue to define their responsibilities as separate from schools; then the government, which has the power to re-deploy resources and to change mandates, has failed.

While we call on the Minister of Education and Training to provide leadership within government, we know that only when government at the highest levels decides that inter-departmental collaboration is non-negotiable will it occur. And without that decisiveness and that leadership, the best teachers and the best principals will be unable to meet the agenda we have set for them: to develop and nurture high levels of literacies in all our children.
Conclusion

We believe that, in spite of changes in society and in education, the overall organizational structure of education in Ontario still makes sense. It is important to start with the teacher-student relationship and build the system to support it, with the bottom line being student learning. While schools, school boards, and the Ministry of Education and Training have important roles to play, there is an important need to clarify these roles, and to shift power and responsibilities, as appropriate, to better suit changed circumstances.

Henry Mintzberg, a well-known organizational theorist at McGill University, writes "Power is a major factor, one that cannot be ignored by anyone interested in understanding how organizations work and end up doing what they do."(16) All those with a stake in the school system - the Minister of Education and Training; the ministry's civil service; school board trustees and administrators; universities; principals; teachers; teacher federations; parents; the business community; even, from time to time, students themselves - try to increase their own power.

Our proposals, here and in Chapters 15 and 16, are attempts to find a better balance among all these forces, a balance that will achieve system goals, promote effective use of resources, redress inequities, and respond to the needs of different parts of the system and of Ontario's various geographic regions.

Although we do not recommend any radical changes in the overall organizational structure of education in the province, we do recommend a review and redefinition of some roles and responsibilities. We are also suggesting a shift of some responsibilities away from school boards. In some cases, these would move to the schools, in others to the Ministry.

We anticipate a reorganization or downsizing of central office staff as a result of other recommendations in the report, particularly those related to curriculum development (see Chapters 7 to 10) and taxing powers (discussed in Chapter 18). That may be countered somewhat by increased responsibilities in relation to community education alliances (as discussed in Chapter 14).

On balance, we try to ensure that, within clearly understood and agreed-upon provincial guidelines, local communities and their schools have the scope to meet their needs as they see fit. Our proposals protect students and the public by ensuring high standards, as well as clarity about curriculum and intended learning, right across the province. At the same time, they allow teachers, principals, parents, and their local communities not only the freedom, but the resources, to craft their own solutions and programs. In other words, we see the school system as combining stability and flexibility as much as possible.

Endnotes (Chapter 17)


4. For a good summary of the research, see Suzanne Ziegler, *The Effects of Parent Involvement on Children's Achievement: The Significance of Home/School Links*, report 185 (Toronto Board of Education, 1987).

   For more detail, see reports by Joyce L. Epstein, one of the more recent ones being "School and Family Connections," in *Families in Community Settings*, ed. D.G. Unger and M.B. Sussman (New York: Haworth Press, 1990).


6. We acknowledge that the Chicago reforms have received mixed reviews from observers, participants, and researchers. On balance, however, we are aware of no compelling evidence that would suggest Ontario should follow this kind of school governance model. See, for instance, Anthony S. Bryk and others, "The State of Chicago School Reform," *Phi Delta Kappan* 76, no. 1 (1994): 74-78.


8. Of the 170-odd Ontario boards, 20 are called District School Area Boards. These and another eight very small Roman Catholic Separate School boards operate mostly in remote areas of the province, usually with only one school, with fewer than 100 students under their jurisdiction. Most of them have no administrators beyond the school principal, and are physically distant from other boards. There is also a Protestant separate school board in Penetanguishene and a board operating only a secondary school in Moosonee. Four boards do not operate schools at all, usually buying education for the students living in their area from other boards. Others are care and treatment centre boards connected with hospitals or other treatment centres in half-a-dozen cities. There are, therefore, only 128 Ontario boards that fit the image of what most people probably mean when they speak of school boards, that is, boards operating a number of schools, and having some central board administrative staff. Much of the text in this section refers, unless otherwise noted, to these 128 boards.

9. For example:


12. For instance:
   Karen Seashore Louis and Matthew B. Miles, *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and*

13. The Metropolitan Toronto Board of Trade circulated figures in December of 1993 claiming that a large proportion of staff in various Metro boards was non-teaching. In particular, they reported that only 46.1 percent of Toronto Board of Education employees were "on grid teachers." However, according to Toronto Board sources, the percentage of teaching staff is 65 to 75 percent, depending on how staff such as classroom teaching assistants are classified.


Chapter 18: Funding

Equity in education requires financial equity. Although the very complex issue of education funding in general was not a specific part of our mandate, we are convinced that our goal of providing an excellent education for all learners cannot become reality unless the way education is funded in Ontario is changed radically. This chapter explains briefly how we came to that conclusion and makes recommendations we believe will lead to more equitable learning opportunities across the province.

We are aware that financing education cannot be discussed in isolation; it is inextricably linked, not only to equity, but to the questions of power and influence we discussed in the previous chapter, and to accountability, the topic of the next chapter.

Historical context

Historically, the initiative to establish schools in Ontario came from the local level or from private sources. Local levies did not become tied to the property tax until 1849, when the Baldwin Act was passed; the following year municipalities were given the right to raise taxes on property.

Provincial funding was sporadic at best until the 1850s, when the government, under the leadership of Egerton Ryerson, introduced a systematic but limited form of grants to give more students access to schools. Ryerson also tied these grants to more regulatory measures designed to improve the quality of education across the province.

In spite of attempts to equalize the money available across Ontario, enormous disparities remained. In 1907, the government first began to pay a sliding scale of grants based on local ability to raise money; in 1924, it decided to use the amount of property assessment as the measure of local wealth. However, it was not until the 1940s, when the government introduced the concept of "approved costs," that it was able to maintain some degree of control over funding and began to achieve some degree of equity.

Initially, the province identified some specific costs for certain programs, and provided grants to ensure that all schools had enough funds to cover those costs. Gradually, during the '50s and '60s, it increased the types of expenditures included in the "approved costs" - and increased the amount of money made available to schools. At the same time, because some municipalities were deliberately undervaluing their assessment in order to attract more grant money, the province also introduced assessment equalization factors, which were used to arrive at a more uniform base for making grants to a municipality or school board. The province continued the process of making adjustments and reducing funding inequities.

In 1964, William Davis, then Minister of Education, implemented the Ontario Foundation Tax Plan, which based the cost of education on a model school program. These costs were estimated from actual
costs in sample boards across Ontario. The province set a mill rate that had to be levied by all boards and then provided grants to bring all boards up to the foundation level. (A mill represents $1 of tax for every $1,000 of property assessment; for example, a property assessed at $100,000 with a mill rate of 25 will attract taxes of $2,500.) The government also made a commitment to increase provincial support to 60 percent of education costs by 1972-73.

By allowing boards to spend funds beyond the foundation level, as long as the money was raised from local taxes, the government acknowledged local needs; at the same time, however, this built in a continuing source of spending inequity across boards, and also made it difficult to achieve the promised level of government support.

Eventually, the level of support did reach 60.5 percent, but only because the government imposed a ceiling on expenditures; boards spending more were subject to penalties. This gave the government control over the total expenditure and ensured that it knew exactly how much the 60 percent provincial share would cost. However, school boards, especially those with significant assessment possibilities, claimed that approved costs did not give sufficient weight to different local needs, and the government relaxed the penalties.

Although the government continued to identify an approved ceiling and, to ensure province-wide equity within it, continued paying grants, some boards soon began to spend well beyond the imposed limits. Until recently, the government continued to increase the ceiling and the amount it paid in grants, to account for both inflation and the cost of new programs, but the increases did not keep pace with the actual growth in board expenditures; therefore, the government's share of the total amount paid for education has slipped steadily. While in 1964, the approved costs were based on real expenditures, the current ceiling no longer reflects reality and, once again, there are great disparities in the amounts different boards spend.

**Education funding in Ontario**

Education in Ontario is financed by a combination of property taxes and provincial grants. Ontario's school boards collectively raise slightly more than half of their total revenue largely from local property taxes on residential, commercial, and industrial properties. The remaining funding comes from the province in the form of education grants. What these figures disguise, however, is that depending on the size or wealth of the local assessment base, some boards get nothing from the province, while others receive virtually their entire budget.

The proportion received from grants and from local taxes depends on the assessment wealth of the board, according to the following:

- First, the Ministry of Education and Training establishes for each board an amount per student that the board may spend; this is known as the "expenditure ceiling."
- Second, the Ministry also establishes a provincial mill rate on an equalized basis. Boards are expected to raise from local taxes the amount this mill rate will produce when applied to its assessment base.
- Third, the Ministry pays grants to a board to close any gap between the amount raised locally by the provincial mill rate and the expenditure ceiling.

Any expenditure over the ceiling has to be raised locally. School boards with a strong commercial and
industrial assessment base are able to generate the most money through local property taxes; some can spend well beyond the ceiling without taxing at a higher rate. Other boards' local tax bases cannot even support the expenditure ceiling.

Ontario's method of financing schools through a combination of property taxes and provincial grants is not unique in Canada, although a higher proportion of our education revenue comes through property taxes than in any other province. The relatively low level of direct provincial support for elementary and secondary education means that the province has less control over school-board decision-making, particularly with boards that have the capacity to raise entire budgets from local taxes.

Current concerns

Based on our public hearings, combined with insights from our research,(1) it is clear that two issues are important to the future of school reform. The first is equity - the question of whether the system distributes available resources in a manner that is fair to all students in the province. The second issue is what we call adequacy - the question of what funding is required to provide the kind of school program we envision.

Equity

Educational equity, the necessity of which we have stressed throughout the report (particularly in Chapters 15 and 16), requires financial equity. Although Ontario does not suffer from the extreme inequities common in some parts of the United States (for example, some New York suburbs spend twice as much as nearby inner city boards),(2) there are serious problems with the Ontario system, in comparison both with other provinces and with what most people believe would be fair.

There is still a gap of several thousand dollars between per-pupil expenditures in boards like Ottawa and Toronto on the one hand, and the Roman Catholic separate school boards in Chapleau, Geraldton, and Kenora on the other. When the higher building and transportation costs in these assessment-poorer boards are factored in, the differences in amounts available, per pupil, for actual in-class expenditures is still greater. Even public boards in relatively large urban centres such as Hamilton and London have considerably lower assessment wealth and spend significantly less per pupil than Ottawa or Metro Toronto, and separate school boards in those areas have even less.

As a result of variations in assessment wealth, many boards provide program levels that appear to be significantly in excess of provincial standards, while others have difficulty offering a basic program and very few options. In the past, when resources were more readily available, the inequities could be dealt with by increasing the level of the "have-nots" to that of the "haves," but this is no longer possible. Instead, the same pie must be sliced and distributed differently. Given that some boards will get a smaller portion, proposals for such funding reforms are necessarily controversial.

At the public hearings, we were told repeatedly that the method of funding education makes it almost impossible for some boards to provide what the speakers considered adequate education programs and services to students without incurring serious deficits. As well, taxes on commercial and industrial assessment are linked to concerns about businesses failing or moving out of a jurisdiction.

These funding issues are not new; several commissions have concluded that the current system is not working. In December 1985, the Commission on the Financing of Elementary and Secondary Education
in Ontario (the Macdonald commission) came to that conclusion, as did the Fair Tax Commission in 1993.

On the face of it, the current funding scheme is equitable: the combination of grants and taxation means that boards receive the same revenue up to the expenditure ceiling. It is, in fact, deeply flawed in regard to both revenue within the ceiling, and, most certainly, in regard to the revenue needed beyond the ceiling.

There are several key sources of inequity in the current system, many of which we heard about in the hearings and submissions.

**Determination and direction of commercial and industrial revenue**

There is a difference in the way some commercial and industrial revenue is determined and who receives it. For example, the main industries in northern Ontario are related to forestry, mining, and hunting and fishing. A pulp-and-paper company in the area covered by the Red Lake Board of Education pays stumpage fees for the trees it cuts, not taxes on the land on which the trees are cut. That fee is paid to the Province of Ontario, not directly to the local school board, although some will be returned through the grants that the province pays to the school board. The rest goes into general revenues, out of which the province pays grants to other school boards and for other initiatives. However, the same pulp-and-paper company pays taxes on its mill operation directly to the school board in Kenora.

Similarly, hunting and fishing licences are paid to the province, which means that no education tax is generated by the land and water on which the hunting and fishing take place. Taxes on some mining operations are paid to the province, while other operations provide a rich source of income for the local municipality and school board. These tax anomalies were also identified by the Fair Tax Commission, and were addressed in several of their recommendations.

**Tax revenue from corporate head offices and seats of government**

Commercial and industrial revenue is often generated in one place but paid to a municipal authority in another. In most such cases, it is paid to larger urban centres, regardless of where it has actually been generated. For instance, major corporate head offices tend to be clustered in a few large urban areas, while the corporate income comes from across the province.

The presence of Parliament in Ottawa and of the Ontario Legislature in Toronto generates considerable tax revenue for those cities, through direct government spending and the spending of government employees, as well as through the impact on tourism.

The taxes that sustain these operations, as well as taxes that directly or indirectly subsidize such tourist attractions as the National Arts Centre (which gets tax money raised in all parts of Canada), the Ontario Science Centre, and SkyDome come from all parts of the province - as do visitors to them. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Ottawa Board of Education has almost twice the provincial average of per-pupil property assessment wealth, while Metropolitan Toronto has more than twice the provincial average.

**Access to commercial and industrial tax base by separate school boards**
Not only are there inequities between locations in the province, there are inequities between the ability of Roman Catholic and public boards to raise funds in the same geographic areas. (Because more than 80 percent of French-language students are also Roman Catholic, they, too, are affected by this disparity.) For example, Roman Catholic school boards continue to have limited access to the commercial and industrial tax base.

In response to recommendations of the Macdonald commission, the province introduced co-terminous pooling: placing the commercial and industrial taxes collected in the area covered by a public board and a Roman Catholic board - or a French-language board where one exists - into a pool from which both draw funds.

However, this has not removed all the inequities that exist between the two systems: pooling is still being phased in, and funds are currently distributed to the boards, not on the basis of per-pupil needs, but in proportion to the amount of assessment homeowners direct to each board. Given that all boards strive to obtain adequate funding, this method of apportioning remains a source of friction between public and separate boards, and constitutes an obstacle to co-operation between local boards.

In presenting the 1993 budget, the Minister of Finance announced that funding would be changed to a per-pupil basis, but that will only be phased in beginning in 1996.

**Default provision**

People who for various reasons - ignorance, misinformation, negligence - do not specifically direct their taxes to the separate school board or to a French-language board are assumed to be public school supporters, and their taxes are automatically sent to the English-language public board. This is done under what is known as the "default provision," and has generally resulted in public school boards getting more than their fair share of property taxes from the residential, commercial, and industrial assessments.

In brief, then, the key sources of inequitable funding are:

- the way commercial and industrial revenues are determined and directed;
- the fact that tax revenue from corporate head offices and seats of government, although generated across the province, are directed only to the municipality in which these headquarters reside;
- lack of access to the commercial and industrial tax base by separate school boards;
- the default provision.

The first three are related to the inequitable distribution of the commercial and industrial tax revenues - inequities either across regions, or between separate and public boards. We believe our recommendations will resolve all three issues.

The fourth is concerned with inequity in the distribution of the residential assessment, and we also make a recommendation to resolve this problem.

The Fair Tax Commission recommended that the use of commercial and industrial property taxes to pay for education be eliminated and replaced by provincial funding from other sources, including personal income tax.

There are other options as well, but it is not within our mandate or competence to prescribe the precise means to reach the desired end - greater financial equity across the province. We do insist, however, that
the government is responsible for ensuring that there is an equitable amount of money available, per pupil, across the province so that each student gets the programs and services necessary for achieving the recommended learning outcomes. It can do so only if most of the amount spent on education is determined provincially on a per-pupil basis.

We want to emphasize that when we recommend more equitable funding, we are emphatically not saying that all boards should receive exactly the same amount per pupil. There are legitimate reasons why some should spend more money on some or all their students. For example, French-language education may require more funds, especially in areas that are not near centres of Franco-Ontarian culture. That is the reason for our earlier recommendation of funding for *animation culturelle*. Similarly, boards in the north, particularly those not in urban areas, have higher operating costs, as do schools in communities with significant numbers of immigrants.

We therefore support the government's current practice of using different weighting factors or special grants to adjust the amounts paid to individual schools boards.

The kinds of change we recommend throughout this report are possible only if there is equitable funding for all students, regardless of where they live. That, in turn, is possible only if the government restructures the funding system for elementary and secondary education. But we note that there are many parts of the province where different kinds of grants or weighting factors would be taken into account, and it is impossible to predict in advance what the concrete financial consequences for individual boards would be, with a more equitable finance system.

**Recommendations 159, 160**

*We recommend that equal per-pupil funding across the province, as well as additional money needed by some school boards for true equity, be decided at the provincial level, and that the province ensure that funds be properly allocated.*

*We also recommend that boards be allowed to raise a further sum, no greater than 10 percent of their provincially determined budget, from residential assessment only.*

Because the so-called default system tends to create a windfall for the English-language public school system, and in view of our recommendation that there should continue to be limited access to the residential assessment base, further action is necessary.

**Recommendation 161**

*We recommend that all residential property owners be required to direct their taxes to the school system they are entitled to and wish to support, and that undirected taxes be pooled and distributed on a per-pupil basis.*

**Adequacy**

It seems to us that neither equity nor fair weighting practices are possible as long as there is a lack of clarity about the level of programs and services established for all Ontario students.

As we indicated in our brief history of funding, it has been 30 years since the implementation of the Ontario Foundation Tax Plan, which was based on actual costs at that time. From 1991 to 1993, the Ministry's Education Finance Reform Project worked on determining, again, the real costs of education, and on developing a new funding model that would lead to greater equity. The Ministry has not yet acted
on the work of this project.

Given our mandate and timelines, the Commission cannot address the question of adequacy more thoroughly. We note, however, that the combination of a lack of equity in the access to funding, and a distribution of resources that no longer bears any relationship to actual cost, is bound to increase the sense of injustice felt by so many Ontarians.

Therefore, we urge the Ministry of Education and Training to build on the work of such groups as the Fair Tax Commission and the Education Finance Reform Project and establish exactly how much money is needed to provide an adequate education program in all parts of Ontario, including the required support services called for in our recommendations.

**Recommendation 162**

*We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training first decide what it considers to be an adequate educational program for the province, and then determine the cost of delivering this program in various areas of the province, taking into account different student needs and varying community characteristics, such as geography, poverty rates, and language, that affect education costs.*

**Conclusion**

We have addressed the two key funding issues of equity and adequacy. Some of the concerns about efficiency that were brought to our attention were discussed in Chapter 17. In Chapter 19, when we look at accountability, we will deal with these concerns again. Our recommendations for centralizing curriculum development, having school boards enter into arrangements to share services, and creating better integrated health and social support services at the local level will help make the system more effective and efficient.

**Endnotes (Chapter 18)**

1. See, for example:


ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
©Copyright 1994, Queens Printer for Ontario
Chapter 19: The Accountability of the System

The combination of two phenomena - the world-wide focus on quality, results, and accountability, and the emphasis of educating all of society to a much higher level and for a quite different world - has put tremendous pressure on education systems, schools, and educators.

G. Rappolt, "Toward Accountability and Results-Oriented Education," Orbit 24, no. 2

Accountability in education: What does it involve?

In this era of decreasing revenues and increasing uncertainty about the future, accountability is a key concern for many people. Virtually all public institutions have been criticized for failing to meet the needs of the groups they were intended to serve. In education, the dissatisfaction is often coupled with a belief that if only schools and those who teach in them were more "accountable," the problems relating to standards of learning and effective use of tax dollars would be resolved. However, as noted by educational researcher Lorna Earl in a paper written for the Commission:

Unfortunately, it is rarely clear what is meant by accountability. It is an emotionally charged term that implies such things as striving for success, confidence, trust, communication and responsiveness, but does not define actual behaviours or practices. (1)

As with every other issue we addressed, people naturally assume that, because concerns about inadequacies of the system are easy enough to articulate, solutions are as easy to find. And, as with every other issue, it is simply not so on matters of accountability. The issues involved, in fact, are quite complex, and if people are serious about introducing accountability into the publicly funded education system - as this Commission is responses must be equal to the problem.

Accountability means exactly that: Who accounts to the public for what happens in schools? Equally, it could be called responsibility: Who is responsible for the performance of our schools? How do we know what we are entitled to expect from schools? How do we know whether schools are delivering on this entitlement? Whom do we hold to account - who is responsible - if we are not satisfied with the answers we get?

Accountability in the education system, then, means that information has to be available to the public, to taxpayers, and to parents, in a form that allows them to have reasonable expectations of the system, to make reasonable judgments about how well the system has performed, and to know who is responsible if they are not satisfied.
The most fundamental form of accountability is that of the classroom teacher to the parents, and of the
school to the community. It has been extraordinarily difficult for parents to find out simply what the
curriculum is and how their children are performing. Although our focus in this chapter is on system
accountability, the ultimate concern for parents and students is, naturally, with individual student
learning. But at both the individual and the system level, we should remember that accountability is not
an end in itself: its function is to ensure that information about performance is actually used to improve
that performance in the future. In other words, "accountability" and "reform" should always be closely
linked.

Two types of accountability are relevant: fiscal and program. Below, we look briefly at each, and then
discuss what additional measures should, in our view, be taken to satisfy the public that the educational
system is operating as it should, and that identified problems are being addressed.

Fiscal accountability" at the school, school board, and Ministry level is addressed by the use of auditing
processes to examine operations on a regular basis. As well, the Ministry conducts spot audits of boards,
examining its transportation functions, verifying enrolment figures, and ensuring that provincial grants
are used as specified. Such audits usually focus on whether funds are administered honestly and
according to regulations. Many people told us they wanted to know more about whether the system is run
as efficiently as it ought to be, and whether funds are allocated appropriately.

In his 1993 annual report, Erik Peters, the provincial auditor, looked not only at the usual fiscal issues,
but also addressed "value for money" questions, suggesting areas that needed to be improved. He noted,
for example, that:

*Present arrangements for the development and delivery of curriculum could be more cost
effective and are not adequate to determine that a curriculum of consistent quality in both
official languages is taught and learned across the province. Therefore, procedures to
measure and report on the effectiveness of education programs and services are not yet
satisfactory. (2)*

We believe that such initiatives should continue, but we caution that auditing an education system is a
complicated process. As we stressed in Chapter 11, on assessment procedures, the qualitative acts of
teaching and learning do not easily lend themselves to quantitative measures of efficiency and
effectiveness; judging schools on the basis of inappropriate tools does not contribute to public
knowledge."

Program accountability," in the sense of establishing and assuring quality of student performance, is a
key priority. We agree with the many observers, both in and outside the educational system, who believe
the time has come for a clear set of criteria by which performance can be judged: people need to know
what students are expected to have learned by the time they complete a given course or grade (the
outcomes) - and what different levels of achievement mean (standards). Such a framework can, and must,
be used to monitor and enhance the progress of students and the performance of the system. The results
of such monitoring must be communicated in an understandable and timely way to all stakeholders.

In Chapter 11 we addressed the need for clearer and more useful assessment of student learning - a very
large part of improved program accountability. That is the purpose of the province-wide literacy tests we
recommend for every student in Grades 3 and 11. And individual results to students and parents, and
system results to all interested parties must be clearly communicated. That these system-wide
assessments are associated with what we term "literacy guarantees" is a particularly powerful accountability mechanism. Of course, the question of the adequacy of the standards applied to the test results is also a fundamental accountability question.

We have also said that the Ministry should continue to conduct other program reviews, through testing sample groups of students across the province. Results from such reviews make it possible to judge the adequacy of the curriculum and whether the official curriculum is actually being taught and learned in schools.

Beyond that, student assessment would be primarily the responsibility of the teacher and the school board, and, as we note, it is important for all teachers to learn more about how best to assess student learning and use the results of assessments to improve instruction and program.

Who is accountable?

The education system involves both elected and appointed policy makers, and both are accountable for their actions. At the local level, trustees are accountable to the electorate every three years, although it is widely acknowledged that complications exist: there is little attention paid by the media to the activities of boards of education, little useful discussion of education issues during elections, and notoriously low voter turnouts. At the provincial level, the Minister of Education and Training is, of course, accountable to the electorate whenever an election is held, as is the government as a whole.

Although such political accountability is important, it hardly seems sufficient to us, because the information that would allow voters to make informed decisions about the system may well not be available. In terms of political accountability, policy makers at the local and provincial level must answer for the soundness of their policies, and also, to some extent, for the results of those policies.

On the administrative and managerial side, there is a need for accountability for implementing policies and for monitoring the process and the impact of implementation.

If education policy makers are going to be held accountable, they will need measures of educational quality. Without these, they cannot report reliably and meaningfully on the soundness of their policies.

Indicators of quality

The education system, like any other publicly funded system, is accountable to the public for operating effectively, efficiently, and equitably - although, as we have stressed, such accountability is far easier to demand than to deliver. If the system is to be as accountable as possible, there must be far more clarity about its purposes or objectives. We believe that considerably more information should be made available, and it should be collected regularly and presented in more consistent, understandable, and meaningful ways. This will enable members of the public to look at it and arrive at their own conclusions about how well the system is operating.

The first step in the process, as we emphasize in Chapter 17, is that the provincial government, through the Ministry of Education and Training, establish clear directions and expectations for the education system, in terms of student learning, regular assessment, parental involvement, and other important objectives.
The term "indicators" is used to refer to quantitative and qualitative data that describe various features of the school system. The obvious problem is that from an education system as vast as Ontario's, one can derive endless statistics, and there can be indicators that tell us something about literally any part of the system - and they may refer to the student, school, board, or provincial level. Decisions about appropriate indicators of a successful system will determine what kind of information should be collected.

Student achievement is the most obvious indicator of the effectiveness of an education system. If students are doing well on measures of learning in relation to standards established locally and those established province-wide or beyond, schools and school systems are usually considered to be doing their jobs satisfactorily and providing value for taxpayers' dollars.

At the moment, there is a wide-spread sense that schools are not doing the jobs well enough, based on both anecdotal evidence and media reports of certain provincial, national, and international tests.

Questions of acceptable standards and their levels, became a particularly contentious issue in Ontario in 1994, when the results of Grade 12 writing reviews and Grade 9 reading and writing tests were released. Members of the public seem to be concerned that expectations of students are too low, and that acceptable standards are not high enough.

While this report consistently stresses the need for more challenging and rigorous learning for our children, we stress that an in-depth sense of student achievement is far more difficult to assess than the media and the public often seem to think.

Moreover, student achievement, crucial as it is, is not the only indicator of the quality of the system, and it is not the only outcome for which the system is accountable to the public.

Other indicators of educational success and quality include such factors as the proportion of students who enter college or university, or who enter employment readily; the relative representation of minority students across all achievement levels and across different programs; per-pupil costs; the drop-out rate (the percentage of students who leave school before graduating); attendance rates of both staff and students; the rate at which students progress through the school system. A different type of indicator, but an important one, relates to the way in which teacher and administrator performance is evaluated, and how the results of evaluation are used to improve performance of individuals and of the system as a whole.

There are also indicators that are not (or not directly) learning related, but also suggest the degree to which a school or system is well managed. These include cost efficiencies, implementation of fair employment practices, and the achievement of acceptable standards of workplace and school safety.

Finally, we believe that the level of satisfaction expressed by students and parents - and, to some extent, by the community - is also a useful indicator. To what extent do these groups feel their concerns are addressed, their ideas welcomed, their needs met?

Policy makers and administrators can, through regular and systematic sampling of student, parent, and public opinion, be alerted to potential problems that need to addressed. Let us be clear: we are by no means suggesting that education policy and practice should be determined by public opinion. It should not. However, if an education system is to serve its public well, the system should monitor the concerns and reactions of those it serves.
Assessment agency

Until recently, Ontario, in comparison with other jurisdictions, did not place a high priority on monitoring, assessing, and reporting various aspects of school system performance, at either the provincial or local level. The problem is that, without regular monitoring, teachers and principals do not receive the kind of feedback that allows them to adjust their instruction and curriculum planning. Nor does the public have the information on which to base reasonable judgments of schools. Assessments, therefore, must not only be carried out, but must be widely reported in understandable ways.

Although most people, including educators, are coming to agree that more monitoring of system performance is justified, there is little consensus on just how this should be done. There is particular disagreement on whether an independent agency should evaluate and report on the system, or whether the responsibility should be left with the Ministry: there is some concern about the capacity of the Ministry to carry out monitoring, or to be as open and objective as required.

In other countries, including the United States and Australia, there are models of agencies that do large-scale assessments; they usually operate nationally rather than just at the state level. They tend to be quite large institutions that develop tests, administer them, and report on the results. Such large-scale assessments are extremely expensive to develop and administer, and are not easy to change when there are major shifts in curriculum policies.

While throughout our work we have been reluctant to recommend the creation of new bureaucratic structures, largely for the reasons just cited, we found, in the end, that the argument for an outside assessment agency is persuasive.

Education policy is set by governments and, therefore, is by definition political. But in matters of assessment, public credibility is probably the overriding need. Therefore, an arm's-length agency, removed from the political arena, seems to be the inevitable solution.

We see such an agency as consisting of a small number of experts in education and assessment with overall responsibility for evaluating and reporting on the success of Ontario's education policies. As a mark of its independence, this Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability, as we have chosen to call it, would report directly to the Legislature, perhaps through the Standing Committee on Social Development.

The first job of the new office would be responsibility for the Grade 3 language and mathematics test and for the Grade 11 literacy test, as recommended in Chapter 11 for all students. To keep the office small and flexible, it would not itself develop and administer these tests, but would contract with assessment experts, preferably, but not exclusively, from Ontario.

The contract process would involve issuing a public call for proposals, to be advertised widely. We would hope that the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) and other Ontario graduate schools of education would respond enthusiastically to the call for proposals, as would measurement experts in departments of psychology or elsewhere.

**Recommendation 163 (Cf. Chapter 11, Rec. 51)**

*We recommend that the government establish an Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability, reporting to the Legislature. Its first responsibility would be the Grades 3 and 11 system-wide, every-student*
The Ministry and school boards have a variety of information-gathering mechanisms that can and should be adapted to give additional information on such things as drop-out rates and breakdown of data by region, language, gender, race, etc. There is no need for other agencies to develop new systems, but it is important that the existing systems be improved to ensure that necessary information is available for the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability and for the Ministry, so they can provide accurate information to the public on the effectiveness of the entire education system.

**Accountability and consistency**

What is critical, and what will require some changes in data-gathering and reporting procedures, is that the data be comparable from board to board and from year to year. One of the problems in assessing today's education system is a lack of good past data for useful comparisons. Information on drop-out rates, for instance, has been difficult to get and to interpret, but the Ministry, in collaboration with several school boards, is currently developing common systems for tracking and reporting them.

Over a number of years, many school boards have developed their own systems for keeping track of information about programs, staff, students, and finances, as well as about student achievement. Not surprisingly, they are reluctant to abandon their investments by adopting new and different systems, even though these might be more useful for province-wide use.

However, we note that adoption of the Grades 3 and 11 tests will require all school boards to use a single provincial identification number for students; once that is done, developing a single database for all students in the province will be much easier. The Ministry established a Student Information System in 1986, which could be the basis of an expanded system for tracking students; it would be important to maintain data after students leave the system, in order to do longitudinal research when that is appropriate.

We have already mentioned other existing mechanisms for accountability, such as the work of the provincial auditor, and other provincial reviews and audits. We expect these mechanisms to continue to be used, but see a need for clearer guidelines, as well as for greater public scrutiny and reporting.

We firmly believe that the best way to ensure accountability is to make public the relevant information about the characteristics and performance of the school system, and to publish it in a way that is readily understood and interpreted by people. Only then can members of the public decide whether their schools are providing the kind and level of service they want.

In recent years, the Ministry has not always closely monitored boards' implementation of its policies and related programs. Monitoring is sometimes perfunctory: boards are required to file documents showing they have the required policy statement or plan (on special education, for example, or on anti-racism), but not whether that policy or plan is, in fact, being implemented in the schools - or, even more important, whether the policy is having the intended effect.

We believe that provincial policies should be developed in terms of broad directions, and should be accompanied by a clear description of how they are to be assessed. Then, the most important monitoring is of the intended results, or outcomes, leaving it up to school boards to decide the details of how they are to be achieved.
The difficult challenge is to balance central direction-setting and monitoring with local flexibility about the ways desired results are achieved, linking "top-down" and "bottom-up" strategies for reform. Because the Ministry sets the province's direction for schooling, it must articulate its sense of a shared purpose, and set clear expectations. Schools and school boards would then be responsible for deciding, within the broad guidelines, and based on their knowledge of the local context, how they will work to meet those expectations.

Although government monitoring - evaluating whether local schools are doing what they are supposed to be doing - is quite rightly seen as a key element of accountability, monitoring is expensive. Therefore, the information gathered must be available to, and actually used by, schools and school boards.

We are convinced that, in the long run, the most critical accountability mechanism is full public disclosure of all relevant data concerning school and school system performance, delivered in a meaningful form. It has been suggested to us that the Ministry ought to apply sanctions to boards that either do not comply with Ministry regulations, or whose performance is not satisfactory; withholding funds is the most frequently suggested sanction. This is difficult for the Ministry to implement, because students and parents will suffer.

We believe, however, that if data are made available to the public in ways that are understandable, consistent, and comparable, parents and the community will put pressure on schools and school boards to improve weak areas and close gaps. If they do not, trustees will not be re-elected, and it will be difficult for principals and supervisory officers to maintain any credibility. In a democracy, this is the ultimate form of accountability. In other words, we believe that if people have the information they need, they will be able to judge and act appropriately.

**Reporting**

We also believe that the information on the system indicators and on student assessment should be readily accessible, not only to the public, but, wherever possible, to the press.

The Minister of Education and Training and individual school boards prepare annual public reports, although we doubt that most Ontarians have ever read one. We think these reports could be considerably more valuable than is now the case.

In the first place, clear content guidelines for both the Minister's and school boards' annual reports, with a list of agreed-on indicators to be addressed, would make it easier for the public to understand and make judgments about the information and about the system. Although it is not difficult to agree on at least some indicators of a successful education system, achieving consensus on comparable ways of gathering, summarizing, and reporting such information is much more difficult. Various measures or indicators can be seen as snapshots, providing diagnostic information about many aspects of the school system. No one measure can give a full picture; several have to be examined together if members of the public are to make reasonable judgments. Questions of how indicators are to be developed and how the indices are to be used must be addressed by the users, and by the technical experts who develop the statistical indices.

The Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability should begin its work on this task by bringing together education stakeholders, including boards, federations, and faculties of education, as well as parent, student, and community groups. Working with the other groups, it would develop the lists of indicators and, with input from education stakeholders, decide how the indicators should be defined,
calculated, and reported.

**Recommendation 164**

*We recommend that the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability also be responsible for developing indicators of system performance, to be used at the board and provincial levels.

Indicators for school board reports would include reporting on the results of large-scale and other assessments and on audits specific to the board. Reports would also include an indication of what actions have been taken to address problems revealed by the assessment, and what further actions are planned.

The indicators used by the Ministry should also include reporting on assessments and follow-up; it would be expected that board and Ministry reports would provide summary statistics decided on by the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability.

In our view, the Quebec Ministry of Education produces reports that may be useful as an example for Ontario. Quebec's Educational Indicators for the Elementary and Secondary Levels is analogous to Ontario's Key Statistics, but is more complete. It not only tracks indicators over time, but also comments on the most important points arising from an analysis of the indicators, all presented in an attractive and easy-to-comprehend 80-page format.(3)

**Recommendation 165**

*We recommend that the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability, working with education stakeholders, also establish guidelines for the content of annual reports prepared by school boards and by the Minister of Education and Training. Further, we recommend that:

a) these reports be published and be freely and widely available in schools and community locations;

b) the Ministry of Education and Training ensure that all school boards be informed of guidelines for the reports, and that they follow those guidelines.

Moreover, we believe that boards and the Ministry must pay more attention to providing useful information to the public on an on-going basis; they should ensure that information on policies and their intended outcomes is available, as are the results of any evaluations. Some of this will be published in annual reports, but other data, such as descriptions of policies and their outcomes, will have to be provided in a more timely way; as well, there will be occasions when it is useful to have more detail than would be appropriate for an annual report.

In order to assure the public that all information and reports are accurate, that interpretations are defensible, and that boards and the Ministry are held accountable for learning, the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability should do spot checks of a sample of board reports, and monitor board and Ministry assessments of outcomes. The office should report publicly on these activities, and could do so, informally, by having the head of the office meet regularly with the Committee of the Legislature, and, formally, through an annual report. We stress that, to keep costs down, the review should be done on a sample of reports and assessments.

We would not want any structure we recommend to exist beyond its actual usefulness. It is not impossible that the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability might one day prove redundant, and it is entirely plausible that its responsibilities might need to be revised.
Recommendation 166

*We therefore recommend that the work and mandate of the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability be reviewed in five years.

In Chapter 12, we recommended the formation of an Ontario College of Teachers, as a professional self-governing body responsible for setting professional teaching standards in the province; thus, it would play a critical role in the provincial accountability framework. The college would be responsible for ensuring that high professional standards of teaching, and of teacher preparation programs, meet the needs of Ontario schools. Its duties would also include setting and monitoring the framework governing renewal of teacher certification every five years.

Because we have now recommended the addition of two new bodies to the education system, it might be helpful to summarize briefly what they would do and to whom they are accountable.

Finally, we have made recommendations concerning the education responsibilities of ministries other than that of Education and Training, and of other agencies of government. Should the government assign such duties to other government bodies, there would have to be an accountability mechanism for those agencies.

Conclusion

Until recently, issues of accountability did not receive as much attention in Ontario education as many taxpayers and members of the public would have wished. However, there have been many changes in the past few years. For instance, public reporting of the provincial Grade 9 reading and writing tests, released in the fall of 1994, not only provided board data, but school results as well.

We are of two minds about this development. On the one hand, we, of course, applaud the move to share all useful information about students' performance with the public. On the other, we remain seriously concerned that information without perspective, context, or proper interpretation can, in fact, do more harm than good. As we point out in Chapter 11, serious tests are not horse races and should not be reported or judged as such.

To appraise an entire education system on the basis of one test or a single set of tests, and to ignore the many factors that determine whether one school's students do better than another's, is an imperfect exercise at best.

We want the system to be open and accountable, and our recommendations would go far to achieving that goal. But we also want that information to be meaningful and relevant. In that context, we would hope the media will present data in a proper context in a way that enhances, rather than distorts, public understanding.

Once good information becomes available, the onus will be on the public and on parents to use it to make reasonable judgments, and to find out how schools plan to improve programs on the basis of current results.

The onus will also be on educators to work together to continue to improve their programs on the basis of the feedback represented by such results. After all, the point of developing better accountability mechanisms is to help schools to be more effective.
Endnotes (Chapter 19)


ISBN 0-7778-3577-0
©Copyright 1994, Queens Printer for Ontario
Chapter 20: Implementing the Reforms

Implementation has been referred to as the Great Barrier Reef the point at which many a good curriculum sinks without a trace.

David Pratt, Curriculum Planning, 1994

Reform asks everyone in the education system to change their roles and responsibilities, not just teachers and students.


This has been a Commission with few illusions - or at least it has tried to be. From the first, we attempted to be sensitive to the atmosphere in which we were operating, to the constraints we knew we were facing, and to the realities of the outside world.

We began our work in a public mood bordering on cynicism. "Another commission? Just what Ontario needs!" Doubtless, that was the way some people greeted the announcement of the Commission's creation. After all, had there not already been a dozen, a hundred, reports on Ontario education? Was this yet another device to stall? Would the province's education system ever be reformed?

We looked at what had happened to all the various reports that had been produced - whether their recommendations had been implemented fully, how many had been implemented half-heartedly, how many ignored completely, and why. We learned that governments have introduced an almost endless series of changes into Ontario schools over the past several decades; some of them emanated directly from studies and reports while others were so changed from the original conception as to be hardly recognizable. We felt it was important to understand the past before we made more recommendations for the future.

Throughout the writing of this report, we tried to pay attention to the lessons learned about the process of change - that is, how change happens in a massive, complex system such as Ontario's. The answer is only with supreme difficulty. The change process, perhaps not surprisingly, has proved to be almost as complex as the institution itself.

Many people would be bitterly disappointed if this report merely collected dust on a shelf; therefore, it may seem paradoxical for us to produce a scenario for a transformed school system that as we are the first to acknowledge - has an almost utopian cast to it. But it is based on quite realistic ideas, solid research, and many success stories. Idealistic? Maybe. But what a target to aim at! What a vision to help guide the next steps!
As we thought about the process of implementing the reforms advocated here, we tried to analyze, with some care, the roles of the various stakeholders in the world of education; the way each has been, and continues to be, capable of facilitating or resisting change; and the involvement each has had in recent education reforms. This chapter makes suggestions, for both the immediate and longer term, for various stakeholder groups as they begin the process of making changes needed to improve schools for all Ontarians.

It is, in fact, the public, as well as all the other stakeholders, who will decide if our recommendations should be pursued. Teachers, parents, students, administrators, citizens all must ask themselves if they are prepared to make the commitment, to take the calculated risk of moving ahead with these reforms. As well, teachers' federations are a vital group in this process. We recognize they will have concerns about some recommendations, but hope they acknowledge the way we value teachers, and the increased responsibility and recognition we give them as a crucial part of the education system.

All the groups have a vital role to play, not only in asking school boards and the Ministry to act, but in acting themselves. Among others, students must make their views known to schools; parents must insist on a stronger role in their children's schooling; and teachers must take a greater degree of collective responsibility for student learning, for their own professional growth, and for the profession.

We are also well aware that this report is being published close to the time of a provincial election. We would be disappointed if it became a political football. It deserves better, as do the Ontario students, teachers, and parents it is meant to serve, and the thousands of people who took the trouble to share their views with us. We challenge all three parties to put the needs of students first, and to commit themselves to action on the major recommendations in this report.

We believe that developing an implementation strategy was inherent in our responsibility as a Commission, and that our task would not be complete without suggestions on making our vision of schools a reality.

**Previous reports**

Our review of government reports on Ontario education over the last 25 years, since Hall-Dennis in 1968, shows that many recommendations were not actually implemented. It also shows that many of our recommendations are not new; many have appeared in earlier reports, and are still not policy.

Hall-Dennis, for instance, recommended that teachers be moved "from the fringe to the heart of professional decision-making"(1) and proposed that self-government be granted to teachers through a body to be called the College of Teachers of Ontario, which would have the power to license and discipline its members.

In his 1988 report on preventing drop-outs, George Radwanski strongly recommended universal Early Childhood Education programs as fundamental to getting children off to a good start in school.

In neither case was the recommendation adopted or implemented; when Bette Stephenson was Minister of Education she introduced a proposal for a College of Teachers, but ran into resistance from the teachers' federations. Proposals for expansion of Early Childhood Education programs have foundered on issues of cost, and on political and philosophical grounds.
However, a simple tally of the number of recommendations adopted or ignored might give a distorted picture of the impact of inquiries and reports. It could be argued that, even when recommendations are not adopted as their authors intended, such reports have a considerable effect on schools and on educational policy. Ideas that may be slightly ahead of their time, for instance, enter the discourse about education, and may shift beliefs and attitudes; they may be adopted later, when there is a more receptive climate.

Even when government adopts policies and expects school boards and schools to implement changes, the process may not go as smoothly as anticipated. One policy analyst wryly notes that "teachers have the ultimate control over policy when they enter the classroom to teach."(2) For example, the Ministry's curriculum documents, designed to provide more focus and substance to elementary-school science programs, had less impact on school programs than expected because teachers did not change their programs to the extent policy makers and curriculum developers intended. We want to avoid a similar fate for our recommendations.

The change process: How educational change happens

_Educational change is technically simple and socially complex._(3)

In the 1960s, in the midst of affluence, money was not an issue, and many people thought educational change was a simple matter of developing new programs, curricula, materials, or teaching methods, and then disseminating them (often in a form described as "teacher proof") to teachers and schools, who were expected to implement the new ways of doing things. The results of this approach were quite disappointing: teachers rarely changed their practices.

Since then, educators have learned much about the adoption and implementation of educational policy, and about the process of educational change in general. In the words of Professor Milbrey McLaughlin of Stanford University,

*Perhaps the overarching, obvious conclusion running through empirical research on policy implementation is that it is incredibly hard to make something happen, most especially across layers of government and institutions._(4)*

Whether educational change actually occurs in practice depends largely on will and skill(5): the extent to which people believe change is desirable, and the extent to which they have the necessary skill and knowledge to make the changes. Although neither is easily or directly controlled by policy makers, the issue of will or motivation is particularly difficult. Teachers, for instance, may be interested in improvement, but if changes are unilaterally imposed by policy makers and administrators, or if proposed changes do not make sense to them, it is hardly surprising if they resist.

Studies of successful and unsuccessful educational-change projects have led to some remarkably consistent findings about what factors make the difference. They amount to creating an atmosphere and conditions of pressure and support necessary to move a complex system forward. The critical factors seem to be:

- combining "top-down" and "bottom-up" strategies
- developing capacity and skill through training and assistance
- leadership at all levels that clarifies priorities and encourages others
teacher participation and commitment
- a significant but manageable scope of change
- open sharing of information
- monitoring progress and solving problems.

Our suggestions for implementing change take these into account. Although it is important to create a mandate for change and to monitor progress, policy makers who rely solely on these two approaches will be disappointed if they hope for significantly improved schools. The Ministry must communicate the rationale for change and the direction in which schools are expected to move. It must support school boards, schools, and educators in developing a clear understanding of the new goals, and in building the capacity to achieve these goals in each community. (6)

What about the Commission? What do we hope our work will achieve?

Our recommendations are focused on four key changes that, we believe, will generate further improvements. The four strategies we are suggesting will foster both the will and skill.

Based on the evidence available, we believe the Ontario school system does some things very well, and many things fairly well. But our analysis suggests that most students could learn more, and learn better. We have pointed to the need for a more focused and more engaging education system to take us into the 21st century. We have noted the demographic shifts, the changing social fabric, new knowledge about learning and teaching, and the importance of new technologies. We have suggested that schools need to change to address these new conditions.

We believe that it is possible to get beyond "fairly well," to a system in which many more students graduate, and graduate with more knowledge and with better skills as thinkers and as doers. In such a system, students would be better prepared for work, for post-secondary education, and for lives as fully contributing members of their communities. Although education reform is not a substitute for societal reform, we argue that schools can do a great deal to improve the lives of their students, and we believe our recommendations can help.

People in and outside the system expressed concern about lack of focus, teacher overload, student learning, and standards. We believe our statement of purpose is the foundation of a system characterized by focus, quality, openness, fairness, and efficiency. In opting for change, we are concerned not only about specific recommendations, but even more about the overall vision of schooling we are proposing.

To avoid piecemeal solutions to isolated problems, we have tried to identify key directions, based on our vision of what schools could be, and on an understanding of how change actually takes place in schools. Students have changed, teachers have changed, families have changed, technology has changed, society has changed. How can schools not change? They must now be redesigned for the new era. This task begins with our report.

Before we move to our key recommendations and the intervention strategies for moving the system in the direction of reform, we believe it is necessary to describe our approach to reform. It can be summarized as follows:
We articulate the purposes of schools, and situate them in relation to other social institutions; doing so means focusing primarily on learning and teaching, with the development of intellectual competence being the top priority. By "intellectual competence" we mean more than traditional academic skills, and we include imagining, creating, synthesizing, comparing, and analyzing. Schools, like families and other institutions, have other purposes as well: teaching values, fostering social development, and preparing young people for employment and participation in democratic life. We argue, however, that the community must assume greater responsibility for important non-academic needs.

- We take account of research and exemplary practice relating to learning, teaching, and human development.
- We pay attention to the culture of schools, and to creating and sustaining the conditions that will maximize student learning.
- We argue throughout for an equitable system: in funding, in opportunity, in recognition, and in participation, with the expectation of greater achievement for all students.
- We urge a new and more appropriate balance of power and influence, with a system that is open to new ideas and to participation by parents and the community.
- We want to ensure that there is systematic feedback and monitoring, at both the classroom and system levels, so that plans and attempts at improvement are continually re-focused and adjusted in response to problems and successes.

## Engines or levers for change

Throughout this report, we have made recommendations related to the most vital areas of education reform. These must be

- a more challenging curriculum and improved student learning
- improved assessment and accountability
- power, authority, and equity.

These recommendations - there are more than one hundred - cover both general and specific issues, involve both large and small changes, and suggest new directions, but also reinforce initiatives already under way. We have discussed fully many of the issues facing schools, and have concluded with major recommendations and some specific suggestions. The recommendations focus on our vision of the school system and on major strategies designed to put the vision into practice.

The education system, like other large institutions, is slow to change and difficult to redirect. This quality is a strength, in that it provides stability, and a problem, in that it discourages renewal. We need ways of overcoming the inertia of a large and often cumbersome system to stimulate and sustain major change.

We identified critical intervention points in the system, with the idea of initiating change within these areas. These changes can act as engines or levers, moving the system in the direction of reform. The engines are:

- early childhood education
- teacher professionalization and development
- information technology
Early childhood education

Our first intervention strategy involves an earlier and more comprehensive start to formal education. By providing better learning opportunities for very young children - at three years instead of four, and full time instead of half time - schools can positively affect what comes after. An earlier and stronger start leads to better preparation for basic literacy and numeracy, and the prospect of building on that head start throughout the school years.

The responsibilities parents and schools have for children of three and four are very much intertwined; both influence affective and intellectual development. Just as schools or other institutions also have an important nurturing role, parents also teach. This interconnectedness opens the possibilities of low-cost but highly effective community interventions, providing "parent development," which will significantly pay off in children's later intellectual development. (See Volume II, Chapter 7.)

Community-education alliances

We are recommending stronger links between schools and other sectors of government and the community in order to strengthen and support schools, while ensuring that other important social and personal needs are met. If we are to meet changing societal needs and support learning, new ways must be found to strengthen those who want to raise healthy, competent children.

The recommendations related to community partnerships are intended to free up teachers so they can better focus on their students' learning, helping students to learn the social skills they require to work in a group, and to complete the school's core curriculum. The certified teacher who has chosen and been trained to help students learn to read and write, or to learn academic subjects, should not be expected to have the public-health worker's expertise in drug or sex education, or the trained social worker's ability to lead students through a curriculum in decision-making or conflict resolution.

Moreover, it makes good sense for such community resources to be more readily available to schools. When health- and community-service personnel provide recreation, health, and social-development programs, or practising artists offer arts programs, teachers will have more time in the day and week to spend on activities essential to improving learning for students: planning and evaluating the program they deliver individually and collaboratively, working together to improve their assessment skills, and connecting more often and more effectively with parents.

Such community links can also open up the school, and situate it at the nexus of a local community and its various resources, all of which exist to support the people who live there - in this case, the young people.

The role of principal will also change as the school becomes more integrally linked to the community beyond its walls. School/community councils have a vital contribution to make in helping to draw in and co-ordinate community partners. The necessary interdependence between teaching professionals and other people is in itself a lesson for youth about how society works. The fact that some members of the community work as volunteers is another valuable lesson about the way society operates, and what we should expect of ourselves and of others.

If community partnerships are to work, the way departments of government work - largely in isolation
and sometimes in competition - must change. Unless government ensures that responsibility is shared centrally and locally, by the appropriate sectors, the presence of community members in the school will, in itself, create significant demands on educators’ time. Various government departments must focus more on co-ordination and collaboration across the usual bureaucratic boundaries, bringing together policies to support the healthy development of children. Such policies will reward collaborative action at the local level, making it easier for different groups to work together. Funding provisions will also have to be changed, to ensure that co-operation, rather than isolation, is the norm. The government, for instance, might decide to fund only those proposals in which various sectors are working together on a project. (See Volume IV, Chapter 14.)

**Teacher development and professionalization**

Professional responsibility, autonomy, and accountability are essential to the teaching force we envision. We recommend that teachers have more collective responsibility for their profession, with control being shifted from the Ministry to an independent College of Teachers. It would have authority for teaching standards, as well as for accreditation of teacher-education programs, and for setting standards of professional development. This shift would recognize that teaching should be acknowledged as a profession whose members are capable of setting their own standards of professional practice. It is essential to evaluate the performance of all educators, and we stress the need to follow through effectively when performance is unsatisfactory.

Teacher development, both before and after certification, is an essential vehicle for implementing the other proposed reforms. No school system is better than its teachers, and no amount of legislation and regulation of policy and practice will affect student learning unless there are well-educated and dedicated teachers who are clear about their goals.

If reforms are to be implemented, teachers must understand what is expected, believe that the reforms make sense, and know how to get started. Schools must be places where teachers and principals work together to set priorities, agree on plans for action, and keep track of progress. Because they must do all this while continuing to operate the school, there will be a tension between the need for stability and for continuity on the one hand, and for change on the other.

Although we recommend lengthening and strengthening the teacher preparation program, no such program would be enough to educate teachers for a career in which there is always more to be learned, honed, and practised than can be squeezed into a one- or two-year program. Teachers must continue to learn throughout their careers, and one of the best possible venues is the school itself. Research shows that the development of teacher collaboration that focuses on continuously improving teaching and monitoring results is the most effective route to success. Such "collaborative cultures" embrace the involvement of students and parents in the education enterprise. This results in a co-ordinated program that is effective and that pays attention to student progress. Schools must be learning organizations for teachers if they are to be effective learning organizations for students. (See Volume III.)

**Information technology**

Computer hardware and software combine to become a powerful new tool for learning, making the road smoother and faster for students and teachers. It is genuinely motivating for students a fascinating way to learn more, and to learn quite different things. It makes routine tasks for students and teachers more pleasant and efficient, but more significantly, it opens up the world to learning in a way that is brand
new, and that can set a pattern for lifelong learning.

Instruction can be more easily tailored to student needs, enabling students to move at their own pace. Of even greater importance is that through electronic technology students can move beyond dependence on their teachers for access to knowledge: through communications software and access to data banks, CD-ROMs, and libraries, they can become more independent learners. Moreover, information technology offers the potential for developing problem-solving and reasoning abilities. With that new technology, teachers become more, not less, important as they work with students to accommodate and integrate complex knowledge bases.

In short, information technology is becoming essential to teachers' continuing ability to do their jobs well, and to students' future success in a world where computer literacy is becoming as universal and essential as print literacy.

Throughout our report we talk about the fundamental purpose of schools as building literacy - going beyond basic literacy to the higher literacies that are expected of the well educated. People can not remain well educated if they stop reading, or stop talking with others who can challenge their thinking. Increasingly, reading and discussion happen on-screen. The access that the computer brings to knowledge, through print, sound, and graphics, as well as through discussion, cannot be gained in any other way.

Computerized networks of professionals, such as the Ontario Teachers' Federation network "The Culture of Change," have already shown themselves to be more powerful than many conventional means of building and updating teacher knowledge and professionalism, and are likely to have the same impact on other kinds of work. Increasingly, students, on their own, are acquiring knowledge of what computers can do. At school that familiarity must be made universal, so that computers facilitate equal opportunities and equal outcomes in a learning environment, and so that their potential as educational tools for life, not only as entertainment, is realized.

Computers are used as working tools by writers, mathematicians, scientists, artists and designers. They can be used in schools to become libraries and learning circles, tied into global networks dedicated to building and sharing knowledge and understanding. (See Volume IV, Chapter 13.)

By itself, each of these four engines offers significant benefits; combined, their power increases substantially. While all our engines for change focus on the school and the classroom, they also reach out to change other systems: the teacher-education and child-care systems, as well as government policies and programs designed to support children and families. Operating schools, like educating the youth within them, becomes more of a community issue, with joint responsibility. Meeting the needs of young people effectively and efficiently will mean some redefinition of who works in schools, with whom, and with what kind of funding, support, and co-ordination. That is why some of our recommendations go beyond the education system per se, and involve government and community players.

What actions are needed?

All stakeholders must take action and responsibility for implementation of our recommendations, or else change will not take place. Politicians, we know, are unlikely to move in bold new directions unless they perceive that there is a public demand for them to do so. Therefore, the first important step in implementation is for parents, students, taxpayers, and other groups and associations to express their
support for ideas in the report. If the general orientation and recommendations of this report represent
good public policy in the eyes of Ontarians; if they meet public expectations of what the educational
policy should be; the public should say so, individually and as members of groups, through the various
channels available.

That said, we must stress that simplistic solutions do not work for complicated problems. Better ideas or
more money do not guarantee better schools; there are no quick fixes. Co-ordinated action on many
fronts is needed, and the system must acknowledge that, at the beginning of the reform process, not all
the answers are known. Inevitably, the situation will change even as people begin to act, making it
impossible to set out a detailed implementation plan that would provide a complete guide to schools and
others.

Implementation is not just a question of doing a series of tasks or steps that have been set out
sequentially. Rather, above all else, it is a question of people understanding what reforms mean in
concrete and practical terms. The Ministry of Education and Training must adopt an implementation
strategy that, first and foremost, helps to clarify the precise requirements for each of the key directions
for reform.

Time lines are important, but implementation of complex reforms means more than working through the
list of tasks and actions to be taken. Because the unexpected always happens, schedules will have to be
adjusted and new issues will have to be considered.

With these cautions in mind, we have developed the beginning of an implementation plan.
Implementation involves changes in practice, and because we believe quick action is necessary, we have
identified actions that all stakeholders can take to move schools and the school system in the desired
directions.

Although many meaningful changes can be implemented locally without Ministry sanction, we look first
at the actions required at the provincial level, because these set the direction for all of Ontario. We then
suggest actions to be taken by others, including school boards, schools, and parents.

An implementation commission

Government has responsibility for introducing and following political agendas, and for the daily
management of ministries. These do not easily permit the re-adjustments needed to also accommodate
changing directions in a large system such as education. We, therefore, believe that a special mechanism
is needed to oversee implementation of the reforms recommended in this report.

Recommendation 167

*We recommend the establishment of an Implementation Commission to over see the implementation of the
recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Learning.

In our view, an Implementation Commission would be the best vehicle for overseeing the progress of
reforms. The Implementation Commission would report to the Legislature through the Minister of
Education and Training, and would be required to publish a report every six months.

The Commission should be established for a three-year term, with a small secretariat to support its work.
The Chief Commissioner should be someone who is credible to educators and the public.
We assume there would be a committee structure, with members drawn from the field, from faculties of education, and from federations. Participants would focus on implementation of recommendations in specific areas, such as Early Childhood Education, information technology, teacher development, and so on. However, the Implementation Commission would continue to stress the inter-relationship of the recommendations for reform, to guard against the danger of fragmentation and work done at cross-purposes.

As implementation gets under way, the Commission would provide information to be used by all those involved in education as the basis for further improvement. Data from pilot projects would be widely shared, and information from student learning assessments would be used to improve programs and instruction.

The Implementation Commission would also keep educational reform on the public agenda. Its working committee structure would give it a high profile, through links with educators and communities around the province, regular annual reports to the Minister and to the Premier's Office, and regular (at least twice yearly) informal reports to the general public, similar in format to the Royal Commission's Spotlight on Learning newsletters.

Finally, the Implementation Commission could monitor and assess whether reforms were having the intended effect, and what changes needed to be made.

We specifically expect the Implementation Commission to establish criteria by which each of the reforms would be evaluated, and to contract, perhaps through the Office of Learning Accountability and Assessment, for evaluations of pilot projects and early reform initiatives. The results of such evaluations would be widely available, to be used to improve future implementation efforts.

Several briefs, including the first one at our public hearings, called for a kind of "on-going Royal Commission on Education" to which special problems and ideas for reforms could be addressed. We understand the intent of the idea, but consider that once the push towards the implementation of the report has been given by the Implementation Commission, it is best to direct future demands directly to the Ministry, where they belong.

Other support for implementation

Change takes many different, often parallel, paths, and the actions of different players at different levels are needed to achieve the final goal of reforming a system. Of course, the Minister and the Ministry are expected to play a key role in bringing about change. But by themselves they cannot do much. Stakeholders, as well as individuals in the system, can and must initiate change in their fields.

Beyond the Implementation Commission, there is the Ministry (and to some extent, school boards), which can use various strategies in moving ahead with reform. The Ministry of Education and Training must first establish a clear direction and expectations, in terms of such factors as student learning, regular assessment, and parental involvement, by setting policy guidelines to ensure desired outcomes.

The Ministry must balance central direction setting and monitoring with local flexibility about the way to achieve desired results. Here, too, we see the importance of firm principles, but flexibility in applying them. Policy implementation in the province should shift from "control" to "service."
authorities must set clear expectations related to student learning, and then help school boards meet them, while school boards do the same in relation to schools.

Although we can't mandate everything that matters, mandates can be effective in kick-starting systems, by providing clarity about goals and information about progress. The danger is in relying solely on such regulatory approaches, because important changes are difficult, and require skill, motivation, commitment, and judgment from those who must make the changes work.

The Ministry and school boards can also provide incentives to encourage schools and teachers to move into new areas. Incentive grants encourage school boards, individual schools, and consortia to set up pilot programs. Such concrete local initiatives can then be used as models for others.

Changing organizational structures is another way of stimulating reform. For instance, the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability is intended to deal more effectively with assessment and accountability issues, while school/community councils would co-ordinate community resources more effectively, and give the community a stronger voice in the school.

None of these approaches, however, will work unless schools and those involved with them have the necessary skills and resources. Teachers need professional development and curriculum support materials. Parents, community representatives, and school staff need preparation and support so they can get school/community councils operating effectively.

The reforms we are suggesting are not simple, and in many cases there are few working models to follow. Moreover, the context for educators and students is constantly in flux, and what might make sense today could be unworkable next year. Therefore, implementation plans are more like road maps than blueprints: they cannot specify every detail in advance.

**Provincial actions**

There must also be clear expressions of support for reform from the provincial government, accompanied by wide dissemination of this report, in both its full and brief versions. Discussion of the key ideas of the report must be encouraged, in both the education and the broader communities, to increase the understanding of the principles guiding the proposed reforms. There must then be a statement, from the Minister of Education or the Premier, or both, on what the government plans to do in response to our report: whether they support the key directions we have identified, and what implementation plan, with time lines, has been developed. The first step, of course, is to establish the Implementation Commission, with clear and broad authority to oversee the process.

The province must be clear and firm about principles, and about the directions in which schools should be moving. But it is equally important to be flexible about the means that schools and school boards adopt to move in the desired directions. One such principle is that schools must increase the involvement of parents in ways that benefit student learning. However, there should be considerable flexibility about how schools and school boards increase parent involvement. The Ministry and school boards should, therefore, support diversity in local arrangements, as long as that diversity supports and is consistent with the general principles.

If the government is serious about its response to our report, it may choose to use the following list of suggested actions as a starting point. Appendix 1 to this chapter provides examples of further actions that
could be taken by the provincial government and the Ministry in each of the next three years, as well as indications of what might be put in place over the next five to ten years.

Time lines are critical to any implementation plan, although some flexibility must be built in. Although 1995 is an election year a somewhat disruptive time for implementing major new public policies - we think the recommended actions constitute an appropriate agenda for all parties, regardless of which one forms the government.

**Suggested short-term actions for the provincial government and for the Ministry: 1995-96**

**The framework for reform**
- the government and the MET respond to the RCOL report, indicating their support and plans for implementation, with time lines
- set up Implementation Commission through the MET
- prepare enabling legislation as necessary to implement RCOL recommendations
- prepare enabling legislation for the College of Teachers
- set up the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability
- create a central body to co-ordinate information technology
- set up a council at the Premier's level to consider how to strengthen inter-ministerial work, and co-ordinate services for children, with the designation of a senior minister responsible for such co-ordination in addition to his or her regular portfolio
- plan changes in funding structures
- plan changes in French-language governance
- the MET changes its structures and functions as recommended by the RCOL
- sponsor and encourage working conferences to discuss and begin to implement key recommendations of the RCOL

**Curriculum**
- develop an action plan for curriculum development and provincial reviews
- continue implementing The Common Curriculum, with a clearer focus on a few clear outcomes
- bring together schools and other interested groups concerning Grade 12 outcomes and new specialized curriculum

**Assessment and accountability**
- the MET and Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability begin planning Grade 3 and 11 assessments
- provide target funding to OISE and/or other graduate faculties of education and/or 1-2 consortia involving boards and faculties of education to establish centres of expertise re assessment of student learning and program evaluation.

**Power, influence, and equity**
- prepare legislative changes for short-term action, e.g., voting student trustees, status of aboriginal
band-operated schools

- repeal of Section 136 regarding preferential hiring of Roman Catholic teachers
- provide targeting incentive funding at both the provincial and board level, to begin phasing in school/community councils
- develop and begin to apply funding formulas that will encourage more co-operative service arrangements between school boards
- develop students' and parents' Charters of Rights and Responsibilities

**Early childhood education**

- set up a joint college/faculty of education committee to discuss short-term and long-term arrangements for preparation and certification of staff
- develop policy to guide program development, relationships to current child-care providers, certification and preparation of staff and organization
- begin establishing learning outcomes for ECE programs
- survey space needs for ECE
- plan pilot project for phasing in ECE programs in schools
- establish models for integrated daycare and ECE programs

**Teacher professionalization and development**

- plan with key groups the composition and authority of the College of Teachers
- set up review/evaluation teams for principal preparation courses and supervisory officer qualification programs, and begin evaluations
- fund and establish a pilot project concerning the two-year preservice preparation program, with a full evaluation
- encourage faculties of education to introduce programs requested by Catholic school systems

**Information technology**

- seek out partnership agreements with computer firms
- plan development and licensing of more Canadian educational software, where appropriate
- negotiate agreements between the MET and businesses to give discarded computers to schools

**Community-education alliances**

- identify the inter-government and inter-Ministry initiatives necessary to remove barriers to community-education alliances; for instance, changes in legislation to provide for a common age of consent (the age at which a young person is considered adult) to facilitate service delivery to older adolescents
- develop guidelines for programs to be provided in schools by arts, health, social service and recreation agencies, in collaboration with other ministries
- prepare (or contract for preparation of) a directory of community/education partnership initiatives, categorized for easy access, as well as empirically based guidelines for the development of such initiatives
Actions by other stakeholders

The Ministry of Education and Training and the provincial government must act. So, too, must educators and community members. Parents, students, teachers, faculties of education, and others can make a big difference at the local level, and can also put pressure on the Ministry and the government. Appendix 2 to this chapter provides examples of actions that these groups can take immediately, without waiting for changes at the provincial level.

Once the government has enacted enabling legislation and clarified the overall rationale for the reforms, all those involved in Ontario education will have to act simultaneously in a number of areas. For instance, changes in curricula will have to be accompanied by changes in assessment that, in turn, are not possible without on-going teacher development. All these actions will need to be closely co-ordinated so they reinforce each other.

Although all parties, from the provincial government to students, have a role to play in changing the education system, there are three groups whose initial responses and actions will be crucial. The first is the provincial government - particularly, but by no means only, the Ministry of Education and Training. As the major regulatory and policy-making bodies, ministries set the direction for the province. Second are the school boards, which translate Ministry policy at the local level, and have considerable power to set local priorities within provincial guidelines. And third are the Ontario Teachers' Federation and its five affiliates, who represent 120,000 teachers, and are a major force on the province's educational scene. Their support will be decisive in achieving the gains we anticipate.

We stress, however, that many of the most significant changes can be made by teachers and principals in schools, without waiting for governments or boards to act. As Jennifer Lewington and Graham Orpwood observed in their recent book, Overdue Assignment:

_Schools will not flourish if teachers and others in the system hunker down in hopes of waiting out the storm. Instead, ... those who work in [the system] must develop a strong capacity for self-renewal._(8)

Cost issues

Cost issues are critical, particularly in light of Ontario's continuing budgetary difficulties. Educational change cannot wait until we have more money, and in any case, we do not believe that more money is necessarily the answer. Instead, reform must now be achieved by shifting the focus of the system, allocating the same pot of money in different ways. There is no avoiding the fact that many choices will be painful. Setting priorities is difficult, not only within the education system, but also between education and other societal needs.

Given the complexity and uncertainty of specific cost projections, as well as our time frame and limited resources, we cannot provide detailed cost estimates. These will need to be done by the Ministry. In the end, choices must be governed by the cost of providing adequate programs to students across the province, the amount of money available for education, and the priorities that are set.

We recognize that many of our recommendations have cost implications, and in most cases, we have made suggestions about redirecting funds within the system, with little or no new money required. Equalization of funding across the province, for instance, should involve redistribution rather than
Budgetary constraints have become a long-term feature of the system. It is therefore critical that funds are targeted to the areas where they will have the most impact. That is why we recommend, for instance, Early Childhood Education programs, because investments in quality programs for very young children will pay off later in reduced need for remedial programs and other social supports. Such an approach might be compared to preventive health care, with the assumption that money spent on early prevention initiatives will, in the long run, reduce costs. Since we are recommending that students graduate from secondary school after 12 years in the system, rather than the 13 years many of them now take, we anticipate significant savings at the level of senior secondary school.

We also point out that the initial costs of school-based Early Childhood Education programs should be partially offset by reduced costs for subsidized daycare.

Costs for large-scale assessments and for increased monitoring should also produce favourable cost/benefit results, as long as the information is used for improving the system and targeting efforts more accurately. Costs of developing and administering challenge exams and General Education Diploma exams, as recommended in Chapter 10, will be partially offset by less time spent in school by students. (They won't have to take courses if they already know the material and demonstrate their knowledge in these exams.)

We also expect costs of some reforms to be offset by savings from improved efficiencies in other parts of the delivery system. We suggest, for example, that clarification of the roles of trustees and supervisory officers, as well as some shifts of responsibility to schools and the Ministry, should lead to savings as fewer central-office staff will be required.

We also suggest increased sharing of resources and services between boards and other local agencies; greater and more effective use of various staffing formulas and community resources in schools; and centralized curriculum development, to avoid duplication of effort among school boards.

It is difficult to estimate the cost implications of greater co-ordination of government services and increased community alliances, particularly because these involve ministries other than the Ministry of Education and Training. But we anticipate that, after the initial start-up, better co-ordination of services will result not only in improved services but in a more streamlined system with significant reductions in duplication of effort and administration.

An important consideration in costing is that many of our recommendations incorporate a rethought use of time and other resources. Done imaginatively and effectively, this is a low-cost strategy for making other things happen. In particular, we have identified a variety of ways in which flexibility can be built into teachers' working lives at little cost. For example, throughout the report we recommend the use of volunteers, peer tutors, and cross-age tutors, which benefits those tutoring and those being tutored.

We also recommend that, in their second year of preservice preparation, student teachers work in schools as interns, significantly adding to the staff resources, and potentially freeing teachers for collaborative curriculum work. School/community councils would act to bring additional resources into schools, while more flexible groupings of some students could free time for teachers to provide more intensive remedial or enrichment opportunities to others. The creative use of technology is another time-freeing strategy.

Although savings from such shifts in the way time and other assets are perceived and utilized are difficult
to calculate, they are a low-cost way of substantially adding to existing resources.

Although there will undoubtedly be costs attached to implementing our recommendations - as there are for any changes - we expect these to be offset by savings in the longer term. However, it is crucial that funding choices be made deliberately, on the basis of educational priorities.

**A call to action**

We believe that our recommendations and intervention strategies provide powerful directions and tools for reform. We want our recommendations to be implemented; we want the school system of Ontario to become more responsive, open, and flexible; we want higher levels of student learning; we want well-prepared, highly motivated teachers taking greater collective responsibility for professional issues. But we are not naive. We realize that there are constraints and barriers. These must not, however, stop stakeholders from moving forward.

We are under no illusions that hurdles are easy to overcome, or that our suggestions will always be successful. We believe, however, that the journey must begin. Schools and their communities need a reasonably clear vision of the destination, the will to overcome or work around the constraints, and a commitment to imaginative problem-solving. If there was ever a time for a massive call to action, that time is now. We suggest ways of overcoming some of the key barriers to change.

**Inertia**

Having already acknowledged the difficulty in getting a large and complicated system to change course, we stress the importance of having the government give clear direction and a well-articulated sense of the overall goals, as well as incentives for change. We also underline that, through the public hearing process, we were strongly reminded that pressures for change are mounting, and cannot be resisted.

Support for innovative initiatives that operate outside the usual organizational and bureaucratic constraints can help overcome inertia. Highly visible projects can provide the incentive for others to develop their own innovations.

**Power issues**

Although it is rarely acknowledged openly, concerns about protecting influence often get in the way of change. No group wants to lose power. Those who have more, at whatever level of the hierarchy, may resist efforts to decrease their spheres of influence, or to democratize organizational decision-making processes. Educators, however, like others in contemporary society, are aware that times have changed, and that the education system must become more responsive to parent and community concerns. We stress that the goals of increased student learning and the opening up of a closed education system should guide the decisions of all stakeholders on the best way to organize schooling.

**Collective bargaining issues**

Specific provisions of collective agreements must not prevent changes that will improve student learning. There must be more flexibility in the use of staff and in the way time is allocated and accounted for. Teachers' federations have been tireless and effective in their roles as advocates for teachers, and have also positively addressed many professional issues. However, the rigidities of collective agreements may not always work to the benefit of students and schools. More flexible approaches to collective bargaining
seem to be appropriate if schools are to change with changing social circumstances.

In this report, we have repeatedly acknowledged the inestimable value and contributions of teachers, and have recommended a variety of measures to support them in their very challenging work. We expect, in turn, that federations will be flexible on issues where the interests of students and teachers may, to some extent, conflict.

**Overload**

We often heard that schools and the people in them are overloaded, and find it difficult - if not impossible - to take on more responsibilities. We acknowledge these concerns, and although we have no magic solution to alleviate them, we do think our recommendations address the problems. Most important, the report takes a stand in clarifying the purpose of schools, stressing that schools exist first and foremost for the intellectual and academic nurturing of students. This clearer focus and direction should help ameliorate the overload problem.

The truth, however, is that the overload will worsen if people do not take action. Will and skill, although not magic solutions, can be effective antidotes to overload. We believe that an essential (but difficult) first step is for teachers, schools, and boards to critically review what they are now doing and to set priorities. Educators must identify tasks that may no longer be important, or that are better done by others, in a difficult process that has been termed "organized abandonment."

**Lack of resources**

We recognize the serious financial constraints affecting both provincial and local governments, constraints shared by most public institutions in the 1990s. Expansionary times have long gone, and society is becoming aware that complaints do nothing to ease fiscal difficulties. Although constraints are real, they should not be seen as an insurmountable barrier. In some cases, low-cost options are highly effective; we have already pointed to peer tutoring as a low-cost program with benefits to students. In our opinion, volunteers are another under-used and low-cost resource. In other cases, educators and the public should be prepared to argue for re-allocation of funds to ensure that essential and high-priority services and programs are available.

Achieving the kind of school system we envisage will be difficult, but it is a worthy ideal. We have not shied away from difficult issues, even when we cannot offer clear or guaranteed solutions.

Will our recommendations be implemented faithfully? That will be decided by the government, school boards, schools, teachers, parents, students, and others with a stake in education in Ontario. If the Commission's vision is to be realized, these people and organizations must move forward without waiting for others to take the first step.

We began our report by highlighting the dramatically altered context in which schools now operate. Profound social, economic, demographic, and technological changes have made the old forms of schooling outmoded. We went on to suggest that changes in the education system, important as they are, are not enough. People must rethink how schools relate to the community, and how the education system relates to the rest of government and to other societal institutions.

We want real change in the lives of students and teachers. We are not interested in political rhetoric about education. We have indicated what is required in terms of the government's response and
implementation plan, but if substantial changes are to occur, more than provincial policy changes are needed.

School boards, faculties of education, principals, teachers, parents, and students can and must act. They need not - and, indeed, should not - wait for governments. Local actions will produce improvements in classrooms and schools, and will also put pressure on decision-makers to follow through with necessary supports.

In other words, everybody has to take responsibility for making schools increasingly better. A 1994 implementation guide published by the British Columbia Ministry of Education sets out how each stakeholder contributes to reform. Because we found it to be an excellent summary of responsibilities, we reproduce it here:

**Implementation responsibilities**

- Ministry provides leadership and implementation support
- School boards organize planning and allocation of financial, human and learning resources in support of implementation
- Teachers and school administrators participate in [board] and school-based planning for implementation of new policies, and implement policies according to provincial guidelines
- Students work to take advantage of learning opportunities offered by provincial and local programs
- Parents help children to develop clear values and self-discipline, and to apply themselves to their schoolwork
- Provincial and professional organizations [teachers' federations] plan, and assist members to understand, adapt and implement new policies and programs
- College of Teachers reviews requirements for certification and teacher education in relation to the new programs
- Business and labour work with local school boards and schools to develop partnerships in and outside of schools to assist in the implementation of new programs, especially in the area of work experience and career development

We would add to this list the need for parents and other community members to work with schools to establish school/community councils, and to look for ways to link school, home, and community more effectively, while students are responsible for organizing their systematic input to schools.

The actions that people take in schools, in the community, and in government, will have a cumulative effect in moving reform forward. They will:

- build commitment to the necessary reforms, and encourage action by all stakeholders, at the local and provincial levels
- develop capacity and skill among educators, parents, students, and others, to implement the changes
- create organizational cultures supportive of changes, and provide necessary resources for schools,
school boards, the Ministry, and community groups

- provide relevant feedback to schools and to the public, about how the process is proceeding and about early outcomes, and ensure that such feedback is used to improve future implementation.

We end our report by suggesting actions for all those who care about Ontario's schools. Through thousands of such actions, guided by the goal of improved learning for all students, our schools will rise to the challenge of preparing children and adolescents for the 21st century.

Together, those with the biggest stake in Ontario education can work to make our recommendations a reality. They can also insist that the government act promptly to implement the report. "Systems ... don't change by themselves; people change systems." The report of the Royal Commission on Learning is now in the hands of the people of Ontario. Its future is up to you.

---

### Endnotes (Chapter 20)


ISBN 0-7778-3577-0