2nd Annual Report Card on Western Canadian High Schools: Saskatchewan & Manitoba

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b) investigating and analyzing the full range of options for public and private sector responses to the issues identified and acting as a catalyst for informed debate on those options, with a particular focus on strategies for overcoming Atlantic Canada’s economic challenges in terms of regional disparities;

c) communicating the conclusions of its research to a regional and national audience in a clear, non-partisan way; and,

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Note to reader: Some words in this document may appear in blue and are underlined, with endnotes in red. Clicking on the blue words will direct the reader to relevant online websites or documents using your associated web-browser. Clicking on any endnote numeral will directly go to the appropriate reference at the end of this document, with a Return button to its preceeding page point.
What’s in the report card?

The 2nd Annual Report Card on Western Canadian High Schools includes information from the 2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years to calculate stable results—two of the three years must be available for inclusion. We compile data from departments of education, school boards, schools and any other publicly-available sources that provide insight into the performance of high schools. All indicators represent an entire school’s performance or characteristic. Once the data has been compiled, we grade and rank everything that explains how your schools serve you with the exception of schools where results represent an average of fewer than six students—these are excluded due to the potentiality of skewed results and privacy concerns.

Indicators

Indicators reveal school performance in one of its many facets. At their highest level, they represent one of the two core objectives of education: (1) keeping students engaged in learning (Engagement) and (2) facilitating the attainment of competencies (Achievement). These broad objectives have a number of different elements to be considered for a comprehensive assessment. Keeping students engaged means that they attend school and progress from grade-to-grade-to-graduation. Schools should also be encouraging students to enjoy the challenge of learning and continue learning upon graduation. Those that do well teaching and engaging students will have more students staying in school, committed to learning and progressing to higher-learning.

Schools doing a good job of facilitating competency attainment have students with high levels of essential competencies (e.g. mathematics, language and sciences). We know how schools are doing—comparatively—by administering common exams across all schools that comprehensively and effectively assess levels of competencies. We recognize that standardized exams can only narrowly assess competencies effectively; thus, we also include Teacher-Assigned Marks to assess the broader range of competencies (e.g. inter and intra-personal skills, diligence etc.) required for success.

The comprehensiveness of this report allows identification of all sources of a problem. For instance, two schools that perform poorly on provincial math exams, but have varying attendance records (students show up to one and don’t to the other) have different problems. The school where students are not showing up will do better by focusing on getting students back in the classroom. The school where students are there but not learning would do better by improving its instruction methods. These schools can look at the policies and practices of other schools with high attendance rates and provincial math exam marks for direction.

Below is a description of the indicators we like to include (as opposed to what is actually included) in our high school report cards and why we like to include it. Jump to the Indicator Pyramids section to find out what is actually included in this report card and how overall grades are derived.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>What is it?</th>
<th>Why is it included?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moving-On</td>
<td>Number of students who move from one grade to the next within the same school</td>
<td>Indicates schools’ ability to sustain students’ interest in learning throughout the entire duration of high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 12 to graduation is the final Moving-On rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Average daily attendance rate of students in all courses and grades</td>
<td>Indicates schools’ ability to get and keep students in class on a daily basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary Preparatory Course Participation</td>
<td>Proportion of students participating in university or college preparatory math and language arts courses</td>
<td>Indicates schools’ ability to facilitate interest in higher learning - an important aspect of success later in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Secondary Participation</td>
<td>Proportion of students moving on, or intending to move on, to post-secondary education the year after graduation</td>
<td>Indicates schools’ ability to facilitate actual participation in higher learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Exams</td>
<td>Average grade on provincial exams including math, science, language arts and humanities, where available</td>
<td>Indicates schools’ ability to facilitate the attainment of core competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comparable across all high schools in the province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Marks</td>
<td>Average teacher-assigned mark in all math, science, language arts and humanities courses</td>
<td>Indicates schools’ ability to facilitate the attainment of the broad range of competencies required for success in high-school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A more encompassing assessment of achievement than provincial exams but lacks comparability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Secondary School Achievement</td>
<td>Average first year marks of students who moved on to study at one of the universities or community colleges within one of the four Western provinces.</td>
<td>Indicates school’s ability to facilitate the broad range of competencies required for success in post-secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enables more meaningful comparisons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Enrolment</td>
<td>Number of students enrolled in high schools (Grades 9 or 10 - 12)</td>
<td>Levels the playing field based on the physical capacity of the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil-Teacher Ratio</td>
<td>Ratio of all students to all full-time equivalent teaching staff</td>
<td>Levels the playing field based on the labour capacity of the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Certification</td>
<td>Indicator of the average qualifications possessed by teaching staffs in schools</td>
<td>Levels the playing field based on the quality of the schools’ teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scoring, Ranking and Grading

Ranks indicate the performance of schools relative to other schools. The top ranked school (number 1) is the top performing school. Grades indicate the performance of schools relative to other schools, but they also consider how much better or worse schools are than proximal schools. For instance, the top, second and third ranked school may all receive a ‘B+’ because they are only slightly better than the other schools. The top ranked might also achieve an ‘A+’ and the second, a ‘B’ indicating a much greater difference in performance between the two.

Context

The AIMS model for assessing high schools is designed to focus on the factors that are directly within their control. Education systems have a responsibility to recognize external factors (Inputs) to understand why certain conditions enable high performance and other conditions prevent it. When considering how schools perform, it is somewhat unfair to disregard their fortune. We consider the following Inputs to focus assessment on the school itself:

- the size of the high school,
- the amount of students per teacher,
- level of teacher qualifications,
- student performance prior to entering high school,
- the demographic characteristics of the surrounding community.

Inputs are used to derive In-Context scores which level the playing field. In-Context grades and ranks better represent the efforts disadvantaged schools put forth to overcome their challenges.
Absolute

Providing a fair assessment is important; however, it is also important to consider how schools are serving its students in absolute terms. This more effectively predicts schools’ performance at preparing students for success. The grade and ranks, unadjusted for circumstances, are labeled Absolute.

Overall and Final

The scores for each indicator are used to calculate average grades for the Achievement and Engagement indicator categories. These average grades are then used to calculate an overall Absolute and In-Context grade. The Final Grade for each school is calculated by averaging the Overall Absolute and the Overall In-Context score.

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**FIGURE 1**  
Indicator Pyramid – Saskatchewan

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FIGURE 2

Indicator Pyramid – Manitoba

Absolute Overall Engagement

In-Context Overall Engagement

High School Engagement (1 of 1)

Moving-On Rates (2 of 2)

Gr. 10 - 11

Gr. 11 - 12
Special considerations

The prototype is described above (excluding the Indicator Pyramids), this section describes how this report card differs from the prototype. Data availability and accessibility typically prevent us from providing the prototype. We remain flexible to deliver as much important information about your schools’ performance as possible. Below describes exactly what is included in this report card.

Saskatchewan

Results on middle school provincial exams were made available to us to better understand the calibre of students entering high schools. In our model Feeder Achievement is typically determined by compiling these marks for all schools feeding into a particular high school. This works well when middle schools feed one particular high school; this is not the case in Saskatchewan. We altered the method to calculate community Feeder Achievement averages rather than high school averages. These averages were applied to all high schools within a particular community. Note that not all schools had Feeder Achievement scores, which prevents calculation of In-Context scores and, consequently, Final grades and ranks.¹

The number of students enrolled in different levels of grade 12 math and language arts courses was made available to us for the Post-Secondary Preparation indicators. We decided exclude them because there is no clear method, common for all schools, to distinguish between courses that prepare for higher levels of education and those that do not. Also, the Department of Education collects annual surveys that assess students’ commitment to learning. These Commitment to Learning indicators allow for a cross-province comparison of students’ enthusiasm and commitment to learning, similar to what Post-Secondary Preparation assesses. This is a strong indicator of the likelihood of students to continue formal education after high school and overall levels of engagement, in general.

Teacher certification levels, attendance rates and post-secondary participation rates remain unavailable. Inclusion of this information would tell us more about how schools perform. We hope in the future the Saskatchewan officials recognize the importance of making this information available at the school-level.

We were unable to include Post-Secondary Achievement. We hope we are able to include this important indicator of student academic achievement in the next edition.

All independent schools were excluded from the Final dataset as labeled by Saskatchewan Department of Education’s Saskatchewan Independent Schools.

¹ Most notably, this impacted Englefeld School—the top overall ranked school in the previous edition. This example emphasizes the importance of looking beneath the Final grade and rank—Englefeld demonstrates high Absolute performance yet again this year.
(General Public List) 2011-2012 School Year list. All schools closed from the beginning of the assessment period until now were also excluded.

Despite these few examples, we are mostly pleased with the amount of information made available by the Department of Education. We applaud the prompt, helpful and cordial responses to our requests and look forward to further collaboration to improve education in Saskatchewan.

Manitoba

All non-funded independent were excluded from the final dataset as identified by on the Manitoba Department of Education’s website Schools in Manitoba: Non-Funded and Independent. Also all adult education centres were excluded as identified by the Directory of Certified Adult Learning and Literacy Centres of Manitoba 2011-2012 document.

Few other qualifications are needed for Manitoba’s data primarily because so little was made available. We were able to include even fewer indicators in this edition from the scant amount include in the previous; only grade 10–11 and 11–12 Moving-On Rates are included with grade 12 to graduation missing because graduation rates were not distributed this year.

Despite our efforts to convey the importance of school-level assessments to Manitoba’s Department of Education, they have regressed from the previous edition. Manitoba’s actions suggest they either believe school-level assessment is unimportant or not useful. They fail to see why parents and students would be interested in knowing how their school is performing against others. They fail to recognize that there are differences in the quality of education offered at different schools. They fail to recognize the grave impact of these differences on students’ future prospects. They fail to recognize that parents and students are interested in knowing how their schools are doing and armed with the right information can influence education improvements in their schools and across the province. They fail to recognize that improvements in transparency practices improve accountability which is essential to accelerate education improvements. Either they fail to recognize these things or they find it more convenient to keep their citizens in the dark. It is up to you to decide whether or not this is acceptable.
Understanding the results

The results are presented in table-format. Below are descriptions of how to interpret the results and a diagram identifying each aspect of the table.

**Note**—Data in examples below are for illustrative purposes and do not represent any school in particular.

Results are presented under each indicator header. *Inputs* contain the raw results (either actual scores or percentiles) and their accompanying rank. *Input ranks* only consider the magnitude of the score, they do not consider optimal performance.

Outcome indicator results are presented as grades and ranks. These ranks do consider optimal performance with number one being the top performing school. Grades represent a typical school letter grading system with ‘A+’ being the best and ‘F’, the worst. A school’s grade depends on their Z-score with ‘0’ being the average or ‘B-’, positive scores are above average or ‘B-’ and above, and negative, below average or ‘B-’ and below; the higher a score, the better the performance.

Each grade has a designated upper and lower bound. If the Z-score falls between the upper and lower bound of a grade, that grade is attributed to the school. Below is a diagram illustrating the upper and lower bounds of each potential grade.

**TABLE 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-1.51</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1.18</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>-1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.81</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>-1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.51</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>-0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interpreting the results

**Inputs:**

**High School Enrolment**—the numbers within this column represent three-year averages of total high school enrolment—all applicable grades as defined by provincial standards (e.g. Grs. 10, 11 and 12).

**PTR**—the numbers within this column represent the number of pupils for every full time equivalent (FTE) teachers (*For schools with more than just high-school grades (i.e. intermediate and primary grades), all students and FTE teachers are used to calculate school PTRs—number of FTE teachers by grade is unavailable in all Atlantic Canadian provinces.*)

**Teacher Certification**—the numbers within this column are percentiles and represent the proportion of teachers with higher than a basic level teaching certificate (e.g. 83 means this school has more highly trained teachers than 82 per cent of other schools in the province).

**SES**—the numbers within this column are percentiles and represent the student population’s relative socio-economic status (e.g. 69 means the student population has a socio-economic status higher than 69 per cent of other schools in the province). We use Statistics Canada’s most recent Census data and connect it to students’ home postal codes. Postal codes represent a small region allowing us to represent the SES of all the small regions in which students live. An overall score is calculated by averaging all the small regions’ SES scores.

The following data makes up the SES scores: (1) Proportion of the labour force in high status occupations, (2) Proportion of the population with university degrees, (3) Average income, (4) Average home value, (5) Average rent, (6) Employment rate, (7) Youth employment rate, (8) Proportion of the population having less than a high school diploma, (9) Unemployment rate, (10) Youth unemployment rate, (11) Proportion of one-parent families, and (12) Proportion of low-income families.

**Feeder Achievement**—the numbers within this column are percentiles and represent the relative competency levels—as determined by intermediate provincial exams—of students entering high school (e.g. 74 means your high school’s feeder schools had students with competency levels higher than 73% per cent of other middle schools/junior highs.)
Indicators:

The scenarios below describe what the grades and ranks mean. They also provide a practical explanation of good and poor performance on Absolute and In-Context scores. This section helps anyone who remains confused about how to interpret Absolute and In-Context performance.

**Scenario 1: Absolute - A+/1, In Context - A+/3**
In absolute terms, your school scores well above the provincial average and you rank first overall in this measure. This excellent performance also shows your school has advantages from the outset, but do not rely on them for their good performance. Keep up the good work.

**Scenario 2: Absolute - A+/14, In Context - C+/87**
In absolute terms your school performs well above the provincial average on this measure. Based on the context in which your school operates, however, there is considerable room for improvement and a real opportunity to excel that is being missed.

**Scenario 3: Absolute - B-/41, In Context - A-/14**
In absolute terms your school performs slightly below the provincial average, however, considering the context in which your school operates this performance is actually BETTER than would reasonably be expected. Schools in similar circumstances should look to you for best practices.

**Scenario 4: Absolute - D/107, In Context - B/50**
In absolute terms your school performs far below the provincial average, however, this performance is offset by your operating circumstances as you perform considerably better than would reasonably be expected. Identifying and building on the tools that have allowed you to make the best of a sub-optimal situation should allow you to achieve continued growth in coming years.

**Scenario 5: Absolute - F/40, In Context - D/39**
In absolute terms your school performs far below the provincial average and this performance is not offset by your operating circumstances as you perform considerably below expectations as well. This is an area for considerable improvement. Finding schools that have similar inputs and that do better on this measure would be helpful.
Why use this report card?

In short: to know how high schools are serving their students. But why is this important? It is no secret that a high school education is crucial for lifelong success. We know that success is not only dependent on a diploma but also on gaining high levels of competencies and an enthusiasm for higher learning. We also know that some high schools are good at achieving these things and some, not so good. We know this by listening to our friends and family talk about other schools or maybe by watching the news and finding out a certain school won an award. There is surprisingly little information made available to us indicating school performance based on hard facts.

Often we can find information on how our province is performing on provincial exams or graduation rates which is useful information for your department of education but offers little to parents and students. It is cold hard facts about the performance of the schools we attend that allow us to hold departments of education, school boards and school administrators accountable with questions like:

- **Why do students get high marks from their teachers but fail provincial exams?**
- **Why aren’t students prepared for university studies?**
- **Why can’t you keep students coming to school?**
- **Why aren’t students interested in learning?**

The 2nd Annual Report Card on Western Canadian High Schools provides you with the information to identify problems and, if warranted, celebrate successes. We can no longer accept that our schools are serving us well without proof when so much is riding on it. The proof is here. Hold our schools accountable with it and improve the education they deliver.
Reading the results

The report card is presented in chart format. It is read from left to right with the school names and districts in the far left column, and the overall Absolute and In-context grades and ranks in the far right. The grades and ranks in each cell correspond to the indicator at the top of the column and the school at the start of the row. The schools appear in the chart according to their Final Rank with number 1 at the top. The schools without enough data for a Final grade are unranked, separated and appear in alphabetical order.

Specific aspects of the AIMS Report Card chart are described in the diagram below. For quick reference, identify the aspect in question and follow the proximal arrow to the corresponding description.

Note—Not all indicators of school quality are included due to data availability. The final grades and ranks for the Final and other overall categories reflect the schools’ performance as an average of only the available indicators included. If there are no final grades, there was not enough information to assess overall school quality.

It is important to understand where schools rank overall, but it is just as important to understand how they rank on individual indicators. Schools may be weak in some areas and strong in others, this variation is not reflected by the Overall Grade.

Table 3: Results The comprehensive Table 3, in three parts, is available at our website at:


For notes on how to read the Table see next page.
### How to read the Results Table

The far left column contains the name of the school and the name of its surrounding community. All information in the columns to the right pertains to this school. Two rows represent every school. All values beneath are inputs – school characteristics that impact performance.

There are two rows of grades and ranks for every school – the top are Absolute scores; the bottom, In-Context.

**TABLE 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name (Community)</th>
<th>Board Name</th>
<th>Final (or 170)</th>
<th>WRC1 Final* (or 170)</th>
<th>Final grade and rank from previous report card to assess the relative change.</th>
<th>All values beneath are inputs–school characteristics that impact performance.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A (Town A)</td>
<td>School Board A</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10 Moving-On</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11 Moving-On</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12 Moving-On</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to Learning</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math (of 102)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math (of 132)</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Assigned Mark -</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Assigned Mark -</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Assigned Mark -</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Assigned Mark -</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Exam Mark -</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Exam Mark -</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Exam Mark -</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Exam Mark -</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Engagement</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Engagement</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*"(of 243)" means the performance information for 243 schools for this particular indicator. The "(of 0)" indicates no information is available.

*n/a* means not applicable which represents scores that were either not made available or were only available for one year. "ts" is not included in this example but means "too small" and represents schools with too few students to validate include performance information.

Overall Performance grades and ranks are the average of Overall Achievement and Overall Engagement.

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Ideas for a Better Tomorrow