

A Learning Province

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON
EDUCATION ASSESSMENT
IN ONTARIO

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Introduction

There has long been considerable debate across Canada and internationally about how best to support individual students' learning. At the centre of this debate is the question about what forms of assessments are appropriate. Trying to understand the best approaches to assessment and reporting has been a long-standing concern in Ontario. In 1993, the Government of Ontario appointed the Royal Commission on Learning to comprehensively study the direction of the province's education system to ensure Ontario's youth would be well-prepared for the challenges of the 21st century: how should schools respond to technological, social and economic changes? How should the government demonstrate its accountability for the quality and performance of Ontario's publicly funded schools?

A main conclusion of the Royal Commission – that the goal of assessment is to improve learning – remains true, as does its warning that if assessment is not supporting learning we need to stop or change what we are doing.

If we want serious information about how our students and schools are doing in preparing for the twenty-first century, we will have to accept that the process is long and involved, that it's not a series of horse races with clear-cut winners and losers, and that unless its primary purpose is to improve learning, we may as well not bother doing it all.

– Royal Commission on Learning: For the Love of Learning (1995)

The Commission's report, **For the Love of Learning**, provided extensive recommendations for the Ontario education system, including emphasizing the importance of teachers providing and using classroom assessments to support students' learning. The Commission recommended introducing common report cards to inform parents of students' achievements, creating an independent agency to design and administer provincial assessments, and supported Ontario's continued involvement in national and international assessments.

Over twenty years later, it is time to review assessments and reconsider what is needed to improve students' learning, knowledge and skills in a time of complex and rapid global, economic, social, cultural and technological change.



Independent Review of Assessment and Reporting

On September 6, 2017, the Premier and Minister of Education announced an Independent Review of Assessment and Reporting to update Ontario's assessment and reporting practices to make sure they are culturally relevant, able to measure a wider range of learning, and better reflect student well-being and equity.

The scope of this review includes public engagement concerning:

- Classroom assessments
- Large-scale provincial assessments, including Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments
- Ontario's participation in pan-Canadian and international assessment programs.

This Independent Review of Assessment and Reporting is being conducted by the Premier and the Minister's Education Advisors and is being led by Dr. Carol Campbell in collaboration with Dr. Jean Clinton, Dr. Michael Fullan, Dr. Andy Hargreaves, Dr. Carl James, and Kahontakwas Diane Longboat. Our goal is to engage as many people as possible in a province-wide conversation about current approaches to assessment and reporting in Ontario. The expectation is that this provincial conversation, by listening to many diverse experiences and perspectives, will reveal the hopes for and concerns about assessment, and propose suggestions about future possibilities for assessment. The Review will also examine relevant research evidence and gather technical expertise on measurement and assessments practices in Ontario, across Canada and internationally.

In this paper, we describe our vision, considerations, questions and propose ways the people of Ontario can contribute to this vital province-wide conversation. We welcome all views, experiences, opinions and suggestions related to assessment and reporting.

Scope and Outcomes of the Independent Review of Assessment and Reporting



In our Review, we have been asked to provide:

1. An evidence-informed review of the current model of assessment and reporting practices at the student, classroom, school, board and provincial levels which examines its impact on learning, achievement and well-being. This should include consideration of Indigenous educational assessments at the classroom, school, board and system levels where language, culture and land-based learning are part of well-being.
2. A theory of action to support the best roles and uses of assessment and reporting at each level to inform various objectives including student learning. This should include consideration of the role of the learner.
3. Evidence-informed and implementable recommendations for change based on the above.
4. A more detailed set of recommendations regarding large-scale assessment practices, including a vision for the future. This should include consideration of:
 - The grade levels to be assessed, taking into consideration the developmental stage of the learner and research on important outcomes or milestones
 - The competencies to be assessed
 - Timing of assessments
 - Where assessments take place and who administers them
 - The format of assessment (including technology and self-assessment)
 - Equity, human rights and cultural relevancy
 - Feedback and reporting to students and parents/caregivers
 - Appropriate uses of large-scale data at classroom, school, board and provincial levels
 - Participation in, and uses of, pan-Canadian and international assessments

In addition to the Terms of Reference outlined above, the Review will take into account other relevant topics and issues from the public conversation and from our review of evidence relating to assessments in Ontario and in other provinces and countries. Such topics may include the direct and indirect effects of particular assessment approaches for students, approaches to assessment design involving all students or samples of students, and appropriate use, sharing and reporting of assessment data.



A Vision for Student-Centered Assessments to Support Equitable Learning Opportunities and Outcomes

OUR VISION is that students' experiences – their needs, learning, progress and well-being – are at the centre of decisions about future assessment design and use.

OUR GOAL is to ensure further development of, and improve approaches to, assessment which support all children and young people to learn and develop to their fullest potential from early childhood through to high school graduation and post-secondary destinations.

The bottom line is that assessment practices must support equitable opportunities and outcomes for all learners. What this means is that assessment materials must be culturally relevant, respectful and appropriate to the diversity of Ontario's communities and students, including Indigenous knowledge, languages and cultures, Francophone identity and culture, and the experiences of racialized and minoritized groups. Appropriate supports and assessment practices for students identified as having Special Education needs, and for English/French language learners, continue to be essential.

We will review the ways in which assessment practices can and do affect student experiences and outcomes as a direct result of their design and implementation practices and also in terms of any indirect impact on student needs, learning, progress and well-being. Our aim is to engage people across Ontario in a conversation to identify concerns about current assessments, as well as to consider successful existing practices, or future practices, which can inform practical and meaningful recommendations.

Future assessments need to be useful and appropriate if Ontario is to:

- Support students' learning, their well-being, and equitable opportunities and outcomes.
- Support professionals' practices and judgement.
- Inform students and parents/caregivers/families of learning progress and include meaningful input from them.

- Inform school and system improvement.
- Provide information for public assurance and confidence about the quality and progress of the Ontario education system.
- Advance the achievement of the above goals with positive benefits for the overall goals of Ontario's publicly funded education system.

By taking a student-centred approach, we will seek to ensure future assessments are helpful to children and young people's learning and development. We will also consider Ontario's approaches to assessment in an international context of current assessment policies and practices. Achieving these multiple purposes is not an easy task, but it is crucial.

The debate about how best to support individual students' learning is considerable. There is also debate about what forms of classroom assessments and large-scale assessments are appropriate to inform school and system improvement. Additionally, there is discussion about what forms of reporting are needed by students, educators, parents and the wider public. Issues for consideration include:

- How to balance the importance of teachers' expertise and professional judgement within classroom assessments with large-scale assessments for public accountability of the performance of schools, boards and the province.
- How to effectively monitor and track students' progress.

- What may be the consequences (intended or unintended) of particular forms of assessment.
- How assessment can better support and not hinder equity and student well-being.
- Which students, grades, subjects and skills should (or should not) be assessed using what methods.
- What are the elements of human growth at important stages that should be assessed.
- Whether assessments should be taken from a census of all students in a grade level or from a sample of students.
- What is the role of new technologies in the future design and implementation of assessments.

Across Canada and internationally there exist a range of approaches to assessment, particularly large-scale assessment. Variations in who participates in large-scale assessments include approaches where all students in most or all grades are assessed using standardized approaches – as in the United States – or, as is more common in Canada, only students in specific grades participate in large-scale assessments. In Ontario, for example, elementary school assessments take place at the end of Grade 3 and Grade 6, whereas in British Columbia assessments are in Grades 4 and 7.

Alternatively, countries such as Finland assess a representative sample of students during their school years, and require all students to write an end of secondary school matriculation exam. In New Zealand, as part of a range of monitoring and assessments, the National Monitoring of Study of Student Achievement (NMSSA) uses a multi-matrix sampling technique: a random sample of schools is selected, then a random sample of students

within these schools is selected; the learning areas assessed rotate over time. In 2017, health and physical education and science were the learning areas assessed in the NMSSA. Therefore, there is also variation in what is assessed linked to curriculum expectations, subject or course knowledge and/or wider skills. Across OECD countries, including Canada, there is increasing attention to assessing students' skills and competences (for example collaboration and creativity), as well as subject and course knowledge.

The timing for when large-scale assessments take place also vary: Alberta's new Student Learning Assessments are administered at the start of each school year; in Scotland, teachers choose when to administer new standardized assessments with students participating within existing class time during the school year. In both Alberta and Scotland the assessments are administered online and are designed to support teachers' professional judgement and timely information for students and parents/caregivers to inform their learning. In other words, how assessments are administered also varies considerably: examples include teacher designed and administered assessments in classrooms; teachers choosing from standardized assessment items and marking those assessments; samples of teacher marked student assessments being submitted provincially/nationally to provide information for large-scale reporting; standardized assessments designed and reported by external agencies or organizations; and, more recently, the introduction of Apps-style online assessments and gaming technologies aimed at providing students with experiences that don't feel like "taking a test."



Developing Student Assessments to Achieve Excellence, Equity, Well-being and Public Confidence

The need to review and improve approaches to assessment is necessary to realize fully the Ontario Ministry of Education's priority goals for *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* (2014):

- **Achieving Excellence:** Children and students of all ages will achieve high levels of academic performance, acquire valuable skills and demonstrate good citizenship. Educators will be supported in learning continuously and will be recognized as among the best in the world.
- **Ensuring Equity:** All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood.
- **Promoting Well-Being:** All children and students will develop enhanced mental and physical health, a positive sense of self and belonging, and the skills to make positive choices.
- **Enhancing Public Confidence:** Ontarians will continue to have confidence in a publicly funded education system that helps develop new generations of confident, capable and caring citizens.

Throughout K-12 schooling, it is important to ensure that assessment approaches support, rather than hinder, learning.

Starting with the Early Years, *How Does Learning Happen? (HDLH) Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* (2014) set out a shared view of children as competent, capable, curious and rich in potential. HDLH identified four foundations of belonging, well-being, engagement and expression which are expected to apply for all children, regardless of age, ability, culture, language, geography, or setting.

Looking to high school graduation and post-school destinations, *Building the Workforce of Tomorrow: A Shared Responsibility* (2016) proposed that to compete and succeed in a fast-paced economy, Ontario's workforce must be equipped with skills that meet all the needs of the jobs of today and tomorrow, and with the opportunities to realize aspirations.

The challenge, however, is not only about developing students' knowledge, skills and work habits for economic and employment needs. The goal is also to develop young people who become confident, capable and caring citizens, who respect the diversity of Ontarians, who honour and value Indigenous knowledge, who appreciate and respect cultures and communities in a global context, and who will thrive in their personal and future professional lives and well-being.

Overview of Current Assessment Policies and Practices in Ontario



In Ontario, we have a system of assessment and evaluation that works not only to support individual students' learning but also to report on student, school, school board, and provincial education performance. Different types of assessment and

evaluation have different purposes, administration and types of accountability, including classroom-based assessments and large-scale assessments. Figure 1 outlines the current assessments administered in Ontario's publicly-funded schools.

FIGURE 1: CURRENT STUDENT ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN ONTARIO

SK	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 6	GRADE 8	GRADE 9	GRADE 10
ONGOING CLASSROOM ASSESSMENTS JK-12						
EDI Developmental Domains - 3 year cycle - Census	EQAO Literacy (Reading and Writing) and Mathematics - Yearly cycle - Census	PIRLS Reading - 5 year cycle - Sample TIMSS Mathematics and Science - 4 year cycle - Sample	EQAO Literacy (Reading and Writing) and Mathematics - Yearly cycle - Census	PCAP Reading Mathematics and Science - 3 year cycle - Sample TIMSS Mathematics and Science - 4 year cycle - Sample	EQAO Academic and Applied Mathematics - Yearly cycle - Census	EQAO OSSLT - Graduation Requirement (Literacy Test) - Yearly cycle - Census PISA Reading Mathematics and Science - 3 year cycle - Sample

What is the difference between 'classroom' and 'large-scale' assessment?

"**Classroom assessment** and evaluation strategies are developed by teachers to help individual students take the next steps in learning and to determine and inform students and parents of the student's achievement. **Large-scale assessments**, by contrast, are one-time measures, developed by institutions or agencies at a provincial, national, or international level and designed primarily to provide snapshots of the strengths and weaknesses of education systems."

"Large-scale assessments are administered at key stages in students' education. They contain standardized content and are administered and scored according to standardized procedures. They enable governments and school boards to compare results over time in a consistent and objective manner, providing information that can be used to develop education policies and allocate resources. These objective measures of student achievement also help to build public confidence in the ability of governments and educators to readily identify key areas in which the education system needs improvement."

Both classroom assessment and evaluation and large-scale assessments are important and useful and, when taken together, paint a comprehensive picture of the learning and achievement of students".

- Growing Success, p. 92 (2010)



Classroom Assessments

Classroom assessments can take many forms including teachers' observations of student learning, teacher-student conversations, students' individual and group work in class, and products demonstrating students' learning, for example assignments, tasks and exams. Classroom assessments can contribute to information in Report Cards to parents.

Growing Success, Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools (2010) and the accompanying *Growing Success: The Kindergarten Addendum (2016)*, are the Ministry of Education's policy documents for educators on assessment in Ontario's publicly funded schools. The documents lay out seven fundamental principles that are intended to guide the collection of meaningful information that will help to inform instructional decisions, promote student engagement, and improve student learning. To ensure validity and reliability of assessment, evaluation, and reporting, *Growing Success* requires that teachers use practices and procedures that

- Are fair, transparent, and equitable for all students.
- Support all students, including those with special education needs, those who are learning the language of instruction (English or French), and those who are First Nation, Métis, or Inuit.
- Are carefully planned to relate to the curriculum expectations and learning goals and, as much as possible, to the interests, learning styles and preferences, needs, and experiences of all students.
- Are communicated clearly to students and parents at the beginning of the school year or course of study and at other appropriate points throughout the school year or course of study.
- Are ongoing, varied in nature, and administered over a period of time to provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate the full range of their learning.

- Provide ongoing descriptive feedback that is clear, specific, meaningful, and timely to support improved learning and achievement.
- Develop students' self-assessment skills to enable them to assess their own learning, set specific goals, and plan next steps for their learning.

Ontario uses a criterion-referenced assessment and evaluation, which means teachers assess and evaluate students' work with reference to established criteria for four levels of achievement that are standard across the province. Student performance is not assessed in comparison to work done by other students nor is there any expectation that a certain number or percentage of students must be allocated to any particular level of achievement.

Across the Ontario curriculum, students are expected to demonstrate the following knowledge and skills:

- **Knowledge and understanding:** subject-specific content acquired in each grade/course, and the comprehension of its meaning and significance
- **Thinking:** the use of critical and creative thinking skills and/or processes
- **Communication:** the conveying of meaning through various forms
- **Application:** the use of knowledge and skills to make connections within and between various contexts.

Teachers are also expected to support students to develop learning skills and work habits which include responsibility, organization, independent work, collaboration, initiative and self-regulation. In the coming year, the government intends to review and update these to six transferable skills: communication, collaboration, self-directed learning, creativity and innovation, citizenship, and problem solving.

Large-scale Ontario Assessments



Large-scale assessments are developed by institutions or agencies at a provincial, national, or international level. These assessments are administered at key stages in students' education, using standardized content in the assessments, and administered and scored according to standardized procedures. These assessments primarily provide snapshots of the performance of Ontario's education system and can be used to inform school and system improvement policies and can also be used for public reporting and accountability.

Early Development Instrument (EDI)

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is an observational tool to assess the developmental health (skills and behaviours) of children between 3.5 and 6.5 years of age (kindergarten age) developed by the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University. The EDI is a questionnaire that measures five domains: physical health and well-being; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; and, communication skills and general knowledge. The EDI is completed by kindergarten teachers for each senior kindergarten (SK) student in their classroom. The EDI is a population measure designed for use with whole populations of children; it is not used for individual student assessment. The EDI has been used since 1998 in Canada and has been implemented in every province and territory with the exception of Nunavut. The EDI has also gained international recognition and has been adapted for use in more than 20 countries for purposes ranging from small-scale pilots to research studies to national monitoring. Further adaptations are ongoing and a standard protocol has been established for adaptation in each new setting to ascertain the reliability and validity of the adapted instrument and ensure comparability of results. In Ontario, since 2004, the EDI has been

collected province-wide every 3 years. The Ministry of Education sponsored the EDI collection in 2014/2015. In contrast to previous cycles, the fourth full provincial collection took place entirely in a single year. The latest EDI data collection in 2014-15 collected information on over 135,000 senior kindergarten students. There will be another administration of the EDI in 2017-18 which will be the fifth provincial collection and the second collection led by the Ministry of Education.

Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)

The legislation that established EQAO requires all students in publicly funded schools to participate in provincial large-scale assessments. In 1997, EQAO administered the first provincial assessments in Ontario. EQAO assessments involve full-census (all students) for: Reading, Writing and Mathematics for the Primary Division (Grades 1-3; administered in Grade 3); Reading, Writing and Mathematics for the Junior Division (Grades 4-6; administered in Grade 6); Grade 9 Mathematics (Academic and Applied); and, the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), first administered to Grade 10 students. Primary and Junior assessment results are not recorded on students' elementary

provincial report cards. In the case of Grade 9 math, teachers have the option of marking all or a portion of their students' work and integrating the mark as part of the students' final grade for their specific mathematics course. For the OSSLT, students must pass the test as one of thirty-two graduation requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma. All EQAO tests are currently performed using paper and pen- with special provisions provided for students with special education needs.

In 2016-2017, a total of 141,791 Grade 3 students, 138,502 Grade 6 students, 100,897 students enrolled in the Grade 9 academic math course and 36,174 students enrolled in Grade 9 applied math course participated in EQAO assessments. In addition, 142,188 students were eligible to participate in the OSSLT for the first time. Unlike the international large-scale assessments that take place in Ontario, EQAO provides individual student reports to parents detailing their individual child's results and information on understanding the EQAO assessment results.

The Education Quality and Accountability Office

Established by the Education Quality and Accountability Act of 1996, the EQAO is a Crown agency mandate to provide independent and public scrutiny of Ontario's education system. EQAO administers large-scale assessments grounded in the curriculum, provides outreach support for the understanding of EQAO data, coordinates Ontario's participation in national and international assessments, and contributes to education research.

Using assessment results, EQAO provides reports to students and their parents/caregivers, schools, school boards and the Government of Ontario on student achievement and attitudinal patterns. EQAO data should be analyzed alongside classroom, school and school board information to build a comprehensive understanding of trends. As part of a broader modernization initiative, EQAO is currently seeking to update its assessments to reflect classroom experiences better, incorporate more digital tools, broaden the insights gained into student achievement, and create an assessment experience that is customizable and more easily accessible for all students.

Ontario's Participation in National and International Assessments



Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP)

The Pan-Canadian Assessment Program is a national large-scale assessment that was developed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and is administered every three years to assess the reading, mathematics, and science knowledge and skills of Grade 8 students. Across Ontario, a random sample of 3208 students in 150 English-language schools (approximately 2% of the total population of students enrolled in Grade 8 in 2012–2013) and 2180 students in 125 French-language schools (approximately 34% of the total population of students enrolled in Grade 8 in 2012–2013) participated in PCAP 2013. All 10 provinces, but no territories, participated in the 2013 PCAP.

Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a large-scale international assessment developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that reports every three years on the reading literacy, mathematical literacy, and scientific literacy of Grade 10 (fifteen-year-old) students. Schools and the students within schools are selected randomly for participation. The results are valid only on the pan-Canadian and provincial levels. All 10 provinces have participated in each assessment. Approximately 20,000 Canadian students from about 1000 schools have taken part in each PISA assessment in either English or French. Of those students, 4123 were from Ontario.

Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

The Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is a large-scale international assessment conducted every four years that measures the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of mathematics and science for students in Grades 4 and 8. In Canada, a sample of schools is selected at random and within each of the sampled schools, at least one Grade 4 and/or Grade 8/Secondary II class is selected to participate in the assessment. In 2015, in Ontario, over 4500 Grade 4 students and over 4500 Grade 8 participated in TIMSS.

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is a large-scale international assessment conducted every five years that measures learning in reading for students in Grade 4. In 2011, a Canadian-wide sample was selected and seven provinces selected samples large enough to provide provincial results. In Ontario, approximately 4000 students participate in each administration.

The TIMSS and the PIRLS assessments are both conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).



Meeting the Needs of All Learners

Effective assessment policies and practices should meet the unique needs of all students. *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan (2017)* describes how systemic barriers are caused by embedded biases in policies, practices and processes, and may result in differential treatment. Barriers can be unintentional – for example, learning materials that do not take into account the diversity of our communities – often these are a result of doing things the way they have always been done. It is also important to recognize and address additional barriers and unique experiences of discrimination that can arise for some students when factors such as racialization, Indigeneity, parent/caregiver status, children and youth in care, class, gender identity, religion, poverty, and physical or intellectual ability intersect. The design of assessment data and reporting should give consideration to the needs and experiences of all students.

English and French Language Learners

English language learners (ELL) and French language learners (students in provincially funded English-language or French-language schools whose first language is a language other than, or significantly different from, the English/French used for instruction in Ontario schools) are at a disadvantage when faced with assessments in a language they are only just learning. Results from assessments that are meant to capture a particular learning (e.g. science) could be affected if the student struggles to understand what is being asked.

Francophone Students

Ontario's education system includes twelve French-language school boards with over 425 schools where the curriculum is taught exclusively in French, with the exception of English (as a subject). Along with teaching Ontario's curriculum from junior kindergarten to grade 12, French-language schools also have a mandate to protect,

enhance and transmit the French language and culture. This is supported by the Ministry of Education's *Aménagement Linguistique Policy for French-Language Education (2005)* — a policy that aims to promote identity-building and self-confidence in being francophone within a francophone multicultural school environment, along with academic achievement and personal success. French-language school boards participate in the same provincial, national and international testing as do the English-language school boards. However, the content of the provincial EQAO assessment in math is different in the English and French-language versions because they reflect different curricula. French-language students generally perform better on provincial assessments than national or international assessments. Investigation into the accessibility of the language being used in national and international assessments for Ontario's French-language system may be required, particularly for students living in a minority context where spoken French is not standardized.

Students with Special Education Needs

The report *Special Education in Ontario: Kindergarten to Grade 12 (2017)* noted that the “...assessment of students with special education needs is a continuous cyclical process giving consideration to the unique blend of strengths and needs of the learner.” Educators must work to enable students with special education needs to participate in all aspects of assessment and demonstrate the full extent of their learning. When required, a student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) describes their individual program and would specify whether the student requires accommodations, modified expectations or alternative expectations. Continuous assessment of the student with special education needs provides information that may indicate that the IEP may be adjusted by the teacher in consultation with the in-school team and/or special education teacher, the student, or the student’s parents/caregivers. Currently, however, concerns about the effective use of IEPs, modifications and accommodations have been raised as well as the overall appropriateness of approaches to assessments for recognizing and reflecting the unique needs and differences of learners.

Indigenous Students

Ontario’s Indigenous Education Strategy has been designed to help improve opportunities for success for First Nation, Métis and Inuit students in Ontario schools, and to increase the knowledge and awareness of all students about Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives and contributions.

The number of Indigenous students in Ontario is growing and there are concerns that these students have been marginalized and not been able to thrive in our publicly funded education system. Making the transition from First Nations schools to Ontario’s publicly funded education system presents students with a unique combination of social, emotional and academic factors that may impact their educational success.

Consideration of assessment data and reporting should be mindful of Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing, differing pedagogies, and opportunities required to demonstrate learning. Factors affecting educational resiliency must also be considered in assessments. Additionally, the Ministry’s assessments and reporting should recognize the First Nation Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) principles. The collection, the use and ownership of assessment data on Indigenous students in the education system has been considered in recent years by the Ministry of Education working with Indigenous partners. As of March 2015, all 72 Ontario school boards and four school authorities were reporting voluntary, confidential Indigenous student self-identification data to the Ministry of Education. Preliminary data from October 2015 indicates approximately 63% of the estimated Indigenous student population have self-identified. Baseline data on student achievement for self-identified Indigenous students was released in *A Solid Foundation: Second Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework (2013)*.

Student Well-being

Over the 2016-17 school year, Ontario's Ministry of Education consulted with students, parents/caregivers, educators, partners, and community members, to learn more about student well-being and how it is being supported in schools (*How We Listened: Well-being in Our Schools, Strength in Our Society*). This consultation informed decisions about future measures and data for student well-being. At the school and school board levels, well-being data will be collected using school climate surveys of students, school staff and parents/caregivers at least once every two years.

The surveys will be done anonymously and the results are intended to help schools and school boards build and sustain a positive school climate and make informed planning decisions about program effectiveness at the local level. At the provincial level, the Ministry of Education will ensure that some of the measures of well-being draw on existing provincial surveys and data collection tools. The development of these tools is being informed by a research report that was produced by the University of Ottawa in Summer 2017, including a literature review and environmental scan of Kindergarten to grade 12 student well-being measures, data sets and tools in Ontario and other jurisdictions.

Conversations for Improvement



Over twenty years have passed since the first large-scale provincial assessments in Ontario, and now we are looking forward twenty years to 2037: what do you hope future assessments in Ontario will look like? Do you have specific suggestions for future large-scale assessments and/or for classroom assessments?

Our aim is to have a province-wide conversation about how best to improve Ontario's approaches to assessment. We want to hear from as many people as possible over the public engagement period. And we are committed to openness and transparency throughout the process. The feedback we get from you will inform a report to be submitted, by Spring 2018, to the Minister of Education providing actionable advice on student assessments within the scope of the Terms of Reference of the Independent Review of Assessment and Reporting.

The following questions are intended to stimulate conversations to inform potential recommendations concerning future assessment practices in Ontario. You do not have to answer all questions and you may have different questions, topics and suggestions that you wish to propose. We are seeking as wide a range of views, experiences and suggestions as possible. As well as general responses, if you have specific perspectives as a student, parent/caregiver, educator, employer or community member, please indicate those in your responses also. When you answer, where possible please provide examples or any other evidence to illustrate or support your perceptions.

We really appreciate your time. Your views and experiences are very important to us and to the province as we review and consider how to have the best possible assessment system that supports all students, their learning and well-being.



Discussion Questions

1. EQAO Assessments

EQAO involves educators from across the province in the design, development, administration, scoring and reporting of assessment results. Current EQAO assessment approaches include Primary Division (Grades 1–3) and Junior Division (Grades 4–6) assessments of reading, writing, and mathematics, Grade 9 assessments of mathematics (academic and applied), and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, administered in Grade 10 as a graduation requirement. The census (all students) assessments contain performance-based tasks requiring written responses to open format questions as well as multiple choice questions, through which students can demonstrate what they know and can do in relation to specific curriculum expectations.

From your perspective, how well or poorly do current EQAO assessment approaches support the following goals, where 1 is “very poorly” and 5 is “very well”?

1	2	3	4	5	DON'T KNOW	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Improving student learning, knowledge and skills?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Ensuring student equity, including the unique, diverse and specific needs of all learners?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Recognizing the culture and experiences of each student?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Minimizing undesirable indirect effects of assessment practices on students' learning and well-being?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Providing evidence to inform educators' professional practice, including instruction and assessment?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Providing a useful, effective and manageable way to track the progress of students?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Providing evidence to inform policies and priority actions by schools, school boards and the government to support improvements for all students and for students requiring additional supports?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Providing independent scrutiny and accountability to report to the public on the performance and quality of schools, school boards and the overall Ontario publicly-funded education system?

Discussion Question #1

Background Ontario's goals include achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being and enhancing public confidence in the public education system.

How can EQAO assessments be improved to realize the provincial goals?

You may wish to consider which grades, knowledge and skills should or should not be assessed, how assessments are designed, when and how assessments are administered, whether assessments should involve all students or a sample of students, and how to use technology most effectively.

Discussion Question #2

Background Current reporting includes individual student results, reports on school and school district performance, provincial reports and public reporting.

What types of EQAO reporting do you consider to be most useful, and why?

You may wish to consider student results (which are provided to students, teachers and parents), school results, school board results and provincial results (which are available to the public). EQAO reports are generated for longitudinal tracking of student results over time, for cohorts of students between assessment years, for sub-groups of students (e.g. by gender, Indigenous students, English language learners, or students with special education needs) to support educators in identifying gaps and, for areas of strength and improvement with respect to sections of the curriculum.

2. Classroom Assessments

Background Classroom assessment strategies are developed by teachers to help students move forward in their learning and to determine and inform students and their parents/caregivers on their learning progress. Typical classroom assessment approaches include class work, tests and various other activities and assignments that are assessed based on curriculum expectations. Teachers use a variety of assessment tools, which may include direct observation, portfolios, journals, written assignments, presentations, seminars, group work, tests, projects, and self- and peer assessment.

From your perspective, how well or poorly do current classroom assessment approaches support the following goals, where 1 is “very poorly” and 5 is “very well”?

1	2	3	4	5	DON'T KNOW	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Improving student learning, knowledge and skills?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Ensuring student equity, including the unique, diverse and specific needs of all learners?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Recognizing the culture and experiences of each student?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Minimizing undesirable indirect effects of assessment practices on students' learning and well-being?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Providing evidence to inform educators' professional practice, including instruction and assessment?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Enabling educators to use their professional judgement to provide meaningful feedback to students?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Providing a useful, effective and manageable way to monitor the progress of students?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Providing parents/caregivers with meaningful information on their child's achievements and progress?

Discussion Question #3

Background Ontario’s goals include achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being and enhancing public confidence in the public education system.

How can classroom assessment be improved to realize our provincial goals?

Discussion Question #4

Background Current reporting for students, parents/caregivers, and educators includes parent-teacher or parent-student-teacher conferences, portfolios of student work, student-led conferences, interviews, phone calls, checklists, elementary progress report cards, elementary and secondary provincial report cards, as well as informal reports.

What types of reporting of student learning in the classroom do you consider to be most useful, and why?

3. National and International Assessments

Background Current national and international assessment approaches include the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program, the Program for International Student Assessment, Trends in Mathematics and Science Study and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study. These are all large-scale assessments that Ontario participates in on a cyclical basis (every few years) with a sample of students.

From your perspective, how well or poorly do current national and international assessment approaches support the following goals, where 1 is “very poorly” and 5 is “very well”?

1	2	3	4	5	DON'T KNOW	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Improving student learning, knowledge and skills?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Providing evidence to improve educational policies and practices in Ontario?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Informing the public about the performance of Ontario's education system?
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Profiling Ontario's educational achievements, equity and diversity nationally and internationally?

Discussion Question #5

How can Ontario’s participation in national and/or international assessments better help us to understand how Ontario students are performing relative to their national/international peers?

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4. The Future of Assessments in Ontario

Discussion Question #6

It has been 20 years since the first large-scale provincial assessments in Ontario; looking ahead 20 years to 2037, what trends, changes or needs do we need to start thinking about today to guide education assessment and reporting in the future?

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Please share any further comments or advice related to assessment and reporting in Ontario.

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Thank you for participating and helping us improve
the future of education assessment in Ontario.



There are multiple ways to share your input:

Online: Visit *OntarioALearningProvince.ca* to participate in an online engagement and answer discussion questions

Social media: Share your comments on Twitter at #OntEdAssessment (English); or at #OntEvaluationEdu (French)

In writing: Submit your written comments/papers to *educationassessment@Ontario.ca*

In person: Participate in local engagement sessions in late November and early December across Ontario. We want to hear directly from parents/ caregivers, students, educators, officials and the broader community and work with you to develop ideas on how to improve assessment practices.

In the community: Convene a conversation and submit your report to *educationassessment@Ontario.ca*

In order to be considered for the report, please submit your feedback and input by Friday, December 15, 2017.

www.OntarioALearningProvince.ca

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