

Directions for Diversity

Enhancing Supports
to Children and Youth
with Diverse Needs

Final Report

of the

Saskatchewan Special Education Review Committee

January, 2000

ISBN: 1-894116-74-7

The Future

“The future is not the result of choices among alternative paths offered by the present but a place that is created. Created first in the mind and will, created next in activity. The future is not some place we are going to but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destination.”

-- John Schaar

Table of Contents

Members of the Committee	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Executive Summary	vi
Principles and Beliefs	1
Background and Process	3
The Special Education Review in Context	11
Key Findings, Questions, and Implications	46
Recommendations	56
Directions for Diversity.....	84
Responsibilities for Leadership	85
References	90
Appendices	
A. Synthesis of Consultations and Submissions	93
B. Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations	147
C. Process Forms	153
D. Consultations and Meetings with Groups	157
E. Written Briefs Received	158
F. Attendance at School Division Forums	162
G. Schools Visited by Committee Members	163
H. Resource Materials	164

Members of the Committee

The five person Special Education Review Committee was chaired by **Christine Boyczuk**. Ms. Boyczuk's experience includes senior administrative positions in rural and urban settings, with responsibility for curriculum and special education. As well as experience as a Director of Education, she has experience as a classroom teacher, special education teacher, consultant for gifted education, and reading consultant.

Ms. Boyczuk is involved in many professional organizations, including the Council for Exceptional Children, Saskatchewan Reading Council and several subject councils with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. The Council for Exceptional Children recognized her contribution to the field of special education in 1989 when it named her Administrator of the Year in 1989.

Bob Green is the chairperson of the Saskatchewan Valley School Division. Mr. Green retired from a position as Assistant Director of Education in charge of student services, including special education and counselling, in 1987. His contribution to the field of special education was recognized when the Council for Exceptional Children named him Administrator of the Year in 1987. Before his position as a system-based administrator, Mr. Green was a classroom teacher and a principal.

Since his retirement, Mr. Green has established a private educational consulting business. He has been involved in a number of projects, including school reviews, youth drug and alcohol prevention activities, writing teacher resource materials for the Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan, and developing professional development materials for school-based administrators for the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit. Mr. Green is the coordinator of the League of Peaceful Schools in Saskatchewan.

Dr. Len Haines is a professor with the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. He has a Ph.D. in Special Education and since 1978 has taught graduate and undergraduate courses in the education of exceptional children.

Dr. Haines has conducted a range of research in the field of special education. Most recently, he has investigated the collaborative process and the impact that computer technology has on the team planning process to develop and implement individual programs for students with exceptional needs.

As a teacher trainer, Dr. Haines collaborates with classroom teachers and resource teachers to supervise students preparing to be special education teachers. He is involved in professional organizations related to the practice of special education, including technology and media and teacher education divisions of the Council for Exceptional Children.

Jean Lendzyk, a special education resource teacher at Wynyard Composite High School, teaches students with various exceptionalities. Ms. Lendzyk brings a range of teaching experience to the Committee, having regular classroom experience at the Division I to Division III levels as well as teaching special needs students at all grade levels.

She is involved in organizations within the school, the community and the province. Ms. Lendzyk was instrumental in implementing a Peers Helping Peers Program at her school. She has been involved with her local community's Saskatchewan Action Plan for Children Committee and has served on the Mayor's Task Force on Accessibility. In 1992, Ms. Lendzyk received a "Canada 125" Award for her outstanding contribution to the community.

Ms. Lendzyk is the Past President of the Saskatchewan Council for Exceptional Children and she has served on the Board of Governors for the Canadian Council for Exceptional Children.

Elaine Billay is a parent and a social worker with the Child and Youth Department of Mental Health Services in the Prince Albert Health District.

In addition to bringing a parent's perspective to the Committee, Ms. Billay works in schools in Prince Albert, specifically in the areas of social skills training and bereavement counselling. Through her counselling work, she is involved with many children with exceptional needs and their families. Ms. Billay has experience working with children who are abused and their families. Her professional life has focused on children and families.

Acknowledgements

The Special Education Review Committee would like to thank the many people who participated in the review for the assistance they provided.

The Committee extends sincere thanks to all those who attended the public consultations, to those who submitted briefs and made presentations to the Committee, and to the hundreds of people who contributed to the development of those briefs. The involvement of the partner organizations, community agencies, advocacy groups, government agencies, and other stakeholders was most valuable to the Committee.

The Committee is thankful for the interest and willingness of the teams who attended the school division forums and to the schools and school divisions who welcomed the Committee members to their communities. The involvement of students, parents, teacher assistants, teachers, and central office staff provided valuable insights for the Committee. Many school divisions and groups conducted their own mini-consultations, forums, and surveys. This information was most beneficial.

The Committee extends gratitude to the staff of Saskatchewan Education – the Regional Superintendents of Children’s Services, the Regional Directors of Education, and the Regional office staffs. Their insights helped to guide the process of the Review without interfering with the Committee's ability to conduct an impartial study.

The Committee thanks Janice Charlton, Director, Special Education Unit; Gillian McCreary, Executive Director, Planning, Evaluation and Children’s Services; Ken Horsman, Associate Deputy Minister of Education; and Dr. Craig Dotson, Deputy Minister of Education, for their prompt and gracious responses to many requests. In addition, many individual experts contributed to the Review. Dr. Keith Walker, Dr. Robert Sanche, Dr. Ailsa Watkinson, Dr. Deborah Parker-Loewen, and the Office of Disability Issues provided the Committee with required information and knowledge.

The Committee wishes to extend thanks to the Davidson School Division office staff for the technical support provided to the Committee – Brenda Reich, Nadine Gartner, and Jeff Alexander – and to the Board of Education. Thanks are extended to the Shamrock School Division for providing Jean Lendzyk with support as she undertook her role on the Committee, and to the University of Saskatchewan for supporting Len Haines as a Committee member. To Sandra Baldwin, the assistant to the Committee, most sincere thanks are extended. Sandra was essential to the Committee and to the participants in providing technical and organizational support.

Finally, the Committee would like to extend its appreciation to Dr. Len Haines. Len served as a member of the Committee as well as the writer of the report. His ability to synthesize the information and the discussion, and present the ideas in text are appreciated. The Committee members are extremely grateful for his expertise.

Executive Summary

The Special Education Review was conducted by a five member panel external to Government, over a sixteen month period, beginning in September, 1998. Ten Terms of Reference were given as the basis of the study. They included the examination of the foundational and philosophical basis, program and delivery, integrated services, funding, accountability, early screening and identification, professional preparation and development, knowledge and expertise, continuing dialogue, and parental involvement.

The Committee reviewed an extensive body of research and data, including historical, international, national, and provincial sources. In addition, the Committee conducted public consultations, meetings, forums, interviews, focus groups, and school visits; received and reviewed numerous briefs and other written material; and analyzed the information received.

From the information available, the Committee identified themes, including strengths and barriers of the current system and the possible avenues to improve what currently exists. Next, key findings, issues, and implications for recommendations were determined. Then, a vision for the future was formulated and recommendations were established.

During the deliberations of the Committee, it was determined that the most effective way to provide appropriate support services for students with exceptional needs is to ensure the availability of a comprehensive array of support services. Such a system of comprehensive services addresses the needs of students with disabilities, some of whom are currently not served or inadequately served in the existing delivery of special education services.

The Committee uses the term students with diverse needs throughout this report. The term includes students served traditionally by special education, that is students with disabilities and gifted learners. Others included in the term students with diverse needs are those children and youth who are at risk for developmental, learning and behavioural problems because of environmental and other factors. A major finding of the review is that schools in Saskatchewan are dealing with greater diversity in the student population. Meeting the diverse needs of students requires building the capacity of schools and school divisions to support those needs. Building inclusive schools through effective practices and supports to students will be the continuing challenge for schools, school divisions, and Saskatchewan Education.

The Committee, while making significant recommendations for improvements for the education of students with diverse needs, indicates support for the general direction of special education in the province. Saskatchewan schools and school divisions are doing a commendable job in meeting the changing and growing demands of providing a broad range of services to students with special needs. The Committee supports the philosophy of progressive inclusion with a continuum of supports, services and options. The provincial government's work toward interdepartmental coordination of services is recognized.

The Committee recognizes that the role of the school in delivering a variety of support services to children has changed. The staff, knowledge, and resources of education alone are no longer sufficient to meet the challenges of providing for the diverse needs of children in schools. A

fundamental change to the way services are delivered to children with special needs is required. The Committee recommends actions to help schools serve as a focal point for the delivery of a full spectrum of programs and services for students with diverse needs and for their families. The recommendations are based on a vision of full citizenship sustained by a seamless continuum of supports and services extending from preschool to adult life.

The major findings of the Committee are as follows:

- there is a need to enhance the capacity of schools to meet diverse needs
- there is a need to develop collaboratively the provincial philosophy of supporting students with diverse needs
- there is a need for renewal of policy to support and communicate the philosophy
- there is a need for a set of related practices to implement the policy
- there is a need to restructure resources and supports to sustain and renew the practices.

The major recommendations of the Committee are to:

- adopt, implement, and support the philosophy of inclusive schools
- establish a Children's Services Advisory Committee to plan and support a provincial children's diversity strategy
- renew the provincial policy and board of education policies as they relate to students with diverse needs
- develop a framework of effective practices to support students with diverse needs
- enhance funding and develop protocols to focus on children's needs, accelerate the interagency initiative, and restructure consultative services.

The Committee emphasizes the importance of community. In order to effectively implement the recommendations the stakeholder groups will have to work together. There are some actions that can be implemented immediately. Others require work with partners, and will require a longer term to implement. It is hoped that the report of the Special Education Review Committee will serve as a foundation for the future and provide direction to strengthen learning opportunities, supports, and outcomes for students with diverse needs. The key to successfully implementing and acting on the philosophy of inclusive schools is the continued commitment of all.

Special Education Review Committee - January, 2000

Principles and Beliefs

The following principles and belief statements guided the information gathering and research methodology, decision-making processes, and the development of the recommendations included in this report. They are considered applicable to the strategies and actions that may follow the recommendations.

Child-Centred

Because we believe that children and young people are the heart of the education endeavour ... we consider their needs and best interests to be the primary considerations in providing programs and support services.

Worth of the Person, Equity, and Respect for Diversity

Because we believe in the inherent value and worth of each individual ... we respect and nurture the diversity, cultural heritage, life experience, ways of knowing, unique potential and capabilities of each child and adult. Persons with diverse needs have the same rights and responsibilities as do others. They are entitled, as others are, to equal protection and equal benefit of the law and require measures for achieving equality. All children, youth, and adults have the opportunity to experience success and to develop the skill, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to contribute meaningfully to society. It is understood that diversity enriches the lives of all Saskatchewan people. Children and families have access to educational opportunities and the necessary supporting human services to achieve equitable benefit. Persons with special needs require the supports necessary to ensure their independence and enhance their well being. It is understood that along with shared responsibility there is mutual benefit to all in achieving the vision for equity.

Cooperation, Empowerment, and Shared Responsibility

Because we believe in cooperation, empowerment, and shared responsibility ... we use collaborative processes involving education partners, children and families, and community members to broaden the base of participation and support. This recognizes that in order to address complex issues, all people need to participate directly in the process.

Educational Excellence

Because we believe in educational excellence ... we clearly define expectations and measure our growth toward those expectations. Excellence is achieved in learning programs that are responsive, culturally affirming, challenging, delivered in a caring school environment, and built on existing supportive structures. The student, teacher, and the learning environment are the focus of supports that enhance opportunities and remove barriers to teaching and learning. Leadership is pivotal to create educational excellence.

Prevention and Early Intervention

Because we believe in the enduring value of prevention and early intervention ...
... we create services that reflect a balance of prevention, early intervention and support services, along with crisis response and treatment. Services and supports are planned and implemented that offer support before problems reach the point where more intrusive interventions are required. Programs are in place to strengthen the child's early learning environment and development in the home and community.

Holistic, Integrated Approaches

Because we believe in using holistic and comprehensive approaches ...
... we address issues by defining and dealing with them as an integrated whole, rather than as parts. Programs and services incorporate a broad spectrum of community and school-based social supports to respond to the whole child. Solution finding focuses on identifying the needs of the student, the context of the issues, and the long-term goals rather than simply addressing symptoms. It is understood that issues are complex and that solutions are interconnected and interdependent.

Affordability

Because we believe in affordability ...
... we identify strategies that build capacity and make the most effective use of available resources.

Accountability

Because we believe in accountability ...
... we use processes that are collaborative, with accountability factors built into goal setting and decision making. Transparency of actions and free flow of information are valued. This information tells stakeholders what we do, how well we are doing, our strengths, concerns and areas of improvement.

Adapted from:

- *"Our Children, Our Communities, Our Future": Equity in Education: A Policy Framework*
- *Working Together to Address Barriers to Learning*
- *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues*

Background and Process

Orientation

In September of 1998, the Minister of Education at the time, the Honourable Pat Atkinson, established the Special Education Review Committee. The members appointed to the committee, based on their diverse experiences and interests in special education, were Christine Boyczuk (Chairperson), Bob Green, Dr. Len Haines, Jean Lendzyk, and Elaine Billay. The purpose of the review was to build on strengths, identify needed improvements and ensure that special education resources are being invested effectively. "Although there have been many

changes in special education in the past thirty years, there has been no comprehensive review,” stated Atkinson in her announcement.

The Committee was asked to inquire into the provision of special education programs and services to students within Saskatchewan’s public education system and submit its recommendations to the Minister of Education. The recommendations were to be directed at all the special education stakeholder groups.

The Committee was specifically directed to examine and report on the following Terms of Reference:

1. the foundational and philosophical basis of special education in Saskatchewan
 2. the delivery of special education programs and services in Saskatchewan
 3. opportunities and mechanisms to improve the integration and coordination of education, health and social services programs in effectively meeting the needs of students with exceptional needs
 4. the special education funding arrangements and protocols currently being used by Saskatchewan Education, to ensure that maximum resources are going to students
 5. the accountability mechanisms regarding funding
 6. the feasibility of implementing a province-wide early screening process to identify students who are at risk for developing learning and behavioural problems
 7. the education, training and continuing professional development of teachers and other staff who work with special education students
 8. the most appropriate ways to ensure that the staff of Saskatchewan Education and of boards of education keep their professional knowledge and expertise current in view of emerging knowledge and techniques
 9. the most appropriate ways for Saskatchewan Education and boards of education to sustain positive continuing dialogue with all stakeholder groups
 10. parents perspectives in program planning and mechanisms for their involvement.
-

The Committee was asked to conduct literature reviews, reviews of policies, programs and practices, and interviews with students, parents and other stakeholders, as it deemed necessary. The Committee was directed to conduct the receipt of oral presentations by December 31, 1998 and to submit its report to the Minister of Education by December 31, 1999.

The Committee began its work by reviewing the Terms of Reference, examining the issues, and establishing key questions. Next, the Committee established a mission, targets, objectives, a strategic plan, a research design, and a process for the review. The mission statement developed by the Committee reads as follows:

“The Special Education Review Committee will use all resources available to make appropriate and sufficient recommendations to the Minister of Education regarding special education services for the future. Our intent is to make recommendations that will build on strengths, identify needed improvements, and ensure special education resources are ‘most effective’.”

The specific objectives of the Special Education Review Committee were to:

- identify strengths and weaknesses in what currently exists
- make recommendations for changes in practice and policy that would lead to continuous improvement in the quality of programs and services in special education in the province
- develop and offer a vision or direction for the future of special education in Saskatchewan.

Design

Since the mandate of the Committee was to identify strengths and concerns and to make recommendations that would fit the Saskatchewan context, the Committee examined various options for the review process. The review paradigm selected was an adapted form of “utilization-focused evaluation” described by Patton (1999). The information sources used were both quantitative and qualitative. The structure involved both naturalistic inquiry and situationally responsive design. Both deductive and inductive inquiry modes were used. The conceptualization of special education in Saskatchewan was seen to be a holistic, interdependent system and therefore a collaborative, consultative, community development process was used. The Committee chose to use both confirmatory hypotheses testing and exploratory hypothesis generating approaches to various issues. The sampling was strategically directed, using key stakeholders. It was considered that stakeholders’ perspectives would be described, explored, and tested.

Different types of reviews are based on different questions, focus on different purposes, and employ different processes. The Committee recognized that the focus of the Review and the defining questions were:

- Descriptive: What currently exists? What is the background?
 - Context: What is the environment within which special education exists historically, nationally, internationally, politically, socially, economically, and futuristically?
 - Effectiveness: What are the elements of special education in Saskatchewan that are effective?
 - Critical issues: What are the critical issues and concerns of the stakeholders and users?
 - Extensiveness focus: How does the current system compare to the needed level of service and impacts?
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- Inputs focus: What resources (money, staff, facilities, technology, etc.) are available and necessary?
- Future focus: What are the trends and likely directions for the future? What change will be needed?
- Diversity focus: What are the perspectives of various stakeholders?
- Decisions focus: What information is needed to inform future decisions?

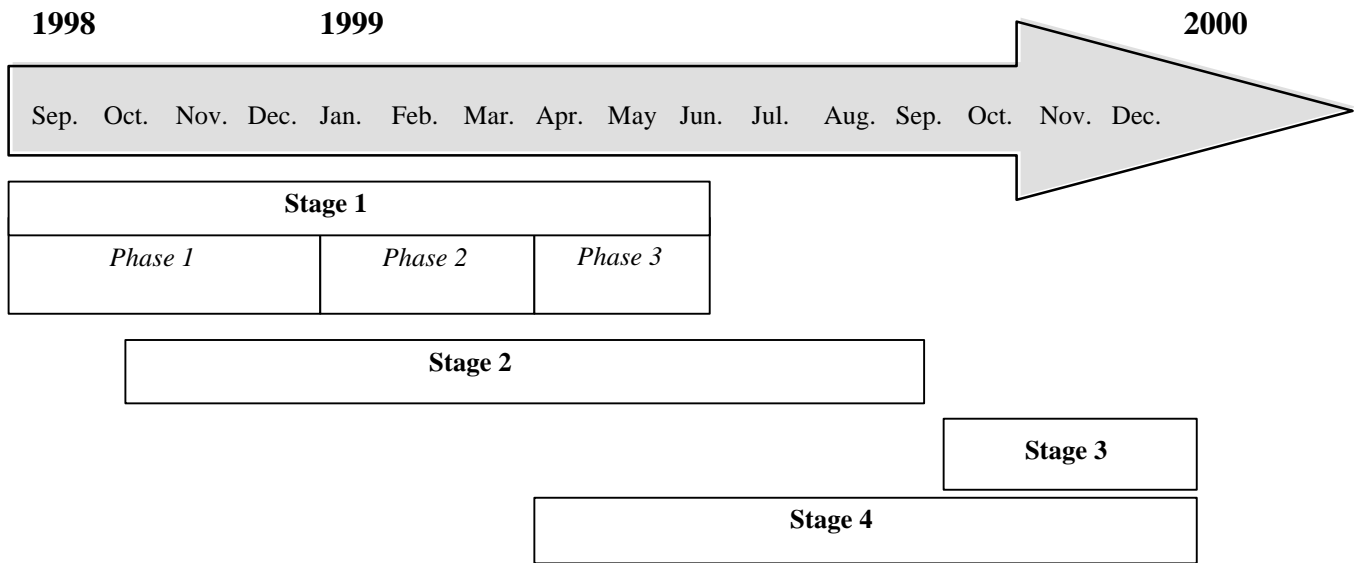
For information gathering purposes, the community development process was used for the review. This involved gathering information and perspectives from all stakeholders, reviewing the data, generating hypotheses, and returning to the key stakeholder groups to test the hypotheses. The key questions examined were:

- What exists in your environment?
- What are the strengths of the current system?
- What are the biggest problems that affect the stakeholder groups?
- What solutions to these problems are suggested?
- What are the barriers to improvement?
- What are the gaps in the current system?

Many of the presentations and briefs submitted utilized the above structure, which enabled the Committee to readily summarize the data.

Process

The review was conducted in several stages and phases. Stage one of the review involved the gathering of information, data, and perspectives. The first stage was structured into three component phases. The first phase involved open consultations and meetings with special interest and advocacy groups. The second phase consisted of meetings with partner organizations and stakeholder groups. The third phase involved two forums attended by school division teams and eighteen school visits conducted by Committee members.



The second stage, which focussed on the analysis of information, was conducted concurrently with the first stage. The third stage of the review involved the examination of the more controversial findings to determine the points of agreement and disagreement. The fourth stage involved the preparation and writing of the final report. During all phases, an ongoing literature review was conducted and a cross Canada and United States survey was undertaken. In addition, briefs were received and reviewed by the Committee throughout the study. The progression of the review is illustrated in the chart above.

Stage One

Phase one of the review was planned and implemented with the assistance of the Regional Directors of Education, the regional education office staff and the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit. Open consultations were held in 11 locations across the province over a three-month period. The purpose of the consultations was to gather information regarding the Terms of Reference to assist the Committee in making recommendations. Approximately 600 people attended these meetings. The following table provides a profile of those who attended the meetings:

Representation at Open Consultations	
Group	Percentage
Parents or “individuals”	26%
Classroom teachers	19%
Other professionals (Occupational and physical therapists, representatives from health boards, consultants)	13%
Special education/resource room teachers	11%
Advocacy group representation	9%

Principals	6%
Directors of education	5%
Trustees	5%
Saskatchewan Education employees	4%
Teacher associates	2%

The open consultation process provided the opportunity for each participant to give feedback to the Special Education Review Committee. Participants were invited to respond to several open ended questions. All those who attended the consultations were encouraged to participate and offer feedback in a series of interview rounds in six specific areas drawn from the Terms of Reference:

- philosophy of special education
- current services and programs
- integration of services among education, justice, health and social services
- communication between Saskatchewan Education, boards of education, and parents, teachers, administrators and other groups
- parental involvement
- teacher training.

The Committee also heard from 26 individuals and 32 groups who presented oral executive summaries at the open consultations. Thirty additional briefs were received during the period between October and December of 1998. Furthermore, the Committee met with 14 special interest and advocacy groups who presented oral and written briefs. Finally, document collection and a cross-Canada survey of policy and practice was conducted. Several prevailing themes emerged:

- the importance of parental involvement in decision making
 - the need for early intervention
 - the support for Regional Offices of Education and special education support personnel (teacher associates, resource teachers and consultants)
 - the need for continued work on the Adaptive Dimension
 - the need to clarify the role and responsibility of teacher associates
 - the importance of integrated services
 - the importance of educating children in their neighbourhood schools with their peers, with the necessary supports in place
 - the need for continued dialogue among all stakeholders
 - variations among schools and school divisions with regard to many practices such as parental involvement.
-

Phase two of the review involved the Committee meeting with 39 partner organizations, stakeholders, and working committees. These groups presented oral and written briefs, most of which had been developed with input from the members of the organization or group. In addition to the meetings, another 97 briefs were received and reviewed. The Committee met with key officials of Saskatchewan Education. A literature review and a review of the Saskatchewan documents and statistics were also conducted. Themes that emerged from phase two included:

- the outstanding commitment of the partners to the field of special education
- the need for increased funding, funding protocols, and accountability measures
- the increased concern for students with social, emotional and behavioural problems, severely aggressive and non-compliant behaviours
- the continued concern for appropriate identification and programming for learning disabled students
- the support needed for classroom teachers
- the concern regarding the appropriate role of paraprofessionals
- the need for early identification
- the need for an interagency approach along with an operational model to support students, families, and schools.

During phase three, the Committee hosted two school division forums, one in Regina and another in Saskatoon. The purpose of the forums was to gather information regarding the Terms of Reference from the perspective of a cross section of school division special education stakeholders. School divisions were invited to send a team consisting of the director of education, a board of education member, a consultant (if available), a principal, a special education teacher, regular classroom teachers, a teacher associate, and a parent. Twenty-one school division teams attended the forums. Teams were asked to work together to generate ideas and solutions, and participants were asked to problem solve in role alike focus groups.

Dominant themes that emerged from the forums included the need for:

- continuing dialogue within and among school divisions
- greater focus on the Adaptive Dimension for meeting the diverse needs of students
- school-based team planning
- a good provincial and school division policy manual and master plan
- “standards of appropriate practice”
- support for the concept of inclusive schools
- a review of teacher training courses
- a handbook for resource teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals
- focusing on prevention.

From the responses received from the forums, school divisions’ commitment to providing quality programs for students emerged. Many strengths of the current system were shared.

During this phase, Committee members also visited 18 schools throughout the province. The purpose was to gather first-hand information from the school level regarding the delivery of services. Interviews were held with administrators, classroom teachers, resource teachers, paraprofessionals, consultants, parents, students served, and other students. Observations were also part of the school visits. Documents from the schools were collected and the Committee members conducted surveys. Again, the Committee summarized the themes that emerged:

- there were many varied programs and strategies
- there were variations among schools and school divisions
- there was a great deal of will to serve special needs students well
- the leadership role of the school administrator was seen as vital
- collaboration of the special education team plays a key role in the education of exceptional students
- a climate of acceptance and support is required in the school and school division in meeting the diverse needs of students
- professional development for staff and parents was seen by the school as a critical factor in serving students
- the role of consultants and support personnel was also highly valued by the school
- challenging problems for the schools were identified as meeting the needs of students with behavioural problems and with learning disabilities.

During this phase, the Committee met with individual “experts” to gather information on financial, legal, ethical, medical, human rights, children’s advocacy matters, and urban issues. Meetings were held with representatives of stakeholder groups and with the Assistant Deputy Ministers of Health, Education and Social Services, regarding interagency issues. A forum was conducted on meeting the needs of Aboriginal students, and meetings took place with the Office of Disability Issues. More briefs were received and reviewed during this three-month period. The research at this stage was specific to the Terms of Reference and to gaining a historical perspective on the issues.

Stage 2

This stage involved the analysis and synthesis of the information collected. The views represented in all the information gathered were reviewed, summarized, linked, categorized, matched and where appropriate, weighted. This work was conducted concurrently with phase 1, but extended beyond it.

Stage 3

During the third stage, the Committee met with some key partners: the Special Education Unit; the Regional Directors of Education; the Regional Superintendents of Children's Services; the executive of the League of Education Administrators, Directors and Superintendents; the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation; the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; and the Provincial Interagency Network on Disabilities.

The Committee found variance of opinion on certain issues such as: the meaning and application of inclusion, funding protocols, and accountability processes. There was general consensus on the need to:

- focus on early intervention and prevention
- increase funding for special education
- advance the use of technology
- intensify the focus on meeting the needs of students with social, emotional and behavioural problems
- develop protocols for interagency service delivery
- publish a revised policy manual
- renew the concept of the Adaptive Dimension
- develop a strategic plan on the part of Saskatchewan Education
- conduct ongoing consultation with stakeholders
- review of courses at the universities
- build the concept of the inclusive school and effective practices, with additional resources for the classroom and the school, and professional development at all levels to actualize this vision.

Stage 4

The final stage of the review involved analysis and synthesis of the information gathered from the open consultations, briefs, meetings, forums, visits, observations, and interviews; drafting of the report; formulating the recommendations; and submission of the final report. In the analysis, the Committee looked specifically for gaps in services; natural linkages between themes, issues, and directions; and matches between stakeholder needs, perceived strengths, barriers, and problems. The report was prepared with key sections to describe the background and methodology; the historical, national and international perspective; key findings, questions and implications; and recommendations. The key points from the open consultations, briefs, meetings, interviews, and visits are found in Appendix A.

The Special Education Review in Context

Historical Context of Special Education

A great deal can be learned about the quality of a society, institution, or organization by studying the way it treats its most vulnerable members. In the case of children with special needs, a meaningful quality index is the extent of society's resolve to provide these individuals with full access to a quality life in the community through commitment of the educational system to deliver high quality, appropriate educational experiences. A commitment test to appraise the depth of this resolve is to examine changes in the quality index that arise during times of fiscal restraint and competing initiatives. It is particularly important that society's commitment be supported by a set of ethical principles that can provide direction and stability to our policy and practices within the educational system.

The ways we currently educate students with special needs have evolved over time. To understand current policies and practices, we must first appreciate their historical bases. T. Smith (1998) has observed that there are at least three important reasons for studying the history of special education:

- To help us understand why we do the things we do today
- To help us plan for the future
- To reduce the chance of making the same mistakes twice.

With these purposes in mind, our goal is to provide a brief historical profile of the education of students with special needs in Saskatchewan and beyond. Our intent is to highlight the evolution of foundational principles that underlie policy, thereby providing a better understanding of past and present practices in special education within Saskatchewan. This historical review should also provide an important context for current issues in special education, and nurture more effective future practices.

Beyond Canada

Before 1950

Development of our understanding of persons with disabilities and the evolution of the field of special education has been well documented in written histories (e.g., Safford & Safford, 1996; J. Smith, 1998a). For the first half of the twentieth century, public concern for persons with disabilities was directed toward those with readily identifiable conditions, such as deafness and blindness. Public attitude towards these people was that of "looking after the less fortunate". Institutions were set up to care for people with disabilities. The institutions, which were located away from the mainstream of society, looked after the physical care and, in a limited sense, the educational needs of these individuals.

**1950s
&
1960s**

During the 1950s and 1960s, fewer children and youth were being sent to institutions to live and, as a result, community and parent groups set up "special" schools for those who were considered "educable". The efforts to educate students with disabilities was criticized by some people because they believed that education for these students served little purpose and offered only minimal return to society. Other areas of exceptionality, such as learning disabilities and behavioural disorders, were not identified and not accommodated. At this time, some school boards employed remedial reading teachers and set up segregated special classes in regular schools to attempt to meet the educational needs of these students. However, opportunities to obtain a meaningful education were very limited, especially at the secondary school level. The majority of students with these disabilities chose not to continue their schooling, or were expelled.

By the late 1960s there was growing dissatisfaction with the state of special education provision. Parent advocacy groups began to appear and to grow in size and influence during this period. Under the leadership of Samuel Kirk, learning disabilities were becoming understood as the basis of school failure for many students previously considered mildly mentally retarded. Perhaps the single most significant event of this period was the publication of Dunn's (1968) indictment of categorical, segregated placements for students with mild disabilities. His message sounded the beginning of a new direction in special education that is still resonating today.

1970s

The 1970s was a period of massive change in special education. Deno (1970) advocated the Cascade Model which consisted of a service delivery system based on a continuum of programs and placements. The model described a range of options, from segregated programs and placements through to classrooms. The Cascade was intended to operate on the principle of "Least Restrictive Environment" (LRE), whereby students are placed in the best choice location as close to the normal classroom setting as possible, and moved back toward the classroom as soon as appropriate. The counterbalancing principle to classroom placement for students with special needs is the right of the child to an "appropriate" education. "Appropriate" was widely interpreted as providing the child with intensive, specialized instruction delivered by qualified professionals in self-contained settings.

Litigation in the USA began to define the educational rights of children with disabilities. The court's decision in the case of *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children vs. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania State Board of Education* (1972) gave the right to an education to all children with intellectual disabilities. The outcome of *Mills vs. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972) extended the right of schooling to all children regardless of degree or type of disability. Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, was passed in the U.S. Congress in 1975. This landmark legislation not only mandated special education services and provided funding for students with disabilities, but included provisions to define standards of practice. In particular, PL 94-142 required that educational provision for students with disabilities include free and appropriate services, screening and assessment procedures, confidentiality, parental permission and involvement, development of an individualized education program (IEP), placement in the Least Restrictive Environment, and access to a review process. PL 94-142 had a worldwide impact on special education that continues to influence the field today.

1980s

The 1980s could be characterized as the decade of the "Rights of Disabled Persons"

and of "Mainstreaming". The United Nations General Assembly declared 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons and in 1989 signed the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. In schools, many children who had previously been placed in segregated settings were being located closer to the classrooms in their neighbourhood schools. In what would become a most controversial statement, Will (1986) proposed the Regular Education Initiative (REI) as a reaction to the perceived weaknesses and inefficiencies of the traditional special education system. The goal of proponents of the REI was to radically restructure special education by merging the separate systems of regular and special education, eliminating pull-out services, and collaborating with classroom teachers to deliver special education in regular classrooms. The proposal gave rise to a heated debate within the profession (e.g., Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). It also set the stage for two dominant themes of the 1990s -- inclusive education and collaborative service delivery.

1990s

During the 1990s the single dominant theme in special education has been inclusive education. While the mainstreaming and integration movements in the 1970s and 1980s attempted to gain greater access to regular education experiences for students with special needs, inclusion became a movement to have normal settings and experiences recognized as the right of all students (Stainback, Stainback, & Ayres, 1996). Like the REI movement in the late 1980s, inclusion has been controversial. Arguments have been directed toward inclusion as an issue of philosophy, social values, economics, and instruction (e.g., Kauffman, 1999). Despite the debate, the direction of practice has been toward a greater proportion of children with special needs receiving their education within regular schools and classrooms (McLeskey, Henry, & Hodges, 1999). Many professional organizations, most notably the *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO), have endorsed the concept of inclusive education in their philosophy statements. UNESCO's action in special needs education has been set explicitly within the 'inclusive education' framework adopted at the Salamanca Conference in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994):

"The guiding principle that informs this Framework is that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups. These conditions create a range of different challenges to school systems. In the context of this Framework, the term 'special educational needs' refers to all those children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties. Many children experience learning difficulties and thus have special educational needs at some time during their schooling. Schools have to find ways of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities. There is an emerging consensus that children and youth with special educational needs should be included in the educational arrangements made for the majority of children. This has led to the concept of the inclusive school. The challenge confronting the inclusive school is that of developing a child-centred pedagogy capable of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities. The merit of such schools is not only that they are capable of providing quality education to all children; their establishment is a crucial step in helping to change discriminatory attitudes, in creating welcoming communities and in developing an inclusive society." (p. 6)

Although the debate around inclusive education tends to focus on issues of location (i.e., the regular classroom vs. pull-out or special classes), inclusion may be better characterized as a philosophy of education and a set of related practices that have implications for the location of a child's instruction. The *Council for Exceptional Children* (Working Forum, 1994) position statement illustrates this point. The document outlines 12 characteristics of inclusive schools:

- a sense of community
- leadership
- high standards
- collaboration and cooperation
- changing roles and responsibilities
- array of services
- partnerships with parents
- flexible learning environments
- strategies based on research
- new forms of accountability
- access
- continuing professional development.

There is a need to create schools that commit to and engage in effective practices that result in the provision of appropriate programs and supports. The intent is to create educational environments where diversity among students is valued and supported, and a range of service options close to the classroom is as accessible as needed to meet the needs of students.

During the 1990s, the traditional mandate of special education has undergone a transformation. Not only is the range of students needing support services expanding to include a variety of "at-risk" students, but the role of the special educator is expanding accordingly (Council for Exceptional Children, 1995). In addition to fulfilling their traditional role of providing direct services to students with disabilities, special education teachers are expected to serve in a variety of teamwork situations with classroom teachers, other professionals, and parents. These changes are related to another major theme of the 1990s, collaborative service delivery (Friend & Cook, 1996). In order to address the needs of the full range of students requiring special education support, particularly where inclusive education is being practiced, special educators are providing consultative support for classroom teachers and in-class instructional delivery for students. Considerable demands are being placed on these professionals to serve in such new roles as information broker, communicator, case manager, integrated service team worker, co-teacher, transition planner, and paraprofessional trainer and coordinator. Accordingly, it has become necessary for special educators to become knowledgeable about classroom management, curricula, instruction, and adaptations. It has also become essential that they be highly competent in the skills and processes of collaborative teamwork in order to carry out this new role successfully.

Within Canada

The history of special education in Canada has been similar to that of the United States and elsewhere, although with some significant differences. Education in Canada is a provincial rather than federal responsibility, with the exception of federal provisions for some Aboriginal

people. Accordingly, each province has a somewhat unique history of providing special education services to its students. However, some federal level events and initiatives have influenced the evolution of special education in the provinces.

**1960s
&
1970s**

Toward the end of the 1960s, several educational reports were released that had major influences on special education in Canada. The first of these, called “Living and Learning”, was prepared by the province of Ontario (Hall & Dennis, 1968). The contribution of this report was to provide a strong endorsement of the right to a free and appropriate public education for all children, and of the rights of parents to choose the kind of education their children would receive. A larger scale study conducted by a national commission sponsored by six national advocacy groups for the disabled was under way at the same time. The resulting report, called “One Million Children” (Roberts & Lazure, 1971), concluded that 12% of the school population in Canada (1 million children) had special needs and that the majority of these children were not receiving services. They recommended integration, right to a free public education, and instruction based on learning needs rather than category of exceptionality. The recommendations arising from this report had a major influence upon policy development leading to mandatory legislation across Canada.

Another influential report of this period was the SEECC report (Hardy, McLeod, Minto, Perkins, & Quance, 1971). The service delivery model presented in the report addressed the preparation, deployment, and utilization of consultants, resource teachers, and classroom teachers. It highlighted the collaborative role of the resource teacher well before this concept had appeared elsewhere. Far ahead of its time, this report identified the classroom teacher as a key special education service provider, and the need for pre-service preparation for this role. The SEECC report led to the development of special education courses in teacher education programs at many Universities across Canada.

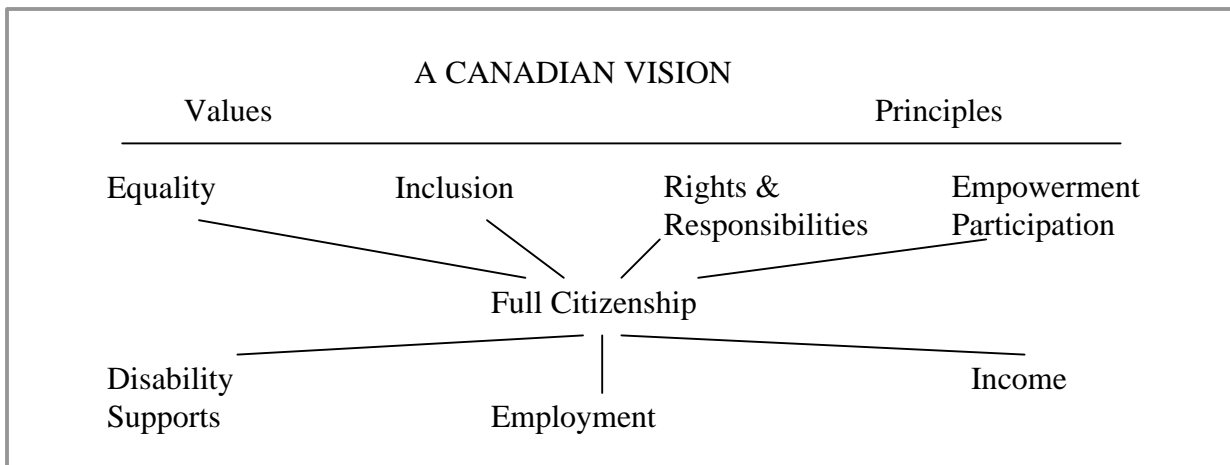
During this period, the direction of special education was greatly influenced by the “normalization” principle advocated by Wolfensberger (1972). He argued that all persons should learn and live in environments as close to normal as possible. His message was directed toward the practices of institutionalization that had prevailed up to that time, but the roots of inclusive education in Canada can readily be traced to his beliefs.

**1980s
&
1990s**

The national event during the 1980s with the greatest implications for special education was the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, proclaimed in 1982 and enacted in 1985. The Charter guaranteed equity rights for all citizens, including those with disabilities. While the wording of the act itself has been subject to interpretation, it has provided an avenue of appeal that, by its very presence, has had a significant impact on special education practices in Canada. The case of *Eaton versus Brant County Board of Education*, decided by the Supreme Court of Canada in February, 1997, has received a great deal of attention across the country. The parents appealed the decision of the board to place their daughter Emily in a special class against their preference to have her in a regular classroom. The Supreme Court decided in favour of the Board, stating that the placement of Emily in a segregated classroom did not constitute the imposition of a burden or disadvantage, nor did it constitute the withholding of a benefit or advantage. Clearly, this decision will have a major impact on decision-making and placement issues in special education now and in the future.

Two recent federal level reports have important implications for special education. The first of these, entitled "Resistance and Acceptance" was a cross-Canada study of educator attitudes toward inclusion of students with special needs (Bunch, Lupart, & Brown, 1997). One theme identified strong reservations regarding workload and the effect of inclusion on regular class teachers, adequacy of preservice and inservice preparation, and administrator support for inclusion. A second major theme found positive beliefs about inclusion and classroom teachers' capabilities to accept responsibility for these students, ability of regular class and resource teachers to work collaboratively, and the effect of inclusion upon both regular and included students. The authors concluded that Canadian educators believe inclusive education to be an educationally sound practice, to be within the competencies of supported regular class teachers, and to be beneficial to all students.

Another recent report, entitled "In Unison" (Ministers, 1998) is noteworthy because it has received the endorsement of the governments of all provinces and territories (except Quebec). It also reflects the growing movement across the country to ensure the right of persons with disabilities to full participation in all aspects of Canadian society. Although not specifically addressing education, the report establishes a vision of "Full Citizenship" for persons with disabilities as follows:



The goal of full citizenship is considered to arise from a supporting set of values and principles. The inclusion of persons with disabilities is a key organizing concept. The vision set out by "In Unison" carries the strong implication that the education of children with disabilities will also be guided by these values and principles. It also underscores the important roles schools play in preparing all people, with and without disabilities, to accept and foster lifelong inclusion.

Within the Provinces

The history of special education provisions within the provinces mirrors the evolution of practices internationally. However, a survey of recent history conducted as part of this review reveals certain commonalities and some unique variations across the provinces in the structure and delivery of special education services. This section of the historical review is intended to emphasize recent provincial events and practices, with emphasis on the Special Education Review Committee's terms of reference. Sources of information for this review include

documents provided by provincial Departments of Education and information available through provincial government websites.

Foundational Philosophy

The philosophical foundation for educating students with special needs can be seen in the policy and legislation espoused in each province. A majority of the provinces have enacted legislation that requires boards of education to provide educational services to all children, including those with disabilities. The provinces without mandatory legislation (British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, and Alberta) have legislation that encourages rather than requires boards of education to provide services to these students. However, policy exists in all jurisdictions to guide the provision of special education to students with disabilities.

In defining those students eligible for special education services, the policies in many provinces have moved away from categorical systems toward needs-based approaches. British Columbia, for example, refers to students with special needs as those requiring "... resources different than those needed by most students". Alberta's description states that these students "... require a different program or an adaptation or modification of the regular school program". Similarly, Nova Scotia defines students with special needs as "... those who need supports beyond those provided by the classroom teacher". At the same time, categorical descriptions are still in frequent use, especially for funding purposes, to define the exceptionalities of students who require special education services.

Across Canada, most jurisdictions have adopted a position of "inclusion" in their statements of philosophy for special education. This philosophy is expressed in the following ways:

- Alberta – "... regular classrooms in neighbourhood schools ... first placement option ..."
- British Columbia – "... equitable access to learning by all students ..."
- Manitoba – "... students with special learning needs in regular classroom settings ..."
- Ontario – "... integration as the first consideration ..."
- New Brunswick – "... with same age peers in most enabling environments ..."
- Nova Scotia – "... within regular instructional settings with their peers in age ..."
- Prince Edward Island – "... most enabling environment that allows opportunities to interact with peers"
- Quebec – "... a view to facilitating their learning and social integration ..."
- Saskatchewan – "... students with exceptional needs ... should experience education ... in inclusive settings ..."

Although most provinces now endorse inclusive education, there is commonly an exception clause in those policies. There is an allowance for alternate placement when it is considered to be "... in the best interests of the student" (Manitoba), "... for compelling reasons" (Saskatchewan), "... in the interests of the child and in accordance with wishes of the parent" (Ontario), with "... due regard for the educational needs of all pupils" (New Brunswick). None of the philosophy statements provides clear, detailed guidelines, criteria, or processes to be followed in deciding the conditions that would require removal of the child to an alternative placement.

Delivery of Programs and Services

Most provinces have a special education policy manual in place that outlines procedures and protocols for delivery of special education programs and services. All provinces use an individualized program development process to ensure that appropriate programs and services are in place for students with special needs. The terms used to describe this process and related documents vary. For example, Saskatchewan uses the term Personal Program Plan (PPP) while Alberta calls their plans Individual Program Plans (IPP). All jurisdictions require that a PPP be developed for students who are identified with special needs and are receiving special education services. However, the conditions requiring development of the PPP vary across provinces. Some require that all students identified as special needs have a written plan (e.g., New Brunswick, Alberta). In other provinces such as Ontario and Saskatchewan, written PPPs are required for students receiving designated funding, and recommended for other students who have significant program modifications. In most provinces, the PPP must be developed by a

team that includes the parents, and parents must sign the PPP document to show their agreement with the resulting program. The prevailing review period for the PPP is a minimum of one year. However, Nova Scotia expects that PPP reviews occur twice a year, and the Yukon requires review within two months of the development of the PPP, then at the same intervals as for the regular school reporting.

Transition planning is approached quite differently in different provinces. In some jurisdictions there is a lack of clear policy and guidelines (e.g., Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick), while elsewhere procedures are clearly defined (e.g., British Columbia, Alberta). Where transitions are addressed, policy varies from considering transition planning to be part of the PPP process (e.g., Nova Scotia) to specifying the process in detail (e.g., British Columbia).

There has been an increase across the provinces in concern about students with behaviour disorders. In Saskatchewan, this concern resulted in the implementation of a special funding avenue (Targeted Behaviour Program) to support prevention and intervention programs for students at-risk or experiencing behaviour disorders.

Integration & Coordination of Services

There is a trend across the provinces toward building an integrated, interagency approach to the provision of services to children and families. There is a Western Inter-provincial Assistant Deputy Ministers' Forum that meets regularly and deals with service integration as one of its issues. This Forum also has a cross-Canada chair. Most jurisdictions have established inter-ministerial committees to direct the integrated services activities. Some have established new ministries, such as the Ministry for Children and Families in British Columbia, as a strategy to reduce service gaps and overlap. As in Saskatchewan, most provinces have recently established policies and protocols to address issues such as strategic planning, working models, shared funding, information sharing agreements, and case management procedures.

Funding Structure & Protocols

A review of funding for special education across the provinces reveals considerable variation in the approaches adopted. Some provinces provide full funding for special education services through provincial funding sources (e.g., British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick) while others combine provincial funding with local taxation (e.g., Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia). The provinces also vary greatly in the way special education funding is accessed and delivered. Most jurisdictions use some combination of targeted funding (directed toward specified special education expenditures) and formula funding (block grants directed at programs). Nova Scotia, for example, provides special education funds to boards based on total student enrolments. In contrast, Saskatchewan uses a mixed funding approach, targeting funds to specific students, staff, and services. The dynamics in operation around funding appear to be local autonomy, conditionality, local-to-provincial funding ratios, and accountability measures. Each of the funding approaches have advantages and disadvantages in these areas. The evolution of funding in the provinces has been away from categorical, targeted funding toward block funding to support local autonomy and programs. This shift has been accompanied by concerns about accountability and the search for new protocols.

Accountability Mechanisms

Examination of practices across the provinces reveals a wide range of approaches to accountability. In some cases, such as Quebec and Prince Edward Island, considerable local autonomy over special education expenditures is allowed, with little externally imposed accountability. Where targeted funding is in place, there are fewer concerns about accountability. This is not surprising, since expenditures must be documented as part of this approach. Likewise, there are fewer accountability concerns in provinces that share the costs of funding with local school boards. Those provinces that rely more on formula funding, such as Alberta, tend to use financial audits and annual reports, reviews, and inspections as accountability devices. In these situations, emphasis is placed upon having qualified special education personnel in place, and expenditures on programs and services that are equivalent to the funds provided. There is some movement toward using student outcomes and indicators as accountability measures (e.g., Nova Scotia).

Accountability for delivery of appropriate programs to students is generally handled through the requirement that PPPs be developed. Many provinces have appeal or review processes in place that allow parents/advocates to challenge the appropriateness of instruction and services that the student is receiving. Some provinces (e.g., Newfoundland) also require that pre-referral processes have been implemented for the student. Other provinces (e.g., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia) require that a local service delivery planning document be developed by each school division or district. In Saskatchewan, this Master Plan is subject to inspection by Saskatchewan Education officials.

Early Identification & Intervention

Historically, provincial Departments of Education have not provided early screening and intervention programs for children prior to school age. Public Health nurses have traditionally conducted developmental screening as part of routine health checks on preschool children. Most of the children identified by this process are found to be experiencing sensory deficits, health conditions, developmental delay, or serious behaviour disorders. Departments of Health routinely provide intervention services for preschool children with sensory impairment (e.g., cochlear implants and auditory rehabilitation) and other health-related disabilities. In some provinces, such as Saskatchewan, services are provided to preschool children through home-based Early Childhood Intervention Programs located throughout the province. However, the provinces have experienced reductions in personnel to conduct Public Health screenings. More recently, there has been an emphasis on prevention in most provinces. In Alberta, for example, education provides information to parents and school staffs on characteristics used to help identify children with special needs.

Some provinces (e.g., Ontario, Saskatchewan) have developed policies that allow special education funding to be extended down to the preschool years. Ontario, for example, offers integrated junior kindergartens in about half of its school districts. In many provinces, for example New Brunswick, Alberta, procedures are in place to screen children as they come into school. Many provinces are working on interagency agreements that will address early screening and intervention as an integrated service initiative.

Professional Preparation & Development

There are considerable variations across the provinces regarding policy and practice for professional preparation and ongoing professional development. With reference to classroom teachers, few of the provinces require formal preparation in special education. However, an introductory course is a mandatory part of the preservice university programs in some provinces, such as Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia. For special education teachers, the prevailing situation across the provinces is to require specified coursework or a degree in special education. With reference to ancillary personnel such as school psychologists and speech/language pathologists, most provinces require membership or certification in the related professional organization. Also, school counsellors and school psychologists usually require a teaching certificate. Preparation standards for teacher assistants vary greatly across the provinces. Some follow a permissive approach, such as Manitoba, Newfoundland, allowing local school divisions to make decisions about training. In other cases, such as Yukon and New Brunswick, specific courses or a certificate are required.

Parental Involvement

Involvement of parents of students with special needs vary widely across Canadian jurisdictions. Yukon’s policy encourages perhaps the most active parental engagement in the country. Parents are to be seen as equal partners, with active involvement in assessment and program planning, and in helping teachers implement program strategies. Other provinces approach parental involvement more from a human rights perspective. Most require that parents be informed or consulted regarding assessment, programs, and placement decisions. Likewise, parents have the right to participate in the Personal Program Planning process, and to have access to information about their child. Some provinces, such as New Brunswick, have active Parent Advisory Councils in every school to assist in decision making for special education.

All jurisdictions have formal appeal processes available to parents to assist in resolving disputes. The usual first step is an attempt to resolve the dispute at the school level, and in many instances there is a next appeal body at the board level. In the event that resolution fails at local levels, various provinces have different follow-up mechanisms in place. British Columbia makes an ombudsman available to parents. Alberta, Ontario, and Manitoba use a Special Education Tribunal to review and decide on appeals. Manitoba also offers conciliation services prior to a tribunal.

Within Saskatchewan

1960s

Sanche and Dahl (in preparation) have recently prepared a historical profile of the evolution of special education in Saskatchewan. They point out that up to the 1960s, provision of special education services by boards of education was voluntary. The prevailing approach during the 1960s was the creation of segregated classrooms, schools, and institutions. During this period, there was a three-fold increase in the numbers of special needs students served in segregated settings. By the end of the decade, a shift had begun toward provision of “remedial” and “itinerant remedial” services for some students in their neighbourhood schools.

1970s & 1980s

In 1971, the Saskatchewan Government was the first province to pass mandatory legislation requiring boards of education to provide educational services for all students regardless of their disabilities. School boards assumed responsibility for the operation of the special schools, developmental centres, and classrooms. This happened quickly, and there were often not sufficient support personnel and services in place within school divisions. As a result, the quick response to this immediate need involved the creation of special classes to accommodate these students. During this period, home-based Early Childhood Intervention Programs were put in place to provide intervention services for severely disabled preschool children. Also, in the early 1970s, the area of assessment and education of students with learning disabilities was developing. As students with learning disabilities were identified, more and more school divisions hired resource teachers to work with them. The resource teachers, most prepared at the University of Saskatchewan, had been trained by professors who were qualified and well respected in the field of learning disabilities. By 1978, the requirement was in place that every classroom teacher have a mandatory introductory class in special education as part of their preservice preparation program.

The Special Education Policy Manual was released in several versions during this period.

Funding for special education was provided as "high cost" designation funding for all students with moderate to severe disabilities and "low cost" or block funding for students with mild to moderate disabilities. The numbers of students identified as disabled increased dramatically at this time, particularly in the area of learning disabilities. Testing and designation for high cost funding became a growth industry, and many school divisions hired educational psychologists to perform this function. The "Shared Services" model was created in order that several smaller boards of education could partner and receive funding to hire an educational psychologist and speech/language pathologist. Saskatchewan Education employed consultants in low-incidence disability areas to provide support services across the province.

The prevailing model of service delivery for students with mild to moderate disabilities was the diagnostic-remedial approach. The focus was upon conducting clinical assessments of students, then focussing individual instruction upon the remediation of the deficits disclosed by the assessment. For many students, resource teachers provided individual or small group instruction in the resource room. Ongoing support for these students during the time they spent in the classroom was typically limited.

Provision of programs and services for gifted students was not included in the mandatory legislation of 1971. Accordingly, boards needed to rely on the limited low-cost funding or resources from their general budget to provide for these students. Many boards used the temporary Educational Development Fund (EDF) to build programs and services for gifted students. However, these services tended not to be sustained after the EDF was discontinued.

Screening for disabilities during early childhood was conducted widely by public health nurses. Many of the children identified through this process received services from the growing number of Early Childhood Intervention Programs (ECIPs) being implemented across the province. This period also witnessed growth in the numbers of integrated pre-school and kindergarten programs for these children as they approached school age.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, school divisions commonly grouped students with severe, low incidence disabilities (deaf, blind, intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities) into special classes. The Saskatchewan Government continued to operate the R. J. D. Williams School for the Deaf. However, during this period the movement toward mainstreaming was gaining momentum. Curriculum reform was under way, and in 1992 the Adaptive Dimension of Core was introduced. The expectation was that the Adaptive Dimension would be part of all programs of instruction. This change recognized the many variables that teachers must consider to meet diverse student needs, and provided a framework for teachers to adapt curriculum resources, instruction and the learning environment to better meet this range of individual needs.

1990s In the late 1980s and into the 1990s, increasing numbers of parents demanded the integration of their children with severe, low-incidence disabilities into the regular classroom of their neighbourhood school. At the same time, some parents continued to want a congregated placement for their children. In June, 1991, the R. J. D. Williams School for the Deaf was closed because of the declining enrolment that resulted from more students with hearing impairment being educated in their home school division.

Resource teachers who were trained in the 1970s had excellent skills in working with students with learning disabilities, but by the 1990s their positions were evolving. They were now expected to be case managers for all students with disabilities, as well providers of direct service to a larger array of students. Resource teachers are now expected to be knowledgeable in learning disabilities, behaviour disorders, intellectual disabilities, fetal alcohol syndrome, medically fragile conditions, autism, acquired brain injury, attention deficit disorders, and many other conditions. The increased demand on school-based special education personnel coincided with decreasing numbers of central office special education consultants and supervisors, which resulted from declining enrolments and consequent reductions in provincial funding to school boards in the early 1990s.

The funding system based on “low-cost” (block funding for students with mild to moderate disabilities) and “high-cost” funding (designation funding for all students with moderate to severe disabilities) that had been in place for two decades was replaced by 1990. Designated Disabled Program (DDP) funding was retained for low-incidence disabilities and the Special Needs Program (SNP) was introduced for all other exceptionalities. This change significantly influenced students with Learning Disabilities and Behaviour Disorders, who had been supported under the prior High Cost funding approach. In recent years, concerns about increasing numbers of children with behavioural disorders has resulted in the creation of a special funding avenue (Targeted Behaviour Program) to support prevention and intervention programs for these students.

Special education service delivery continues to evolve and reflect emerging effective practices. Congregated programs for students with severe, low incidence disabilities have been replaced in many school divisions by individualized programs delivered in regular schools and classrooms. The focus is now on early intervention, particularly in language arts and math, and on strategies to help students cope with learning disabilities. Today there is need for more holistic ways of providing appropriate education for students with diverse disabilities. Factors such as family poverty, more high-risk families moving to urban centres, increasing number of children who are medically fragile, increased understanding of the value of preventative services, and the needs of children who are "in care," all challenge special educators to find effective ways of serving these students in their community schools.

Summary and Synthesis

The history of special education internationally over the past 100 years has been one of "progressive inclusion", from neglect to custodial care to segregated education to mainstreaming to inclusive education (Reynolds, 1991). Progressive inclusion has meant bringing children who are disabled out of their "special" classes and schools and into regular school environments, and reducing special education referrals and labels by strengthening regular school programs (Wang & Reynolds, 1997). While a public education was once viewed as a privilege for a few, it has evolved into a right for all. For students with disabilities, this has meant that access to a free and appropriate education is a right protected by law. Inclusion is the philosophy presently advocated by almost all Canadian jurisdictions. At the same time, provision is generally made for students to be placed in alternate settings under prescribed conditions. The motive for choosing inclusion is to provide all students with equity of access and outcome so they may achieve full citizenship.

A review of the history of special education in Canada reveals a progressive differentiation and expansion of traditional concepts of disability. The movement has been toward considering students with special needs less in traditional disability categories and more in terms of the natural diversity among all children. Because of this trend, special educators have had to think beyond their traditional mandates, and to provide support for a diverse range of students in need of assistance. There is a clear recent trend across the provinces to move away from categorical funding approaches and service provision based on labeling, toward serving the needs of students within inclusive practices.

Current Context

The following section of the report provides a profile of the current status of special education, within the context of general education in Saskatchewan. It outlines the rationale for the review, as well as a context for the results and recommendations.

Administrative Structure of Special Education

Leadership in special education is provided by Saskatchewan Education, which sets the legislative and policy framework for education in the K-12 system. The Department supports equitable participation of students with exceptional needs and influences the quality of special education programs and services throughout the province. The policies established by the Saskatchewan Education apply to students until the age of 22 years, including preschool (ages three and four) children with disabilities. Policies regarding transition to adult and post-secondary settings are included in K-12 special education. School divisions are responsible for all K-12 education and for providing special education programming and services to all students in their jurisdictions.

Special Education Unit Structure

The Special Education Unit is part of the Planning, Evaluation, and Children's Services Branch of Saskatchewan Education. It is made up of three full time professional staff (Director, two Program Managers) who are located in Regina. The major functions of the Unit include continuing work in the areas of policy, programming, administration, funding, and support services. Within the seven regional offices located across the province there are Regional Superintendents of Children's Services who provide consultation, monitoring, data collection, and inservice related to special education in their region.

The Special Education Unit provides a variety of professional development and consultative support related to educating students with exceptional needs through the ACCESS (Assistance, Collaboration, Consultation, Evaluation, Support Services) Team. ACCESS Team services are provided upon request by a school division. The focus areas of ACCESS for 1998-99 were FAS/FAE (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effects), Challenging Behaviours, Team Building, Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, Visual Disabilities, and Meeting Challenging Needs.

During 1995-96, the Special Education Unit began publishing a newsletter called *Challenges, Choices, and Changes*. As the title reflects, the newsletter provides teachers with information to

assist them with the increasing complexity of their profession. They also maintain a website (<http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/k/pecs/se/index.html>) that offers a range of information related to special education in the province.

Legislation

Saskatchewan Education ensures appropriate education for children and youth with exceptional needs through legislative and policy support, funding support, and consultative support services. The right of all students in the province between the ages of six and 22 years to a free and appropriate education is provided in *The Education Act* (1995). The provisions are as follows:

- Students have the right to receive instruction appropriate to their age and level of educational achievement in courses of instruction approved by Saskatchewan Education and the board of education.
- The principal must, and a parent or guardian may, refer a student to a school official responsible for students with exceptional needs if the student is considered by reason of disability or other attribute unable to profit from the instruction ordinarily provided. A similar provision is made for gifted students.
- The school official must investigate the matter and confer with the principal, teacher, and parent or guardian with respect to recommendations for altering the student's educational program.
- Boards may limit or provide for education elsewhere if they consider that it is impractical or prejudicial to the educational well being of the students to provide instruction in all years or grades.
- Students with disabilities and/or their parents may request a review of a board of education's decisions regarding the student's identification, program and placement. All boards must have mechanism for the local review of such decisions.
- The legislation assures that students with disabilities receive special services and are assessed by qualified personnel.
- A parent or guardian has the right to request a review of the child's situation with the expectation that programming recommendations will follow.
- The teacher is responsible, in cooperation with staff colleagues and administrative authorities, to plan and organize the learning activities of the class and to address the individual differences and needs of students.
- The Adaptive Dimension, a major component of the Core Curriculum of Saskatchewan, enables teachers to provide program enrichment and extension, program reinforcement, curriculum relevance, additional background knowledge and experience, and differential teaching to meet cultural and community expectations.

Special Education Principles & Policies

The principles and policies developed by Saskatchewan Education have been set out in the Special Education Policy Manual (1989). This document is now out of date, and release of a revised version is awaiting submission of the report of the Special Education Review Committee. In the section below, principles and policy statements from the draft versions of the Policy Manual are presented as they relate to the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Foundational & Philosophical Basis

- “The purpose of special education is to provide appropriate educational opportunities and equitable benefits for all children and youth with exceptional needs.”
 - “Involvement of people with exceptional needs in all aspects of community living benefits all people in society.”
 - “Schools are responsible for fostering and promoting educational opportunities that inspire a view of the future where people with exceptional needs belong and contribute to their communities.”
-

Delivery of Programs & Services

- “Students with exceptional needs require an environment based on their needs and abilities.”
- “Students with exceptional needs should experience education in settings that allow them to achieve their individual goals in inclusive settings. Other arrangements may be used when compelling reasons necessitate other alternatives.”
- “It is essential that educational programs for students with exceptional needs reflect a balanced curriculum that is consistent with the Goals of Education for Saskatchewan.”
- “Special education is a commitment to the provision of support services that make it possible for students with exceptional needs to receive an education commensurate with their potential and appropriate to their level of ability.”
- “Curriculum materials, instructional methods, facilities, settings, and technological aids may require adaptation to address the unique needs of the individual.”
- “Appropriate education can be designed and delivered for all students with exceptional needs within the inclusive policies of the Core Curriculum.”
- “Assistive technology when used appropriately may improve the educational program of a student with exceptional needs.”
- “Transition planning is crucial to program planning for children and youth with exceptional needs.”
- “Evaluation is an integral part of a school division’s special education programs and services.”

Integration & Coordination of Services

- “Educational programming involves collaboration and cooperation among those involved. There must be systematic program planning based on the strengths and needs of students involving families, the educational community, students where appropriate, and personnel from related disciplines.”

Accountability Mechanisms

- “Effective special education programs and services result when constructive planning occurs at the level of the school division, the school, the family and the student.”
- “In Saskatchewan, all special education funding is conditional. That is, school boards must provide programs and services for identified students before funding recognition is approved.”
- “A board of education is required to provide access to school records but may stipulate the conditions under which this is to be granted.”
- “The board of education or conseil scolaire must have written procedures that set out the local review process for decisions related to the designation, placement, or program of students with disabilities.”
- “Each student with a designated disability must have a personal program plan that is available for review by the family and the Regional Superintendent of Children’s Services.”
- “Each school division is required to provide a written Special Education Master Plan to the Regional Office.”

Early Identification & Intervention

- “Early intervention for students with exceptional needs prevents more serious educational problems and improves the chances of success.”
 - “School divisions may identify and place preschool-aged students with designated disabilities
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in educational programs.” In cases where boards of education choose not to be involved with preschool education for students with disabilities, the Regional Superintendent of Children's Services places the student in an appropriate program and monitors his/her progress.

Professional Preparation & Development

- “Well trained personnel who have a commitment to the education of students with exceptional needs are a key component of successful educational programs and support services.”
- “Special education teachers and professional support staff, who are responsible for individual assessments, program planning, and program delivery, must possess qualifications acceptable to the Minister.”

Parental Involvement

- “Parent and/or guardian and family involvement is central and critical to planning appropriate educational programs for students with special needs.”
- “When the educational program of the student is being altered, school division personnel shall confer with parents and guardians.”

Special Education Funding

In order to provide educational services to students, boards of education receive funds from three sources: local revenue (property taxation); provincial grants (determined through the Foundation Operating Grant formula); and tuition fees (from other boards of education and First Nations). When the foundation formula was developed, it was dependent on two factors: need (recognized expenditure), the cost for a division to provide an acceptable education program, and ability to pay (recognized revenue), the board of education's ability to raise money locally. The Foundation Operating Grant to a school division is determined by subtracting recognized revenue from recognized expenditure. The greater the disparity between need and ability to pay, the larger the provincial grant.

Expenditures made by school divisions in Saskatchewan for special education programs and services are recognized in the following areas:

- Designated Disabled Program (DDP) recognition supports students with intellectual disabilities, chronic illness, orthopedic disabilities, visual disabilities, multiple disabilities, and the deaf and hard of hearing, as defined in Section 49 of the Regulations of *The Education Act* (1995).
 - Special Needs Program (SNP) recognition supports programs for students with exceptional learning needs, including students with learning disabilities, mild and moderate forms of the designated disabilities, speech/language disorders, and gifted learners. The funding is in the form of a program grant, rather than an individual pupil grant, based on a per capita enrolment in a school division and the staff employed.
 - Targeted Behaviour Program (TBP) recognition assists school divisions with specialized programming for students with severe social, emotional, and behavioural disabilities. This recognition supports prevention, early intervention and intensive programming for students with social, emotional and behavioural challenges.
 - Special Education Technical Aids Cost Recognition assists school divisions with the purchase of specialized equipment used by students with designated disabilities.
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- Shared Services recognition assists with the provision of support services such as speech and language therapy and school psychology services in areas outside of Saskatoon and Regina.
- Special Education Transportation recognitions assist with the additional cost of transporting students with disabilities to and from school programs.
- Students in the Care of Social Services recognition supports special education programming and services for students with social, emotional and behavioural disorders, who are in the care of the Minister of Social Services.
- Fractional Funding provides boards with financial assistance for the education of students with disabilities who enrol or are identified during a school year.

Special Education Teacher Qualifications

Education legislation stipulates that in order for a school division to receive special education grant recognition, it shall employ special education teachers and professional support staff who possess qualifications acceptable to the Minister. This is based on the belief that qualified staff are crucial to the delivery of an appropriate special education program.

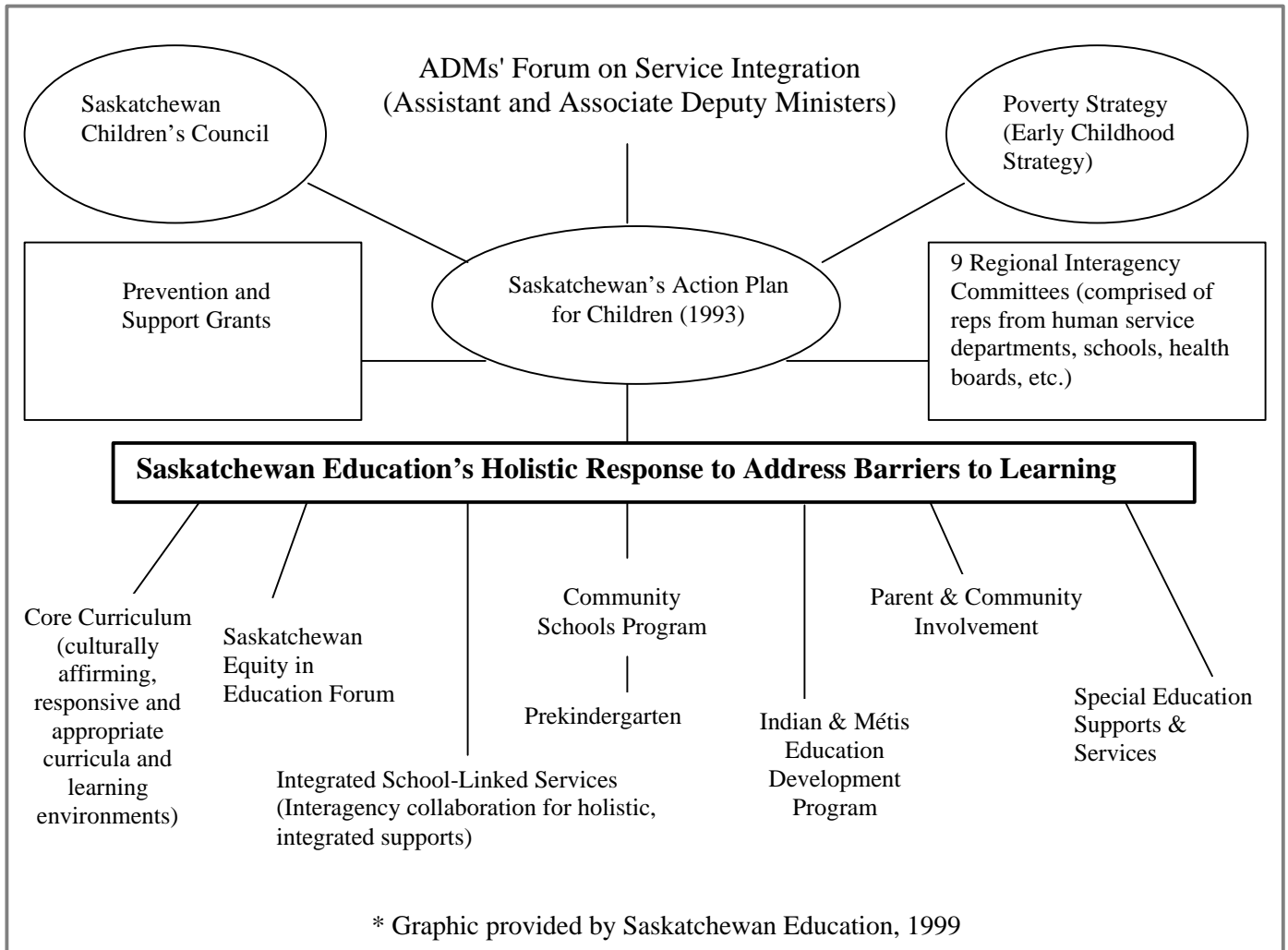
Both Saskatchewan universities have changed their special education programs since the publication of the 1989 *Special Education Policy Manual*. In response, the Special Education Unit has amended the policy regarding qualifications for teachers working with students with exceptional needs. The amended policy follows:

Resource Teachers, Learning Assistance Teachers, and Special Class Teachers shall have a Saskatchewan Professional A Teaching Certificate and have successfully completed a minimum of 18 credit hours of specified courses in special education, with courses in the following areas:

- Area 1: Speech and Language (minimum of three credit hours)
- Area 2: Individual Assessment of Students with Exceptional Needs (minimum of three credit hours)
- Area 3: Programming for Students with Exceptional Needs (minimum of three credit hours) and
- Nine additional credit hours in special education.

Saskatchewan Education Initiatives

Special Education in Saskatchewan coexists within an overall plan designed to address barriers to learning. Besides Saskatchewan Education, other partners in the plan include the departments of Social Services, Health, Justice, Municipal Government, Indian and Métis Affairs, and the Women's Secretariat, as well as non-government and community organizations across the province. The following figure provides an overview of the plan.



The previous figure shows the shared mandates of Saskatchewan Education's Special Education Unit and Community Education Unit. The vision is to create a seamless, comprehensive range of services and supports that address the learning needs of a variety of children. Students targeted for support include those with "established risks", i.e., students who receive special education services due to the presence of a disability. Other students targeted for support require prevention or early intervention services so they do not develop learning and behavioural problems. The third and largest target group includes children who are "environmentally at-risk". These children are experiencing life events that place them at-risk, such as poverty, divorce, abuse, suicide, and family death.

At the present time progress is being made toward the vision. Key documents that mark this progress are:

- *Children first: An invitation to work together – Creating Saskatchewan's action plan for children* (1993).
- *Working together to address barriers to learning: Integrated school-linked services for children and youth at risk. Policy Framework* (1994).
- *Interagency projects: An evaluation guide* (1997).
- *Sharing information to improve services for children, youth, and families: A guide to the legislation* (1997).
- *Integrated case management* (1998).
- *Building communities of hope: Best practices for meeting the learning needs of at-risk and Indian and Métis students. Community schools policy and conceptual framework.* 1996.
- *Our children, our communities, and our future: Equity in education – A policy framework* (1997).
- *Better beginnings, better futures: Best practices policy and guidelines for prekindergarten in Saskatchewan Community Schools* (1997).

Recent Working Committees

Besides the work of the Special Education Review Committee, the deliberations of several other recent provincial level committees have addressed the education of students with special needs.

Integration of Students With Special Needs in the Classroom Committee

This committee was struck in the spring of 1997 and delivered its final report in January, 1999. The membership consisted of representatives of LEADS, SSTA, STF, SASBO, and Saskatchewan Education. The committee's mandate was to identify the issues regarding the education of students with special needs in the K-12 system, to share information and perspectives on the issues, to develop an understanding of the nature and scope of the identified issues, and to develop an action plan to address the issues. The committee identified funding, placement and programs, parent/guardian involvement, and teacher assistants as key issues. Some of their central recommendations, in abbreviated format, are as follows:

- review the adequacy of and criteria for special education funding
 - seek ways to communicate to all parties the established funding criteria
 - develop protocols for determining appropriate service needs for integration
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- collaborate at the board level to establish protocols to provide for consultation, a clear student focus, and sufficient supports for successful placement and programming in the integration of students with special needs
 - address teacher preparation and staff development on integration as a collaborative effort by the education partners and post-secondary institutions
 - determine local needs and set long-term objectives for staff development at the board level
 - seek ways to enhance parental/guardian participation and community support
 - initiate public consultation to build community understanding and consensus on equity for all students
 - ensure that board policies and school practices reflect the professional responsibilities of teachers and duties that may be assigned to teacher assistants.

Administration of Medications and Other Health-Related Services in Schools

Similar to the Integration Committee, this working committee consisted of representatives of LEADS, SSTA, STF, SASBO, and Saskatchewan Education. It began its work in May, 1996 and delivered its report in December, 1998. The mandate was to examine the issues and needs in the administration of medication and other health-related services in schools, and to identify and, where appropriate, develop principles and specific guidelines in this area. The STF withdrew from the committee because consensus could not be reached on the role of teachers in the administration of medication or health care services. The key recommendations in the final report were as follows:

- issues will be identified to the Assistant Deputy Ministers' Forum on Intersectoral Human Services
 - the Minister's Working Committee on Integrated School-linked Services will be requested to develop guidelines for development of agreements and protocols
 - school boards and district health boards plan to provide training and follow-up consultation related to procedures the school is providing
 - boards develop written policies to address administration of medications and health-related services
 - school personnel should be aware of board policy regarding health and personal care procedures.
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The Role of Schools

This committee was struck by the Minister of Education subsequent to the initiation of the Special Education Review Committee, and its work is in progress. The membership consists of a range of educational partners and stakeholders. The committee has a broad mandate to examine the education system, including issues related to the education of students with special needs.

Issues and Directions

Most people would agree that change should take place in their fields, and that positive change or development is desirable. However, change is complex and always involves risk, and the possibility of failure. Indeed, there seem to be many more ways that change initiatives can fail than succeed. Thousand and Villa (1995) have discussed the change process in the context of special education. They point out that to manage complex change, the following elements are necessary: vision, skills, incentives, resources, and an action plan. If one or more of these ingredients is missing, the result may be confusion, anxiety, resistance, frustration, or a “treadmill” effect. Positive change requires direction. Without a carefully and collaboratively constructed vision, change may create difficulties and problems beyond those associated with the status quo. It seems logical to approach change cautiously, with due consideration, dialogue, and debate of the issues. The resulting directions represent our best judgement about pathways to the future.

At the end of the twentieth century, special education is facing a number of important and complex issues and questions that will undoubtedly give rise to large changes in the field. The implications of our decisions in these matters are of such a magnitude that the directions taken could substantially change education itself.

In this section, we discuss some of the critical issues in the field of special education and comment on the direction that appears to be emerging in these areas of debate. Already some of the new challenges and opportunities can be seen, including the need to:

- redefine special education and its relationship to general education
 - redefine and broaden the scope of the students provided with special education support
 - provide effective instruction for exceptional students in inclusive schools
 - integrate innovative models of teaching and learning
 - reduce practices of labeling students
 - commit to professional development of awareness and skill training for all teachers, including specialized education for special education teachers and paraprofessionals
 - enhance the provision of early identification and preventive practices
 - prepare school administrators for the responsibility of leadership on behalf of exceptional students
 - deliver more of the categorical funds as flexible funds to build inclusive schools
 - build collaborative relationships among school staffs, parents, and agencies
 - link school programs with those of other human services agencies
 - integrate technology into the education of students with special needs
 - use technology resources to facilitate access to information, communication, and learning
-

- examine the issues of "quality indicators" to identify effective practices.

Inclusive Education

The history of special education shows a steady trend of progressive inclusion. However, the full continuum of services still exists, and some argue for its continuation. Others argue for immediate and complete placement of all students with special needs within regular classrooms. Despite the debate, there is no evidence to suggest that the steady progression toward inclusion will change.

An issue that makes communication difficult in this area is the fact that inclusion is defined differently by different people (Crockett & Kauffman, 1998). The Special Education Review Committee considers inclusion to be a philosophy of education and a set of related practices that have implications for the location of a child's instruction. Inclusive education is much more than a location, and location may not always be in the regular classroom all the time. The intent is to create educational environments where diversity is valued and supported, and to develop a range of service options in order to provide appropriate instruction for all students. The implication is that instead of moving students to service locations, services move to students.

The present direction appears to be steady progress toward supporting schools as welcoming environments for all children, and toward developing stronger schools and classrooms. There is less support for the arbitrary placement of all children in general education classrooms for their entire school experience; neither is there total contentment with labels and categorical programs. We see widespread concurrence that students have a right to receive an appropriate education, and a desirable aspect of appropriate education is to receive that education in inclusive schools.

The vision statement of the Canadian federal "In Unison" (1998) report provides an outcomes-oriented perspective on the inclusion issue:

"Persons with disabilities participate as full citizens in all aspects of Canadian society. The full participation of persons with disabilities requires the commitment of all segments of society. The realization of the vision will allow persons with disabilities to maximize their independence and enhance their well-being through access to required supports and the elimination of barriers that prevent their full participation." (p. 13)

It seems essential that our children experience full studentship within the education system in order to be appropriately prepared for full citizenship as adults. The challenge is to provide these children, their families, and the educators they are relying on, with access to a sufficient level of supports while eliminating the barriers to reach the vision.

Saskatchewan Education's most recent guiding principle regarding programs and services addresses the matter of inclusive education:

“Students with exceptional needs should experience education in settings that allow them to achieve their individual goals in inclusive settings. Other arrangements may be used when compelling reasons necessitate other alternatives.” (Special Education Policy Manual Draft, April, 1996)

As pointed out earlier in this report, this position is consistent with philosophy statements in all provinces and territories. It is also consistent with the recommendations arising from special education reviews conducted in other provinces:

“Manitoba Education and Training and Manitoba school divisions/districts retain policy that supports a philosophy of inclusion, where the first choice of programming for students occurs in regular classrooms with their same age peers in neighbourhood schools. Furthermore, this policy be substantiated in practice by a continuum of supports, services, and placement options in order that each child receive the supports, services and programming that are most appropriate to his/her needs.” (Manitoba Special Education Review, Final Report, 1998, p. 16)

“The Department of Education clarify its philosophical option for special education by incorporating the basic tenets of a continuum of services based on inclusionary practices.” (Report of the Review of Special Education, Prince Edward Island, Summary Report, p. 15).

While inclusive education may be the preferred philosophy for educating students with special needs, what evidence exists regarding the effectiveness of inclusionary practices? Baker, Wang, and Walberg (1994/1995) addressed this question in reporting the results of three meta-analyses of the available research that compared the effects of inclusive versus non-inclusive educational practices on academic and social outcome measures. They found effect sizes ranging from +0.08 to +0.44, which means that students with special needs educated in regular classes do better academically and socially than comparable students in non-inclusive settings. They found the average effect size for inclusion to be near the average effect size for effective instructional practices. J. Smith (1998b) has summarized a synthesis of research conducted into the effects of inclusion by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs in 1995:

Effects on Academic Skills

- IEPs for students with disabilities in general classrooms are higher in quality than those for students with disabilities in special classes.
- Students with disabilities show greater levels of time engaged in learning in general classrooms compared to students with disabilities in special settings.
- In classrooms that include students with disabilities, the levels of time engaged in learning are increased for students without disabilities and for those with milder disabilities.
- Students with disabilities in a general classroom do not cause disruptions to classroom learning time.
- Students with disabilities in general classrooms do learn targeted skills.
- The inclusion of students with disabilities is not associated with a decline in the academic or behavioural performance of students without disabilities on standardized tests or report cards.

Effects on Social Skills

- High school students report that their relationships with students with disabilities resulted in more positive attitudes, increased responses to the needs of others, and increased appreciation for diversity.
- Students with disabilities in general education settings are alone less often and show more social contact than students in special classes.
- Students with disabilities in inclusive settings demonstrate more social gains than those in segregated settings.
- Students with disabilities in general classroom settings experience greater social acceptance and more opportunities for interactions not associated with their level of functioning.
- Participation in general classrooms by students with disabilities helps establish and maintain social networks for them.

If the trend is toward inclusion as the preferred option, what are the compelling reasons that might lead to the decision that a student requires an educational setting outside of the classroom? The answer involves a complex interaction of factors, including the following:

- nature and intensity of learning and behaviour needs of the student
 - influence of the student on the classroom environment
 - preparedness and availability of sufficient and appropriate supports for the student and teacher
 - availability of an appropriate alternative placement
 - policy and practices of the school and school division
 - age of the student
 - conditions of the classroom (class size, combined class, extent of diversity)
 - perspectives of the parent(s) or guardian
 - perspectives of the student.
-

Given this array of factors, each school or school division will be unique in its response to the matter of “compelling reasons”. Furthermore, what constitutes “compelling” will change as the nature of the related factors changes. In order for placement decisions to remain consistent with inclusionary principles and practices, identification and labeling alone would not constitute a compelling reason. Rather, an alternative placement decision would follow a deliberated effort to design an appropriate program for the student, with the necessary supports in place. The inclusive school, and within it the regular classroom with the necessary supports in place, would always represent the preferred option. When “compelling reasons” necessitate a decision to remove the child from the classroom setting or the neighbourhood school, it would seem desirable that the congregated alternative be situated and organized to allow many opportunities for the student with disabilities to experience a range of interactions with their peers within normal environments. Likewise, a time frame is in place for the review of the student’s needs and the decision regarding appropriate placement.

The concept of the “inclusive school” (Working Forum, 1994) seems to capture the essence of the direction of the inclusion movement:

“The term *inclusive schools* has come to be used to describe the changes that are occurring within schools and school districts to better coordinate and unify educational programs and services, as well as to transform schools into places where all children, including those with disabilities, belong and can learn at higher levels ... an inclusive school has a shared value that promotes a single, coordinated system of education dedicated to ensuring that all students are empowered to become caring, competent, and contributing citizens in an integrated, changing, and diverse society.” (p. vii)

The challenge that emerges from our research is to continue to promote the concept of inclusive schools. Within these schools there is a progressive movement toward enhancing capacity to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population in inclusive arrangements within the school. An important aspect of the challenge is the adoption of a commitment to move progressively toward inclusive principles and practices in the education of all students. This means constantly reflecting on our present practices in relation to changes (e.g., assistive technology) that are taking place in our field.

The Special Education Review Committee believes that inclusive education is best operationalized within an inclusive schools framework. The principles and characteristics of inclusive schools have been outlined in detail by the Council for Exceptional Children's Working Forum on Inclusive Schools (Working Forum, 1994).

A Sense of Community

An inclusive school has a philosophy and a vision that all children belong and can learn in the mainstream of school and community life. Diversity is valued and celebrated for bringing strength and opportunities for learning. Within an inclusive school everyone belongs, is accepted, and is supported by peers and the adults in the school. This sense of community helps each child develop a sense of self-worth, pride in his or her accomplishments, and mutual respect.

Leadership

The principal plays a crucial role in an inclusive school by actively involving and sharing responsibility with the entire school staff in planning and carrying out the strategies that make the school successful.

High Standards

Within inclusive schools, all children meet high levels of educational outcomes and high standards of performance that are appropriate to their needs. Levels of achievement, instructional content, and the manner in which instruction is delivered reflect each student's individual needs.

Collaboration and Cooperation

An inclusive school encourages students and staff to support one another with such strategies as peer tutoring, buddy systems, cooperative learning, team teaching, co-teaching, teacher-student assistance teams, and other collaborative arrangements.

Changing Roles and Responsibilities

An inclusive school changes the traditional roles of teachers and school staff. Teachers lecture less and assist more, school psychologists work more closely with teachers in classrooms, and every person in the school is an active participant in the process.

Array of Services

An inclusive school offers an array of services -- health, mental health, and social services -- all coordinated with the educational staff.

Partnership with Parents

Parents are embraced as equal and essential partners in the education of their children.

Flexible Learning Environments

Children in an inclusive school are not expected to move in lock steps, but rather follow their individual paths to learning. Groups are flexible, and material is presented in concrete, meaningful ways that emphasize participation. Although there is less reliance on programs that pull children out of classrooms, opportunities for children to receive separate instruction are provided if needed.

Strategies Based on Research

Research into how people learn is providing new ideas and strategies for teachers, and an inclusive school incorporates those ideas. Cooperative learning, curriculum adaptation, peer tutoring, direct instruction, reciprocal teaching, social skills training, computer-assisted instruction, study skill training, and mastery learning are some of the practices that have emerged from the latest research and are applied in inclusive schools.

New Forms of Accountability

An inclusive school relies less on standardized tests, using new forms of accountability and assessment to ensure that each student is progressing towards his or her goals.

Access

An inclusive school ensures that students are able to participate in school life by making necessary physical modifications to the building and by making available appropriate technology that maximizes participation.

Continuing Professional Development

An inclusive school enables staff to design and obtain professional development on an ongoing basis so that there is continuous improvement in the knowledge and skills that they can employ to educate students.

Urban and Rural Settings

The challenges faced in the delivery of special education services and supports can be expected to vary considerably in urban compared with rural settings. Each context presents unique factors that may either enhance or detract from the delivery of special education services. From the urban perspective, some of the differing conditions include:

- a higher percentage of the province's designated students in the urban school-aged population (50%) relative to total urban student population (37%)
- a higher urban than rural ratio of students with severe behavioural problems
- a greater urban concentration of students with complex, severe needs
- a lower than desirable urban provincial-to-local grant formula (about 1:1)
- closer access to other human services agencies (Health, Social Services, Justice)
- reduced travel time for consultants and other support personnel allows an itinerant model
- a larger population that allows the creation of congregated programs
- more tracking of students who move within and between school divisions
- access to professional development and qualifications enhancement opportunities for staff
- higher transportation costs for students with special needs who move to programs within the urban setting

Clearly there are very real differences between the rural and urban circumstance. Provision of resources and supports will need to take these factors into account if equity is to be achieved in the provision of special education services to students with special needs.

Funding and Accountability

There is widespread concern in Saskatchewan during the late 1990s about under-funding of both regular and special education. An issue that arises from this condition is that, in the absence of additional funding for education as a whole, expansion of funding for special education might impose a reduction of resources for the broader education system.

The manner in which special education funding should be provided is an issue of considerable debate. Decisions about funding delivery have a direct, formative effect upon how the recipients of these funds organize and deliver services to students. The table on the following page summarizes the four basic approaches to the allocation of special education funding and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Comparison of Special Education Funding Plans		
Approach	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Base rate no conditional funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction of labeling because it is no longer required to access funding • funding approach supports inclusion • high degree of local autonomy and responsibility to ensure that broad range of students' needs are met • easy to administer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parental concern that when funding “carrot” is removed, programs and services erode • requires other measures of accountability to be in place (e.g., appeal mechanism to higher level, with authority to overturn decision of school board)
<p>Block funding based on predicting prevalence of disabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assists boards with providing certain minimum services that are available to all students (e.g., assessment, special programming and services) • does not require labeling students • high degree of local autonomy and responsibility to ensure that broad range of students' needs are met • easy to administer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some parents and advocates believe that block funding erodes the provision of specialized services because the funding is not “tied” to individual students or to a program standard • requires other measures of accountability to be in place
<p>Categorical funding based on per pupil expenditures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high degree of accountability for funds when tied to individual students • assists school boards with the high cost of educating specific students who meet specific criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some disabilities do not have ‘neat’ criteria for identification (e.g., behaviour disorder) • concern that programs and services are only provided to students who meet the categorical definitions • need to continuously add categories as new ones are identified • costly and time consuming to administer
<p>Combination of categorical and block funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assists school boards with the high costs of most severe students • allows for recognition of specific programs and services that students with high incidence disabilities require • measures of accountability are in place to monitor programs and services (e.g., staff with qualifications) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some advocates want more students recognized for per pupil funding because they believe that boards will only provide services for ‘designated’ students • other advocates want no labeling of students as a requirement for additional funding

For many years, special education funding has been provided according to the student’s category of disability and identifying criteria. However, because of the problems arising from this approach and from changes in philosophy and practice in the field, the trend has been toward more local autonomy, greater flexibility in how funds may be spent, simplified administration, and sustaining ongoing programs. This shift has been accompanied by concerns about accountability and the search for new options.

Categorization & Labeling

There is considerable disagreement within the field of special education regarding the policies and practices of classification and labeling of students. Traditionally, the classification of students has been a requirement for funding and for admission to categorical programs. However, recent funding practices have shifted toward programs and personnel, and inclusive education has become a reality for many students. This has reduced the need to categorize students for funding purposes.

Some hold the position that categorization and funding are an important part of the process of delivering special education services to students. They argue that identification or labeling is the first step in the process of understanding the student's disability and accessing the necessary programs and supports. Others point to inadequacies and inconsistencies in definitions and assessment criteria associated with disability categories as reasons for abandoning labeling (e.g., Klierer & Biklin, 1996; Ysseldyke, 1987). They also point to the creation of stereotypes, reduced expectations, and the negative effects that result from labeling as reasons for abandonment of the practice. Adelman (1996) concluded his analysis of the classification problem as follows:

“... the roots of much of the backlash against special education can be traced to the inadequate state of the art with respect to assigning differential diagnostic labels. Until there is a better conceived classification scheme and valid procedures for making differential diagnoses, the efforts of researchers and practitioners alike will continue to raise concerns.” (p. 108)

Other Issues

Over the past few years, the number of paraprofessional staff has increased. Many regular classroom teachers and special education teachers are not specifically trained to work with paraprofessional staff. Also, many of these paraprofessionals have been inadequately prepared for the job they are asked to do. Some parents of children with disabilities view the quality of special education programming as the amount of one-on-one time their child has with a paraprofessional. Some professionals believe that we are abandoning the education of students with the greatest needs to those least qualified to provide it.

In recent years there have been increasing concerns about changing patterns of student behaviour. Increasingly younger children are engaging in behaviours that lead to removal from classrooms and schools. A further concern relates to the number of children and youth of compulsory school age not attending school. Saskatchewan Education's recent focus upon providing boards with financial support (i.e., Targeted Behaviour Program) to provide services for students with behaviour issues indicates the emerging importance of this area. There are questions about the relationship between the obligations of boards under *The Education Act* to provide programs and services to students with disabilities, including behaviour disorders, and the use of suspension, expulsion, or exemption to maintain a safe and productive environment for students and staff.

There has been an increasing number of children who are entering the provincial school system with a variety of special needs. Many of these children live in environments where poverty and related conditions prevail in their lives.

The public education system is under attack as more private entrepreneurs look for contracts with parents and school boards, to assess and tutor students with disabilities. There are some private practitioners who intimate to parents that public school boards are not providing adequate programs and services for students with disabilities. New therapies and intervention approaches are arising that claim dramatic improvements for students with disabilities. Many of these new approaches take place outside the school curriculum and involve extraordinary expenses.

Presently, there are more advocacy groups organized to provide support to individuals with disabilities and their families than ever before. The groups are more knowledgeable and more politically active - meeting frequently with local Members of the Legislative Assembly and commenting in the press about the state of services for the groups of people they represent.

The role of special education teachers is changing. These teachers are being asked to provide a broader range of services and supports to a greater number of students with increasingly diverse needs. Awareness of the need to effectively integrate knowledge and practice from health, social services, and justice perspectives regarding students with disabilities has added further pressure to the role of special education personnel.

Teachers, administrators, and parents are well aware of the many effective and varied instructional strategies and approaches that enable all children to reach their potential. At times, it appears that the barrier to quality special education programming and services is the limited human and financial resources available.

Rationale for the Special Education Review

A variety of current conditions motivated the Saskatchewan Government to strike the Special Education Review Committee to carry out the review of special education in the province.

Based on the factors described below, it was decided that a major examination and analysis of special education was warranted to plan for future needs:

- Since mandatory education legislation was passed in 1971, which required all school boards to provide special education programs and services for all the children within their jurisdiction, special education practice has evolved and changed. In the intervening 28 years, there has been no focused and comprehensive examination of provincial special education legislation, policy, funding support, and program delivery.
 - More than ever before, parents and community agencies are expecting schools to provide a broader array of programs and services to support children and youth with disabilities and their families.
 - Parents of children with special needs continue to experience and express frustration at their difficulty in securing the integrated health and education services they believe their child needs and deserves. Parents of children with disabilities continue to seek community-based services such as respite, physical therapy, behavioural therapy, and home care.
 - There remains some tension between those parents, advocacy groups, and professionals who strongly support the more integrated and inclusive approach and others who believe that segregated programs or services are more appropriate. For example, in Prince Albert the Concerned Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities Inc. has launched a court action against the school divisions and the Government. They want a provincially funded K-12 school in Prince Albert for students with Learning Disabilities.
 - Saskatchewan's two universities are experiencing difficulty in providing the depth and breadth of special education courses that may be required by regular and special education teachers. The College of Education in Saskatoon has found it necessary to reduce the number of faculty positions involved in teaching courses in special education.
 - The Provincial Government and direct service providers are placing increasing emphasis on effective coordination and integration of services from sectors and agencies concerned with health, social services, education, and justice. An example of such increased emphasis on inter-sectoral coordination is the Government's Integrated School-linked Services program.
 - There are more private educational entrepreneurs and advocacy groups who are supporting parents. Frequently, they intimate to parents that public education services for students with disabilities are not of sufficient intensity to optimize the students' potentials.
 - The issue of ensuring high quality special educational programming for students with disabilities has been identified throughout Canada, as evidenced by special education reviews completed, in progress, or planned in other provinces.
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Key Findings, Questions, and Implications

Our children, the students of today, will need to find their way in the world of tomorrow. It is our duty as family, community, and helping professionals to assist our children in meeting with success as they take their place in society. Our schools play a vital role in this process. As educators, one of our greatest challenges is to provide children with diverse needs with the direction they need to live productive and satisfying lives. As special educators, the challenge is to anticipate what these children need today to be successful in the future, and to be energetic and innovative in meeting those needs.

Any attempt to review special education provisions in Saskatchewan needs to take into account the many changes that are happening within education, in related and unrelated disciplines, and in society at large. Some of the trends considered by the Committee over the past year include:

- **The family** – there are increasing numbers of non-traditional and diverse family units, which affect many children.
- **Increasing student diversity** -- growing numbers of children are coming to school with complex social, cultural, and developmental problems that inhibit their capacity to participate effectively.
- **The workplace** – there is an increasing need for a skilled and adaptable work force capable of taking part in a global, technological, and service oriented economy.
- **Declining rural population** – people in Saskatchewan are moving from rural to urban areas. The rural population has decreased from 47% in 1971 to 36.7% in 1996.
- **Declining resources** – the past decade has seen significant reductions in budgets and resources, not only in Education but in all other human services sectors.
- **Aboriginal population** – by 2016, one in three people in Saskatchewan will be of Aboriginal descent and close to half (46%) will be age 5-17 years.
- **Restructuring** – school division restructuring has resulted in the creation of new, larger school divisions and a related set of new challenges.
- **Technological innovation** – technological advances are creating new opportunities for children with diverse needs.
- **Research** -- advances in areas such as brain research, resource-based learning, cognitive strategies, and peer-mediated learning are affecting our understanding.

In this section of the report, the goal is to examine all sources of input into the review to identify key findings and higher-order themes. The table below has been constructed to show the key strengths and needs that emerged from a synthesis of all the input examined by the Committee. This synthesis is accompanied by the identification of issues and questions that are associated with each theme. Finally, consideration of the issues and questions leads to implications for the formulation of recommendations in the next section of the report. Following the table, the Committee examined the implications for recommendations as the basis for further integrating these themes to create a vision of the future. This vision, which is presented as a concept web, served as a guide to the formulation of the recommendations.

Key Findings	Issues and Questions	Implications for Recommendations
<p>There is broad support for, and movement toward, SaskEd’s philosophy of inclusion. Variance of opinion and practice lead to debate around this issue that needs to be considered.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can we establish a shared philosophy? ● How can the philosophy and effective practices of inclusion be clarified and communicated clearly? ● How can we ensure that inclusion is not interpreted only as regular classroom placement? ● How can we ensure that students receive appropriate and effective programs within the philosophy? ● How can we achieve greater consistency of philosophy and practice across the province? ● How can funding better support inclusive schools? ● How can we ensure that enhancing special education supports does not diminish regular programs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand the definition of students to be supported ● Articulate a provincial philosophy of inclusive schools and effective practices ● Communicate the philosophy clearly and broadly ● Update legislation, regulations, and policy to be consistent with philosophy ● Nurture a collaborative, holistic, interagency approach ● Focus on student needs rather than on deficits, categories, and labels ● Enhance the capacity of schools and classrooms to meet student needs
<p>The concept of the Adaptive Dimension is highly valued. Implementation and practice need enhancement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can a broader range of students be successfully accommodated within the curriculum? ● How can the concept of the Adaptive Dimension be actualized? ● How can University courses enhance understanding of the Adaptive Dimension? ● How can we support teachers in implementing the Adaptive Dimension? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Embed the Adaptive Dimension within regular curricula ● Review, renew, and implement the Adaptive Dimension ● Provide preservice and inservice support ● Review university course content
<p>The concept and use of the collaboratively developed Personal Program Plan process is a strength. The use of PPPs needs to be enhanced.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can we empower school-based teams to make the PPP process dynamic and ongoing? ● How can we ensure the engagement of parents and interagency supports in the PPP process? ● How can assistive technology and transition planning be enhanced and built into the PPP process? ● How can children’s needs rather than designation become the basis for PPP development? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop local policy that defines and refines the PPP process ● Provide broad-based inservice on collaboration and teamwork ● Develop a field manual to guide enhancement of the PPP process ● Identify the PPP as an accountability mechanism
<p>School divisions report success meeting the needs of many designated students. Challenges arise with behaviour disorders, learning disabilities, and at-risk students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How can we better provide support for children with high incidence needs? ● How can we enhance resources to meet the needs? ● How can an interagency strategy be implemented? ● How can we best enhance professional knowledge in these areas? ● How can we build environments that support these students’ needs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop effective practices ● Develop a provincial strategy and resources ● Implement a tracking system ● Provide professional development ● Enhance interagency services ● Create protocols

Identification, Analysis, and Implications of Key Findings		
Key Findings	Issues and Questions	Implications for Recommendations
Valuable innovative work is taking place across the province. Further innovation needs to be promoted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can school divisions be supported in undertaking innovations in provision of supports? • How can leadership training best be provided? • How can SaskEd and the education partners best offer leadership in innovation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and evaluate innovative programs and services • Develop a variety of ways to provide information about innovations to the field • Provide flexibility in funding.
Consultative support is highly valued (Shared Services, ACCESS, Regional Superintendents, other consultants). Consultative support needs to be examined.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the Shared Services concept be renewed and updated to enhance services? • How can Shared Services better deal with travel distances and numbers of children with needs? • How can ACCESS teams be expanded and continue to provide direct service to schools and families? • How can ACCESS teams build local capacity to respond to diversity? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine ways to expand, redesign, or renew, the concepts of ACCESS, Shared Services, and other consultative supports.
The support provided by teacher associates is valued highly. Their roles, responsibilities, and preparation need to be better defined.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we ensure that the use of teacher associates is in balance with the availability of other support options? • How can teacher associate roles be clearly defined within the broader array of support options? • How can effective hiring and preparation practices be developed and implemented? • How can the role of teacher associates as team partners be enhanced? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop clear role descriptions • Encourage more involvement of TAs as partners • Provide learning opportunities
Integrated services approaches are supported and seen as very important. They need to be enhanced and implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can SaskEd’s leadership be affirmed by other human services departments? • How can the leadership momentum in service integration be enhanced? • How can the barriers arising from funding, roles, policy, and jurisdiction differences between agencies be overcome? • How can local and informal supports become more a part of the support options? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop joint policy to address shared funding and non-aligned boundaries • Build awareness and knowledge • Enhance collaborative skills • Create a strategic plan to guide service integration. • Develop school division policy to guide service integration

Identification, Analysis, and Implications of Key Findings		
Key Findings	Issues and Questions	Implications for Recommendations
<p>Collaborative teams at the school level are a strength. They need to be enhanced and supported.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we build understanding of teamwork processes? • How can administrators best support teamwork? • How can classroom teachers be included in decision-making about student programs? • How can the needed expertise from different agencies be represented on teams? • How can we support resource teachers in a leadership role with school-based teams? • How can we make time available for collaboration? • How can we build parental involvement on teams? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop policy and guidelines to enhance the role of school-based teams • Provide resources to support the operation of school-based teams • Provide inservice on collaboration skills and team processes for all participants • Develop educational opportunities for administrators on team support
<p>Many effective practices are in place across the province. Knowledge and interpretation of effective practices need to be enhanced.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we reach a consensus of understanding about effective practices? • How can the knowledge of boards of education about current, effective practices be enhanced? • How can we renew our concept of effective practices? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake an ‘Effective Practices’ initiative • Utilize an effective implementation strategy • Develop local policy and protocols to guide practice
<p>Local autonomy has allowed many and varied practices across the province. Some variations in practice lead to inconsistent supports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we ensure consistent, effective practice in all areas of the province? • How can we reconcile the need to sustain local planning with the need for uniform effective practice standards? • How can local jurisdictions be supported in planning and implementing policy and practice? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a province-wide policy and a framework of effective practices • Develop support documents that guide effective practices • Provide support for the development of local plans • Provide appropriate professional development
<p>Many students experience excellent educational opportunities. Present options and quality of programs may not adequately meet some students’ needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we ensure that students with learning disabilities, giftedness, behaviour disorders, deafness, and other needs receive sufficient and appropriate supports? • How can we address the needs of non-attending students? • How can we address the support needs of at-risk populations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster flexibility for innovative and effective programs • Change the funding structure • Provide needed preservice/in-service • Ensure adequate resources • Ensure adequate individualization (PPPs, transition plans) • Build a knowledge base of Effective Practices • Enhance program review

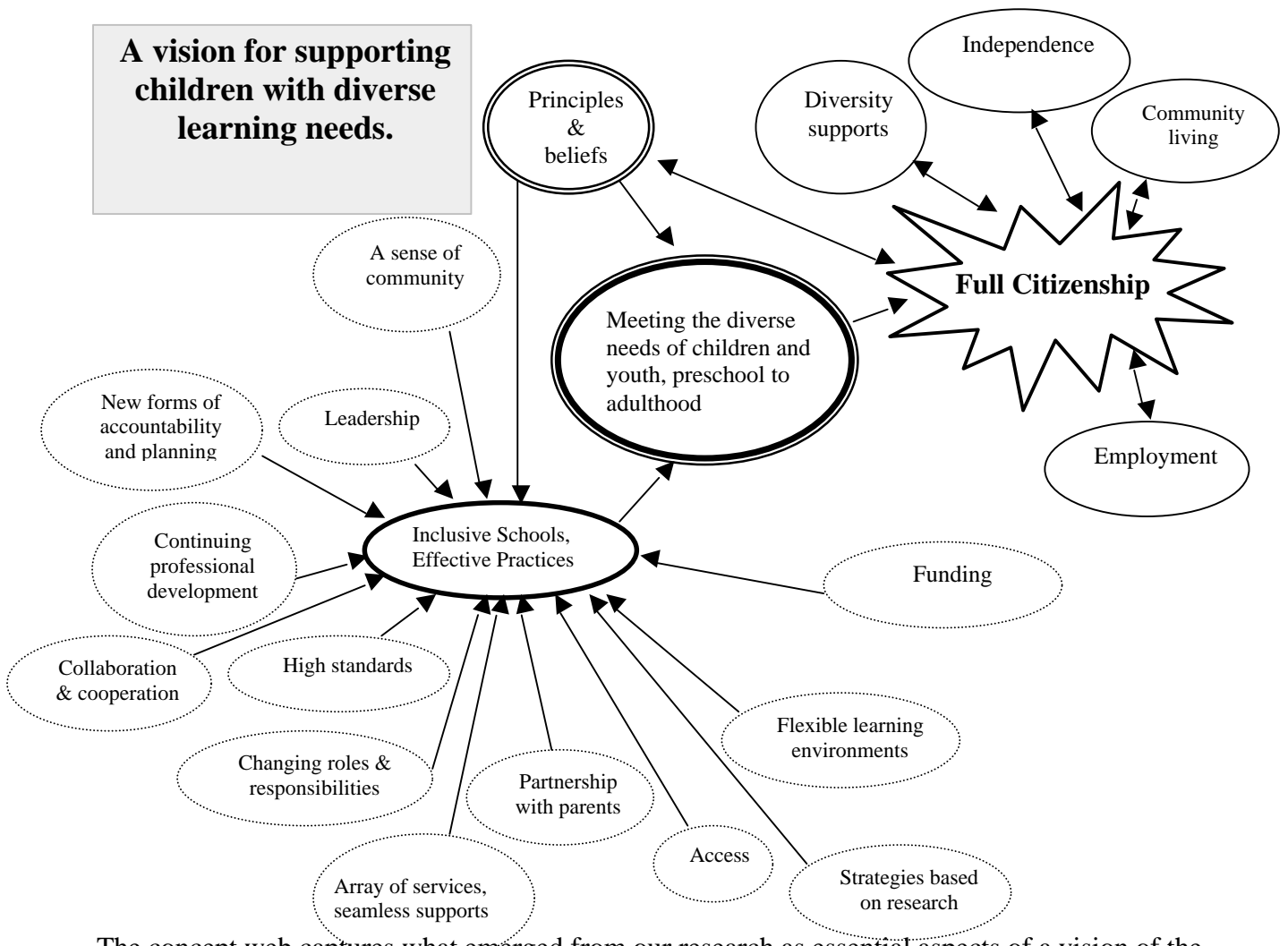
Identification, Analysis, and Implications of Key Findings		
Key Findings	Issues and Questions	Implications for Recommendations
<p>Many teachers are now meeting the diverse needs of students. The complexities and conditions of the classroom sometimes limit teachers' abilities to respond to student needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we provide the supports teachers need at the classroom level? • How can issues of numbers and severity of special needs in one classroom be addressed? • How can the knowledge and skills of teachers be enhanced? • How can students with significant behaviour problems be successfully included? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address class size issues • Direct resources to the classroom • Increase collaboration supports, including interagency involvement • Support professional development
<p>Prevention and early intervention services are taking place, and the need is supported. Expansion is needed in this area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we ensure prevention and early intervention services across the province? • How can we create interagency policy and funding that supports early intervention? • How can we reach consistency and continuity in provision of early childhood services? • How can we develop a shared understanding of the meaning of 'at-risk' and related effective practices? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop provincial policy, funding, and model of delivery • Build upon existing programs • Provide enhanced training and information
<p>Technology grants have provided equipment to many students. Assistive technology needs to be applied more effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the use of assistive technology be expanded to enhance access for a range of students? • How can the use of technological devices be considered as part of the supports in the PPP? • How can we develop sufficient levels of technical expertise and training opportunities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an assistive technology enhancement plan • Coordinate the provision of assistive technology devices • Build assistive technology consideration into the PPP process
<p>Services and supports to students in secondary schools are expanding. They need to be enhanced to meet emerging needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can supports available to secondary schools be increased? • How can secondary schools organize to best meet the needs of diverse students? • How can students' life skills and employment needs best be addressed? • How can successful transitions into and out of secondary schools best be fostered? • How can leadership awareness and skills to meet the needs of diverse students be enhanced? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actualize the Adaptive Dimension of Core Curriculum • Expand vocational and work experience options • Strengthen transition processes • Develop curricula for modified and alternate programs • Enhance resources • Strengthen leadership, teamwork

Identification, Analysis, and Implications of Key Findings		
Key Findings	Issues and Questions	Implications for Recommendations
<p>Special education funding recognition has built and sustained many services. It needs to become more flexible, predictable, transparent, and consistent with the cost of meeting student needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can sufficient funds be provided for increasing numbers, diversity, and complexity of needs? • How can a closer match be made between service expectations and available funding recognition? • How can funding recognition better support students needing costly services? • How can funding recognition to school divisions best be adjusted for unique factors (e.g., size, distance)? • How can more resources be directed to areas of high need (behaviour disorders, learning disabilities, and others)? • How can funding be simplified and directed at student needs rather than disability category? • How can funding recognition be made consistent and flexible to provide a range of supports? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase funding recognition for special education programs and supports • Establish interagency funding • Restructure funding recognition protocols • Direct funding support to the school level
<p>Accountability measures are viewed positively, with many viewing them as contributing to the improvement of practice. Accountability needs to be well coordinated with funding and effective practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we show that expenditures on special education supports are efficient and effective? • How can we ensure that an effective strategic plan is in place? • How can we show that supports for students are producing the expected outcomes? • How can we build awareness and communication about special education provision? • How can we ensure that programs and supports are provided by personnel who are well prepared? • How can we ensure that effective review/appeal procedures are in place to resolve disputes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document expenditures of allocated funds • Embed accountability measures into local policy, practices, and PPPs • Link accountability to implementation of Effective Practices

Identification, Analysis, and Implications of Key Findings		
Key Findings	Issues and Questions	Implications for Recommendations
<p>There has been a steady growth of preparation and professional development in knowledge and skills over the years. There is a need to continue to enhance and renew preservice and inservice preparation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we ensure that qualifications of personnel are consistent with role requirements? • How can we ensure that professional development options are flexible and available? • How can we build inservice experiences that are appropriate, current and sufficient? • How can we provide inservice in low incidence, high-need areas? • How can we enhance the preservice preparation and induction of teachers for inclusive schools? • How can we offer preparation options for a broad range of needs? • How can we offer shared learning experiences that build knowledge amongst stakeholders? • How can personnel be provided with incentives to enhance their preparation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance awareness and importance of the role of professional development in providing for children’s diverse needs • Review provincial inservice needs and models • Renew, enhance, implement, and support the Adaptive Dimension • Offer bursaries, grants, leaves • Address the matters of induction and retention of special education teachers • Enhance key areas in preservice courses • Renew professional qualification requirements in preservice courses • Enhance use of media and technology to build knowledge • Encourage membership in professional organizations
<p>Positive dialogue and collaboration exists at many levels. Enhancement of information flow and opportunities for involvement are needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the full range of stakeholder issues and views be well represented to decision-makers? • How can the free flow of information and dialogue be enhanced within and across all levels? • How can knowledge about disabilities and related issues be widely communicated? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an advisory committee of partners and stakeholders • Develop a strategic plan and periodic review process • Use media and technology to enhance dialogue
<p>Parental involvement is seen as important and is supported. There is a need to enhance parent participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we achieve greater consistency in parent involvement? • How can we create school environments that encourage and welcome parents as partners? • How can we ensure that parents have knowledge of, and access to, effective review and appeal processes? • How can we assist parents to obtain the knowledge and skills they need to be effective partners? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create policy and guidelines to support parental involvement • Enhance school-based teams to include parent involvement • Enhance the philosophy and skills of collaboration • Enhance information provision and communication with parents • Support and practice child advocacy

A complex picture of the current state of special education in Saskatchewan has emerged from the findings of the review. It is very clear that there are many positive aspects to the present state of special education in the province. It is essential that we identify these strengths clearly, sustain and maintain them, and use them as a platform for enhancement and changes in the future. We also found areas in which special education needs to be improved or re-directed. These areas need to be addressed by a clear, workable plan for renewal.

To guide this process, some essential elements necessary for a long-range vision of the future were identified. The figure below offers a conceptual representation of a vision for supporting children with diverse learning needs.



The concept web captures what emerged from our research as essential aspects of a vision of the future. There were many other themes, but most seem to be contained within these major considerations. To interpret the web, one starts with the node stating that the goal for all individuals in our society is full citizenship. Of central importance to this desired outcome is the provision of effective supports to children during their school years that prepare them for full citizenship now and in the future. Inclusive school principles and practices are widely recognized as the most desirable approach to fostering the long range outcome that we want our children to be able to achieve (CEC, UNESCO). The challenge we face in meeting children’s diverse needs is how to enhance the capacity of schools to offer effective instruction and supports that will meet the full range of children’s needs in order that they may receive a quality education. The factors that characterize and foster inclusive schools and effective practices are offered tentatively. These certainly are not the only factors that constitute inclusive schools and effective practices. The importance of some of the factors represented is indisputable (e.g., parents as partners). However, the way we in Saskatchewan will define and operationalize the concept of inclusive schools should be a collaborative endeavour, and subject to change and renewal over time.

The overall picture of special education in Saskatchewan is overwhelmingly one of pride, optimism, and commitment. We heard that much good work is being conducted by many people at all levels. Many aspects of the services and supports presently being provided to children and families are of excellent quality and are highly valued, both by providers and recipients. We noted a strong message of willingness to act on behalf of, and in concert with, children and families. Moreover, our field is dynamic in nature and has shown much ongoing progress and innovation. The direction and leadership by Saskatchewan Education over the years has contributed strongly to this positive picture. With these positive characteristics in the forefront, we also heard the clear message that we should not be content to leave things as they are. We want the provisions we make for vulnerable children to be the best we can make them.

In transforming the key findings into recommendations, it is essential that “Principles and Beliefs” outlined earlier in this report inform their development. The committee was guided by the belief that all decisions should be consistent with these principles:

- Child-centred
- Worth of the Person, Equity, and Respect for Diversity
- Cooperation, Empowerment, and Shared Responsibility
- Educational Excellence
- Prevention and Early Intervention
- Holistic, Integrated Approaches
- Affordability.

It is with this broad perspective steadily in view that we move to the offering of recommendations.

Recommendations

After extensive discussion of the strengths, barriers, and suggested strategies that emerged from the review (see Appendix A), the Committee developed a preliminary set of themes, issues, goals, and possible directions. Some of these emerging issues were shared with the executives of some of the key partners, including the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents; the Provincial Interagency Network on Disabilities; and Saskatchewan Education. Following feedback from these groups, the committee began refining these issues and began formulating the recommendations presented in this section of the report.

The recommendations are organized around the Terms of Reference that have guided the Committee's work. Each section begins with the Term of Reference we were asked to examine, followed by a vision statement that provides context and rationale for the recommendations that follow. Each recommendation is followed by a commentary, which provides further information related to that recommendation.

After careful consideration of all sources of input, the Special Education Review Committee respectfully presents the following recommendations.

1. Foundational and Philosophical Basis

“What should be the foundational and philosophical basis of Special Education in Saskatchewan?”

Vision Statement

Examination of all the input to the review reveals that it is essential for Saskatchewan Education to work with the education partners and other stakeholders to articulate the vision of the foundational and philosophical basis of supports for student diversity. It is important that all schools and staffs share this vision. The prevailing vision is that all children have the same entitlements to be part of their schools and communities. A goal is to promote as much individual opportunity and independence as possible. Children, parents, teachers, and administrators embrace the values of equity among persons, respect for self and others, and acceptance of differences. The focus is on children's needs in terms of reaching maximum potential. The provision of a comprehensive array of appropriate supports, that meet the diverse needs of Saskatchewan children and youth, reflect effective practices and are ensured through the dedicated work of school boards and staffs.

To achieve this vision, the Special Education Review Committee recommends ...

- 1. That Saskatchewan Education, together with the education partners and stakeholders, develop a shared philosophy regarding educational supports for student diversity.*

Commentary

- The Committee found broad-based support for, and evidence of movement toward, the "inclusive schools" concept.
- There was broad support for the inclusion of students with diverse needs in regular schools and classrooms, provided that necessary supports are in place.
- The committee also found that to provide appropriate programs for some students, a continuum of services and supports must be available.
- A statement such as the following is consistent with the philosophy of a continuum of services based on inclusionary practices: "Students with exceptional needs should experience education in settings that allow them to achieve their individual goals in inclusive settings. Other arrangements may be used when compelling reasons necessitate other alternatives". (Draft Special Education Policy Manual, 1999)
- In the future, it will be more difficult to justify and maintain a range of alternate placements when more students are able to receive appropriate programs in their neighbourhood schools.
- The Committee recommends that Saskatchewan Education and the education partners adopt the concept of "inclusive schools" to operationalize the philosophy. The goal is to enhance the capacity of schools to provide appropriate programs for all students. Effective inclusive schools will naturally reduce the need for a range of alternative locations and help to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population of students.

2. That Saskatchewan Education, in consultation with the education partners and stakeholders, develop a policy manual consistent with the philosophy, and which includes the existing and revised policies related to the education of students with exceptional needs.

Commentary

- There are inconsistencies, variances, and gaps in services across the province which a policy manual would address.
- The policy manual must provide vision and direction for the philosophy, including:
 - clarifying the language of the *Education Act*, including the terms "appropriate education" and "compelling reasons", and addressing "may" and "can" clauses that result in conflicting interpretations and practices
 - including policy and guidelines on integrated school-linked services
 - including the principles and practices of collaborative teamwork and case management
 - identifying and clarifying the roles of the service providers
 - establishing clear policy and guidelines regarding Personal Program Plans
 - establishing a clear policy regarding transitions, that includes integrating transition planning into the PPP process
 - developing a clear policy on the involvement of parents
- The completed manual needs to be widely publicized and placed on the special education unit web site
- There is a need to establish a process of "evergreening" this document

3. That Saskatchewan Education redefine the students who are to receive specialized supports to include the broad range of students with diverse needs.

Commentary

- The Committee was told that some children in need of specialized supports (e.g., at-risk students) are not provided with the services they need because of the interpretation of funding protocols.
- Some students experience transitory events (e.g., bereavement, foster home placement) that lead to the need for support.
- Traditional models of service provision that focus on deficits limit the identification of student needs.

4. *That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners develop a strategy to heighten awareness among all stakeholders regarding the philosophy of providing specialized supports for students with diverse needs.*

Commentary

- Only through broad-based awareness and understanding will the philosophy become actualized.
- There is a need for: "... broad public consultation to build community understanding and consensus on equity for all students." (Report of the Committee on Integration of Students with Special Needs in the Classroom, 1999)

2. Program & Delivery

"How might the delivery of special education programs and services be improved?"

Vision Statement

The Committee's historical review, consideration of future trends, and findings from the input of review participants offer a vision of Saskatchewan as a place where there are inclusive schools. These schools embody the foundational principles and beliefs, employ effective practices, and focus on meeting the individual needs of each child. As outlined by the CEC Working Forum on Inclusive Schools, some important aspects of **effective practices** to guide the vision are:

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- In our schools there is a sense of community. There is a philosophy and a vision that all children belong and can learn and participate as full members of the school and community life. Diversity is valued as offering strength and learning opportunities for all. Everyone belongs and is supported by peers and the adults in the school. This sense of community helps each child develop a sense of mutual respect, self-worth, and pride in their accomplishments.
 - In our schools there is leadership toward the vision. Administrators play a crucial role by actively involving and sharing responsibility with the entire school staff in making decisions and carrying out the plans that make the school successful in meeting children's diverse needs.
 - In our schools there are high standards. All children meet high levels of educational outcomes and high standards of performance that are suited to their needs. Instructional content and delivery reflect each student's individual needs.
 - In our schools we practice collaboration and cooperation. Students and staff support one another with such strategies as peer tutoring, buddy systems, cooperative learning, team teaching, co-teaching, teacher-student assistance teams, and other collaborative arrangements. Collaborative teams develop PPPs based on the understanding that students' needs change over time. There is ongoing assessment and monitoring of students' changing needs to drive the decisions about needed supports. This collaborative approach includes parents, educators, other agency personnel, and informal resource people planning effective ways to meet student needs.
 - Our schools are characterized by changing roles and responsibilities. Teachers facilitate learning, and support personnel (e.g., resource teachers, school psychologists, and speech/language pathologists) work collaboratively with classroom teachers. Every person in the school is an active participant in the process.
 - In our schools there is an array of services. Teacher associates are available in balance with other service options to support children's programs. They are flexibly assigned a wide variety of support responsibilities in collaboration with and supervised by professional staff. There is an array of services -- health, mental health, and social services -- and local, informal supports all coordinated with the educational staff.
 - In our schools there are partnerships with parents. Parents are embraced as fundamentally important and equal partners in the education of their children.
 - In our schools there are flexible learning environments. Children are not expected to move in lock steps, but rather follow their individual paths to learning. Groupings are flexible, and material is presented in concrete, meaningful ways that emphasize participation. The preferred location for children with diverse needs to receive their education is in age-appropriate neighbourhood classrooms, with a range of supports. Although there is less reliance on programs that pull children out of classrooms, there are still opportunities for children to receive separate instruction if needed. Ongoing enhancement of the capacity of inclusive schools to meet children's diverse needs progressively reduces the need for alternative settings.
 - In our schools we use strategies based on research. We seek out research into how people learn, and this knowledge provides new ideas and strategies for teachers. Cooperative
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learning, adaptive instruction, peer tutoring, direct instruction, reciprocal teaching, social skills training, computer-assisted instruction, study skill training, work experience, and mastery learning are some of the practices evident in our schools.

- Our schools use new forms of accountability. There is less reliance on standardized tests and greater use of a variety of forms of accountability and assessment to ensure that each child is progressing towards their goals.
- In our schools there is access. We ensure that children are able to take part in school life by making necessary modifications to the building and by providing appropriate technology that makes participation possible, and adaptations and supports that provide access to the curriculum.
- Our schools provide continuing professional development. School staffs design and obtain professional development on an ongoing basis so that there is continuous improvement. Teacher preparation and staff development support the effort to deliver current, effective practices.

Saskatchewan Education, boards of education, and schools show leadership toward this vision. Their initiatives are shared and supported by the universities, partners and stakeholders, and related agencies and service providers.

To achieve this vision, the Special Education Review Committee recommends ...

5. ***That Saskatchewan Education create a Children's Services Advisory Committee made up of representatives from the education partners (League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials; Universities), provincial government human services departments, community agencies, community based organizations, and the Council for Exceptional Children.***

Commentary

- There should be regular rotation of member representatives on this committee.
- Working sub-committees could be established as needed: e.g., special education, integrated services, culturally diverse, ad hoc committees on emerging needs (e.g., learning disabilities, hearing impairment, Aboriginal students, behavioural needs, gifted students).

6. *That the Children's Services Advisory Committee plan and direct a provincial student diversity strategy.*

Commentary

- The Committee could address:
 - the study of emerging issues
 - the population of students to be served (see Recommendation 3)
 - development of the policy manual (see Recommendation 2)
 - guidelines for effective practice (see Recommendation 7)
 - supports for students with learning disabilities, giftedness, behavioural disorders
 - responsibilities of school divisions
 - interagency involvement
 - enhancement of PPP and transition processes (see Recommendation 10)
 - enhancement of school-based teams (see Recommendation 9)
 - teacher associate guidelines (see Recommendation 15)
 - enhancement of the school division local plan (see Recommendation 8)
 - conducting forums at strategic intervals to invite input into the dialogue from teachers, parents and other interested parties

7. *That Saskatchewan Education develop policy and guidelines for “Effective Practices to Support Students with Diverse Needs”.*

Commentary

- The Children’s Services Advisory Committee could be involved in this initiative.
- A working document should include all relevant policies, a framework for Effective Practices with accompanying guidelines for practitioners, and an outline of an array of resources and supports necessary for meeting the diverse needs of students.
- The document needs to set out clear requirements and procedures for practice, addressing such topics as pre-referral practices, collaborative teamwork processes, interagency collaboration, case management, authentic assessment, PPP procedures, transitions, and procedures for working with children and youth with various disabilities.
- The document needs to provide direction and support for all personnel providing services to children and youth with special needs and lead to greater consistency in practice across school divisions.
- There needs to be an inservice strategy developed to assist in implementation.
- The completed document needs to be widely publicized and placed on the special education unit web site.
- See Recommendation 31.

8. *That boards of education, in collaboration with local stakeholders, undertake an enhancement to the local plan, currently referred to as the Special Education Master Plan.*

Commentary

- The local plan needs to be aligned with provincial policy and the Effective Practices document.
- The local plan needs to become a working document to guide the ongoing work of school division staff.
- Revisions need to address interagency plans and protocols.
- The local plan needs to become an accountability vehicle.
- The local plan revision needs to be accompanied by a plan for distribution, renewal, and inservice regarding changes and directions.
- See Recommendation 34.

9. That the Children’s Services Advisory Committee direct a strategy to enhance and promote school-based collaborative teams.**Commentary**

- A primary role of the school-based team needs to be to foster the concept of the inclusive school.
- Teachers, parents, and administrators collectively do not always collaborate in decision making about the programs for students with special needs.
- There is a need to enhance teamwork as a way to support the teacher in inclusive schools.
- School-based teams need to be empowered with an expanded decision making mandate.
- A clear strategy needs to be developed for engaging parents in the ongoing work of the school-based team.
- School staff needs to receive the requisite preparation to understand and participate in the enhanced role of the school-based team.
- The document prepared by PIND and Saskatchewan Education (“Collaborating for the Future of our Children”) could be used as the basis and become part of the Effective Practices document.

10. That the Children’s Services Advisory Committee direct a strategy to enhance use of Personal Program Plans as an ongoing process and as a mechanism for accountability.**Commentary**

- This needs to be part of the Effective Practices framework.
 - An important part of this strategy needs to be a plan to actively engage parents, and students when appropriate, in PPP processes.
 - A systematic strategy needs to be built into the PPP process to activate integrated services support when needed.
 - Planning for transitions needs to be built into the PPP process, with consideration given to the full range of transitions (e.g., home-to-school, grade-to-grade, elementary-to-secondary, secondary-to-workplace, secondary-to-postsecondary).
 - The PPP needs to consider assistive technology as part of the student’s plan.
 - The PPP process and format needs to be suited to the complexity and intensity of the student’s needs (e.g., a child designated as high cost may not have as detailed a PPP as a child who cannot now be designated).
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11. That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners, through Core Curriculum Actualization, assist with renewal and implementation of the Adaptive Dimension.

Commentary

- The Adaptive Dimension is recognized as a valuable tool, making curriculum accessible to children and youth with diverse needs.
- An effective model and plan of implementation for the Adaptive Dimension needs to be developed and applied.
- Enhancements to the present Adaptive Dimension document need to address in more depth cultural diversity, inclusion concepts and strategies, and effective practices.
- Greater depth and detail needs to be provided on classroom assessment and instructional strategies for diversity in the classroom.
- Special attention needs to be placed upon middle and secondary school levels.
- The strategy needs to include a plan to incorporate aspects of the Adaptive Dimension when revising regular curricula.
- The strategy needs to include an inservice and implementation plan.

12. That Saskatchewan Education, through Core Curriculum Actualization, promote an effective vision for the implementation of the Common Essential Learning of “Personal and Social Values and Skills”.

Commentary

- Curricula that address social skills, anger management, and conflict resolution need to be identified.
- Resources that may be useful need to be determined.
- Programs to address school-level needs in this area need to be identified and supported
- Specific strategies for schools regarding “safe and caring school environments” (e.g., restorative justice, non-violent intervention, collaborative cultures) and alternatives to expulsion and suspension need to be explored, and congruent educational opportunities made available for staffs.
- Some of this work is in progress through the Social Skills Identification Project.

13. That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the education partners and government human services departments, develop a provincial policy related to the social/emotional/behavioural needs of students.

Commentary

- This initiative could involve an accompanying provincial strategy.
- The issue of children with serious emotional and behavioural disorders needs to be recognized and addressed at the integrated services level.
- There has been a significant increase in the concern about the number of children and youth who exhibit severely aggressive and inappropriate behaviours.
- There needs to be a review of the nature and extent of the student population with emotional and behavioural disorders requiring intensive services.
- There is a need to develop proactive, preventive measures to address behaviour concerns.
- There needs to be a broad study of suspension and expulsion practices.

- Section 154 and 155 of *The Education Act* (suspension and expulsion) may need revision for clarity of interpretation.

14. That Saskatchewan Education develop, for the secondary school level, frameworks for alternative education programs and locally modified courses, and identify accompanying resources.

Commentary

- Course development is very time consuming, repetitive, and labour intensive work for school divisions. Customized programs based on specific needs are in the best interests of students
- An annotated list of resources, and development of further resources, for various courses would be a valuable support.
- This material should be made available on the web site.

15. That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the education partners, identify and address issues related to teacher associates.

Commentary

- There is concern about a large increase in the number of teacher associates.
 - There are concerns about roles and responsibilities of teacher associates.
 - Teacher associates are not always seen as a partner group in the province.
 - Guidelines are needed to address hiring, transfer, roles, responsibilities, training, and inservice requirements of teacher associates.
-

16. That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners examine the issue of non-attending school aged students and develop prevention strategies and re-entry programs for these children and youth.

Commentary

- There is concern about the well-being of children not attending school.
- This initiative needs to have interagency involvement, since many of these children experience complex issues.
- This needs to be seen as a broader issue than simply re-entry, and needs to address alternative educational approaches and supports.

17. That Saskatchewan Education, in consultation with government and non-government agencies, develop and implement a provincial strategy for the use of assistive technology.

Commentary

- Technical aids have become an increasing part of the school program for children and youth with exceptional needs.
- Effective use of technical aids requires assessment of needs, consultative support, acquisition of appropriate equipment, installation, and maintenance by knowledgeable personnel.
- Consolidated and coordinated services will ensure cost efficiencies and effectiveness.
- See Recommendation 18.

18. That Saskatchewan Education, in consultation with the education partners, restructure the shared services concept.

Commentary

- The goal is to provide full services areas supporting students with diverse needs.
- This will require further work of the Shared Services Review now in progress.
- The concept should be enhanced by the addition of personnel from other agencies and disciplines (e.g., mental health, technology).
- Consideration should be given to the amalgamation of ACCESS, shared services, and integrated services.
- Funding from the government human services agencies, ACCESS, and shared services could be directed to this initiative (see Recommendation 27).
- Consideration of both the numbers and distribution of students in the service area, including urban centres, needs to be taken into account in determining the structure to enhance the efficiency of service delivery.
- Also to be taken into account are areas where it is difficult to retain personnel.
- The plan should aim to address the availability of consultative support in areas of low incidence disability and under-served high incidence disabilities.

3. Integrated Services

"What are the opportunities and mechanisms to improve the integration and coordination of education, health, and social services programs in effectively meeting the needs of students with exceptional needs?"

Vision Statement

All the inputs to the review provide a vision of integrated services delivery for Saskatchewan. Children and their families have access to the coordinated services and supports they require from Education, Social Services, Health, Justice, and other human service agencies. In order for this to happen, parents, educators, and service providers are aware of the benefits and limitations of integrated service delivery models and practices. To maximize children's services, there is access to the expertise of personnel from all agencies. This includes on-site services, interagency case management, demonstration of techniques, consultative contact, training of school-based personnel, and collaboration with the school-based team. To make this happen, government agencies at the provincial level jointly develop policy and shared funding procedures. At the school division level, integrated service teams are in place with the needed protocols, procedures, and funding to implement and sustain supports to children and families. Services are planned and delivered by collaborative interagency teams to provide seamless formal and informal supports to the child and family, with particular attention to transition periods.

To achieve this vision, the Special Education Review Committee recommends ...

19. That the Government of Saskatchewan develop formal legislation, policy, protocol, and funding arrangements among human services departments.

Commentary

- Lack of progress with integrated services is a concern.
 - Services to children should be provided in an integrated, holistic fashion, with the schools as the focal point.
 - Limitations on financial and human resources, and increased demands on all systems increase the need for service integration.
 - Each human service agency requires a clear, flexible mandate to hasten integrated services provision.
 - Education needs to assume a lead role in promoting the interagency agenda.
 - The Regional Intersectoral Committees' interagency roles could be set out in legislation.
 - The mandate, roles, location, and responsibilities of schools and other service providers should be clarified with respect to assessment, referral, sharing information, and evaluating treatment programs, services, and supports.
 - A major barrier to progress with integrated services is the lack of closely aligned boundaries for the regions across the province, which gives rise to complex and conflicting organizational patterns (e.g., travel distances, contacts, communication).
 - We were also told that the majority of children are served in regions with closely aligned boundaries, but there are still coordination problems and lack of progress.
 - There is a need to create boundaries that are more closely aligned.
 - Issues related to boundaries might be resolved through the development of integrated services areas (see Recommendation 18).
-

20. That the District and/or Regional levels of Health, Education, Social Services, and other human services agencies take a lead role in enhancing awareness and promotion of the integrated services approach.

Commentary

- There is not a widespread awareness, understanding, and use of the interagency approach at all levels.
- Attention needs to be directed toward the linkage between mandates, workloads, and protocols of the various sectors.
- The areas of mutual concern for education that need an interagency focus include: early childhood, cultural diversity, health problems, and social/emotional/ behavioural issues.
- Policy, resources, and service strategies need to be developed to address these issues.
- See Recommendation 8.

21. That Saskatchewan Education and Health develop a model for providing health support services to children in schools.

Commentary

- This should be the continued work of the Education Health Steering Committee.
 - The model needs to delineate responses of government departments for the administration and delivery of services and responsibilities for funding, professional development, supervision, and consultative services to support school policy.
 - These issues cannot be resolved by Education alone.
 - With the movement toward inclusion, this is an area of increasing need.
 - Examples of health needs in schools include provision of medication, catheterization, percussion, physical therapy, mental health, and family counselling.
-

22. That boards of education develop policy and procedures within their local plan to enhance integrated service provision at the school division and school levels.

Commentary

- Boards of education need to include a strategy to engage integrated services within their local plan.
- Policy needs to establish the requirement that an interagency approach be integrated into the PPP process and transitions planning.
- This could take the form of a community plan for service delivery among Education, Health, Social Services, Justice, and community agencies.
- See Recommendation 8.

23. That Saskatchewan Education, in partnership with boards of education, develop a provincial electronic information system that follows all children and youth.

Commentary

- Consideration needs to be given to children who move in and out of the provincial education system.
- The system needs to be compatible with tracking systems currently being used by school divisions.
- The system would identify students' school, age, placement, and diverse needs.

24. That the Government of Saskatchewan increase funding for the Saskatchewan Action Plan for Children to sustain effective projects and initiate innovative interagency projects.

Commentary

- Encouraging innovative projects is seen as important in responding to emerging trends and needs.
- Ongoing projects often spawn new projects outside the intended area.
- Many of the projects initiated under this fund have proven to be very successful, but lack the support to continue.

4. Funding

"Do the Special Education Funding arrangements and protocols currently being used maximize resources being delivered to students?"

Vision Statement

Consideration of the information from respondents suggests a vision of funding arrangements and protocols that would maximize delivery of resources to students and classrooms. Saskatchewan Education provides leadership and direction to the provincial education system through clear policy, guidelines, and transparent funding protocols. Saskatchewan Education's funding system provides programs and support services for students with diverse needs to ensure that they have access to appropriate instruction and derive optimal benefit from their education. Provincial funding recognition fosters a broad array of support services that promote the inclusion of

students with diverse needs. Rather than categorical funding based on perceived student deficits, funding recognition is sensitive to students' needs, and supports the provision of a broad array of services as determined by collaborative team planning. Funding is based on realistic, fair, and reasonable costs associated with providing high quality specialized supports to the full range of student needs. Provincial funding recognition is flexible in order to recognize local conditions, priorities, and the significant differences among communities. Funding is predictable to allow boards to engage in long range planning. Funding is efficient and requires a manageable amount of administrative time and record keeping, consistent with prudent program and fiscal management.

To achieve this vision, the Special Education Review Committee recommends ...

25. That Saskatchewan Education increase funding to ensure that specialized supports are available to reflect Saskatchewan's vision and philosophy related to students with diverse needs.

Commentary

- We were told that Provincial funding needs to more closely reflect actual costs rather than a fixed amount based on student diagnosis.
- There are increasing demands on school divisions to provide services to more students with increasingly diverse needs.
- Actual costs involve inservice for teachers and teacher associates, release time for planning and collaborating, assistive technology, and conveyance.

26. That Saskatchewan Education adopt provincial funding protocols that reflect current needs and that support the philosophy.

Commentary

- There needs to be a move from the traditional categorical approach based on identified deficits and identified staff to allow a more flexible approach that supports inclusive settings, more closely reflects actual costs, and promotes effective practices across the province.
- Changes in funding protocols need to promote enhanced local accountability, simplify administration, and promote a comprehensive and cohesive response.
- The funding protocol needs to support:
 - School-based services that support children and youth
 - System-based or shared/regional consultative services
 - Enhanced recognition for students with a variety of intensive needs
 - Comprehensive programming for at-risk students
 - Enhanced recognition for prevention and early intervention
 - Enhanced recognition for Technical Aids
 - Provincial Programs

27. That the Saskatchewan Government increase funding to integrated school-linked services for the purpose of accelerating the development of interagency supports to meet the diverse needs of children and youth.

Commentary

- The ADMs' Forum on Service Integration needs to administer these funds.
- The Committee heard significant concern about the availability of OT/PT, mental health, and social/behavioural services for youth with legal issues, and prevention and early intervention programs.
- While the concept of Integrated School-linked Services is well accepted and consistently articulated, lack of resources presents a significant barrier.
- Many children in school require health, mental health, and other services in order to succeed.
- See Recommendation 18.

28. That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the education partners, undertake a process of discussion prior to major changes in funding protocols.

Commentary

- Collaboration will be needed to clarify, inform, and identify implications of a new funding protocol that may be included in the overall educational funding plan for the province.
- The funding mechanism needs to be responsive to changing needs and conditions.
- Incorporating the above considerations needs to be part of the long term plan.

29. That Saskatchewan Education expand the Community School Program concept to expeditiously recognize more schools, including secondary schools, throughout the province.

Commentary

- These programs could be built upon the strengths of existing programs.

30. That Saskatchewan Education develop a strategy to communicate the provincial funding protocol.

Commentary

- There are misunderstandings about the current funding protocols.
- There needs to be clear communication about funding to all partners and stakeholders.

5. Accountability

" What are appropriate accountability mechanisms for funding?"

Vision Statement

The Committee developed a vision of appropriate accountability mechanisms for service delivery and funding based upon consideration of the input from all participants in the review process. Accountability is viewed as a shared responsibility among educators, schools, boards of education, and Saskatchewan Education. Saskatchewan Education is accountable to provide policy, program direction, and funding recognition. School boards are accountable for providing

an array of appropriate programs and funding supports to students based on effective practices. Saskatchewan Education regularly studies its commitment of funding and supports provided to students with diverse needs, reports the results to stakeholders, and invites evaluative feedback in the *Saskatchewan Education Indicators* report. Saskatchewan Education and its partners pursue the goal of setting policy and standards that provide clear guidance to school divisions for the accountable use of funds to support the diverse needs of students. In collaboration with the partners, Saskatchewan Education develops accountability mechanisms and measures, and reviews their suitability on a regular basis. Saskatchewan Education develops guidelines and supports to enhance accountability. School divisions develop, within a local plan, standards for all aspects of their system to meet diverse students' needs, and this is clearly communicated to parents and the community. School divisions are provided with regular feedback from Saskatchewan Education on how well the accountability standards are being met. Saskatchewan Education and school divisions work together to fully inform all stakeholders about rights, expectations, and outcomes of supports provided. The focus is on providing measures of effective outcomes as local accountability to children, parents and guardians, and communities.

To achieve this vision, the Special Education Review Committee recommends ...

31. That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners develop accountability mechanisms and guidelines that are aligned with the recommended funding protocols and Effective Practices.

Commentary

- Accountability should be an ongoing process, rather than an isolated event.
- Accountability is a shared responsibility of educators, schools, boards of education, communities, and the province.
- Accountability regimes should not be time consuming or overly taxing, but strategic in ensuring Effective Practices.
- The purpose of accountability measures should be to provide continuous feedback and report progress responsibly to families, community members, and students, and not to the policing of regulations.
- Reporting and accountability procedures should be aligned with school divisions' current, regular reporting systems.
- Regional Superintendents of Children's Services need to become more involved in consultation than data collection.

32. That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners develop a strategy to enhance local accountability, including the framework of Effective Practices to support students with diverse needs.

Commentary

- Effective Practices need to be used as an accountability framework.
 - Accountability processes should be carried out in a manner that is mutually informative and congruent with role functions in special education programs and service delivery.
 - Such practices need to be consistent across the province.
 - Accountability programs should assess and contribute to the refinement of Effective
-

Practices.

- The research literature provides ample direction regarding effective practices in meeting the unique and diverse needs of students.
- See Recommendation 7.

33. That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the education partners, develop a mechanism to review instances of non-adherence with the Effective Practices and, if necessary, recommend consequences.

34. That school divisions articulate for parents and community members their local plan to provide supports for student diversity.

Commentary

- The framework of Effective Practices needs to be incorporated into the decision-making process related to the school divisions' local plan to support students with diverse needs.
 - School-level collaborative teams, and PPPs are critical elements of the accountability mechanism.
 - See Recommendation 8.
-

35. That Saskatchewan Education provincial profiles in the Saskatchewan Education Indicators report include the supports to students with diverse needs.

Commentary

- The reporting of additional data about students is required (e.g., expulsion).
- Many boards of education are presently collecting this data.
- Some data from the student tracking system could be included. (see Recommendation 23)

6. Early Screening and Identification

"What is the feasibility of implementing a province-wide early screening program to identify students who are at risk for developing learning and behavioural problems?"

Vision Statement

A vision regarding early screening and identification emerged from our analysis of participant input into the review. It begins with the development of government policy and priorities that reflect the importance of early screening to the present and future success of the child. Early screening and identification are understood as part of a continuum of services sensitive to the needs of the child and family, and to the timely provision of appropriate supports. It is also seen as an interagency initiative involving Education, Health, Social Services, and Justice. The purposes of the screening program include the identification of factors known to place children at risk for developing learning and behavioural problems, selection of children, and identification of children needing further assessment and services. This early screening system is available across age groups in all communities and addresses all areas of need (health, learning, social/emotional, behavioural). Interagency personnel assist families to access services such as Early Childhood Intervention Programs, Community School programs, and preschools. The vision is for family focused, family directed services, with communities involved in the identification of their unique needs.

To achieve this vision, the Special Education Review Committee recommends ...

36. That the Government of Saskatchewan develop policy to support the provision of early screening and intervention.

Commentary

- The long-range goal is to provide comprehensive, consistent, province-wide supports.
- A strong research base supports the preventive aspects of this approach.
- This action is both feasible and necessary.
- Since many preschool aged children who have diverse learning needs also have health related and social issues, early intervention is an interagency matter.
- Absence of provincial interagency policy, regulations, and guidelines is a barrier to province-wide early intervention.
- Early intervention processes and protocols need to be developed.
- Early childhood comprehensive screening conducted through home visits or at Community Child Health Centres by Community Health nurses needs to be considered as

part of the early identification and intervention plan, with intervention conducted by ECIP personnel and other professionals.

- High levels of need in the areas of speech and language and behavioural early intervention programs will require adequate funding.

37. That the Government of Saskatchewan develop and pilot an early screening and intervention model.

Commentary

- Prevention initiatives (primary, secondary, and tertiary) need to play a prominent role in the model.
- Methods of information sharing and confidentiality protocols between agencies and with parents need to be developed and refined during the pilot phase.
- Special attention needs to be directed toward the development of transition planning during the pilot projects.

7. Professional Preparation and Development

"How can the education, training, and continuing professional development of teachers and other staff who work with students with special needs be improved?"

Vision Statement

A composite analysis of the input of respondents to the review suggests a vision of education, training, and continuing professional development. All those who work with children and youth with diverse needs receive the professional preparation required to provide quality services to children and youth and their families. Saskatchewan Education policy sets out professional requirements to support high standards of practice. At both preservice and inservice levels, there is flexible access to the needed learning opportunities. There are funds and incentives, including bursary schemes, to support professional development. Preservice programs at the universities are enhanced for classroom and special education teachers, particularly in high need areas like adaptive instruction, inclusionary practices, behaviour management, collaboration, use of technology, and practicum experiences. Inservice offerings are relevant, continuous, and provided in situations as close to the participant's context as possible. Saskatchewan Education, the universities, and partners collaborate to create a continuum of appropriate and specific professional preparation options. Saskatchewan Education undertakes leadership initiatives to refine and sustain effective practices to address diversity and to anticipate needs. Each school division's local plan contains professional development frameworks that are suited to the circumstance and needs of the school division. Professional staff within each school determine their local needs and priorities and design their own unique professional development experiences within the priorities, frameworks, and opportunities available.

To achieve this vision, the Special Education Review Committee recommends ...

38. That provincial Colleges of Education and the education partners collaborate to review preservice preparation and inservice opportunities for all classroom teachers in the areas of

effective practices for meeting diverse student needs, the Adaptive Dimension, classroom management, and the evolving role of special educators.

Commentary

- Present practices in preparing professionals to address the diverse needs of children and youth require enhancement.
- The essential skills and attitudes of the professionals providing the services are critical to the provision of appropriate supports for children and youth with diverse needs in inclusive classrooms and schools.
- For the success of the movement towards inclusive environments, it is imperative to empower education professionals with working knowledge of effective practices and the Adaptive Dimension to support children and youth with diverse learning needs.

39. That the Colleges of Education, in collaboration with the education partners, review preservice preparation and inservice opportunities for special education teachers to ensure that they receive the experiences they require to fulfill their changing role.

Commentary

- The issue of undergraduate versus graduate programs should be examined.
 - The practice of resource teachers is pivotal to the philosophy.
 - Skills and processes of consultation, collaboration, and teamwork are essential.
 - Special educators need to have a broad knowledge base to address the full range of diversity.
 - A practicum component should be more prevalent in course content.
 - Examples of the changing role include authentic assessment, co-teaching, and peer-mediated learning.
-

40. That provincial Colleges of Education, in consultation with the education partners, develop alternate forms of delivery for university courses related to meeting the diverse needs of students.

Commentary

- Accessibility and flexibility of ongoing course delivery are required to successfully meet today's challenging classroom environments of changing demographics, and diverse student populations.
- Issues of geography, availability of "experts" or practitioners, and decrease in university faculty and course offerings are some of the impediments to easy and flexible access to training opportunities.
- Traditional forms of professional development are not always sufficient to equip educators with the skills required to successfully address the complex instructional needs of a diverse student population.
- The Universities need to work toward enhancing accessibility and flexibility in the offering of special education courses. Some possibilities include distance delivery, local mentorships, alternative scheduling, off-campus offerings, evening classes, and innovative delivery plans.

41. That boards of education, supported by Saskatchewan Education, place a high priority on funding conference and workshop attendance, leaves, bursaries, and scholarships to support professional educators and paraprofessionals in developing and enhancing their philosophical perspective, knowledge, and skills regarding the design and implementation of Effective Practices.

Commentary

- To meet children's diverse needs, professional development is essential for all staff members.
- Incentives are required to promote continuing professional development and to encourage educators and paraprofessionals to actively pursue further learning opportunities.
- Enhancement of knowledge is key to improving service to children.
- There are some special education teachers without the needed qualifications.
- To enhance practitioners' knowledge, skills and philosophical perspective in working with children and youth with high incidence disabilities, professional development opportunities targeted in these areas are necessary.
- Professional educators are committed to accessing learning opportunities; however, available expertise and inservice opportunities are not predictable and accessible.
- The concept of professional development needs to be broadened to include meetings, visits, networking, and mentoring with master teachers.
- The commitment of school divisions needs to be a formal part of their local plan.
- Individual staff members need to direct their learning through development of a personal growth plan.

42. That the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the Board of Teacher Education and Certification study the issue of recruitment and retention of qualified special education

teachers and share recommendations with Saskatchewan Education and the education partners.

Commentary

- A concern arose during the review that the future supply of special education teachers may not meet the demand. The Committee was not able to locate definitive information about this issue.
- One aspect of the special education teacher supply issue relates to the movement of teachers out of this area of speciality. The Committee was not able to locate information on this issue.
- Factors that threaten teacher retention in special education need to be identified, and measures taken to address the related working conditions.
- The expanded role of special education teachers necessitates that they have a working knowledge of curricula and classroom instruction. It may be necessary to change the policy regarding qualifications of special educators to include a prerequisite of two years of successful classroom teaching experience.
- Actions arising from this issue need to be aligned with recommendation 40.

43. That the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit and the education partners develop a module for educational administrators on Effective Practices for meeting the needs of students with diversity in the schools.

Commentary

- The culture and leadership in schools has a significant influence on children and youth.
 - There is a need to continue to develop school-based leadership in the area of diversity.
 - More children and youth with diverse needs are now attending schools and remaining in school longer.
 - Although a course on special education administration is available at the University of Saskatchewan, it is not a regular part of graduate programs.
 - With progressive inclusion, it is critical for school administrators to be knowledgeable in this area.
-

8. Knowledge and Expertise

"What are the most appropriate ways to ensure that staffs of SaskEd and of Boards of Education keep their professional knowledge and expertise current in view of emerging knowledge and techniques?"

Vision Statement

Comments and feedback solicited from participants in the review process offer a vision of how to keep professional knowledge and expertise current. There is a shared expectation that Saskatchewan Education and school division personnel actively pursue initiating, directing, and sustaining the momentum of professional knowledge and expertise. To accomplish this goal, there is openness to new ideas at all levels, along with public awareness and appreciation of the importance of professional development. There is a strategic plan and associated funding to enhance professional development. Saskatchewan Education shows initiative and leadership in this area. At the same time, individuals are involved and responsible for their own professional enhancement. The plan leads to ready access to information for all parties on a need-to-know basis.

To achieve this vision, the Special Education Review Committee recommends ...

44. That Saskatchewan Education enhance the special education area of the web site.

Commentary

- Contents for an enhanced web site could include information on diverse needs, a directory of services, related resources, protocols, research, links to other sites, chat areas, on-line conferences, and e-mail exchange.
- Enhancement of the web site might be seen as an interagency initiative. Funds could come from the integrated services initiative (see Recommendation 27).

45. That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with boards of education, enhance consultative support for effective practices for emotional, social, and behavioural needs.

Commentary

- This area emerged as a most challenging issue for school divisions.
- The behavioural needs of children and youth are characterized by a great deal of diversity.
- This could be done by enhancing the ACCESS model through amalgamation with shared services.
- These services build the capacity of schools to deal with similar issues.
- See Recommendations 18 and 27.

46. That Saskatchewan Education enhance the use of SCN and other media for high priority topics.

Commentary

- This strategy would enable the participation of more people (parents, teacher associates, etc.) across the province.
- Interactive on-line offerings may be less threatening to some participants.
- This method of delivery would enhance opportunities for team participation.
- The workshops could target such topics as behaviour, learning disabilities, fetal alcohol syndrome, autism, Personal Program Plans, and team processes.
- See Recommendation 40

47. That Saskatchewan Education, Social Services, and Health implement a bursary program for needed professionals to serve children and youth with diverse needs such as special education resource teachers, speech and language pathologists, OT/PT, mental health workers, and other high priority areas (e.g., behaviour consultants) as needs emerge.

Commentary

- This action is needed to ensure the availability of qualified professionals.
- There are professionals (e.g., in remote areas) who are not fully qualified and who cannot access learning opportunities.
- Incentives are needed for out-of-province educational preparation (e.g., Braille).

48. That Saskatchewan Education place a high priority on professional development for all staff of the Planning, Evaluation, and Children's Services Branch.

Commentary

- Great value is placed on the expertise provided by Saskatchewan Education.
- To provide the expected level of leadership, these professionals need to have a current, high level of knowledge of the discipline.
- The knowledge base required to address the needs of children is increasing.

49. That Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents; and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation play a lead role in keeping their members current in the area of students with diverse needs.

Commentary

- Inclusive schools, children with diverse needs, and effective practices affect all the education partners.
- These organizations need to play a leadership role by keeping their members knowledgeable in this area.

9. Continuing Dialogue

"What are the most appropriate ways for Saskatchewan Education and boards of education to sustain positive continuing dialogue with all stakeholder groups?"

Vision Statement

A synthesis of the comments and feedback solicited from participants in the review suggests a vision of how positive continuing dialogue should look in the future. There is a shared opinion

that broad-based involvement is foundational to public education. Involvement takes the form of sustained, positive, continuing dialogue among stakeholder groups, Saskatchewan Education, and boards of education. Collaborative, open processes are used to foster communication with stakeholder groups and create partnerships with those responsible for the education and well-being of children and youth in Saskatchewan. This vision is realized through the creation of a clear, transparent strategic plan that addresses the communication elements of information inflow, information outflow, and dialogue.

To achieve this vision, the Special Education Review Committee recommends ...

50. That the Children's Services Advisory Committee plan and direct a provincial student diversity strategy.

This is Recommendation 6, but the commentary below refers to the communication role of the committee.

Commentary

- There is a need to involve partners and stakeholders in a long-term vision and plan.
- A clearer understanding of viewpoints on a range of issues needs to be achieved.
- Collaboration among all stakeholders is needed to enhance understanding and planning.
- There needs to be enhanced dialogue among stakeholders to create greater consistency across the province.

10. Parental Involvement

"How can parent perspectives be included in program planning and what are some appropriate mechanisms to enhance parental involvement?"

Vision Statement

Input and feedback to the Committee during the review process offers a vision of the involvement of parents and guardians in the education of their children with diverse needs. The importance of parental involvement is recognized, valued, and encouraged. Both the provincial policy manual and the local plan provide clear statements of policy and practice for the involvement of parents/guardians in the education of their child with diverse needs. Professionals from education and, when necessary, other agencies, work in partnership with parents in providing the best education possible for children. Parents and children are supported and encouraged to participate with school-based teams in all aspects of program planning and delivery.

To achieve this vision, the Special Education Review Committee recommends ...

51. That Saskatchewan Education and boards of education develop clear statements of policy and guidelines for practice for parental involvement.

Commentary

- Parental involvement enables parents to receive accurate information, provide input, remain knowledgeable about their child's program, and have the opportunity to advocate for their child.
- Meaningful parent involvement in program planning, monitoring, and evaluation is the key to successful outcomes for the student's PPP.
- See Recommendations 2, 9, and 10.

52. That schools enhance meaningful involvement of parents and guardians as partners on school-based collaborative teams.

Commentary

- Policy located in the local plan needs to address this issue.
- Parents may need to learn collaboration and teamwork skills and processes to participate fully.
- A family liaison person may be used to facilitate parental involvement.
- A "Handbook for Parents" could be prepared at the provincial, school division, and/or school levels to enhance parent participation.
- Parents need to be involved as a team member in inservice activities to enhance their capacity to participate as partners.
- Parents need to be recognized as valuable sources of knowledge about their child and welcomed as essential resources in helping to develop shared plans.

53. That boards of education inform parents about policies and procedures within the school division, including the process for review of decisions.

Commentary

- Various communication strategies will be needed to accomplish this goal.
- Parents are not always aware of the process to follow when differences arise regarding placement and program decisions.
- This information could be publicized in such sources as local plans, brochures, and annual reports.

Other Recommendations

In framing and organizing the preceding recommendations, it became evident to the Committee that some additional recommendations were needed that did not fall within the scope of the Terms of Reference. This section contains further recommendations that relate in important ways to the education of students with diverse needs.

The Special Education Review Committee recommends ...

54. That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners promote school improvement and effectiveness models as adjuncts to the inclusive schools approach advocated in this report.

Commentary

- In order for systematic change to occur, schools require a process to reach effective practices.
- There is congruence between inclusive schools effective practices and the effective schools literature.

55. That Saskatchewan Education, the education partners, and boards of education review and apply the most recent models and processes of change.

Commentary

- To engage successfully in implementation of change (e.g., the Adaptive Dimension, Integrated School-Linked Services) a model is needed to support this change.

56. That Saskatchewan Education and boards of education implement policy that moves enrolments toward lower levels in the early school years.

Commentary

- Strong support for prevention and intervention in the early school years is essential to later success.
- This policy needs to be flexible to recognize variations in the needs present in different classroom contexts.

57. That the Saskatchewan Government work toward development of a clear understanding of responsibility for children with First Nations status.

58. That Saskatchewan Education and boards of education continue to promote and enhance resource-based learning and instructional strategies through Core Curriculum Actualization.

Commentary

- These initiatives provide major benefits to all children and youth, including those with diverse needs, and need to be supported.
- An enhanced implementation model and associated resources are needed.
- These initiatives are part of effective practices.

59. That Saskatchewan Education, the education partners, boards of education, and schools continue their efforts to create school cultures that welcome diversity.

Commentary

- Innovative concepts and non-traditional options such as “community of learners”, “inclusive schools”, and “safe and caring environments” need to be adopted to promote the creation of cultures supportive of inclusion.
 - This could be promoted through a more flexible approach to options (e.g., work experiences, advanced credits, mentorships, apprenticeships, curriculum compacting, service learning).
 - Children need to be empowered to take an active part in decision-making when appropriate.
-

Directions for Diversity

Enhancing Supports to Children and Youth with Diverse Needs

Key Findings

There is a need to enhance the capacity of schools to meet diverse needs

There is a need to develop collaboratively the provincial philosophy for supporting students with diverse needs

There is a need for renewal of policy to support and communicate the philosophy

There is a need for a set of related practices to implement the policy

There is a need to restructure resources and supports to sustain and renew the practices

Recommendations

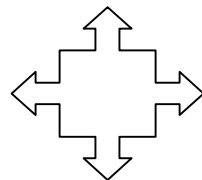
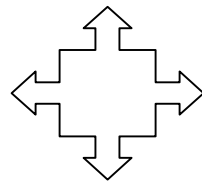
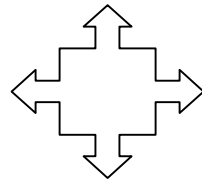
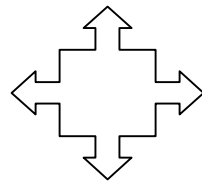
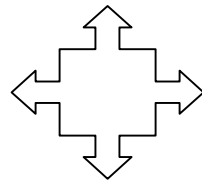
Adopt, implement, and support the philosophy of inclusive schools

Establish a Children’s Services Advisory Committee to plan and support a provincial children’s diversity strategy

Renew the provincial policy and board of education policies as they relate to students with diverse needs

Develop a framework of “Effective Practices to Support Students with Diverse Needs”

Enhance funding and develop protocols to focus on children’s needs; accelerate the interagency initiative; and restructure consultative services



Responsibilities for Leadership		
No.	Recommendation	Responsibility for Action
1	That Saskatchewan Education, together with the educational partners and stakeholders, develop a shared philosophy regarding educational supports for student diversity.	Sask. Education Education Partners
2	That Saskatchewan Education, the education partners, and the stakeholders develop a policy manual consistent with the philosophy, and which includes the existing and revised policies related to the education of students with exceptional needs.	Sask. Education Education Partners Stakeholders
3	That Saskatchewan Education redefine the students who are to receive specialized supports to include the broad range of students with diverse needs.	Sask. Education
4	That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners develop a strategy to heighten awareness among all stakeholders regarding the philosophy of providing specialized supports for students with diverse needs.	Sask. Education Education Partners
5	That Saskatchewan Education create a Children's Services Advisory Committee made up of representatives from the education partners (League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents; Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials; Universities), provincial government human services departments, community agencies, community based organizations, and the Council for Exceptional Children.	Sask. Education
6	That the Children's Services Advisory Committee plan and direct a provincial student diversity strategy.	Children's Services Advisory Committee
7	That Saskatchewan Education develop policy and guidelines for "Effective Practices to Support Students with Diverse Needs".	Sask. Education
8	That boards of education, in collaboration with local stakeholders, undertake an enhancement to the local plan, currently referred to as the Special Education Master Plan.	Boards of Education Local Stakeholders
9	That the Children's Services Advisory Committee direct a strategy to enhance and promote school-based collaborative teams.	Children's Services Advisory Committee
10	That the Children's Services Advisory Committee direct a strategy to enhance use of PPPs as an ongoing process and as a mechanism for accountability.	Children's Services Advisory Committee
11	That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners, through Core Curriculum Actualization, assist with renewal and implementation of the Adaptive Dimension.	Sask. Education Education Partners
12	That Saskatchewan Education, through Core Curriculum Actualization, promote an effective vision for the implementation of the Common Essential Learning of "Personal and Social Values and Skills".	Sask. Education
13	That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the education partners and government human services departments, develop a provincial policy related to the social/emotional/behavioural needs of students.	Sask. Education Education Partners Government Human Services Depts.
14	That Saskatchewan Education develop, for the secondary school level, frameworks for alternative education programs and locally modified courses, and identify accompanying resources.	Sask. Education

Responsibilities for Leadership		
15	That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the education partners, identify and address issues related to teacher associates.	Sask. Education Education Partners
16	That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners examine the issue of non-attending school aged students and develop prevention strategies and re-entry programs for these children and youth.	Sask. Education Education Partners
17	That Saskatchewan Education, in consultation with government and non-government agencies, develop and implement a provincial strategy for the use of assistive technology.	Sask. Education
18	That Saskatchewan Education, in consultation with the education partners, restructure the shared services regions.	Sask. Education
19	That the Government of Saskatchewan develop formal legislation, policy, protocol, and funding arrangements among human services departments.	Government of Saskatchewan
20	That the District and/or Regional levels of Health, Education, Social Services, and other human services agencies take a lead role in enhancing awareness and promotion of the integrated services approach.	Government Human Services Agencies
21	That Saskatchewan Education and Health develop a model for providing health support services to children in schools.	Sask. Education Sask. Health
22	That boards of education develop policy and procedures within their local plan to enhance integrated service provision at the school division and school levels.	Boards of Education
23	That Saskatchewan Education, in partnership with boards of education, develop a provincial electronic information system that follows all children and youth.	Sask. Education Boards of Education
24	That the Government of Saskatchewan increase funding for the Saskatchewan Action Plan for Children to sustain effective projects and initiate innovative interagency projects.	Government of Saskatchewan
25	That Saskatchewan Education increase funding to ensure that specialized supports are available to reflect Saskatchewan's vision and philosophy related to students with diverse needs.	Sask. Education
26	That Saskatchewan Education adopt provincial funding protocols that reflect current needs and that support the philosophy.	Sask. Education
27	That the Saskatchewan Government increase funding to integrated school-linked services for the purpose of accelerating the development of interagency supports to meet the diverse needs of children and youth.	Government of Saskatchewan
28	That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the education partners, undertake a process of discussion prior to major changes in funding protocols.	Sask. Education Education Partners
29	That Saskatchewan Education expand the Community School Program concept to expeditiously recognize more schools, including secondary schools, throughout the province.	Sask. Education
30	That Saskatchewan Education develop a strategy to communicate the provincial funding protocol.	Sask. Education

Responsibilities for Leadership		
31	That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners develop accountability mechanisms and guidelines that are aligned with the recommended funding protocols and Effective Practices.	Sask. Education Education Partners
32	That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners develop a strategy to enhance local accountability, including a framework of Effective Practices to support students with diverse needs.	Sask. Education Education Partners
33	That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the education partners, develop a mechanism to review instances of non-adherence with the Effective Practices and, if necessary, recommend consequences.	Sask. Education Education Partners
34	That boards of education articulate for parents and community members their local plan to provide supports for student diversity.	Boards of Education
35	That Saskatchewan Education provincial profiles in the Education Indicators Report include the supports to students with diverse needs.	Sask. Education
36	That the Government of Saskatchewan develop policy to support the provision of early screening and intervention.	Government of Saskatchewan
37	That the Government of Saskatchewan develop and pilot an early screening and intervention model.	Government of Saskatchewan
38	That provincial Colleges of Education and the education partners collaborate to review preservice preparation and inservice opportunities for all classroom teachers in the areas of effective practices for meeting diverse student needs, the Adaptive Dimension, classroom management, and the evolving role of special educators.	Colleges of Education Education Partners
39	That provincial Colleges of Education, in collaboration with the education partners, review preservice and inservice opportunities for special education teachers to ensure that they receive the experiences they require to fulfil their changing role.	Colleges of Education Education Partners
40	That provincial Colleges of Education, in consultation with the education partners, develop alternate forms of delivery for university courses related to meeting the diverse needs of students.	Colleges of Education Education Partners
41	That boards of education, supported by Saskatchewan Education, place a high priority on funding conference and workshop attendance, leaves, bursaries, and scholarships to support professional educators and paraprofessionals in developing and enhancing their philosophical perspective, knowledge, and skills regarding the design and implementation of Effective Practices.	Boards of Education Sask. Education
42	That the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the Board of Teacher Education and Certification study the issue of recruitment and retention of qualified special education teachers and share recommendations with Saskatchewan Education and the education partners.	STF Board of Teacher Education & Certification
43	That the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit and the education partners develop a module for educational administrators on Effective Practices for meeting the needs of students with diversity in the schools.	SPDU Education Partners
44	That Saskatchewan Education enhance the special education web site.	Sask. Education
45	That Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with boards of education, enhance consultation support for effective practices for emotional, social, and behavioural needs.	Sask. Education Boards of Education

Responsibilities for Leadership		
46	That Saskatchewan Education enhance the use of SCN and other media for high priority topics.	Sask. Education
47	That Saskatchewan Education, Social Services, and Health implement a bursary program for needed professionals to serve children and youth with diverse needs such as special education resource teachers, speech and language pathologists, OT/PT, mental health workers, and other high priority areas (e.g., behaviour consultants) as needs emerge.	Sask. Education Sask. Social Services Sask. Health
48	That Saskatchewan Education place a high priority on professional development for all staff of the Planning, Evaluation, and Children’s Services Branch.	Sask. Education
49	That Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents; and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation play a lead role in keeping their members current in the area of students with diverse needs.	SSTA LEADS STF
50	That Saskatchewan Education and boards of education develop clear statements of policy and guidelines for practice for parental involvement.	Sask. Education Boards of Education
51	That schools enhance meaningful involvement of parents and guardians as partners on school-based collaborative teams.	Schools
52	That boards of education inform parents about policies and procedures within the school division, including the process for review of decisions.	Boards of Education
53	That Saskatchewan Education and the education partners promote school improvement and effectiveness models as adjuncts to the inclusive schools approach recommended in this report.	Sask. Education Education Partners
54	That Saskatchewan Education, the education partners, and boards of education review and apply the most recent models and processes of change.	Sask. Education Education Partners Boards of Education
55	That Saskatchewan Education and boards of education implement policy that moves enrolments toward lower levels in the early school years.	Sask. Education Boards of Education
56	That the Government of Saskatchewan work toward development of a clear understanding of responsibility for children with First Nations status.	Sask. Government
57	That Saskatchewan Education and boards of education continue to promote and enhance resource-based learning and instructional strategies through Core Curriculum Actualization.	Sask. Education Boards of Education
58	That Saskatchewan Education, the education partners, boards of education, and schools continue their efforts to create school cultures that welcome diversity.	Sask. Education Education Partners Boards of Education Schools

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Appendices

Appendix A: Synthesis of Consultations and Submissions

Term of Reference 1 **“What were we asked to examine?”**

“What should be the foundational and philosophical basis of Special Education in Saskatchewan?”

Background

“Why is this term of reference important?”

Saskatchewan Education's present foundational philosophy of special education has been outlined in legislation, regulations, and policy and is stated in the Special Education Policy Manual (SEPM). The SEPM reflects the legislative requirements, as well as the intent of the legislation. The important underlying principles are equal access, equality of benefit, and responsiveness to individual needs. SaskEd has stated its commitment to education for all children, to education appropriate to children’s needs and developmental abilities, and to a focus on children as individuals. Traditionally, the mandate of special education has been to provide a continuum of placement alternatives operating under the principle of "Least Restrictive Environment". More recently, with the advent of inclusive education, there has been a shift toward the concept of a "continuum of services and supports" delivered within the local school and classroom. Presently, SaskEd's statement of philosophy supports the concept of "most appropriate environment" based on the student's educational program. The preference is for inclusive settings, with other arrangements to be used only when compelling reasons necessitate using such alternatives. The recent, strong influence of inclusive education has created an apparent diversity of opinion held by professionals and the public.

Themes

"What did they tell us?"

What is happening now?

At the public consultation meetings, we provided participants with the following statement: "Currently, Saskatchewan Education suggests that students with exceptional needs should receive their education in the most appropriate environment, which entails different degrees of integration for different students at different times and in different circumstances". Participants indicated the extent to which they agree with this philosophy statement. Their responses are summarized below:

"To what extent do you agree with this philosophy statement?"					
rating	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
responses (n=437)	219	172	25	17	4
percentage	50	39	6	4	1

Agreement ratings with philosophy statement by public consultation participants.

The response pattern indicates that a strong majority of respondents (89%) Agree or Strongly Agree with the present philosophy statement, which is based on "most appropriate environment".

We asked participants who attended the public consultation sessions and those who submitted briefs to provide us with written and verbal comments regarding Saskatchewan Education's present foundational philosophy of special education. We analyzed the themes emerging from their comments and present them below as "Strengths" (positive aspects of the present philosophical position), "Barriers" (limitations and impediments of current philosophy), and "Suggestions" (ideas to enhance present foundational philosophy).

Strengths

Policy

Respondents voiced support for SaskEd policy, which states that students with special needs are to be integrated and educated with their peers in the most enabling environment possible. There was support for the concept of a school-based continuum of services and supports.

“We believe that the philosophical and foundational basis for special education in our province is sound. We strongly support the notion that all students can learn and it is our collective and collaborative task to see that this happens.”

- Regional Directors of Education

Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

We were told that in Saskatchewan most schools are attempting to deliver services based on the philosophy of SaskEd by integrating students as much as possible. This philosophy is supported by many caring individuals who see the benefits of inclusion and the need for diverse groups of students in the classroom. There is a realization that inclusion works to break down stigma, reflects the real world, and fosters socialization, modelling, self esteem, peer group relationships, and compassion in other students. Respondents believe that integrated opportunities provide the richest and most normalized educational experience for children with special needs, better preparing them for their inevitable entry into society as young adults and offering them the chance to do so with greater success. There was widespread support for inclusion, with the recognition that children learn well through socialization with peers which leads to greater acceptance throughout life.

Successful Practices

Respondents reported that a strength of present practice is that students who were once segregated and marginalized are now part of everyday student life. Often, students are accepted into schools without prejudice, and schools make students feel like they belong. The educational system continues to provide the needed individual support for children to be integrated into the neighbourhood school. Support was expressed for the Adaptive Dimension and Personal Program Plans as the best way for students to have their individual goals met in the classroom, and to be taught strategies to help them overcome their learning inefficiencies.

Barriers

Policy

Participants in the review told us that the Special Education Policy Manual does not strongly articulate or operationalize the philosophy of inclusion. For example, central terms and concepts such as "compelling reasons" and "most appropriate program" are too open to interpretation, allowing a wide variety of practices to be justified. Attention needs to be directed to who it is that determines "most appropriate", and how this will be done. Concern was also expressed about policy that supports the labeling process and its negative effects on students.

“Excluding and segregating children in schools only prepares them for further isolation in adult life”

- PIND

Consistency

Respondents told us that special education programs and support services vary widely, and the purpose of special education is not fulfilled to the same degree across schools and school divisions. The amount of local control boards have when interpreting policy leads to lack of uniformity in program service delivery.

“Make sure inclusion is a goal not a rule.”

- Director of Education

There is not always a uniform view about what the philosophy of special education should be. Respondents reported differences in attitude and foundational philosophy between SaskEd and school divisions. Philosophical differences and personal biases also exist between teachers, schools, school divisions, special education teachers, and parents. The checks and balances needed to support the philosophical position of SaskEd across the province are not always clear.

Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

“Attitude remains the greatest barrier to inclusion in education”
- parent

We were told that some practitioners, board members, and the public lack knowledge about the foundational and philosophical basis of education and special education. We were also told that there is a lack of shared learning experiences, understanding, and knowledge amongst teachers. There is a pervasive attitude that special education is considered to be location and placement rather than appropriate supports to enable students to access and benefit from curriculum and instruction.

“Failure to accommodate a child’s disability is a violation of that child’s basic human rights that entitle him to equal access to education in this province”
- parent

Respondents considered it critically important to examine the definitions of "inclusion" and "most appropriate environment". The way "most appropriate environment" is currently defined leads to overemphasis on what school or classroom the student should attend, rather than on what instruction they should receive. Respondents commented that the "most appropriate environment" is not the same for every child. In some cases, students are included but separate. There is a need to see children as diverse individuals, not as students with a disability label.

A concern was expressed that generally there exists an intervention philosophy rather than a prevention philosophy. Presently, the philosophy does not include an ecological or systems approach encompassing the whole environment and the whole family. Respondents informed us that students with special needs placed in congregated settings are often seen as inferior by themselves and by other students.

A further concern was voiced by a few that society continues to be ambivalent about investing in children with special needs. Some expressed the opinion that provision for students with special needs diminishes resources for regular programs.

Funding

Respondents told us that there has been inadequate financial commitment from SaskEd to support the philosophical statement of inclusion. In particular, lack of support for the classroom teacher can be a barrier to integration. We were told that lack of sufficient funding results in large class size, which is a barrier to meeting individual needs. Respondents expressed the view that to be consistent with the foundational philosophy, funding needs to address a broader array of supports such as collaboration time, professional development, and resource materials.

What are some avenues to improve what is happening now?

Suggested Strategies

“We believe that regular classrooms in neighbourhood schools provide the best setting in which to meet the special education needs of our children”
- Regina District ACL

Policy

Respondents voiced strong support for SaskEd to continue its direction toward meaningful integration of all students in a school setting that provides a quality education for all. It was stated that if SaskEd truly endorses inclusive education for all, then this must be clearly articulated in their philosophy statement. There was a strong belief that the foundational basis in legislation, policy, and regulations should nurture a systems, interagency, holistic approach that is comprehensive, coordinated, and integrated.

Strategic Planning

Participants suggested a variety of ways that SaskEd could transform policy and planning to better support the foundational philosophy. A standing committee could be struck to review special education legislation and policy, with a view to making recommendations for change. SaskEd, perhaps in collaboration with the Standing Committee, should consider:

- addressing the needs of at-risk populations
- including giftedness in the philosophical perspective
- making changes to funding as a result of expanded definitions
- developing operational guidelines for terms such as “most appropriate”
- developing a strategy to identify student needs first, then design programs
- mandating quality inclusion of individuals into neighbourhood schools and classrooms

“Our children are too often victims of low expectations. To counter this, they need educators who are equipped with the knowledge and skills to teach them.”

- parent

- ensuring that every child receives 300 minutes of instruction per day, as per *The Education Act, 1995*
- amending *The Education Act* to severely restrict the power of school authorities to suspend students
 - aligning philosophy with the *Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*
 - clarifying the legal aspects of special needs education
 - planning for greater consistency across the province

Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

We heard that SaskEd should work to heighten awareness and understanding of the foundational and philosophical basis of special education. They should develop a strategy to address and change the perception that special education is a location. There should be enhancement amongst all educators, especially at the Universities, about the foundational and philosophical basis of special education. It was suggested that SaskEd undertake an initiative to spotlight and build a profile of commitment to the foundational philosophy, perhaps patterned after the "Neighbourhood Schools" concept.

Respondents reminded us that an important goal in schooling is the development of the values of caring and acceptance. Inclusion offers an advantage to all students, because caring cannot be taught vicariously.

Funding

We were told that resources and supports for teachers need to be enhanced in order for inclusion to be fully implemented. Respondents stated that each child has individual learning needs and styles that work best, and everyone has the right to know about these learning styles. Students should have the choice to be taught in the home classroom, and to have accommodations made for learning needs.

In the case of some issues, participants expressed divergent suggestions regarding the inclusion philosophy. For example, some participants suggested continued support for the inclusion of deaf and hearing-impaired children in neighbourhood schools or special resource rooms with the assistance of classroom teachers and other professionals such as itinerant teachers, audiologists and oral interpreters. Others suggested the need for options within a range of services to be provided.

Collaboration

We heard the suggestion that all collaborating participants should agree to placement decisions for students with special needs. It was also suggested that procedures be developed to assist all educational partners to cooperate in creating classrooms where each student has the opportunity to reach potential.

Vision

"What future should we build together?"

Examination of the input of all respondents to the review reveals that it is essential for Saskatchewan Education to work with the educational partners and other stakeholders to articulate the vision of the foundational and philosophical basis of supports for student diversity. It is important that all schools and staffs share this vision. The prevailing vision of our respondents is that all children have the same entitlements to be part of their schools and communities. A goal is to promote as much individual opportunity and independence as possible. Children, parents, teachers, and administrators embrace the values of equity among persons, respect for self and others, and acceptance of differences. The focus is on children’s needs in terms of reaching maximum potential. The provision of a comprehensive array of appropriate services that meet the diverse needs of Saskatchewan children and youth reflect effective practices and are ensured through the dedicated work of school boards and staffs.

"Foundational and Philosophical Basis" Themes
At-a-Glance

Strengths

- Policy
- Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding
- Successful Practices

Barriers

- Policy
- Consistency
- Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding
- Funding

Suggested Strategies

- Policy
- Strategic Planning
- Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding
- Funding
- Collaboration

Term of Reference 2
to examine?"

"What were we asked

"How might the delivery of special education programs and services be improved?"

Background

"Why is this term of reference important?"

Legislative changes to *The Education Act* (1971) made it mandatory for boards of education to provide special education services to students with designated disabilities. As a result, access to services was regulated by a referral-assessment-designation process used to determine if students qualified for traditional disability categories. There was also provision of "low cost funding" for students with mild-to-moderate disabilities who did not meet designation criteria. The prevailing service delivery system at that time was the **Cascade of Services**, which consisted of an array of placement options for students with designated disabilities. The principle underlying the cascade was the **Least Restrictive Environment**, which meant that students should be located in placements that suited their needs, and should be moved back to classroom placement as soon as possible. Legislation included a parental appeal process related to the "placement or failure to place" their child, and stipulated that services were to be provided by professionals with specified qualifications. There was also a requirement that Personal Program Plans (PPPs) be developed for students designated as disabled.

Following the enactment of legislation, many students received special education services outside the classroom. Many segregated special education schools and classrooms were established for designated students. The Resource Teacher model flourished as a means to provide resource room services in schools for many students. As time passed, there was a worldwide shift toward inclusion of all students with disabilities closer to the local school and regular classroom. There has been an associated reduction of the special class placements of the cascade model and a search for service options to support inclusion. In particular, there has been explosive growth in deployment of teacher associates to support students with disabilities located in classrooms. This shift in service provision has given rise to disagreement and debate, particularly in the areas of hearing impairment, behaviour disorders, and learning disabilities.

The Special Education Policy Manual has reflected many service delivery changes in its several revisions (1977, 1982, 1989) since legislation was enacted in 1971. The 1989 revision described major changes in the form of the Special Needs Program Fund (SNPF). This plan, which replaced the prior "low-cost funding", reflected a shift away from designation of individual students as a basis for funding toward the provision of funds for programs and services. The areas of Learning Disabilities and Behaviour Disorders, which were shifted from designation to SNPF, were most affected by this change. At this time, there was an associated shift toward local autonomy, as reflected in the Special Education Master Plan (SEMP) concept. In order to obtain funding, each board is now

responsible for designing its own service delivery plan and keeping it updated. SaskEd conducts periodic reviews of the SEMP.

Many issues surfaced as policy and practice of special education service delivery have evolved. Many of these issues remain unresolved. The Special Education Review Committee was asked to examine the area of program and service delivery carefully, since related decisions would impact directly upon students, families, educators and stakeholders.

Themes

"What did they tell us?"

What is happening now?

At the public consultations, participants were provided with the following statement: "A broad range of services and programs exist for the benefit of students with exceptional needs (i.e., teacher assistants, resource teachers and programs, segregated classrooms, etc.)". They were asked to provide ratings to indicate the extent to which they agree that the needs of students are being met by current practice. Their responses are summarized below:

"To what extent do you agree with this statement: The needs of students with exceptional learning needs are well served through current practice?"					
rating	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
responses (n=411)	18	154	74	135	30
percentage	4	37	18	33	7

Agreement ratings by public consultation participants of belief that exceptional learning needs are well served through current practice.

The response pattern indicates an almost even split between respondents who Agree or Strongly Agree (41%) and those who Disagree or Strongly Disagree (40%), with the remainder neutral on this item. Opinion is divided on whether the exceptional learning needs of students are being well served through current practice. We asked participants who attended the public consultation sessions and those who submitted written briefs to provide us with written and verbal input about the provision of special education services. We analyzed the themes emerging from their comments and present them below as "Strengths" (positive practices that are currently in place), "Barriers" (limitations and impediments to current practice), and "Suggestions" (ideas to enhance service delivery).

Strengths

Successful Practices

We were told that there are currently many successful practices in the delivery of special education services. Educators are now more responsive to the needs of students and tend to look at the whole child, not only academics. Within the province, there are programs that reflect current successful practices in specific areas of teaching and learning. Many students, especially those with severe special needs, are getting adequate supports and programs based on their individual needs and respect for parent choices. Some school divisions, because of their resources and personnel, are able to offer high quality, consistent instruction to students with special needs. They use assessment, curriculum adaptation, instructional strategies, and environmental changes to meet a wide range of student needs. School divisions have local flexibility to tailor programs to suit their student populations.

Respondents told us that, in spite of a lack of resources, most children with special needs are being served in their home school divisions. Usually, the educational needs of these children can be met within the school division and often within the neighbourhood school. There are many programs designed to meet the specific needs and strengths of individual students within inclusive, regular classroom settings. Resource-based learning and adaptations for individual needs are being used to support this integration.

The Adaptive Dimension of the curriculum is seen as a positive approach that helps meet the needs of many types of students. Some school divisions have put the Adaptive Dimension into operation very effectively.

We heard that the work of Shared Services personnel is appreciated and needs to continue. Respondents also stated that they value the work of teacher associates very highly.

Participants told us that some students with hearing impairments have experienced success with the oral/aural and total communication approaches, while others have experienced success using the Bilingual Approach. Some participants told us that for profoundly deaf students, the use of cochlear implants, inclusion, itinerant teachers, and oral interpreters have been effective. Effective program support for hearing impaired students includes speech and language instruction, tutorial for academics, community preschools, and SPARC intervention.

Some specific services were mentioned as offering successful practices. The use of PPPs for programs and transitions for designated students was seen as a strength. Programs offered through the Saskatchewan Abilities Council, designed to assist persons with disabilities access employment in their communities and to meet specific community needs, were also valued. The ACCESS team approach has been helpful. Finally, functionally integrated, modified, alternate, transition, and work experience programs were identified as successful practices.

Innovative Practices

The Committee was told that a great deal of valuable and innovative work is taking place throughout this province in the area of special education. Some school divisions have experimented with alternate schools in an attempt to serve non-attending students. Storefront programs have been developed and seem to be effective. Resource teachers are engaging in self-designed initiatives that provide good opportunities to students. Some school divisions have hired administrative assistants to coordinate and organize the provision of special needs services within the school division.

Integrated Services

We were told that school boards and related service providers (e.g., district health boards, social service agencies) are beginning to develop a more integrated approach to the services required by children with special needs. Part of this work involves broadening the definition special needs to include those with social, economic, and cultural barriers to their learning. SaskEd is involved in continued efforts to link special education and education broadly with other human service agencies. Through the Minister's Working Committee on Integrated School-Linked Services and the ADMs' Forum, work is underway to establish protocols and guidelines around financial responsibility for health issues in schools. There is evidence for the beginnings of the use of informal, local supports.

Collaboration

Participants reported that there is growing recognition of the critical roles a wide array of professional personnel can play in delivering special education services. Currently, there is a concentrated effort to work as a multi-disciplinary team, especially for children with more severe disabilities. Shared service districts help school divisions to pool resources and provide specialized service to students in regions that vary in size and population.

We were told that there are well-trained special education teachers and consultants who work as part of collaborative teams consisting of classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, and parents. These collaborative teams are considered vital to meeting students' needs. Parental involvement in the special education program was seen as a strength.

Commitment

Respondents identified a strength of the present service delivery system to be a commitment to diversity of programming and a continuum of services. Also, there is an effort on the part of school divisions to hire qualified special education personnel and teacher associates. SaskEd has a commitment to increase the employment of qualified personnel in special education, and to deliver professional development through workshops offered throughout Saskatchewan.

Barriers

Leadership

The information we received from participants during the review indicated that aspects of leadership pose barriers to service delivery. We were told that a barrier is lack of leadership training at all levels. Trustees, parents, teachers, administrators, students, and advocacy groups lack access to standards for best practice or indicators of appropriate programs.

Respondents reported that not enough attention is currently being focused on early intervention strategies, and the needs of many students who are gifted, learning disabled, or have behaviour disorders are not being met. School division personnel often lack the time and expertise to appropriately evaluate the effectiveness and feasibility of such programs and practices.

Policy

Respondents commented on a range of barriers arising from matters of policy. They told us that certification credentials for speech pathologists and educational psychologists may cause some recruitment and service problems. They expressed the concern that there is no uniform standard of training required for paraprofessionals.

There were concerns that anonymity decreases services available to students. We heard that reasonable, obligatory identification of children now served by the SNP would reduce this level of anonymity with SaskEd and thereby enhance services. More specifically, participants told us that students with Learning Disabilities have received a reduction of services since SaskEd has stopped requiring that names be submitted with data for individual funding.

Respondents told us that there is a discrepancy between present practice and current legislation. That is, the current legislation lists severe Learning Disabilities and Behaviour Disorders as “high cost”, but funding is provided through the SNP. There is a further concern that present categories for funding do not reflect actual student needs. Placement and programming are dependent on “labeling”, and there are concerns about the appropriateness of applying this model to funding. We were told that the existing legislation is restrictive and there is a need to move to enabling, community-oriented legislation.

Further barriers were identified as arising from restrictive SaskEd and school division policies. One is lack of clarity or willingness to take responsibility for Aboriginal children with special needs who are caught in the debate between federal and provincial jurisdiction. A second barrier arises from the Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training loan program when a student with a disability cannot obtain a provincial loan because they are enrolled for less than the minimum time. An additional concern was expressed regarding difficulty in changing registration from the public to Catholic schools for students with special needs.

“The quality of education and the willingness to include children with disabilities varies widely from region to region, even from school to school – there is no shared vision of special education in Saskatchewan”
- SACL

We heard that present school division policies lead to a lack of options available for children who are deaf and hearing impaired. A barrier arises when there is no appropriate dispute resolution or appeal process available to parents.

A few parents of “regular” students expressed the concern that their children’s education has too low a profile relative to students with special needs.

Consistency

Participants reported that some students do not have access to support and instruction that meets their individual needs. Some students are identified but are not getting appropriate supports and programs, while others are not receiving appropriate services because they have not been identified. We were told that there are significant disparities in policies and practices among schools and school divisions. Different degrees of integration are occurring based on the availability of programs and differences in basic philosophy, rather than on needs of students.

We heard concerns that variations in teacher expertise, distance from service providers, and availability of resources limit consistent provincial program options for all students with special needs. Respondents also indicated that the specialized services delivered within shared service districts vary greatly. Lack of consistency in service delivery also arises from the fact that not all school personnel access the support and consultative services that are available.

“Teachers perceive many gifted students as being short-changed by current practices in special education”
- STF

We were told that support for gifted learners is not available in many school divisions and schools. Transition periods create considerable stress for children with special needs and their families due to the uncertainty of the services. For students with physical disabilities, access to needed therapy is reduced while these students are in school.

Collaboration

Lack of collaboration was reported as posing barriers at many levels. Many teachers feel excluded from the decision-making process. There is a blurring of the roles and responsibilities of teachers, teacher assistants, and special education teachers. There is a concern that paraprofessionals are doing professional work, since we heard that some teacher associates are basically on their own to design and deliver instruction to students.

Present Practices

Respondents told us that quality service delivery is affected by inadequacies in current criteria for placement, programming, and funding. We heard that some school divisions do not reflect best practice in the provision of services. Some students are placed in specific programs rather than receiving instructional programs that are developed to meet their needs. One such practice is the widespread congregation of students into categorical placements, particularly in larger urban school divisions and schools. In some cases, special education services are only provided to students in these congregated settings. Students are sometimes located in the regular classroom without the supports they require to succeed and benefit from this environment. Teachers often lack the time, confidence, and expertise to provide curricular, instructional, and environmental adaptations to meet the diverse needs within the regular classroom. We heard that classroom teachers have often under-utilised the Adaptive Dimension to accommodate students with special needs. Personnel carrying out specialized services may not have adequate training and the consultative support they need to meet the needs of students. Finally, there is an issue of the balance between the provision of direct and indirect services.

“Generally students receive individualized delivery in rural settings and program delivery in urban settings “
- SACL

Participants addressed barriers specifically related to secondary schools. They told us that the demand on middle years and secondary school teachers is increasing without concurrent increases in special education support, resulting in students “falling through cracks”. Problems arise from lack of time for planning and monitoring with classroom teachers. Many secondary schools do not make adequate use of accommodations such as scribes, oral exams, and books on tape. We were told that there are difficulties with modified, alternative, and life skill courses, particularly due to lack of guidelines for exit and because they must be developed locally rather being available provincially. Finally, re-entry programs for non-attending youth and "street kids" were mentioned as needing enhancement.

We were told that the needs of children with significant behaviour problems are not being adequately addressed. Frequently there is no 24-hour support plan for children with significant behaviour or medical problems. It was suggested that using school suspensions does not seem to be an effective way to deal with issues of behaviour.

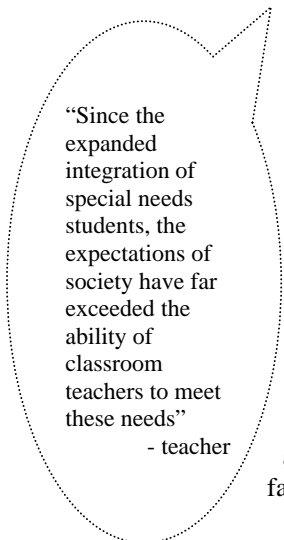
Participants stated that at present the auditory – oral approach is sometimes the only available option for deaf children and their families. We were also told that segregated settings act as a barrier to the development of the hearing impaired child.

We heard that the “band-aid” approach to students with learning disabilities is a barrier. There is a tendency to keep these students busy and quiet, but significant long-term growth may not be taking place. A further concern is that delivering the regular curriculum to students with Learning Disabilities does not adequately meet their needs.

Review participants told us that traditional special education service delivery is not congruent with the needs of Aboriginal students.

Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

Participants told us that many teachers, particularly at middle and secondary levels, do not embrace inclusion philosophies. There is a general lack of understanding and application of the Adaptive Dimension and modified or alternate courses. There is considerable uncertainty or confusion on the part of some teachers about whether their students qualify for funding and other forms of assistance. Finally, we were told that barriers to service delivery are created by excessive and unrealistic expectations and demands placed on school systems from a variety of sources.



“Since the expanded integration of special needs students, the expectations of society have far exceeded the ability of classroom teachers to meet these needs”
- teacher

We were told that barriers arise from limitations of interpretation and knowledge of best practices. The beliefs, priorities, and decisions of trustees toward students with special needs may not be based on current research and best practice. Special education teachers, consultants, and administrators need to acquire skills and knowledge, grounded in best practice, to accommodate students with special needs. Particularly important in this context are the skills necessary to work in a team environment. We were told that there is sometimes a lack of clarity regarding the services children require and how those services can best be accessed. Finally, a barrier arises from a lack of awareness of the importance of the role of local informal supports, such as volunteers and family members.

Respondents told us that lack of consensus regarding determination of a learning disability and the nature of "appropriate supports" causes variance across school divisions, schools, and teachers in the provision of service to these students.

Some respondents told us that traditions of the deaf community and the debate between approaches to the education of students who are deaf act as barriers. Others stated that the bilingual approach to deaf education has been strongly criticized and sometimes incorrectly presented by the education profession. We heard that post-secondary institutions have been slow to respond to the needs of growing numbers of students with hearing-impairment.

Complexity

We were told that complexities associated with service provision create barriers. Transience and the rural-to-urban migration of students with special needs were identified as issues. High numbers of students with special needs in a school create overloading in classrooms. Some teachers find this situation to be physically, psychologically, and emotionally demanding, and the time requirements can be extraordinary. Teachers are concerned that behavioural problems are more acute, not identified, and require that too much time and attention be spent on discipline. Some respondents mentioned that the climate and environment of some schools seem to contribute to behaviour problems.

Funding

Participants reported that the special educational needs of some students are not being adequately addressed due to excessive demands placed on insufficient resources.

Lack of resources was seen as posing a particular problem in secondary schools. In some cases, fiscal realities make the provision of services that are appropriate and consistent with philosophy a challenge for boards of education. High pupil teacher ratios for both regular classroom teachers and special education teachers were identified as barriers. There is also a challenge in implementing the Adaptive Dimension in these large classrooms.

We were told that there has been a decrease across the province of professionals who are specialized in specific disabilities, producing inadequate support and consultative services. As a result, there are waiting lists for access to assessments, programs, and services with many agencies. The limited resources of some school divisions create difficulty in providing intensive speech and language services required by some students. A shortage of qualified personnel exists in shared service regions. There are not enough knowledgeable professionals to serve on ACCESS teams to serve the province adequately, especially in rural areas. Also mentioned was a lack of well-trained interpreters for hearing-impaired students and a lack of psychiatric services.

We were told that there is a lack of funding for professional development, and for the purchase of specialized programs and related training. Classroom teachers require enhanced preservice and inservice training in order to acquire skills and knowledge, founded in best practice, to accommodate the diverse needs of children and youth.

Respondents reported that there is limited time made available for collaborative teamwork among classroom teachers, teacher assistants, and resource teachers. Concern was also expressed about the impact of inclusion of severely disabled students upon other students when resources are inadequate.

“People make the difference – I believe it’s been the people, not the money, not the space, that have made the real difference for my son and for me and my family”
- parent

“Expertise for many low incidence disabilities is not present in school divisions or even at the post-secondary levels in our province.”
- Regina Catholic School Division

What are some avenues to improve what is happening now?

Suggested Strategies

“Including school para-professionals in program planning is essential.”
- SASP

Policy

Many of the suggestions we received from review participants were directed toward SaskEd. We were told that SaskEd should develop province-wide guidelines for provision of special education services. In particular, SaskEd should provide standards and models that outline minimum services that must be available to children with special needs. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on service delivery in the Policy Manual. Part of this enhancement needs to be provision of service-oriented, operational definitions of “inclusion”, “integration”, and “mainstreaming”. Participants stated that SaskEd should review due process provisions to ensure that the interests of families and professionals are represented. They suggested that there be a provincial protocol on transition and that this be integrated into the PPP process. SaskEd should lobby for the development of a government sector other than education with the mandate to facilitate and locate transitional and employment placements for post-secondary students. SaskEd should state clearly which consultant services it will continue to provide and which ones boards of education will be expected to offer. We were told that SaskEd needs to work toward a clearer understanding of responsibility for children with First

Nation status. Modified and alternate programs should be extended into adult education. A decision needs to be made about who should be responsible for the supervision of the educational programs of schools of the province. We were told that social and life skills must be made part of the curriculum, and students should receive credit in areas like orientation mobility. Likewise, the curriculum needs to be more flexible for students with Learning Disabilities to allow use of programs like that from the Foothills Academy in Calgary. Similar flexibility needs to be considered in other areas such as physical therapy (e.g., Conductive Education) and deafness (e.g., American Sign Language).

We received a number of suggestions from review participants directed toward boards of education. We were told that boards should collaboratively establish protocols to provide for consultation, a clear student focus, and sufficient supports for successful placement and programming for inclusion of students with special needs. There should be clear policies stating that boards of education must adapt facilities, transportation, curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and the physical and social milieu within which children with special needs are located. Also, policy should state that boards of education will provide support services for children with special needs from professionals such as Speech and Language Pathologists and Educational Psychologists. Boards should develop statements of policy and school practice that reflect the professional roles and responsibilities of professionals and paraprofessionals relative to students with special needs, and communicate this information within schools and to parents. In view of the trend toward employing teacher associates to support children with special needs, boards of education need to develop staffing policies to address such details as budgeting for personnel expenses, qualifications, preservice training requirements, role clarification and responsibilities, inservice training, and team building. We were told that school divisions should review the practice of regularly suspending students with serious physical, intellectual, and or emotional/behavioural disabilities who demonstrate inappropriate behaviour at school, and develop policy that leads to an increased focus on effective instruction for these students.

Some suggestions were directed toward agencies outside education. Participants suggested a special education supervisory body be created which is province-wide in scope and has the mandate to coordinate service provision between government agencies and school divisions. In addition, participants told us that there should be a clearly established process and protocol for physicians related to administration and systematic follow-up for medications.

Strategic Planning

Most suggestions related to strategic planning were directed toward SaskEd. It was stated that SaskEd should acknowledge that the development and maintenance of exemplary practice is a process that takes time, effort, and support. To assist in the process, SaskEd needs to design and conduct pilot programs as a routine part of the strategic planning process. Participants suggested that provincial protocols based on best practice standards be developed. More specifically, an authentic assessment process should be designed, made available across school divisions, and included in PPPs. Work needs to continue on the development of protocols for the delivery of health-related interventions within the schools. Participants suggested that a strategic plan be developed for addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities and supported by appropriate funding. With reference to teacher associates, we were told that their work needs to be more formally evaluated, recruitment should be more strategic, and supervision needs to be more efficient. We received the recommendation that SaskEd should stimulate development of curriculum resources for special education. Examples include developing alternate and modified programs, writing handbooks addressing specific needs such as “autism” and common best practices, providing and updating a bank of developmental objectives for students, developing modified programs for middle years students, providing release time for teachers to develop programs for special needs students, and enhancing the SaskEd web site.

We were told that school divisions need to revisit their Special Education Master Plans to ensure that appropriately prepared professional staffs are delivering services to students. Rubrics and protocols should be developed to enhance service delivery and included in the Master Plans. These Plans need to be reviewed and updated annually to ensure that the implementation of services is consistent with the intention of the Plan. We were told that boards of education and their staffs need to determine local needs and set objectives for long-term staff development. Boards need to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the informal local supports and incorporate it into program planning for children with special needs. Finally, school divisions need to have an overall plan to facilitate integration of students with complex medical needs within their schools.

“Delivery of quality programs and services to students with special needs involves planning, evaluation and problem solving carried out by a team of professionals. Given appropriate supports, inclusive education maximizes the potential of most students.”
- School Division

Collaboration

Participants told us that to meet a wide range of educational needs it is necessary to adopt an eclectic approach and to combine the knowledge of many disciplines. To achieve this goal, there needs to be ongoing intersectoral collaborative planning at all levels. SaskEd should work in conjunction with Health to provide the full range of speech and language services for preschool and school-aged children. The Saskatchewan Abilities Council expressed an interest in partnership and cooperation with SaskEd to prepare children with disabilities for employment. They are also interested in collaborating to develop a technology clearinghouse and database to provide better assistive technology services.

Many suggestions were directed at the school division level. Collaboration is required to ensure that the medical and other non-medical needs of children are met. They also need to find ways to work closely with parents and community members in shaping and supporting each student's sense of personal responsibility.

At the school level, a team approach should be used to develop program goals and to discuss placement options for students with special needs. This team should include parents, educational consultants, therapy consultants, educators, paraprofessionals and professionals from other agencies who are providing services to the student and the family. There needs to be a clear definition of roles among professionals and parents. The collaborative team needs to give careful consideration to the parents' input. This teamwork process needs to be supported by administrative leadership, with adequate time provided for sharing of expertise and planning.

Communication Avenues

Respondents told us that open communication and access to information are important aspects of effective service delivery. There needs to be a strong effort to keep all parties, and particularly parents, fully informed and aware of program options. Education and other agencies should develop a method to track all school-aged children within the province, and ensure that relevant information about students can be shared. We were told that access to a directory of disability organizations and services would enhance communication about service delivery, particularly for rural areas. Teacher assistant roles and duties need to be communicated within the school and to parents. Transition programming must include education about social services and funding available to youth.

Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

Participants told us that teachers are facing increases in diversity and numbers of difficult-to-teach students. To meet these students' needs, extensive preservice training will be needed for professionals and paraprofessionals. They said that consideration should be given to enhancing and increasing the special education programs at both universities. There needs to be increased alignment between university course content and classroom realities. Current and future special education classes need an increased focus on instructional strategies, classroom management, and collaborative approaches and skills. In particular, it was suggested that the mandatory preservice courses in education be reviewed and renewed, enhancing the curriculum and Adaptive Dimension aspects. Respondents told us that induction models and internships should include a special education component.

A variety of suggestions were directed toward the need for continuing inservice training for classroom teachers, special education teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals. Respondents said that there should be staff induction and orientation to the policies, procedures, and practices of providing services for students with special needs. Consideration needs to be given to the specialized training required by teacher assistants to accomplish their assigned duties. More specifically, understanding of transitions programs should be enhanced for parents, teachers, and students. Professional development opportunities need to address the Adaptive Dimension, multiple intelligences, intervention for students with ADHD, and behaviour management. We were told that a resource library and videos for teachers about students with special needs would enhance service delivery.

Funding

Respondents offered suggestions about ways that funding could enhance service delivery. They told us that maintaining a low pupil teacher ratio and a setting where the teacher is not responsible for multiple grades are essential.

Some participants suggested that funding be used to improve the programs and resources available for students with special needs. In particular, more support for preventative programs was suggested. Funding should be increased for educational resources such as FM systems in the classroom. We were told that alternative education programs need more support. Respondents also mentioned the need for stronger resource programs, particularly for high school level services and for students with Learning Disabilities.

A variety of suggestions addressed the need to enhance funding for personnel. There should be an increase in the number of special education teachers available to collaborate with classroom teachers. They are needed to coordinate educational program plans and to help integrate programming from other professionals. Funding should be available for additional teacher-librarians to support resource-based learning and the Adaptive Dimension. It was suggested that there be an increase in the availability of consultative support in areas of low incidence disability and under-served high incidence disabilities. We received the suggestion that there should be bursaries made available to address the shortage of qualified personnel in shared services. A related suggestion was that the funding being delivered to shared service districts should be examined. Respondents told us that there should be at least two

assessment and treatment units for young children, a provincial consultant for hearing-impaired students, and more family and student counsellors.

Relative to specific groups of students, we heard the suggestion that funding and support for gifted education needs to be enhanced. Also, adequate support for students with complex medical needs should be provided to allow those students to remain at school.

We were told that service delivery could be improved by providing teachers with more time and assistance to implement program goals developed by the collaborative teams. Extra time is needed to periodically evaluate the educational goals of the student, to review goals with the team, and to modify the educational program.

Effective Practices

Respondents offered many suggestions of ways to build effective practices within the service delivery system. We were told that SaskEd should incorporate ideas and suggestions for the Adaptive Dimension within the regular curricula. In addition, as regular curricula are revised, attention to embedding experiential learning activities and an emphasis on life skills should be integrated. Also, curricular changes should incorporate current research-based practices related to reading instruction. Finally, consideration should be given to physical education curricula for students with disabilities.

“Many students with learning disabilities, including those with severe disabilities, do not have individualized education programs.”
- parent

It was suggested that "best practices" in educating students with special needs must be identified and implemented across the province. These practices must be supported by research, ethical standards, and a consensus of opinion within the educational community. In addition, SaskEd should examine the impact of pupil-teacher ratio, service options, and administrative support upon outcomes for students with exceptional needs. Development and implementation of PPPs should be seen as a dynamic process requiring periodic evaluation and revision. Use of IQ tests should be limited, and they should not be used alone to make educational decisions. Instead, authentic assessment practices need to be developed. These evaluation practices need to be ongoing so student programs can be dynamically updated. A range of classroom supports should be available for both teachers and students to enhance inclusion. Transitional planning and programming should occur early in the individual's program, and these services should be available consistently throughout the province.

Respondents told us that the identification of special needs among young children, and especially children facing at-risk conditions, would enhance the effectiveness of service delivery. Prevention programs were seen as a high priority. We were told that the emphasis should be on improvement of existing early childhood programs rather than the creation of new ones. At the school-age level, identification mechanisms should be implemented for underachievers and gifted students, and flexible supplemental programs should be made available.

“There is a lack of professional respect for different approaches to deaf education and rehabilitation”
- parent

Many suggestions were offered regarding effective practices for students with hearing impairment. There was agreement amongst contributors that there be a commitment to increase the presence of qualified professionals at all levels of the education system for students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. The remainder of the suggestions came from two groups with rather distinct orientations. The first stressed the importance of preserving oral and total communication for all students with hearing impairment. They recommended continued support for mainstreaming in regular classrooms, for cochlear implants and SPARC auditory therapy, and for support from a teacher trained in hearing impairment and a well-trained teacher associate. They pointed out the need for qualified oral interpreters at every level of education system. The second group recommended the recognition of different communication approaches and philosophies in the education of students who are hearing impaired. They told us that these children should have access to sign language at an early age. They also suggested the immediate recognition of American Sign Language as one of the languages of instruction.

It was suggested that a provincial multidisciplinary Assistive Technology Committee should be developed. Its role would be to evaluate all requests for costly items (e.g., computers and peripherals, augmentative communication, power mobility). The committee should also develop guidelines regarding multidisciplinary assessment, choice of equipment, program goals, training of educators and caregivers, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the child's assistive technology program.

Respondents suggested that a range of services, accommodations, and placement options should be made available for students with Learning Disabilities. This may require provision of congregated settings or special schools designed specifically to teach skills, learning and coping strategies, such as those from the Foothills Academy

program. A balanced combination of academic and functional life skills should be provided for many students with special needs, particularly those with autism and FAS/FAE.

Many suggestions addressed secondary and post-secondary education. At the secondary school level, it was suggested that life skills programs such as vocational education and work experience programs are needed across the province. In secondary schools, transition programs need to begin early, addressing access to post-secondary training, leisure skills, and work experience. The Youth Internship Project is one of many creative programs that support youth with disabilities making the transition from school to work. We also received the suggestion that Transition Facilitators might be contracted to assist in the process. Respondents suggested that secondary school advanced programs should be expanded. Inclusion at the secondary school level needs to involve daily mentoring programs and peer support models for students with special needs.

We heard suggestions that there needs to be more on-site professional support services provided in the schools. Consultative services to the province by ACCESS teams should be provided on an ongoing case-by-case basis as is presently being done, and this direct service might be enhanced with inservice opportunities. Some specific suggestions for specialized services include social skills programs, health and social services personnel in classrooms, and counselling for students and families. More specialized attention is also required for young offenders, transient students, and foster children.

Respondents suggested the need for a provincial library of resources, including a registry of information for various disability syndromes. Resource-based learning should also be enhanced to meet the students' special needs.

We received the suggestion that special education services should contain strong cultural ties and values. It is important to develop assessment tools suitable for Northern schools. Programs for Aboriginal students need to include traditional culture and healing. Cultural and linguistic needs of aboriginal children should be addressed in all curricula.

Some suggestions for effective practices were directed toward the needs of parents or guardians. We heard that there should be stress management programs offered for caregivers. Parent mentoring, family counselling, healing and talking circles, respite, and recreation were mentioned as additional areas of need.

Leadership

Respondents directed most of their suggestions for leadership in service delivery toward SaskEd. We heard that SaskEd should conduct research to evaluate innovative school-based programs and practices. Before adopting or supporting alternative approaches within schools, SaskEd needs to undertake research into efficacy and safety of programs and undertake leadership in consulting with other professional groups or sectors with complementary mandates in service delivery. There should be an initiative to integrate these effective practices into written sample programs for a variety of special needs students. SaskEd should develop a resource centre where education personnel can obtain support whenever assistive technology is made available to children with special needs. We were told that SaskEd should deliver elementary as well as high school correspondence and advanced basic courses via computer CD-ROM, internet, and television. Finally, SaskEd should continue to articulate and promote a vision for gifted education to ensure that this aspect of special education receives necessary attention.

“Many schools, particularly secondary schools, refuse to make accommodations for students with learning disabilities.”
- parent, educator

Many suggestions were directed toward service delivery in secondary schools. SaskEd should provide curricula for modified and alternative education programs with built-in flexibility for local adaptation. Core curriculum should be revised by SaskEd to include regular, advanced, and modified basic programs in all subject areas at all grade levels. We were told that a "Special Needs Provincial Examination Handbook" should be developed so that all educators are aware of the adaptations that could be implemented.

We heard the recommendation that there should be continued efforts by the Minister's Working Committee on Integrated School-Linked Services to identify and remove barriers, define issues, and create effective programs. There needs to be further investigation of children and youth not in school, considering the reasons and possible solutions for their absence.

Vision

"What future should we build together?"

The Committee's historical review, consideration of future trends, and findings from the input of review participants offer a vision of Saskatchewan as a place where there are inclusive schools. These schools embody the foundational principles and beliefs, employ effective practices, and focus on meeting the individual needs of each child.

In our schools, there is a sense of community. There is a philosophy and a vision that all children belong and can learn and participate as full members of the school and community life. Diversity is valued as offering strength and learning opportunities for all. Everyone belongs and is supported by peers and the adults in the school. This sense of community helps each child develop a sense of mutual respect, self-worth, and pride in their accomplishments.

In our schools, there is leadership toward the vision. The principal plays a crucial role by actively involving and sharing responsibility with the entire school staff in making decisions and carrying out the plans that make the school successful.

In our schools, there are high standards. All children meet high levels of educational outcomes and high standards of performance that are suited to their needs. Instructional content and delivery reflect each student's individual needs.

"Programs & Services" Themes*At-a-Glance***Strengths**

- Successful Practices
- Innovative Practices
- Integrated Services
- Collaboration
- Commitment

Barriers

- Leadership
- Policy
- Consistency
- Collaboration
- Present Practices
- Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding
- Complexity
- Funding

Suggested Strategies

- Policy
- Strategic Planning
- Collaboration
- Communication Avenues
- Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding
- Funding
- Effective Practices
- Leadership

In our schools, we practice collaboration and cooperation. Students and staff support one another with such strategies as peer tutoring, buddy systems, cooperative learning, team teaching, co-teaching, teacher-student assistance teams, and other collaborative arrangements. Collaborative teams develop PPPs that are based on the understanding that students' needs change over time. There is ongoing assessment and monitoring of students' changing needs to drive the decisions about needed supports. This collaborative approach includes parents, educators, other agency personnel, and informal resource people planning effective ways to meet student needs.

Our schools are characterized by changing roles and responsibilities. Teachers lecture less and assist more, and support personnel (e.g., school psychologists and speech/language pathologists) work more closely with teachers in classrooms. Every person in the school is an active participant in the process.

In our schools, there is an array of services. Teacher associates are available in balance with other service options to support children's programs. They are flexibly assigned a wide variety of support responsibilities in collaboration with and supervised by professional staff. There is an array of services -- health, mental health, and social services -- and local, informal supports all coordinated with the educational staff.

In our schools, there are partnerships with parents. Parents are embraced as fundamentally important and equal partners in the education of their children.

In our schools, there are flexible learning environments. Children are not expected to move in lock steps, but rather follow their individual paths to learning. Groupings are flexible, and material is presented in concrete, meaningful ways that emphasize participation. The expected location for children with diverse needs to receive their education is in age-appropriate neighbourhood classrooms, with a range of supports. Although there is less reliance on programs that pull children out of classrooms, there are still opportunities for children to receive separate instruction if needed. During the development of inclusive schools, a limited continuum of placements model remains to recognize the greater diversity of some children's needs and to maximize the flexibility of professionals in responding to these children. Options close to the classroom are preferred and the goal, guided by a clear plan, is to return the child to a more inclusive arrangement. Ongoing enhancement of the capacity of inclusive schools to meet children's diverse needs progressively reduces the need for alternative settings.

In our schools, we use strategies based on research. We seek out research into how people learn, and this knowledge provides new ideas and strategies for teachers. Cooperative learning, adaptive instruction, peer tutoring, direct instruction, reciprocal teaching, social skills training, computer-assisted instruction, study skill training, and mastery learning are some of the practices evident in our schools.

Our schools use new forms of accountability. There is less reliance on standardized tests and greater use of new forms of accountability and assessment to make sure that each child is progressing towards their goals.

In our schools, there is access. We ensure that children are able to take part in school life by making necessary modifications to the building and by providing appropriate technology, that makes participation possible.

Our schools provide continuing professional development. School staffs design and obtain professional development on an ongoing basis so that there is continuous improvement. Teacher preparation and staff development support the effort to deliver current, effective practices.

Saskatchewan Education, boards of education, and schools show leadership toward this vision. Their initiatives are shared and supported by the universities, partners and stakeholders, and related agencies and service providers.

Term of Reference 3 "What were we asked to examine?"

“What are the opportunities and mechanisms to improve the integration and coordination of education, health, and social services programs in effectively meeting the needs of students with exceptional needs?”

Background "Why is this term of reference important?"

Increasing numbers of students are coming to school with complex social, emotional, health, and developmental problems that create barriers to their learning. The solutions to the problems these children and families face require a range of services that cuts across the present boundaries of human service agencies. The design and implementation of appropriate programs necessitates an ongoing collaborative working relationship between education, health, social services, and justice. However, each department and agency has a unique mandate, as well as access to the professionals required to carry out that mandate. They have traditionally delivered their services in relative isolation from one another. Recent recognition of the importance of integrated service delivery has given rise to a range of initiatives (e.g., Minister's Working Committee on Integrated School-linked Services, Assistant Deputy Ministers' Forum, Child Action Plan, Regional Intersectoral Committees) reflecting commitment and action toward this goal.

Themes "What did they tell us?"

What is happening now?

At the public consultations, participants were provided with the following statement: "Currently, the belief exists that the integration of education, justice, health, and social services programs will provide for more effective ways to meet the needs of students with exceptional needs". They were asked to provide ratings to indicate the extent to which they agree with this belief. Their responses are summarized below:

"To what extent do you agree with the above statement?"					
rating	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
responses (n=397)	178	164	31	21	3
percentage	45	41	8	5	1

Agreement ratings by public consultation participants of belief in potential effectiveness of service integration.

The response pattern indicates that a strong majority of respondents (86%) Agree or Strongly Agree that service integration will lead to more effective programs for students.

We asked participants who attended the public consultation sessions and those who submitted written briefs to provide us with written and verbal appraisals of the integration of Education, Justice, Health, and Social Services programs. We analyzed the themes emerging from their comments and present them below as "Strengths" (positive practices that are currently in place), "Barriers" (limitations and impediments to current practice), and "Suggestions" (ideas to enhance service integration).

Strengths **Commitment**
 We were told that there is widespread recognition of the importance of an integrated services approach. Increasing numbers of students are faced with health, social, behavioural, and family issues that impact negatively on their educational experience. We found awareness that an interagency approach is necessary to address the needs of these students and their families. Respondents acknowledged that children are a shared responsibility and are entitled to support across environments. Many agencies, professions, and informal caregivers have a contribution to make towards effective planning of educational programs for children with special needs.

“There is much promise in the philosophy of integrated school-linked services.”
- administrator

being.

We were told that there is a commitment to advancing interagency initiatives. The leadership role that SaskEd is taking is seen as strong evidence of commitment. There are working examples of initiatives that reflect commitment to integration and coordination of services (Child Action Plan, ADMs' Forum, Minister's Working Committee on School-linked Services, Regional Intersectoral Committees, Integrated Services documents and demonstration sites, SaskEd organizational re-alignment). There is a commitment on the part of various agencies to do what they can for children within their mandates. Most school and communities are willing to come together in response to issues related to children's well

Collaboration

It was reported that there have been improvements in cooperative problem solving on interagency teams. Integrated School-linked Services to date have had a community development focus, which facilitates collaborative interactions. Respondents told us that the Integrated Case Management document (October, 1998) and the case management model provided there are particular strengths. Respondents to the review told us that there are many examples of school divisions working with interagency committees. There are excellent examples of "best practice" related to transition planning at critical levels of child development.

Funding

We were told that there are a few examples of cost sharing by human service agencies. There has been allocation of funds at the regional level to Regional Intersectoral Committees and coordinators.

Barriers

Consistency

Respondents told us that the implementation of integrated services is frequently ad hoc, and often dependent on personal rapport between the individuals involved. This problem is augmented by frequent changes in personnel. There are gaps and overlaps across human service environments in the provision of supports to children with special needs. Problems of communication, coordination, and interpretation of mandates lead to duplication of services and ineffective use of limited resources. One example of inconsistency is school-aged children with therapy needs who do not have access to the same level of services as do children under age three and adults over age 22. Access to health-related services is often discontinued once a child enters school. In the case of physiotherapy and occupational therapy services, neither boards of education nor health districts have the legislated responsibility to provide these services to children in school.

“I felt like for years and years I've gone in a circle”
- parent

established across the province.

Participants reported inconsistencies across the province in the amount of time and effort administrators provide toward service integration within school divisions. First, some school divisions have not activated the Integrated Services model. Secondly, the linkages between publicly funded boards of education and the non-profit and private-for-profit service organizations may not be clear. Third, participants reported a lack of consistent procedures to track a child's progress from birth to Grade 12. Finally, transition policy has not been clearly

Collaboration

We were told that in some cases there is inadequate collaboration among staffs of various agencies because of controlling rather than collaborative cultures and attitudes.

“Coming together should not be in addition to our job, it should be our job”
- resource teacher

Different operating procedures across human service agencies make it difficult to put the needs of the child first. In addition, we were told that the judicial system has been conspicuous in its absence from planning teams. It is not common for Justice to ask for Education's input, even though school attendance is often a condition of probation.

Leadership

No agency or organization has the clear responsibility for initiating interagency collaboration to develop appropriate post-secondary opportunities for young adults with special needs. Roles and responsibilities for interagency work have not been adequately established.

Funding

Participants voiced a concern that time and resources may be insufficient to sustain integration of services. For example, there is a lack of funding for critical positions such as case managers. They told us that funding practices result in "turf protection" rather than the facilitation of service integration. A further barrier arises from lack of continuous funding through the Child Action Plan, Associated Entities, and Prevention and Support grants to sustain funding for programs proven to be effective. Some agencies are not always able to commit funding and personnel to needed projects in their region. For example, Social Services does not always have the staff to deliver required services, particularly in rural areas. We were told that insufficient use is being made of informal support systems such as family and community members and organizations like Big Brothers. Finally, the coordination and integration of service demands more time from all personnel at a time when more professionals and families are finding themselves facing existing heavy workloads.

Communication Avenues

Respondents pointed out that there has been a lack of use of technology to enhance service integration.

Policy & Planning

Contributors to the review told us that there is not an effective operational policy and model to facilitate the coordination of services provided by participating agencies. The support documents for the Integrated Services model have been developed (e.g., Integrated Case Management); however, there is no consistent mechanism for activating this process. Activation and coordination problems arise from unclear roles in areas such as provision of medication, personal care, and physiotherapy services. Problems arise from the fact that each government department is autonomous with respect to funding and service. The agencies may have narrowly defined mandates, regional boundaries do not coincide, and there are prohibitive regulations regarding the sharing of information. Successful service integration requires that all agencies actively participate, but this is not always happening.

Complexity

Participants reported that children are coming to school with increasingly complex issues, and at younger ages. An example of such problems is children attending schools with behavioural issues. Also, there are differing challenges in rural and urban settings.

Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

We learned during the review proceedings that there is a general lack of public awareness about the Integrated Services model. Also, professionals are uninformed about each others' working atmosphere, policies, and procedures.

A barrier to the delivery of health and other related services in schools is the traditional model of providing such services. Therapy services are traditionally provided in clinical settings. For example, we heard that mental health services may be more effectively delivered through a community-based model, whereas existing structures support a mental-health centre-based program delivery. As a result, children who attend school in their neighbourhood may receive reduced services or must be absent from school while they go to a centre for therapy.

Representation

Special Education personnel from school divisions are not always included on Regional Intersectoral Committees.

What are some avenues to improve what is happening now?

Suggested Strategies

Policy

Respondents suggested that ultimately there needs to be more government guidance around integrated services -- a blueprint or master plan outlining interagency roles, responsibilities, and how funding will be provided. There was consensus that the focus of our efforts needs to

be on the child in the context of the family. Some suggestions include:

- make early intervention an integrated service priority
- state that the school is the usual location of integrated service provision
- deal with non-aligned boundaries or to create aligned boundaries
- form a Child Advocacy Department at the Ministerial level of government with the authority to draw

funding from each department

"All opportunities and mechanisms to improve the integration and coordination of education, health, and social services programs must be vigorously pursued."

- SASBO

We heard many suggestions regarding legislation:

- SaskEd should amend *The Education Act* and make preschool education for children with low incidence disabilities mandatory rather than permissive
- legislation should be amended to state which local agency has the mandate to provide therapy services to children attending school
- the Community Living Division of Social Services should expand their mandate to include individuals under the age of 22 years
- strengthen shared services to include a broadened mandate and interagency support

Participants stated that education should take the leadership role in advancing integrated services. SaskEd needs to develop policy to support the integration of services. This policy would clarify requirements for school divisions and provide guidelines for protocol and procedure. It was suggested that one response would be to expand the Community Schools concept. Another initiative would be to develop a similar concept for Inclusive Schools.

At the school division level, boards need to have a policy with respect to service integration.

Strategic Planning

Respondents told us that government should develop a plan to assist local communities in providing the necessary integrated support services required by students with exceptional needs. They suggested that the departments of Social Services, Health, Education and Justice blend planning and service delivery at the local level to develop a model that provides full 24-hour support, with joint funding responsibility and optimization of local, informal supports. We received advice that SaskEd and other agencies develop a strategic plan to:

- situate interagency personnel (e.g., liaison officers, social workers) in schools
- conduct a caseload review; look for overlaps and gaps; restructure
- establish operating protocols
- provide joint training
- develop methods of tracking students with special needs
- identify "core groups" to coordinate integration of services
- reconfigure the concept of case manager to be responsible for liaison, networking, and structuring communication, and regular review meetings
- field test, enhance, and implement the Integrated Case Management model
- set up a clearinghouse for all agencies to avoid service duplication
- use technology to enhance service integration

Funding

Respondents told us that agencies should collaborate to provide adequate funding, human resources, and flexible discretionary funds to create successful interagency partnerships. There needs to be consistent funding, not just on a trial basis, to support projects. We were told that SaskEd, in collaboration with other partners, should continue to provide the Associated Entities and Prevention & Support grants for innovative projects, as well as providing sustainable funding for programs that prove to be effective. We received the suggestion that joint funding be established to pay for the range of services required by "high needs" students and families.

Ongoing Review Process

During the review, we heard the suggestion that issues and solutions should continue to be brought forward to the ADMs' Forum. It was suggested that there be yearly summative evaluations of progress toward service integration – a social audit of effectiveness. The suggestion was offered that the dialogue continue on administration of medication and personal care procedures.

Collaboration

We were told that school divisions should commit to a model that develops collaborative teams. Teamwork

processes that need to be addressed include team building and maintenance, role clarification, shared decision-making, shared leadership, accountability, and professional development. Social services and health personnel should be located in schools to support collaboration with school staff. Parent involvement on teams should be enhanced. We were told that collaborative integrated service teams should be established to address specific tasks such as preschool intervention, in-school behavioural intervention, and transitions.

Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

We received suggestions advocating the enhancement of awareness and understanding of service integration. There should be efforts to heighten public awareness about interagency initiatives. Theory and practice of the interagency concept and the nature of services provided by other professionals should be incorporated into all preservice preparation of human service workers. Shared inservice training of interagency service providers should be undertaken.

Vision

"What future should we build together?"

Contributions of the many participants in the review provide a vision of integrated services delivery for Saskatchewan. Children and their families have access to the coordinated services and supports they require from Education, Social Services, Health, Justice, and other human services agencies. In order for this to happen, parents, educators, and other service providers are aware of the benefits and limitations of integrated service delivery models and practices. To maximize children's services, educators have access to the expertise of personnel from other agencies. This includes on-site services, interagency case management, demonstration of techniques, consultative contact, training of school-based personnel, and involvement with the school-based team. To make this happen, government agencies at the provincial level jointly develop policy and shared funding procedures. At the school division level, integrated service teams are in place with the needed protocols, procedures, and funding to implement and sustain supports to children and families. Services are planned and delivered by collaborative interagency teams to provide seamless formal and informal supports to the child and family, with particular attention to transition periods.

"Integrated Services" Themes
At-a-Glance

Strengths

- Commitment
- Collaboration
- Funding

Barriers

- Consistency
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Funding
- Communication Avenues
- Policy & Planning
- Complexity
- Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding
- Representation
- Strategic Planning

Suggested Strategies

- Policy
- Strategic Planning
- Funding
- Ongoing Review Process
- Collaboration
- Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

Term of Reference 4
to examine?"

"What were we asked

"Do the Special Education Funding arrangements and protocols currently being used maximize resources being delivered to students?"

Background

"Why is this term of reference important?"

Legislation in Saskatchewan requires that appropriate services be provided to all pupils between the ages of six and 21, at no cost to parents or guardians. In order to provide these services, boards of education receive funds from three sources: local revenue (property taxation), provincial grants (determined through the Foundation Operating Grant Formula), and tuition fees (from other boards of education, education authorities, and the federal government). The provincial education grant is delivered to each school division through a Foundation Formula based on a board's need and ability to pay.

SaskEd provides additional funding beyond the Foundation Grant to support Special Education. The various protocols for this funding, as outlined in the Special Education Policy Manual, include:

Per Pupil Recognition

- Designated Disabled Program (DDP)
- Supplemental Designated Disabled Program
- Special Education Transportation
- Technical Aids Cost Recognition
- Students in Care of Social Services
- Room and Board

Program Recognition

- Special Needs Program (SNP)
- Targeted Behaviour Program
- Shared Services

Miscellaneous and Ad Hoc Recognition

- Wheelchair lifts on buses

- Building accessibility
- Special Program Grants (e.g., integrated preschool programs)

To access this special education funding, school divisions must submit data annually that identifies: the designated student and individual programming provided, staff employed to support the special education population, special education technology purchased, and special education transportation.

SaskEd's systematic provision of funding for close to 30 years has put in place a service infrastructure for special education throughout Saskatchewan. However, although the funding plans have evolved over time, a variety of issues and problems are associated with the current approach. Given current trends and the important impact of funding mechanisms to all aspects of special education, it is important to determine if current funding arrangements and protocols deliver the expected benefits to students.

Themes

"What did they tell us?"

What is happening now?

Throughout the review, we collected written and verbal advice from participants regarding the adequacy of current funding arrangements and protocols in delivering maximum resources to students. We reviewed, analyzed, and classified this information according to intersecting themes. These themes have been classified and presented below as "Strengths" (positive practices that are currently in place), "Barriers" (limitations and impediments to current funding practice), and "Suggested Strategies" (ideas to enhance funding arrangements and protocols).

Strengths

Equity

We were told that the delivery of funds through the Foundation Operating Grant provides equity to school divisions in meeting some of the additional expenses involved in educating students with special needs. Funding schemes were seen as generally being applied consistently across the province.

Policy

Respondents reported a present strength to be funding recognition that is conditional upon the provision of appropriate special education programming, which includes the employment of qualified special education personnel. The teacher qualification requirement and its linkage to special education funding has provided a focus for boards of education in attempting to hire qualified special education staff. It was stated that funds mostly go to students and programs, with services reflecting the funding supports provided. Respondents felt that boards of education are conscientious in reporting and calculating their proposed expenditures. Special funding programs like the Targeted Behaviour Fund were viewed as strengths. Respondents appreciated the option to transfer funding information electronically.

Commitment

Respondents reported that funding has increased in the last three years and covers a wide range of services. For example, present protocols are responsive to preschool-aged children, technology, transportation, children in care of the Department of Social Services, entrance of children with special needs to the school system during the school year, and funding extension to age 22. Respondents reported that funding arrangements have evolved to reflect growing needs. Current cost recognition can be directly linked to programs, services, or staff providing special education support services. Many school divisions are trying to find ways to support students in the regular classrooms under the current funding systems.

Local Autonomy

Respondents reported that a strength of the present funding system is that boards of education have a high degree of autonomy. Many school divisions provide a wide range of resources and services. SaskEd administration of current funding is primarily de-centralized to regional offices.

Collaboration

We were told that some school divisions have arrangements to share personnel and resources. There is recognition that boards provide funding for children who require intensive services outside of the division. Also, there has been an increase in cost sharing arrangements with related human service agencies.

Barriers

Funding Delivery

"Questions surrounding funding – what kind and how much – are central to most discussions about the current state and likely future of special education."

- STF

Participants told us in a variety of ways that SaskEd does not match policy expectations with sufficient provincial resources. There was a strong message that insufficient funding is hindering the provision of appropriate services to students with special needs. Current levels of funding allocated to education do not reflect the true costs of supporting appropriate programs. In particular, the present SNP funding based on 1:200 does not adequately address the full range of student needs nor the large number of students requiring services within this category. There have been continuous increases in the number of students, the diversity and severity of needs, and the community's expectations of the education system. Sometimes parents or other groups make demands on the school that go beyond the funds available. However, budget increases have not kept pace with the increased demands and real costs. These factors multiply the financial pressures on many boards of education facing declining student enrolment, distant communities, and depressed local economies.

We were told that there are sometimes discrepancies between recognized expenditures and the actual expenditures incurred by a school board to provide appropriate special education programming and services. For example, some school divisions pay more in transportation costs than they receive. While grant allocation is not intended to cover all costs that a school division incurs in the education of students with special needs, some students have needs that are so specialized that expenses for appropriate programming far exceed grant allocation.

"The education needs of those vulnerable children not eligible for designated per pupil funding deserve protection."

- Children's Advocate

Participants told us about various inequities in the allocation of funding. Some high-needs students are not funded, and some require programs costing significantly more than grant allocations. There is a concern that the needs of many students with learning disabilities are neither identified nor adequately addressed. SNP funding for learning disabled students is seen as inadequate, making it difficult to provide the needed resources and personnel. There is a perception that sometimes SNP funding goes to school divisions with little need, while large systems with larger numbers of these students require more than they receive. Current funding arrangements do not recognize regional issues: density of "problem areas", availability of special education personnel, and economies of scale. In particular, the Northwest area of the province was identified as having a disproportionate population of students with special needs. The ratio of provincial funding to local funding creates disparity among school divisions. Funds provided by INAC are not sufficient to provide adequate funding for federal First Nations students attending provincial schools. Finally, there was a concern expressed about the resources special education may be taking away from general education school programs.

Consistency

Respondents told us that funding is driving many of the decisions that result in gaps in special education, and commitments to special education programs are characterized more by diversity than homogeneity. Current tax assessment levees and the present SaskEd Foundation Operating Grant (FOG) formulas have the potential to limit special education expenditures. Boards of education with high tax assessments who receive minimal or no grant support from the FOG may have the tendency to provide the least expensive configuration of services for children with special needs, which may not be the most appropriate. Some school divisions do not provide services unless they have the assurance that they will receive funding. We were told that this is contrary to the intention of the legislation. We were also told that there is variation in how funding is applied in different regions.

Policy

Participants informed us that current funding policy and protocols can be exclusionary, limiting, discriminatory, and complex. The assumption that some children can be meaningfully classified, while others cannot, may lead to inappropriate and discriminatory service delivery patterns. High cost funding criteria, which are based on medical diagnosis rather than on educational needs, may exclude some children and the funding may be difficult to obtain. While medical needs are important, not enough weight is given to the educational needs of students compared with the deficit model. We were told that in order to access funding, school divisions have had to report inappropriate classification of children, teachers, and support staff. The current funding protocols available for school divisions creates a problem in the Targeted Behaviour Fund area. A further concern is that all funding is linked to “input” planned at the beginning of the program rather than to outcomes and progress.

“We wonder about the whole designation process and how it is that only certain disabilities ‘qualify’ for ‘high-cost’ funding.”
- SSTA

We were told that special education is faced with an expanding mandate. To meet all of the needs is a problem. The system was designed to identify students who qualified for special education programming due to physical and/or intellectual disabilities. The system falters when students show characteristics that are educationally challenging but may not be readily tested and classified (e.g., learning disabilities, behaviour problems, sexual problems, and violent youth). These disabilities may be costly but are currently not recognized under DDPF. We were told of increasing numbers of students exhibiting severely aggressive and non-compliant behaviour in instructional settings. Inclusion of these and other students with special needs places demands on classroom teachers, both in terms of numbers of students and complexity of issues. Funding does not always reach the classroom where these students are located.

The absence of a legislated mandate and funding to provide prevention and early intervention has resulted in a lack of programming below the age of 3 years. The way boards of education and other agencies have interpreted provincial policy related to personnel has led to inappropriate practices (e.g., designation means a teacher associate). Also, we were told the present funding mandate does not provide for professional development and planning time.

Special Projects & Programs

Participants told us that there is no developed framework to determine funding for special projects. Support for special projects is ad hoc, not equitably distributed across the province, and it is not reflective of the escalating use being made of the services.

We were told that current funding practices are often reactionary, making it difficult to access funds for preventative programs or to start new programs. Some programs are very expensive and exceed the grant; for example, programs for children with severe behaviour disorders, preschool children, and Student of the Province and foster care. For expensive programs, current funding practices are insensitive to differences in the ability of boards of education to pay the local portion of the program. We were also told that specialized material costs are very high, and resources to successfully include children in classrooms are insufficient. Respondents mentioned that there needs to be an increase in Community School designation to provide for greater access to the grant recognition.

Complexity

A concern was expressed that current funding protocols are very complex and, therefore, are unclear to someone not intimately familiar with educational finance. Some of the funding protocols are based on individual students, some on conglomerate numbers of students, some are teacher-based, and some are project-based (e.g., Storefront schools).

There is confusion among teachers, parents, and administrators about these various types of special education funding. The funding system is seen as inflexible, and in many cases not responsive to actual needs. When there is an urgent or unexpected need, there is red tape involved in accessing funding.

Administration

Respondents expressed concern that funding requires labour intensive data submissions by all levels of personnel. The present system requires extensive use of professional time at the Department level and at the school system level. Respondents felt that SaskEd superintendents spend an excessive amount of time on funding administration. Yearly data collection may be too frequent in some cases.

Collaboration

A concern was expressed that generally there is a lack of interagency funding for cost sharing to support student programs. One example of this funding barrier is a shortage of funds for medical or therapy needs. Education is often the sole funding source of students until age 22, yet many of these students are involved with other agencies.

What are some avenues to improve what is happening now?

Suggested Strategies

Policy

Respondents voiced the strong suggestion that SaskEd enhance and expand funding for special education. Some viewed the issue broadly and suggested that SaskEd increase its overall budget for K-12 education in order to sustain teacher-student ratios at an acceptable level. We were told that there is growing demand to return to a 60%-to-40% provincial-to-

local funding ratio.

We heard that SaskEd should review the funding model and criteria for special education and increase funding levels so that special education services and programs are available to all students requiring such services. It was suggested that special education funding be calculated outside the Foundational Operating Grant and allocated fully to boards of education. There was a general opinion that SNP funding needs to be increased. Consideration should be given to recognizing two rather than three teacher associates as being equal to one FTE and converting TBP to permanent funding with provision for fractional funding. Specific areas that need increased funding were identified as:

“We do not need any more victims in the education family due to lack of funding”
- parent

- student of province, student of foster care
- transportation of students with exceptional needs
- professional services
- shared services
- teacher associates
- consultation time
- Targeted Behaviour Program
- identification and programs for Learning Disabilities
- integrated services

"Fund special needs according to individual needs rather than student numbers and ensure that funding is completely portable among schools, training facilities, and employment sites" - SACL

Respondents suggested that funding protocols be expanded to include the full range of students with special needs. Cost recognition of the incremental amounts should be extended to approved independent schools. It was suggested that the technical grants be expanded and the cost of software recognized. We received the suggestion that SaskEd expand the funding for Community Schools to increase the numbers of such schools.

We heard that funding should be based on the educational needs rather than on a diagnosis of students, and should more accurately reflect the actual costs of appropriate programs and services provided. Respondents stated that programming should not be delayed while awaiting a definitive label. Some felt that we need a mechanism that is both responsive to need, universal, and as unconditional as possible. The goal should be to fund the actual number of students who have needs and are receiving service. The recognized special education base rate should more closely reflect the average actual cost

of providing the programs. It was recommended that this base rate replace the category fund, and that additional support be available for individual needs as identified by a multi-disciplinary PPP. It was suggested that SaskEd develop a protocol to facilitate requests from school divisions for additional funds when more costly programming is required.

It was suggested that current funding protocols and criteria be restructured to ensure a focus on educational needs and improve transparency. Restructuring could reflect an incremental scale describing levels of need. There should be more levels, and they should be redefined as service delivery options.

“The Department of Education must commit financial and other resources to guarantee that students with exceptional learning needs can continue to receive their schooling in regular classrooms and schools.”

- Saskatoon Catholic School Division

Respondents also told us that funding structures should be more flexible. At a broad level, it was suggested that school divisions should use a range of programming options to meet the diverse needs of their student population. Participants wanted more funding to support short term, intensive programming, with a minimum of red tape involved. They suggested that SaskEd strengthen support for specific initiatives such as the ACCESS teams and bursaries. SaskEd should establish provincial bursaries and actively promote these in areas where there are critical shortages of personnel. Some specific suggestions for flexible funding would include:

- global funding for release time
- alternative therapies (e.g., Conductive Education)
- more flexibility in the EAPD program
- materials, instructional resources (Adaptive Dimension)
- preparation time for teachers with special needs students
- support costs – staff, curriculum, and material
- study the cost of inclusion
- start-up grants for alternate school projects
- innovative projects rather than grants
- a range of personnel (e.g., home-school liaison)

Collaboration

We heard the suggestion that funding for students with special needs should be a collaborative effort. Participants stated that there should be a pool of funds shared by Education, Health, Social Services, and Justice for school-linked services. For Education, this could involve a reallocation of funding now being delivered to shared service units.

Administration

Participants offered a number of suggestions related to administration of special education funding. SaskEd should review the current documentation process required by school divisions with a view to providing a transparent process for reporting and monitoring that balances accountability and efficiency. This kind of review should be conducted on a regular basis. Some suggested that SaskEd limit the frequency with which data must be submitted, and perhaps sustain a fixed level of funding for a couple of years. There was a suggestion that SaskEd move the date of submission of the data and also a suggestion to use school division funding report documents to report special education numbers. Respondents wanted SaskEd to shift the emphasis from individual disability-related designation approval to "consultation – program approval – program monitoring".

"The current lack of understanding, in some instances, leaves the perception that programs are being developed to meet funding criteria rather than to meet the needs of the student."

- Committee on Integration

The approval system could be delegated to the Regional Offices. Regional Superintendents should focus on supporting and monitoring programs and program development for students with special needs. They should continue the monitoring of special needs programs through the SEMP. Respondents suggested that boards of education develop protocols for determining appropriate service plans for the integration of students with special needs, and that these should be a part of their SEMP. There should be better inventories of equipment, and purchased equipment should move with the student.

Vision

"What future should we build together?"

Consideration of the information from respondents suggests a vision of funding arrangements and protocols that would maximize delivery of resources to students. Saskatchewan Education provides leadership and direction to the provincial education system through clear policy, guidelines, and transparent funding protocols. Saskatchewan Education's funding system provides programs and support services for students with diverse needs to ensure that they have access to appropriate instruction and derive optimal benefit from their education. Provincial funding recognition fosters a broad array of support services that promote the inclusion of students with diverse needs. Rather than categorical funding based on perceived student deficits, funding recognition is sensitive to students' needs, and supports the provision of a broad array of services as determined by collaborative team planning. Funding is based on realistic, fair, and reasonable costs associated with providing high quality specialized supports to the full range of student needs. Provincial funding recognition is flexible in order to recognize local conditions, priorities, and the significant differences among communities. Funding is predictable to allow boards to engage in long range planning. Funding is efficient and requires a manageable amount of administrative time and record keeping, consistent with prudent program and fiscal management.

<p style="text-align: center;">"Funding" Themes <i>At-a-Glance</i></p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity • Policy • Commitment • Local Autonomy • Collaboration <p>Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding Delivery • Consistency • Policy • Special Projects & Programs • Complexity • Administration • Collaboration <p>Suggested Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Collaboration • Administration

Term of Reference 5 “What were we asked to examine?”

“What are appropriate accountability mechanisms for funding?”

Background "Why is this term of reference important?"

This term of reference addresses the matter of ensuring that students with special needs receive quality services and supports commensurate with the funds that have been provided for that purpose. Present Saskatchewan Education policy states that all students identified and placed under the DDPF categories must be reported to Saskatchewan Education each year in the fall. The cost of the programs that serve these students must, as a minimum, approximate the level of the special education grants provided. Grant recognition is conditional upon the identification of staff who support the educational programming of students served under the SNP, the DDP, or the TBF. Each student with a designated disability must have a PPP that is available for review by the Regional Superintendent of Children’s Services. Each student receiving ongoing special education intervention should have a PPP. Boards are required to prepare and submit a Special Education Master Plan that describes the board’s statement of commitment, delivery system, quality indicators, and emerging needs. It was important that this committee consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of these accountability mechanisms as part of the review proceedings.

Themes "What did they tell us?"

What is happening now?

Throughout the review period, review of documents and feedback from respondents provided us with written and verbal appraisals of the appropriateness of current accountability mechanisms for funding. A description of the themes that emerged from our analysis of participant contributions is presented below, classified into Strengths, Barriers, and Suggested Strategies.

Strengths

Attitude, Awareness & Understanding

Respondents identified present accountability measures as a strength because these measures foster an understanding of the status of special education support in individual divisions.

Collaboration

We were told that current accountability mechanisms enhance collaboration with Regional Special Education offices. Regional Superintendents now meet with school divisions as part of accountability activities, and this encourages focussed interaction and dialogue.

Commitment

Respondents reported that a strength of present accountability procedures is that school divisions retain a high degree of autonomy to set priorities and establish levels of expenditure they believe are appropriate, without being penalized for choices.

Policy

Respondents identified as strengths some of the accountability mechanisms presently in place. We were told there is a review process in place and available to provide parents with an avenue to have concerns addressed. The designation process was viewed as providing accountability for these students. Having Regional Superintendents monitor these designations was considered a positive accountability characteristic. The structure and process for Personal Program Plans were viewed positively. Finally, the Special Education Master Plan mechanism was reported to be a strength of the present accountability system.

We were told that a strength exists in the standards of quality that are in place. That is, funding is conditional upon the hiring of qualified special education personnel. Funding is also conditional upon the provision of "appropriate" programs to students.

Barriers

Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

Participants in the review told us that a barrier arising from present accountability procedures is that the ability to meet the needs of students can become tied to funding. The implication is that the present system creates a dependency on funding-related options rather than on a broader array of locally developed alternatives. Sometimes school divisions provide only what is available through funding, rather than considering more informal supports. There are few incentives to retain children in educational programs who are being suspended, expelled, or disinvented, and exempted from school because of their behaviour patterns.

“A system of accountability and the establishment of standards for special education must be developed, reviewed, and enforced at every level of the education system.”
- PIND

Policy

Respondents told us that a barrier imposed by current accountability mechanisms is the lack of a formal review process at the local level. We were told that a barrier arises from the lack of a system to track the location and progress of students in the education system. A concern was expressed that exemption and expulsion practices by boards of education lead to student movement among schools and school divisions without the proper provision of programming. The use of Sections 154, 155, and 157 (1)(h) of *The Education Act* allows boards of education to pre-empt their responsibilities of providing programming for children with special behavioural needs. We were reminded that the Special Education Policy Manual is not updated and distributed to school divisions, making it difficult to access an official statement of policy.

Consistency

It was reported that there is a lack of consistent auditing for all school divisions. PPPs are not consistently developed across the province and SEMP's are not always available, current, updated and distributed, nor used.

Quality Standards

Participants reported that school boards are not required to meet standards of best practices regarding the education of students with exceptional needs. There is no apparent accountability connection between identification of special learning needs and the outcomes achieved following the provision of programs and services. We were told that there are few guidelines as to what is “appropriate”.

Complexity

Concern was expressed regarding complexity of the funding mechanism, making it often misunderstood or misapplied. We heard that currently there is too much paperwork at all levels, and undesirable labeling of students is occurring. We were told that the review process can be complex and costly, especially in Northern Saskatchewan.

Collaboration

Participants informed us that there is no process for updating the SEMP's and PPP's within schools and school divisions.

Communication Avenues

We were told that lack of a current Policy Manual to guide accountability is a barrier. In particular, there is inadequate distribution and difficulty gaining access to recently updated policies on accountability.

What are some avenues to improve what is happening now?

Suggested Strategies

Policy

Respondents made a variety of suggestions that involve consideration of SaskEd policy. They said that SaskEd needs to:

- mandate quality special education
- standardize services across the province.
- mandate a service response before boards consider expelling or exempting children with behavioural needs
- revise the Education Act (Sections 152, 154, 155, 157, and 186) to clarify responsibility of boards of education on this issue.
- reconcile Regulation 52 (8) with the current practices regarding responsibility for funding services across jurisdictions
- permit Regional Superintendents and Directors to give approval for funding.

Participants told us that SaskEd needs to develop and promote a framework of standards regarding levels of service required for students with special needs. Policies should address the SEMP and PPPs, including transition planning and annual reviews with families and students when appropriate. We were told that role descriptions for professionals and support personnel should be clearly stated by school divisions, and guidelines developed addressing standards for professional support for teachers. In particular, we were told that SaskEd needs to set standards for utilization of teacher associates. Provincial standards for inclusive education need to be established and monitored.

We heard that the data SaskEd collects should be used to ensure that funding is equitably distributed. Accountability around funding processes should be reviewed to ensure that they are respectful, fair, and transparent to all stakeholders.

Consistency

We heard that the data SaskEd collects should ensure that school divisions are providing quality services consistent with the level of funding they are receiving. There should be a process for reviewing the work of special education within school divisions and the province to ensure that needs are being met. We were told that auditing should happen on a consistent, rotational basis.

Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

Many of the suggestions about accountability offered by review participants addressed the need to heighten awareness and understanding of professionals and the public. They told us that all partners in education, families, and other stakeholders should have an understanding of the funding and accountability mechanisms. Teachers need to know more about guidelines, regulations, funding, and legislation. Parents should be fully informed of all the options under Human Rights and Legislation regarding their child's education. To assist with this, they suggested that SaskEd create a full time position to inform and advocate for parents and students. Boards of education should be required to explicitly inform families about the mechanisms for resolving differences or disputes regarding the programs and services their children are receiving.

We were told that professional educators should be trusted and accountability will occur naturally through the PPP process.

Communication Avenues

Respondents suggested that SaskEd provide school divisions and schools with methods to account for the use of special needs funding in a manner that is easily demonstrated to the public. We were told that SaskEd should finalize the Special Education Policy Manual in the interest of enhancing awareness and understanding of accountability.

We heard the suggestion that SaskEd should hold public forums every two years to review the effectiveness of special education. Each school division should be required to publish a report annually summarizing what programs they offer and how they are offered. Assessment results, including both strengths and weaknesses, for each student with special needs should be shared with students and parents.

Vision

"What future should we build together?"

The Committee developed a vision of appropriate accountability mechanisms for service delivery and funding based upon consideration of the input from all participants in the review process. Accountability is viewed as a shared responsibility among educators, schools, boards of education, and Saskatchewan Education. Saskatchewan Education is accountable to provide policy, program direction, and funding recognition. School boards are accountable for providing an array of appropriate programs and funding supports to students based on effective practices. Saskatchewan Education regularly studies its commitment of funding and supports provided to students with diverse needs, reports the results to stakeholders, and invites evaluative feedback in the Indicators Report. Saskatchewan Education and its partners pursue the goal of setting policy and standards that provide clear guidance to school divisions for the accountable use of funds to support the diverse needs of students. In collaboration with the partners, Saskatchewan Education develops accountability mechanisms and measures, and reviews their suitability on a regular basis. Saskatchewan Education develops guidelines and supports to enhance accountability. School divisions develop, within a local plan, standards for all aspects of their system to meet diverse students' needs, and this is clearly communicated to parents and the community. School divisions are provided with regular feedback from Saskatchewan Education on how well the accountability standards are being met. Saskatchewan Education and school divisions work together to fully inform all stakeholders about rights, expectations, and outcomes of supports provided. The focus is on providing measures of effective outcomes as local accountability to children, parents and guardians, and communities.

<p>"Accountability" Themes <i>At-a-Glance</i></p> <p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude, Awareness & Understanding • Collaboration • Commitment • Policy <p>Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude, Awareness & Understanding • Policy • Consistency • Quality Standards • Complexity • Collaboration • Communication Avenues <p>Suggested Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Consistency • Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding • Communication Avenues
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Term of Reference 6

"What were we asked to examine?"

"What is the feasibility of implementing a province-wide early screening program to identify students who are at risk for developing learning and behavioural problems?"

Background

"Why is this term of reference important?"

Research supports the efficacy of early intervention programs for at-risk students and those with disabilities. Early screening programs are designed to identify students in need of support before problems require major, long-term interventions. Such early screening programs, when integrated with a responsive network of supports, can produce a system of care that is effective, efficient, and economical. In the present context, we interpret "early" to mean screening and program delivery in the preschool and primary years. However, in a broader lifespan view, "early" could be thought of as events close to the onset of the risk or disabling condition. Also, "screening" is a concept closely aligned with "prevention", since an important goal of screening programs is to enact measures that will prevent negative effects associated with the identified risk factors. Prevention goals may be thought of as "primary" (removing the risk factor before the disabling condition happens, as in advertisement campaigns against drinking during pregnancy), "secondary" (avoiding the disabling consequence after a risk factor has happened, as in surgery for hydrocephalus), and "tertiary" (minimizing the impact of a disabling condition upon the individual, as in use of

computer-assisted speech devices for a person who is non-verbal).

Establishment and support of an effective early screening system, combined with pre-school programming, is important for at-risk students and those with disabilities. Currently there is a variety of programs in place to address this need. It was appropriate that a review of these services be part of the Committee's activities.

Themes

"What did they tell us?"

What is happening now?

We asked participants in the review process to provide us with written and verbal appraisals of the adequacy of present services and the feasibility of implementing a province-wide early screening program to identify students who are at risk for developing learning and behavioural problems. We analyzed the themes emerging from their comments and present them below, classified into Strengths, Barriers, and Suggested Strategies.

Strengths

Commitment

Respondents stated that some early screening services are a strength of current practice. Kindergarten programs are available to all children, and prekindergartens have been established in each of the 26 Community Schools. Assessment practices for the purpose of program planning and access to support services are in place within most kindergarten programs. Teachers and speech and language pathologists working within these programs identify children in need of additional support.

“School boards should acknowledge the significant contributions preschools make in the area of early intervention for special needs children.”

- Over the Rainbow Preschool

Early Childhood Intervention Programs (ECIPs) provide home-based programs for children who demonstrate or are at risk for developmental delays. A component of the program is to assist with transition to school programs. Children in need of these services are identified through physicians, public health nurses, and social workers. For children of ages 2 and 3 years, SPARC helps to identify hearing loss and provides support and interventions for families learning to cope with the challenges of deafness. Early skills development programs are available in some centres to provide early intervention for children with persistent, aggressive, and violent behaviour. The Saskatchewan Institute on Prevention of Handicaps, which has an ongoing prevention mandate, is in the second year of a Community Development Initiative grant with a focus on prevention screening and working with mothers with a history of alcohol abuse.

Respondents told us that there is general acceptance that early entrance programs for children with special needs are important, and there is now widespread provision of such programs by boards of education. There is increasing flexibility being exercised with respect to where those children receive early entrance services.

Collaboration

Respondents identified as a strength programs presently providing early screening services. Health boards, social and economic sectors of the government, and the private sector are expressing more interest in early intervention for children at risk, thus providing an opportunity for SaskEd to be a partner in developing broad social policy. The home-based ECIP delivery model and interagency initiatives serve as positive examples of collaboration.

Barriers

Policy

We were told that a barrier arises from the absence of provincial policy, regulations, and guidelines across government departments regarding a province-wide screening process. Criteria restrictions of SaskEd and ECIPs sometimes prevent children who still need services from receiving support. There is an over-reliance on traditional methods of identification. We were told that the present designation model does not necessarily identify all at-risk children, and that there is a time issue between the designation process and funding.

“Young preschool children often 'fall through the cracks' of human services delivery systems.”

- SCEP

Consistency

Participants in the review told us that availability of programs and services for pre-school children are inconsistent and inadequate. Furthermore, prior to preschool and kindergarten,

children may not be seen by agencies that could provide screening services. Early childhood services for disadvantaged families (e.g., Community School prekindergarten programs) are not available in all communities. Some children enter the regular school system with special needs, but with no assessment background or documentation. In addition, as soon as a child is designated for individual high cost funding and enters the school system, other agencies withdraw their services.

We were told about barriers arising from issues of continuity. There is sometimes a lack or duplication of programs and services after screening. Resources for follow-up to screening are not always identified prior to the implementation of the screening process.

Funding

Respondents told us that a barrier arises from limitations in funding and resources. We were told that in the past, early childhood developmental screening was carried out by Public Health Nurses during required home visits or in clinics. This is no longer the general practice. There are currently few specialized assessment centres and long waiting lists for children who have been referred for early identification.

Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

Participants in the review told us that cost benefit studies of early intervention programming suggest that government at all levels should be keenly interested in investing in early screening and identification. However, there is a need to define “early” when addressing the feasibility, purpose, and potential benefits of an early screening process. Likewise, there is no common understanding or acceptance of what constitutes “at risk”. A related concern is that current standardized assessment instruments do not reliably identify learning and behaviour disabilities.

We were told that a barrier to early screening is lack of good communication between agencies and high-risk families to assist in their participation. There continue to be young at-risk children who are at-risk whose parents are unable or do not choose to access services for their child. Parents can stop the flow of information or refuse intervention. Since the ECIPs are not under the umbrella of the Department of Education, flow of information may be hindered.

Lack of awareness as to the potential benefits of early screening acts as a barrier. There is also a lack of awareness of the early identification processes that currently exist across the province.

Collaboration

Participants in the review told us inadequate sharing of relevant information across agency and sector lines continues to be seen as a major barrier, primarily dependent upon individual worker interpretation of agency or professional association policies. We were told that interagency collaboration is not possible when some agencies withdraw services as soon as funding protocols from another agency become available.

What are some avenues to improvement?

Suggested Strategies

Policy

Respondents offered a range of suggestions that involve consideration of policy and planning by SaskEd. They said that SaskEd should collaboratively develop a Provincial model and

“A provincial early screening process to identify at risk students is a goal that we feel could greatly enhance our ability to provide appropriate programs for special needs students.”
- Regional Directors of Education

process for a comprehensive early screening system. The process and protocol should provide guidance, from assessment through to program delivery. A formal government policy should activate this early intervention strategy. This policy should include the provision of inservice opportunities.

Some respondents suggested that the approach should be flexible to allow for autonomy in planning. Local service providers could develop protocols for the collection, sharing, and transfer of information. School divisions should develop procedural support for early screening, and include this in their SEMP.

Ongoing support for families is seen as a valuable service. It was suggested that an enhanced transition-to-school model would improve this support. Transition policies should be developed in all school divisions.

Collaboration

Respondents made a variety of suggestions that would involve different government departments working together with a more accessible, integrated service model. We were told that SaskEd should collaborate with other agencies to provide coordinated services for preschool children. Some suggested a Ministry of Children’s Services to coordinate services at an intersectoral level. They told us that there should be one funding mechanism across the agency sectors to provide 24-hour support services for children and families in need.

“An integrated partnership with other service providers could be used to develop the process and protocol to implement the screening program.”
- Regional Directors of Education

Interagency protocols for sharing of information need to be developed and agreed upon. We heard that developmental screening by public health nurses should be reinstated. All children should be followed by public health nurses, with the location of the services based on the needs of the family.

Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

Respondents offered suggestions that involve awareness and understanding of screening concepts and practices. We heard the suggestion that screening and related programs be based on the primary, secondary, tertiary prevention continuum with the goal of identifying the needed intervention as early as possible. All personnel involved with young children (e.g., day care workers, preschool teachers, social workers) need to be provided with ongoing professional development in the early identification of students at risk for learning and behavioural problems. We were told that teachers should be screening for learning and behavioural problems for children who are in school programs.

This necessitates adequate teacher training and continued professional development in early identification and early intervention strategies.

We heard about the need to develop a means to heighten awareness and support in families who do not access services. As part of this strategy, parents should be provided with comprehensive information on various services available.

Funding

Respondents provided suggestions that involve funding and resources. Respondents stated that funding for early identification should be increased and provided consistently across the province. Some offered the caveat that the cost and feasibility of such a program must be carefully examined by all involved before it is attempted.

Participants identified the need for an increase in speech and language services and for behavioural early intervention programs for young children and their families. We were told that early childhood classrooms should maintain a small class size to ensure that it is reasonable for teachers to be able to observe and assess the needs of all the students. Finally, it was suggested that there be consistent hearing and vision screening in schools.

Participants told us that SaskEd should explore the feasibility of providing funds for preschool programs for all students who are identified as at-risk of developing learning and behavioural problems. The focus should be upon a broad range of target groups, including students with behavioural, social, and emotional concerns. Also, this initiative should extend below the age of three years and could include therapeutic preschools or camps.

Vision

"What future should we build together?"

A vision regarding early screening and identification emerged from our analysis of participant input into the review. It begins with the development of government policy and priorities that reflect the importance of early screening to the present and future success of the child. Early screening and identification are understood as part of a continuum of services sensitive to the needs of the child and family, and to the timely provision of appropriate supports. It is also seen as an interagency initiative involving Education, Health, Social Services, and Justice. The purposes of the screening program include the identification of factors known to place children at risk for developing learning and behavioural problems, selection of children, and identification of children needing further assessment and services. This early screening system is available across age groups in all communities and addresses all areas of need (health, learning, social, emotional, behavioural). Interagency personnel assist families to access services such as Early Childhood Intervention Programs, Community School programs, and preschools. The vision is for family focused, family directed services, with communities involved in the identification of their unique needs.

"Early Screening" Themes
At-a-Glance

Strengths

- Commitment
- Collaboration

Barriers

- Policy
- Consistency
- Funding
- Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding
- Collaboration

Suggested Strategies

- Policy
- Collaboration
- Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding
- Funding

Term of Reference 7 "What were we asked to examine?"

"How can the education, training, and continuing professional development of teachers and other staff who work with students with special needs be improved?"

Background "Why is this term of reference important?"

Saskatchewan Education believes that having qualified, knowledgeable personnel in place is a key factor in the provision of quality services to students with special needs and their families. The Special Education Policy Manual states that special education teachers and professional support staff responsible for individual assessments, program planning, and program delivery must possess qualifications acceptable to the Minister. Qualification standards have been outlined in the Regulations of *The Education Act*, 1995 for resource teachers, learning assistance teachers, special class teachers, special education consultants, educational psychologists, and speech and language pathologists. Challenges to the nature of professional preparation have arisen from evolution of the service delivery system, particularly related to inclusive education, collaborative models, and changing conceptions of student needs. Limitations in financial and human resources are also impacting on the quantity and quality of professional preparation. It is necessary to examine current standards and practices of professional preparation to determine their adequacy.

Themes "What did they tell us?"

What is happening now?

Participants in the public consultation meetings were provided with the following statement: "It is important that all special education teachers, classroom teachers, and teacher associates receive appropriate education, training, and professional development in order to enable them to work successfully with students with special needs". They were asked to provide ratings to indicate the extent to which they agree that current preparation practices prepare professionals to work with students with special needs. Their responses are summarized below:

"To what extent do you agree that the education, training, and professional development that teachers and other staff are currently receiving prepares them to work with students with special needs?"					
rating	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
responses (n=437)	21	83	86	180	67
percentage	5	19	20	41	15

Agreement ratings by public consultation participants of the adequacy of professional preparation

The response pattern indicates that a majority of respondents (56%) Disagree or Strongly Disagree that present practices are effective in preparing professionals to work with students with special needs.

We asked participants who attended the public consultation sessions and those who submitted written briefs to provide us with written and verbal appraisals of the adequacy of education, training, and professional development that teachers and other staff are currently receiving. We analyzed the themes emerging from their comments and present them below as "Strengths" (positive practices that are currently in place), "Barriers" (limitations and impediments to current practice), and "Suggestions" (ideas to enhance professional preparation).

Strengths

Commitment

We were told that in Saskatchewan there is a commitment to professional development. Special Education teachers are well prepared and show a desire to enhance their professional knowledge and skills. Many are seeking continuing education. Some have taken additional classes beyond the minimum requirements in special education.

Policy

Participants reported that a strength of current practice is SaskEd policy outlining qualification requirements for special education professionals. School divisions must employ personnel who meet qualification requirements in order to receive grant recognition. Local leadership is also evident, in that some boards of education and schools have developed excellent policies and practices regarding professional development.

“Classroom teachers who have appropriate training have skills and attitudes that are beneficial to students with special needs”
- parent

Successful Practices

Respondents told us that the Saskatchewan universities have a reputation of graduating students with strong knowledge and skills. Teacher education programs include an overview class in teaching exceptional children as a mandatory component of the programs. While the University of Saskatchewan has the requirement in the secondary program, the University of Regina is exploring this possibility. We were told that current Special Education course content at the universities includes an emphasis on the collaborative model and team approach to special education. It was reported that the availability of graduate programs at the Universities is a strength. Professional development opportunities are provided through summer short courses in the area of special education.

Respondents viewed positively the training program for Teacher Associates available through the Saskatchewan Institutes of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST). The formation by Teacher Associates of the Saskatchewan Association of School Paraprofessionals (SASP) was seen as a strength.

A further strength in access to professional development opportunities was seen as the availability of training through other educational agencies and professional groups, such as the Council for Exceptional Children, Learning Disability Association, and the Autism Society. The ACCESS teams were mentioned as making a positive contribution to the professional development of teachers.

Funding

We were told that a number of school divisions provide paid educational leave opportunities to staff, and have designated special education as one priority in the area of professional development. Attendance at workshops and conferences is supported.

Barriers

Consistency

Respondents told us that the following factors act as barriers to professional development:

- geography, distance, and location of school divisions
- lack of experts, especially in low incidence disabilities (e.g., blind, deaf)
- limited access to training for qualifications
- need to access training outside the province
- difficulty accessing information about professional development
- inopportune timing of professional development during the year

A barrier to the provision of professional development was seen to be training that is insufficiently appropriate and specific. Unqualified personnel continue to fill special education positions. Often, the neediest students are seen as being served by people with the least training. In particular, education and training to work with severe, profound or low incidence disabilities was seen as inadequate. Generally, respondents reported a lack of training for and about parents and families.

“The attitude of the teacher decided whether we had a good or bad year”
- parent

Respondents identified a number of barriers associated with the delivery of courses at the Universities. In general, there is not sufficient flexibility in the design of programs and

scheduling of offerings. Also, there is inconsistency between programs at the two Universities. At the University of Saskatchewan, approved special education courses are now delivered at the graduate level. This may limit access and lead to a potential decline of qualified staff. There are no course offerings in the province in the areas of visual impairment, hearing impairment, multiple disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and autism. It was stated that there is not enough special education preparation during preservice programs. There has been a decline in the number of Special Education faculty at the University of Saskatchewan, while the University of Regina has only one faculty member. Course offerings have diminished, and teaching is frequently being assigned to sessional lecturers.

Complexity

We were told that complexities related to developments in the field of Special Education represent a barrier to professional development. In particular, the concept of "special needs" has expanded and requires a broader spectrum of training.

Policy

Participants voiced a concern that many classroom teachers have little training in special education. We were told that some classroom teachers have never had a class in teaching children with an exceptionality. Without training in the area of special education, teachers find it difficult to integrate special education concepts and utilize the Adaptive Dimension. A specific area identified as needing enhancement was the understanding and management of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural issues. In addition, it was felt that Teacher Associates and school and system administrators generally have limited training. Currently, insufficient opportunity exists for secondary school teachers in the area of special education.

“No teachers should be able to opt out of professional development”
- STF

Funding

Participants reported that funding at many levels has been restricted to classes needed to meet qualifications. There has been a lack of incentive, in the form of pressure and financial support, to take extra training. Participants pointed out a lack of funds to provide teacher associates with professional development. In some school divisions, there is insufficient access to consultants to carry out training. We heard concerns that there are no formal requirements to engage in professional development activities. A further issue is that funding for professional development is contingent upon local board level priorities.

“Funding plays a key role in determining many of the professional development opportunities that are available to teachers”
- STF

Continuity

We learned during the review proceedings that insufficient release time is made available to plan for the application of what has been learned from professional development experiences at the local level. There was general concern that a long-term plan for training or professional development does not exist.

What are some avenues to improve what is happening now?

Suggested Strategies

Leadership

Respondents suggested that SaskEd undertake a leadership initiative to enhance professional development through the design of provincial long range plans for inservice. One possibility could be to sponsor annual or biannual symposia on special education issues. Another suggestion was that SaskEd design annual inservice events which could be delivered regionally on a rotational basis. SaskEd could provide inservice in special education for school divisions (e.g., Adaptive Dimension, understanding diverse needs, instructional strategies, high incidence disabilities, and gifted students). Mention was made of the need for Adaptive Dimension workshops for middle and secondary levels, possibly modelled after the Common Essential Learnings implementation. It was also suggested that the partners initiate research and development activities to increase their knowledge and abilities.

Strategic Planning

SaskEd

We were told that there needs to be a more consistent, continuous professional preparation and development plan at the provincial level. We heard that SaskEd should work with the Universities to expand extension offerings and specialized training, particularly of courses that prepare special educators to work with children whose disability is not addressed by existing courses, such as visually impairment, deafness, and multiple disability. Delivery could include evening and summer courses. There was strong support for promotion of a course in special education administration.

Respondents offered a range of ideas to be included in strategic planning for the focus of professional development in Saskatchewan:

- video exchanges and training through SCN
- an internet directory with hot-links
- a "virtual shared services" – experts online
- training for special educators in computer applications
- workshop packages developed by experts
- a library of resources at SaskEd
- training in the identification of student needs
- training to work effectively with teacher associates
- training in cross-cultural education, poverty, and related issues
- training to identify youth in crisis
- enhance knowledge of mental health issues
- identify professionals with expertise in low incidence
- expansion of professional development services in the North

Universities

Respondents made a number of suggestions directed toward the universities. The University of Saskatchewan should review programs to determine which courses might be offered at the undergraduate level. A practicum component should be more prevalent in course content. Course offerings and content in the overview classes needs to be expanded. Interns should spend time with resource teachers or in classrooms with special needs. There should be a required undergraduate course in classroom management and behavioural disorders, and these skills should be enhanced for all special education teachers. All teachers need more training in working with parents and more focus needs to be applied to early literacy instruction. It was suggested that SaskEd collaborate with the universities to include compulsory special education coursework at the graduate level for administrators.

Partners

Each of the major partners should develop a long-term strategic plan with related commitments. More systematic follow-up is needed after inservice sessions. Mentoring models could be developed whereby beginning special education teachers could be matched with experienced practitioners. Respondents suggested that a refresher program is needed. To enhance long-term professional development, it was suggested that special educators should be encouraged to belong to professional organizations.

Policy

Respondents told us that SaskEd and the universities should review policy regarding teacher qualification requirements for special education. They should consider alternative training and courses to meet teacher certification and qualifications in special education, including such options as credit for attendance at short courses. Other factors to consider are more flexibility for special areas (e.g., Aboriginal students), compulsory updating of teacher qualifications, and the qualifications and training of educational psychologists and sign-language interpreters. It was also recommended that SaskEd examine policy related to the qualifications, hiring procedures, and screening for teacher associates.

Funding

During the review, we heard the suggestion that time and resources need to be allocated to training and professional development. It was suggested that professionals be selected for further training, and bursaries be provided to support their advanced education. A matching funds arrangement could be established between SaskEd, the school division, and the professional. We were told that classroom teachers need time to consult with resource teachers. Boards need to provide sufficient release time for these formal and informal professional development activities. Funding should be made available for training and professional development of teacher associates.

Collaboration

Contributors to the review told us that there should be teacher involvement in all phases of professional development planning. They stated a preference for hands-on, integrated professional development, with joint participation by administrators, teachers, teacher associates, and parents. We received the suggestion that ACCESS teams continue on an individual case-by-case and training basis. Involvement of Health and other agencies was suggested as a valuable approach to training. We also heard that resource teachers need time for networking at the school division level.

Communication Avenues

It was suggested that improvements be made to publicizing professional development opportunities. We heard that there needs to be increased communication flow to families. Respondents suggested continued use of the Special Education Unit newsletter. It was suggested that a web-based map be created to enhance access to professional development opportunities.

Vision

"What future should we build together?"

A composite analysis of the input of respondents to the review suggests a vision of education, training, and continuing professional development. All those who work with children and youth with diverse needs receive the professional preparation required to provide quality services to children and youth and their families. Saskatchewan Education policy sets out professional requirements to support high standards of practice. At both preservice and inservice levels, there is flexible access to the needed learning opportunities. There are funding and incentives, including bursary schemes, to support professional development. Preservice programs at the universities are enhanced for classroom and special education teachers, particularly in high need areas like adaptive instruction, inclusionary practices, behaviour management, collaboration, use of technology, and practicum experiences. Inservice offerings are relevant, continuous, and provided in situations as close to the participant's context as possible. Saskatchewan Education, the universities, and partners collaborate to create a continuum of appropriate and specific professional preparation options. Saskatchewan Education undertakes leadership initiatives

"Professional Preparation & Development" Themes
At-a-Glance

Strengths

- Commitment
- Policy
- Successful Practices
- Funding

Barriers

- Consistency
- Complexity
- Policy
- Funding
- Continuity

Suggested Strategies

- Leadership
- Strategic Planning
- Policy
- Funding
- Collaboration
- Communication Avenues

to refine and sustain effective practices to address diversity and to anticipate needs. Each school division's local plan contains professional development frameworks that are suited to the circumstance and needs of the school division. Professional staff within each school determine their local needs and priorities and design their own unique professional development experiences within the priorities, frameworks, and opportunities available.

Term of Reference 8 "What were we asked to examine?"

"What are the most appropriate ways to ensure that staffs of SaskEd and of Boards of Education keep their professional knowledge and expertise current in view of emerging knowledge and techniques?"

Background "Why is this term of reference important?"

The body of knowledge that helps us understand teaching and learning and how to best meet the needs of students is constantly developing and growing. This term of reference addresses the important task of ensuring that all people involved in the education of students with exceptional learning needs are building and maintaining an up-to-date personal and shared knowledge base regarding current practices in special education. The assumption related to this term of reference is that quality of programs and services for students with special needs is directly related to the currency of knowledge of the people in key positions to influence those programs.

Themes "What did they tell us?"

What is happening now?

We collected written and verbal assessments from participants in the review process regarding the currency of professional knowledge and expertise of staff of SaskEd and school divisions. This information was reviewed, analyzed, and classified according to intersecting themes. These themes are classified and presented below as "Strengths" (positive practices that are currently in place), "Barriers" (limitations and impediments to current practice), and "Suggested Strategies" (ideas to enhance professional knowledge and expertise).

Strengths

Commitment

We were told that there are many committed and dedicated people employed by SaskEd and School Divisions who want to keep their knowledge current.

Print & Electronic Media

This positive theme was strongly voiced during the review. Respondents identified a range of resources that help to maintain and build knowledge: journals and newsletters (e.g., "Challenges and Choices"), SaskEd and other websites, SCN courses, videos, literature from special interest groups, the "Diversity" series (SPDU, SIDRU), and the Western Provinces' special education documents.

Networking

Knowledge enhancement is viewed as taking place through networking relationships. Many school divisions have created resource teacher network meetings. We were also told that some mentoring relationships exist.

Conferences

Participation in conferences was reported as making important contributions to currency of knowledge. Leaders (e.g., directors, special education consultants, department heads) attend national meetings, convey this information, and thereby enhance local knowledge. Teacher and professional groups attend conferences that contribute to knowledge growth and promote networking among professionals.

Consulting

Consultation was reported as an important element in keeping knowledge current. Organizations such as the Council for Exceptional Children offer current information. SaskEd and school divisions provide special education consultants or coordinators to enhance knowledge. Shared Service and ACCESS teams bring information to school divisions. Finally, provincial advisory and coordinating committees were seen as enhancing knowledge and expertise.

Courses

The universities offer courses that are seen as effective in enhancing knowledge. It was seen as positive that SaskEd works with the universities on course offerings.

Workshops & Meetings

Knowledge and expertise are kept current through the SPDU and other groups that offer a wide variety of inservice workshops on special education topics. Regional meetings with Special Education Superintendents are seen as contributing to knowledge enhancement. Provincial Directors of Special Education attend inter-provincial meetings that build knowledge and expertise.

Barriers

Funding

Within the term of reference "currency of knowledge and expertise", contributors to the review rarely mentioned funding directly. However, funding issues are implicated in many of the other barriers described in this section. We were told that there is difficulty arranging release time funding. It was also stated that there is a lack of policy, strategic planning, and dedicated funding to support professional development for employees of SaskEd.

Access to Information

Participants told us that access to information can be difficult. Capacity to respond locally to information is limited by distance, travel time, and access to courses. Communication mechanisms for research results are seen as restricted. Also, there is a lack of accessible cataloguing of resources available to enhance knowledge and expertise.

Continuity

Participants stated that a barrier to growth of knowledge and expertise arises from limited follow-up to conferences and other professional development experiences. It was seen as important that people be supported in accessing information on a "need to know" basis.

Leadership

We heard that there is a lack of professional development growth plan; a mechanism to guide and support professionals and others in keeping their knowledge current. This theme emphasized the importance of SaskEd, LEADS, the SSTA, and other groups taking a strong leadership within their memberships for persons at all levels to keep abreast of current knowledge.

Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

SaskEd and school division personnel may lack awareness of issues related to "at risk children" (e.g., cross cultural factors, poverty, and violence). Boards of education are seen as not always well informed about diverse school populations and needs, and support for professional development is thereby limited.

"It is particularly vital that professionals working with children who present with exceptional challenges be aware of emerging knowledge and techniques."

- LDAS

Complexity

Participants told us that it is challenging to keep professional knowledge and expertise current. There is a breadth of complex issues to be recognized and understood. It is difficult to choose the most beneficial professional development option. The situation is made more complex by confusing or conflicting messages from research, which make it difficult to know which option to pursue.

Receptivity

The concern was stated that school division staffs and other professionals sometimes lack an openness to innovation and new ideas.

What are some avenues to improvement?

Suggested Strategies

Policy

Participants in the review told us that the Special Education Policy Manual (SEPM) is a key to ensuring that knowledge and expertise are kept current. There should be predictable periodic updates to the SEPM. We were told that SaskEd should develop policy that addresses the revision of the Policy Manual, and that an inter-partner advisory team be involved in this development.

Communication Avenues

A major theme called "access to information on a need-to-know basis" emerged. A first aspect to this theme suggests a need for transparency of access to information such as funding structures. Another important sub-theme identifies the limited utility of paper flow. The preferred alternative is electronic delivery via the Internet, with support for navigating the pathways. Participants thought that cross-links from the web site could be better developed. This enhanced website should become a mechanism for promoting the dissemination of research. It was suggested that alternate delivery methods (e.g., distance education, SCN) for accessing knowledge be enhanced. We were told that SaskEd could develop a map for accessing services. One useful mechanism that could include the map might be a human services handbook that is updated regularly.

Strategic Plan

During the review, respondents told us that there should be a strategic plan to enhance professional knowledge and development. They suggested that there be a partnership amongst educators, the SSTA and other stakeholders, as well as school division personnel to develop a framework for professional development.

Funding

Respondents suggested that more funding is needed in this area. A bursary program should be implemented. There should be incentives to increase access to special education training at local, national, and international levels.

Local Needs

During the review, we heard that there needs to be local support for enhancement of knowledge and expertise at the school division and school levels. In particular, SaskEd should facilitate the development of local collaboration models, with special emphasis on team building and mentoring relationships.

Regional Seminars

It was suggested to us that SaskEd plan and implement regional seminars on a rotating schedule. These could be delivered to School Division personnel and

“School divisions require up-to-date research in the area of special education to ensure decisions are based on relevant and current data.”
- Saskatoon Public School Division

**"Professional Knowledge" Themes
At-a-Glance**

Strengths

- Commitment
- Print and Electronic Media
- Networking
- Conferences
- Consulting
- Courses
- Workshops & Meetings

Barriers

- Funding
- Access to Information
- Continuity
- Leadership
- Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding
- Complexity
- Receptivity

Suggested Strategies

- Policy
- Communication Avenues
- Strategic Plan
- Funding
- Local Needs
- Regional Seminars
- Research Team
- Resource Centre

other local and regional professionals.

Research Team

We received the suggestion that SaskEd, along with inter-agency and other partners, develop an evaluation team that could examine and make recommendations about research trends and alternate intervention and therapies. This team could carry out a research and pilot project component and serve as an advisory committee.

Resource Centre

It was suggested to us that SaskEd develop a catalogue of specific information in the area of special education. This could consist of a resource centre and an electronically accessible database.

Vision

"What future should we build together?"

Comments and feedback solicited from participants in the review process offer a vision of how to keep professional knowledge and expertise current. There is a shared expectation that Saskatchewan Education and school division personnel actively pursue initiating, directing, and sustaining the momentum of professional knowledge and expertise. To accomplish this goal, there is openness to new ideas at all levels, along with public awareness and appreciation of the importance of professional development. There is a strategic plan and associated funding to enhance professional development. Saskatchewan Education shows initiative and leadership in this area. At the same time, individuals are involved and responsible for their own professional enhancement. The plan leads to ready access to information for all parties on a need-to-know basis.

Term of Reference 9

"What were we asked to examine?"

"What are the most appropriate ways for Saskatchewan Education and boards of education to sustain positive continuing dialogue with all stakeholder groups?"

Background

"Why is this term of reference important?"

This term of reference speaks to the importance of multi-level communication amongst all people involved in the education of students with exceptional learning needs. It also alludes to the pivotal role of Saskatchewan Education and school divisions in building mechanisms and avenues of communication to enhance the open flow of dialogue. The underlying assumption is that such "avenues of dialogue" will build increased awareness and support for educational programs. Furthermore, ongoing communication should lead us to a service system that is more sensitive to existing needs and more responsive to changing conditions.

Themes

"What did they tell us?"

What is happening now?

Participants at the public consultations were given the following statement: "The Department of Education and boards of education need to sustain positive continuing communication with teachers, parents, administrators, and other support agencies". They were asked to rate the extent to which ongoing communication and dialogue is currently taking place. The table below summarizes their responses:

"To what extent do you agree that positive, continuing dialogue is happening?"					
rating	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
responses (n=432)	83	145	82	102	20
percentage	19	34	19	24	5

Ratings by public consultation participants of present state of positive, continuing dialogue.

The responses indicate that the majority of respondents (53%) agree or strongly agree that positive dialogue is happening now. Despite this positive picture, there is room for improvement, since a minority (29%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Participants in the review process provided written and verbal comments regarding positive continuing dialogue. This information was reviewed, analyzed, and classified according to intersecting themes. These themes are classified and presented below as "Strengths" (positive practices that are currently in place), "Barriers" (limitations and impediments to current practice), and "Suggestions" (ideas to enhance professional knowledge and expertise).

Strengths **Commitment**
 We were told that Saskatchewan enjoys an unparalleled reputation in educational partnerships. Respondents stated that stakeholder groups and partners want to maintain contact with SaskEd staff, and that public involvement is encouraged in Saskatchewan.

Collaboration
 Participants told us that positive ongoing dialogue is being enhanced by the adoption of collaborative models and teamwork practices.

Leadership
 Input of the Regional Superintendents of Children’s Services into policy and practice of school divisions is valued. Special Education Unit staff and regional offices serving as liaison with stakeholders was seen as positive. Respondents also reported that the Regional Superintendents and the ACCESS teams have provided professional development events that have enhanced dialogue and services.

We were told that some school divisions do a good job of communicating with parents. As well, excellent communication between parents and staff was reported to exist within some school divisions.

Meetings
 Respondents believe that open meetings have enhanced dialogue. They reported that the Special Education Review Committee meetings have been well received by the public. Likewise, regional meetings led by Special Education Coordinators from school divisions were reported as effective and helpful. School divisions' willingness to meet with advocacy groups was seen as an enhancement to dialogue.

Committees
 We heard that SaskEd has established avenues for dialogue with various groups. One example of this would be the Committee on Integration of Students with Special Needs in the Classroom. At the school division level, creation of special education advisory committees is seen as positive.

“Teachers are left feeling excluded from the decision-making process”
- STF

Communication Avenues

We heard that print material (e.g., *Challenges, Choices and Changes*) and some internet material made available, and that e-mail has enhanced dialogue.

Barriers

Representation

Participants in the review process told us that the views of all parties are not always represented in decision-making. Stakeholder representatives do not always speak for all members.

Feedback is not always requested or listened to by SaskEd, development of policy may proceed without involvement of field personnel, and recommendations of committees are not always acted upon.

Consistency

The information we collected informed us that positive dialogue exists on a broken front. There is inconsistency in communication across the province and at the provincial level. Also, personnel changes sometimes make it difficult to build and sustain relationships.

Complexity

“Challenges exist, both at the Department and school level, in balancing the expectations and needs of all stakeholder groups. Frequent opportunities for discussion and dialogue are needed to sustain a positive atmosphere in which to educate all students.”
- administrator

Participants stated that it is challenging to establish and maintain liaison between staff and stakeholders across local, regional, and provincial levels. In particular, information is not always provided to those needing it. There was a perception that lack of interagency collaboration limits meaningful dialogue.

Attitude, Awareness, Understanding

There was also the concern that boards of education and SaskEd are not always well informed about what is happening in schools. We were told that school divisions face challenges in relating to and working with children from diverse, and particularly Aboriginal cultures. In addition, SaskEd is not responsive to the issues and concerns expressed by some individuals, organizations, and school divisions.

Access to Information

Participants informed us that parents and the general public may lack knowledge about disabilities and not have ready access to needed information. Language, culture, and geographic location contribute to this problem. Some respondents reported that communication to target groups is lacking, and that print materials may not be an effective way to build dialogue. Additionally, we were told that opportunities to communicate through the media are not being used.

Strategic Planning

We received responses to indicate that there is a lack of planning, process, and protocol to improve dialogue.

What are some avenues to improvement?

Suggested Strategies

Ongoing Review Process

We were told that establishing an ongoing review process involving stakeholders and partners could enhance dialogue. It was also felt that SaskEd should maintain the consultation that now exists with PIND.

Strategic Plan

Participants suggested that SaskEd, in partnership with stakeholder groups, form a "Special Education Advisory Committee" which would develop a strategic plan that includes a communication strand. This plan should be sensitive to provincial, regional, and local needs. The goal would be to keep all parties better informed about special education and to allow improved input from stakeholders. We were also told that establishing an ongoing review process would enhance communication.



Communication Avenues

We were advised that SaskEd and boards of education need to explore all means of communication, and to ensure that the most effective methods are used to reach stakeholders. Most respondents identified enhancements to the Internet, e-mail access, and other electronic options. Many avenues for dialogue were suggested: public meetings, meetings with school boards, and the use of media such as newspapers, TV, fax, videotape programs, newsletters, and pamphlets.

Representation

It was stated that SaskEd and boards should include input from stakeholder groups in the development of strategic plans, policy, and procedures. The spirit of this suggestion was that care be taken to ensure representation in decision-making of the views of agencies and advocacy groups. Boards could establish advisory councils so that parents and students could influence the quality of programs and services. Parents should be included on planning teams for students. Finally, SaskEd needs to work toward building and sustaining relationships with Aboriginal and other diverse groups so that their input into policy and practice is enhanced.

Vision

"What future should we build together?"

A synthesis of the comments and feedback solicited from participants in the review suggests a vision of how positive continuing dialogue should look in the future. There is a shared opinion that broad-based involvement is foundational to public education. Involvement takes the form of sustained, positive, continuing dialogue among stakeholder groups, Saskatchewan Education, and boards of education. Collaborative, open processes are used to foster communication with stakeholder groups and create partnerships with those responsible for the education and well being of children and youth in Saskatchewan. This vision is realized through the creation of a clear, transparent strategic plan that addresses the communication elements of information inflow, information outflow, and dialogue.

"Continuing Dialogue" Themes
At-a-Glance

Strengths

- Commitment
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Meetings
- Committees
- Communication Avenues

Barriers

- Representation
- Consistency
- Complexity
- Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding
- Access to Information
- Strategic Planning

Suggested Strategies

- Ongoing Review Process
- Strategic Plan
- Communication Avenues
- Representation

Term of Reference 10 "What were we asked to examine?"

"How can parent perspectives be included in program planning and what are some appropriate mechanisms to enhance parental involvement?"

Background "Why is this term of reference important?"

The Special Education Policy Manual states that parent and guardian involvement is critical in planning appropriate education programs for students with special needs. This policy position is consistent with accumulating evidence that parental involvement leads to a variety of positive outcomes for children: higher achievement, better attendance, more positive attitudes and behaviour, and higher graduation rates. Current literature indicates that parents and guardians should be involved at all stages of educational planning. In addition, parental views should be fully represented in program and placement decisions. Mechanisms for parental involvement include participation in:

- gathering of information for program planning and review
- designing, implementing, and altering program and transition plans
- problem-solving and accessing the appeal process, should differences arise

Themes "What did they tell us?"

What is happening now?

Participants at the public consultations were asked to provide ratings for two questions related to the following statement: "Involving parents and guardians in program planning enhances the programs created for their own children". Responses are summarized below:

"To what extent do you agree with the above statement?"					
rating	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
responses (n=421)	294	108	15	3	1
percentage	70	26	4	<1	<1
"To what extent do you agree that this is happening?"					
responses (n=398)	23	158	99	88	30
percentage	6	40	25	22	7

Agreement ratings by public consultation participants about parental involvement

The responses to the first question clearly indicate that the vast majority of respondents (96%) agree or strongly agree that involvement of parents and guardians in program planning for their children enhances the programs. Despite this belief in the importance of parental involvement, a much smaller proportion (46%) agreed or strongly agreed that it is actually happening.

Those who attended the public consultation sessions and those who submitted written briefs were asked to comment on how parents could be more meaningfully involved in program planning and what barriers exist to such involvement. We classified their responses, along with all other input into the review process, into themes and present them below as "Strengths" (positive practices that are currently in place), "Barriers" (limitations and impediments to current practice), and "Suggested Strategies" (ideas to enhance parental involvement).

Strengths

“Teachers believe that a collaborative approach that includes parents is essential to the process of making informed decisions about student placements.”

- STF

Policy

We were told that policy for students with special needs, as set out in the Policy Manual, identifies the key roles of parents in developing and monitoring programs and services for their children. School boards are developing and using the legislative provision for local review of program and placement decisions. We heard that there is support for legislative changes that allow parents the right to appeal program and placement decisions made by boards of education.

Collaboration

It was clear from the responses that "good things happen" when parental cooperation is obtained. Schools are seen as increasingly open and responsive, and parents are more often asked to participate. It was reported that some school divisions are using a variety of collaborative arrangements to involve parents. Examples include participation in team meetings (e.g., MAPS), PPP teams, volunteer programs, collaborative interviews when hiring teacher associates, and parent councils.

Commitment

Respondents to the review told us that parents are knowledgeable about their children's needs and are active in advocating for their rights. We were told that there is a growing ability and acceptance by school staffs to use jointly understood planning processes that enhance the involvement of families. It was felt that families generally accept that the education system is trying to meet the special needs of their children.

Barriers

"We want to know that our children are joyfully included rather than grudgingly accommodated."

- parent

Consistency

Respondents told us that the extent of family involvement in program planning and evaluation differs across schools and school divisions. Many families are also distressed at the change in services they received during preschool years compared to services they received at the elementary level.

Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding

This theme was complex, involving issues of understanding on behalf of both educators and parents. We were told that some parents do not understand their child’s disability and the situation at school. This may lead to unrealistic expectations and desire for a quick fix. Cultural variables and language differences result in resistance toward traditional educational interventions. The vocabulary and processes of education and special education cause some parents to feel overwhelmed, confused, or uninvited. Many parents are uninformed and/or unsure about their rights and responsibilities in engaging the appeal process. Boards of education often have difficulty meeting the expectations of what quality programming means to a family. Some parents feel a lack of empathy on the part of educators.

We were told that differing philosophical points of view influence parental involvement. Participant feedback informed us that some parents are reluctant to become involved or make themselves readily available. In cases of behaviour problems, there is a need for parental involvement, but dysfunctional family systems prevent this involvement.

We were also told of balance problems (e.g., vocal parent, passive teacher or vis versa). Parents’ past experiences in the education system often limit ability to approach and relate to the education system.

“Unfortunately, the wording of policies governing parental involvement leaves this vital link in educational programming to the discretion of individual professionals.”
- LDAS

Communication Avenues

Review participants told us that there is a lack of information available to the parents. In some cases, there is a perception of lack of unbiased information. Many boards do not have mechanisms in place to inform families of available programs and services.

Leadership

Respondents told us that the language used in describing policy in the Policy Manual is not consistent and specific. We were also informed that there is often not an expectation that school divisions will involve parents in PPP development.

Funding

We heard that limitations in funding and resources for both families and schools affect family involvement. Teachers may be willing but unable to manage parent involvement due to the demands of lack of time for meetings and class size. Lack of parental resources such as time, transportation, and childcare limit involvement. We heard of instances where parents felt compelled to purchase services or programs that are not being provided by the schools.

"This type of decision-making, bereft of thoughtfulness, shocked and angered us."
- parent

Collaboration

Our theme analysis suggested a need to enhance teamwork processes. We were told that there is a lack of clarity about roles to be played by team members, and that some people are lacking in skills and abilities for collaboration.

Receptivity

A barrier to parental involvement relates to openness to change. School personnel were seen as locked into traditional ways of doing things. Some parents have felt the need to use external service agencies. In some cases, students do not want their parents involved. A further barrier to parental involvement was seen to be a lack of celebration of successes.

What are some avenues to improve what is happening now?

Suggested Strategies

Policy

Respondents suggested that SaskEd develop guidelines to support existing policy, and assist school divisions in creating strategies to facilitate ongoing parental engagement. We were told that policy should assist a change from the present "consenting" model, in which parents are asked to agree to decisions made by educators, to a "consulting" model, where parents are an integral part of the decision-making process. They commented that the Special Education Master Plan (SEMP) should become more of a working guide at the school level that promotes parent involvement. They told us that the SEMP must clearly define and outline the nature of parent involvement.

Collaboration

"Involvement empowers families"
- Public Consultation Meeting

Throughout the review we received the strong message that enhancing collaboration is seen as the most promising avenue to building participation of parents of children with special needs. Program planning needs to include all those involved with the child, working together to provide integrated, holistic services to children and families. A team approach is essential. Parents must be accepted as possessing valuable information about their child and involved as full and valued participants, from initial PPP planning through implementation, evaluation and monitoring of programs.

To build collaborative climates, school personnel need to establish the school as a non-threatening environment. All teachers should receive inservice on collaborative school-based teamwork. This would help to ensure that team roles and responsibilities become more clearly defined and understood, including the responsibilities of parents. A family liaison person should be in place in the school setting to facilitate parental involvement.

“Parents must be central to any information exchange, meetings, or communication that relates in anyway to their child’s program.”
- ECIP

Communication Avenues

Our participants suggested that there needs to be more frequent and regular interaction with parents. Schools should provide direction and nurture communication between home and school. An important goal should be to consult with and advise parents on an ongoing basis about available options. A special effort needs to be made to offer parents accurate information about program alternatives. We were told that information and education should be provided for families about philosophy, rights, responsibilities, roles, programs and services, how to advocate for their child, and how to access and work with human service personnel. There is a particular need to disclose rights of due process to parents. Development of a "Handbook for Parents" was suggested as a means to enhancing parent participation.

Representation

It was suggested that parents be represented in developing programs for their children at the school level, in setting school policy in the school division, and at the department level. The parental voice must always be represented in development of PPPs.

The suggestion was offered that there needs to be active child advocacy at all levels of the service system. Advocacy should involve the parent, student, and outside advocacy groups. Until the child can act on their own behalf, the parent should serve as an advocacy partner. It was suggested that involvement of advocate groups be encouraged at the school level. Local teams and support groups should be formed, with parents encouraged to act as advocates or coaches for other parents. The need to support the parent role in transition planning was emphasized. The suggestion was made that the knowledge of parents be enhanced regarding their advocacy role during transitions made by their child.

Funding

Respondents told us that increased funding is needed to provide the necessary services and programs for families. It was also felt that increased funding of ACCESS teams is needed to provide specialized support to schools and families in rural areas.

Vision

"What future should we build together?"

Input and feedback to the Committee during the review process offers a vision of the involvement of parent and guardians in the education of their children with diverse needs. The importance of parental involvement is recognized, valued, and encouraged. Both the provincial policy manual and the local plan provide clear statements of policy and practice for the involvement of parents/guardians in the education of their child with diverse needs. Professionals from education and, when necessary other agencies, work in partnership with parents in providing the best education possible for children. Parents and children are supported and encouraged to participate with school-based teams in all aspects of program planning and delivery.

"Parent Involvement" Themes
At-a-Glance

Strengths

- Policy
- Collaboration
- Commitment

Barriers

- Consistency
- Attitude, Awareness, & Understanding
- Communication Avenues
- Leadership
- Funding
- Collaboration
- Receptivity

Suggested Strategies

- Policy
- Collaboration
- Communication Avenues
- Representation
- Funding

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

- ACCESS:** Assistance, Collaboration, Consultation, & Evaluation Support Services – a provincial team of specialists seconded from school divisions to provide intensive inservice and individualized consultation for teachers on particular types of disabilities.
- accommodations:** specialized support and services that are provided to enable students with diverse needs to achieve learning expectations. This may include technological equipment, support staff and informal supports.
- adaptations:** adjustments to curriculum content, instructional practices, materials or technology, assessment strategies, and the learning environment made in accordance with the strengths, needs, and interests of the learner.
- Adaptive Dimension:** the concept of making adjustments in approved educational programs to accommodate diversity in student learning needs. It includes those practices the teacher undertakes to make curriculum, instruction, and the learning environment meaningful and appropriate for each student. Adaptations are made to help students achieve objectives of the course or program.
- ADHD:** attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- ADMs' Forum:** Assistant Deputy Ministers' working group on service integration. Included are Education, Health, Social Services, Justice, Municipal government, and Post-secondary Education.
- advocacy groups:** a non-profit organization whose mission is to advocate for and with individuals they represent, to secure and develop community-based services for the individuals they represent and their families, to support research leading to better outcomes that enhance the lives of the individuals they represent, and to promote public awareness, education and legislation.
- alternate schools:** an environment created to provide learning appropriate to the needs of students who experience difficulty in regular school systems.
- alternate courses:** courses that are changed beyond the limits of approved courses.
- Associated Entities Fund and Prevention & Support Grants:** funding components of Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children used to assist community-based organizations in enhancing the health and well-being of vulnerable children, youth and families through prevention and early intervention activities.
- At-risk children and youth:** vulnerable to the affects of adverse conditions which may negatively affect their learning.
- BD:** behaviour disorder
- bilingual communication:** form of communication which emphasizes competence in American Sign Language and English so that the child becomes part of both the hearing and deaf worlds.
- cascade of services:** educational services provided along a continuum and defined in terms of their restrictiveness in relation to the regular or mainstream setting. Students are given the opportunity to move sequentially between the program alternatives as their needs change.
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case management: the coordinating of services for a child or family to facilitate effective and efficient service delivery.

categorical placements: the practice of placing students with similar disabilities in self-contained classrooms or special schools.

CEC: Council for Exceptional Children

Challenges, Choices, Changes: a newsletter produced by the Saskatchewan Special Education Unit to share effective strategies and approaches with teachers to help them address the needs of diverse learners

Child Action Plan: the provincial partnership between government and communities which promotes and sustains an important emphasis on issues affecting children, youth and families, contributes to a greater awareness of these issues and encourages action across human services sectors and government departments.

Committee on Integration: a committee of the education partners struck in 1997 to study the issue around integration of students with special needs in classrooms.

Community Schools: specially funded schools that incorporate a comprehensive, preventative, culturally affirming, community-based approach to meet the diverse learning needs of at-risk and Indian and Métis children at the elementary level. Four key components of the school program include: the learning program, parent and community involvement, integrated services, and community development.

congregated settings: learning environments composed of individuals with disabilities.

continuum of placements model: a hierarchy of program delivery locations from least restrictive to most restrictive.

continuum of services model: a range of educational placements, programs, and supports provided to students with diverse needs to maximize integration.

DDP: designated disabled pupil

DDPF: designated disabled pupil fund

direct service: services and supports provided directly to the student.

Diversity series: research-based resources developed by educators for educators

EAPD: Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities

Early screening: the process of identifying young children who require specialized supports.

Early intervention: the necessary mental, physical, social and emotional supports that are developed and put in place for young children at-risk to prevent or lessen the need for more intrusive intervention later on.

ECIP: Early Childhood Intervention Program

Education Indicators Report: an annually published Provincial report that provides a profile of education in Saskatchewan.

Education Health Steering Committee: a current committee working on health issues in education.

Education partners: include Saskatchewan Education, Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; University of Regina; University of Saskatchewan

FAS/FAE: fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effect

FOG: foundation operating grant

FTE: full time teacher equivalent

high cost funding: funding provided to school divisions to support programming for designated disabled students

human services: Education, health, mental health, social services, justice, recreation, culture, and housing services that are provided within or outside of the schools by community or government agencies that contribute to the well-being of students and their families.

INAC: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

inclusion: the commitment to educate children in inclusive schools.

inclusive school: schools that embody effective principles and practices that coordinate and unify educational programs and supports in order that all children, including those with diverse needs, belong and can learn effectively.

indirect service delivery: services provided to those persons who provide services and supports to children.

informal supports: family, friends, volunteers, or local groups who provide support to children and families.

integrated case management: the coordination of services for a child or family to facilitate effective and efficient interagency services.

Integrated School-Linked Services: partnerships among school divisions, schools, their communities, Aboriginal organizations, and provincial and community human service agencies to address the complex and diverse needs of students and families at risk.

integration: a major strategy used to achieve an inclusive philosophy. Integration involves the practice of including special needs students in regular classrooms for part or all of the day.

interagency: a comprehensive model of service coordination involving departments and agencies from education, health, social services and justice.

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- intersectoral: a joint partnership of key stakeholders created to generate sustainable solutions by combining the distinct interests and resources of each partner. Key stakeholders usually include representatives from Social Services, Health, Justice, Education, Municipal Government, Culture and Recreation, Intergovernmental & Aboriginal Affairs, Saskatchewan Housing, Post Secondary Education & Skills Training, Canada/Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services, Métis Nation of Saskatchewan
- labeling: the practice of classifying students to a disability category according to common physical, cognitive or behavioural characteristics.
- LEADS: League of Education Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents
- LD: learning disabled
- LDAS: Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan
- learning assistance teacher: a professional educator, also known as a resource teacher, who provides a variety of direct and/or indirect supports to students of diverse needs and their teachers.
- least restrictive environment: the setting as similar as possible to that for students without exceptionalities in which a student with an exceptionality can be educated with appropriate supports provided. For most students, the least restrictive environment is a regular education classroom.
- low cost funding: funding provided to school divisions to support programming for students who have diverse learning needs but do not meet the designation criteria.
- mainstreaming: the practice of placing students with disabilities in regular education settings when they can meet traditional academic expectations with minimal assistance or when those expectations are not relevant.
- MAPS: multi-action planning strategy
- modified course: term used to describe an academic course that has been changed at the school or school division level and is approved by the Regional Director of Education.
- multidisciplinary team: a team comprised of education and human services personnel which develops and implements instructional and/or management strategies and problem-solves to coordinate resources and provide support for students with diverse needs.
- neighbourhood school: the school that students with disabilities would attend if they did not have an exceptionality.
- oral interpreters: a professional who assists individuals in understanding messages communicated between hearing individuals and those who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- OT/PT: occupational therapy/physical therapy
- paraprofessional: a non-certified staff member, also called a teacher assistant or teacher associate, employed to assist certified staff in carrying out education programs and otherwise helping in the instruction of students with disabilities.
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PIND: Provincial Interagency Network on Disabilities, a coalition of community based groups and organizations representing and serving persons with disabilities.

PPP: personal program plan

preschool programming: program developed by a multi-disciplinary team for preschool children who are experiencing developmental delay as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures in one or more of the areas of cognitive development physical development, communication development, social or emotional development and/or adaptive development.

prevention: primary – removing the risk factor before the disabling condition happens.
secondary – avoiding the disabling consequence after a risk factor has happened.
tertiary – minimizing the impact of a disabling condition on the individual.

progressive inclusion: the steady trend over time, from neglect to distal arrangements to special schools, to special classes in regular schools, to resource rooms, to inclusion in regular schools and classrooms.

RDACL: Regina and District Association for Community Living

Resource-based learning: a philosophy and accompanying practices in which a range of resources and media are used to foster self-directed learning.

SACL: Saskatchewan Association for Community Living

SASBO: Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials

SASC: Saskatchewan Association of School Councils

SaskEd: Saskatchewan Education

SASP: Saskatchewan Association of School Paraprofessionals

SCEP: Socialization Communication Education Program, which involves early intervention screening and therapeutic services.

SCN: Saskatchewan Communication Network

SEMP: Saskatchewan Education Master Plan

SERC: Special Education Review Committee

Shared Services: an organizational structure to provide program funding for specialized services such as educational psychologists and speech pathologists to students with diverse needs in rural areas. This model is based on the concept that school divisions could share services to achieve economies of scale in the provision of specialized services.

SIAST: Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

SIDRU: Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit

SNPF/SNP: Special Needs Program Fund/Special Needs Program

- SPARC: Saskatchewan Preschool Auditory Rehabilitation Centre
- SPDU: Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit
- SSTA: Saskatchewan School Trustees Association
- stakeholders: include parents, children, educators, aboriginal communities, human service providers, community organizations, and businesses.
- STF: Saskatchewan Teacher' Federation
- storefront school: an alternate school that takes the nature and location of the learning environment close to the child/youth.
- TBF/TBP: Targeted Behaviour Fund/Targeted Behaviour Program
- total communication: the simultaneous use of visual and auditory cues to enhance the deaf person's ability to develop language and communicate.
- transition: passage from one environment to another at key points from childhood to adulthood. This may include entering primary education, moving from grade to grade, moving from one school to another, and leaving school to move into environments that may include post-secondary education options, or community-based programs and activities.
- UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

Appendix C: Process Forms –

1. Call for Submissions

**Special Education Review
Call For Submissions**

The purpose of the Open Consultations will be to gather useful information, which will assist the Special Education Review Committee in making recommendations to the Minister of Education. The Committee is specifically directed to examine and report on the Terms of References (located on back of this form). The Committee is open to and will be considering all viewpoints presented.

Written Briefs

The panel will accept written briefs until April 15, 1999. They should not be longer than 10 - 15 double-spaced pages. The brief should include profile of the agency or individual, and contain strengths of the current system, issues, concerns and recommendations. Supporting attachments may be included. The brief may also include, but not be limited to, responses to the Terms of Reference: philosophy of special education, program delivery, funding and accountability, teacher training, and parent involvement. Written briefs may be presented at any time to the address below.

Executive Summaries

Executive Summaries, based on a written brief, may be orally delivered at the Open Consultations. These must provide an overview of the written brief including identification of the agency or individual involved. Summaries should be organized in point form and shall be 3 - 5 minutes in length. An overhead projector and a screen will be available to assist presenter. The panel may request further information or clarification and presenters will have an opportunity to respond to questions.

Requests to present orally must be forwarded in writing to Sandra Baldwin at the address below. All requests will receive a response from the Committee and a schedule for Executive Summaries will be forwarded to those presenters selected.

Written briefs do not have to be completed when the Executive Summaries are presented. All briefs must be received by April 15, 1999.

Special Education Review
Call for Submissions
Request to Present Oral Summary

Name of Organization: _____

Contact Person: _____

Address: _____ **Telephone:** _____

_____ **Fax:** _____

Date and Location to Present: _____

Please forward request to: Special Education Review Committee, P.O. Box 885, Davidson, SK, S0G 1A0.
Attention: Sandra M. Baldwin; Phone 306-567-2055, Fax 306-567-2878, e-mail sandra@dcd.sk.ca

2. Open Consultation Agenda

Special Education Review

Agenda for the Open Consultation Process

- 7:00 p.m. Welcome
 Overview of the Review Mandate
 Agenda for the Consultation Process
- 7:20 p.m. Interviewing Rounds Process
 Participants will be divided into groups of six; each group will collect data using a structured interview process. The process designed to ensure that each participant has an opportunity to provide feedback regarding each of the six aspects of the Special Education Review. The chairperson will provide the process works directions regarding how.
- 8:30 p.m. continuing the Dialogue: Small Groups
- 9:00 p.m. Presentation of Briefs
- 10:00 p.m. Adjournment

The process used in the open consultation provides opportunity for each participant to provide feedback to the Special Education Review in a fairly structured fashion. Should you feel as though you would like further input, three additional options exist:

1. To respond to the structured interview questions in more detail in writing and send them in to the Special Education Review Committee.
2. To respond to the "Continuing the Dialogue" questions in more detail in writing and also mail that in to the Special Education Review Committee.
3. To submit a written brief to the Special Education Committee before April 15, 1999.
All additional information can be forwarded to:

Special Education Review Committee
Attention: Sandra Baldwin
P.O. Box 696
Davidson, SK S0G 1A0
Fax: 306-567-2878
Phone: 306-567-2055

3. Sample of Structured Discussion Guide

TERM OF REFERENCE:

The foundational and philosophical basis of special education in Saskatchewan.

What is happening now?		What should happen?	Barriers	Recommendations you would make	
Strengths	Problems				To Whom

4. Framework for School Visits

Date:

School:

Division:

Region:

Principal:

Special Ed Teacher(s):

Teacher Assistant(s):

Classroom Teacher(s):

Student(s):

Parent (s):

Demographics: (Special Education Teacher)

- Number of students in school
- Number of designated high cost students
- Number of resource teachers
- Number of teacher assistants
- Number of students served (direct and indirect)
- Number of other personnel
- Central office support
- Shared services

**Describe your approach to services. What is good?
What needs enhancement?**

- a) Tell us about one of your successes:
- Why is it successful?
 - What barriers do you encounter?
 - What do you do to overcome it?
 - What facilitating factors can you identify?
 - How do they help?
- b) Tell us about one of your "challenges":
- Why is it a challenge?
 - What barriers do you encounter?
 - How do you try to address them?
 - What facilitating factors can you identify?
 - Why do they not work?
 - What would you do to be more successful?

c) What advice would you like to give the Committee in these areas:

- Philosophy
- Funding
- Program Delivery
- Resources
- Staffing
- Professional/Staff Development
- Parental Involvement
- Administrative Support
- Integrated Services
 - Case Management
 - Program
- Identification and Assessment Procedures

d) What one thing do you need to make things better?

If possible get or review print materials:

- Personal Program Plan
- Master Plan
- Protocols
- Policy

Appendix D: Consultations and Meetings with Groups

- Aboriginal Head Start
- Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Team
- Autism Resource Centre
- Biggar School Division No. 50
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- Charlton, Janice (consulted)
- Committee on Integration of Students with Special Needs in the Classroom
- Council of Exceptional Children
- Dahl, Harry (consulted)
- Director of Education Indian Head School Division No. 19, Murray Sanders
- Director of Education Scenic Valley School Division No. 117, Lynn Saas
- Dumelie, Gil (consulted)
- Early Childhood Intervention Program
- Employability Assistance and Skills Program, Larry Carlson & Jim Seiferling
- League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents.
- Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan
- McCreary, Gillian (consulted)
- Midwest Community Health Services, Cathy Palmer & Rosalie Tuchshere
- National Association for Child Development
- Provincial Interagency Network on Disabilities
- Regina Association of Community Living
- Regina Catholic School Division No. 81
- Regina Public School Division No. 4
- Regional Interagency Coordinators
- Saskatchewan Education, Regional Directors of Education
- Saskatchewan Education, Regional Superintendents of Children's Services
- Saskatchewan Abilities Council
- Saskatchewan Associate Deputy Minister of Education, Ken Horsman
- Saskatchewan Assistant Deputy Minister of Health, Marlene Smadu
- Saskatchewan Assistant Deputy Minister of Social Services, Bonnie Durnford
- Saskatchewan Association for School Councils
- Saskatchewan Association of Community Living
- Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials
- Saskatchewan Association of School Paraprofessionals
- Saskatchewan Association of Speech –Language Pathologists and Audiologists
- Saskatchewan Brain Injury Association
- Saskatchewan Children's Advocate Office
- Saskatchewan Concerned Parents for Children with Learning Disabilities Inc.
- Saskatchewan Council on Children
- Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Inc.
- Saskatchewan Deaf Children's Society
- Saskatchewan Department of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, Doreen Bradshaw & Mark Larocque
- Saskatchewan Deputy Minister of Education, Craig Dotson
- Saskatchewan Education, Aboriginal Education Unit, David Eaton
- Saskatchewan Education, Curriculum and Instruction Branch, Margaret Lipp
- Saskatchewan Education, Planning, Evaluation, and Children's Services Branch
- Saskatchewan Education, Special Education Unit
- Saskatchewan Educational Psychologist Association
- Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre
- Saskatchewan Office of Disability Issues
- Saskatchewan Preschool Auditory Rehabilitation Centre
- Saskatchewan School Trustees Association
- Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation
- Saskatoon Catholic School Division No. 20
- Saskatoon Public School Division No. 13
- Special Education Coordinator, Indian Head and Scenic Valley School Divisions. Pat Lyster.
- University of Regina
- University of Saskatchewan
- Walker, Keith (consulted)
- Watkinson, Ailsa (consulted)
- Working Committee on the Administration of Medications and other Health-related Services in Schools
- Zimmer, Jerry. (consulted)

Appendix E: Written Briefs Received

- A.G. Bell Association. Saskatoon
- Aboriginal Head Start
- Achilles, Sheila. Saskatoon
- Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Team, Regina
- Ashton, Kenda & Ken. Regina Beach
- Autism Resource Centre
- Barlas, Anna. Saskatoon
- Barrington, Marilyn. Saskatoon
- Battlefords and Area FAS/FAE Project, North Battleford
- Battlefords Early Childhood Intervention Program. North Battleford
- Bayduza, Audrey. Saskatoon
- Biggar School Division No. 50. Biggar
- Birt, Helen. Foam Lake
- Bissky, Laverne. Saskatoon
- Borderland Local Teachers' Association. Rockglen
- Borderland School Division No. 68. Rockglen
- Boryski, Paul. Regina
- Brahmhatt, Sharon. Downey, California
- Brantnell, Anne J. Regina
- Buffalo Plains School Division No. 21, Administrators and Special Education Teachers, Regina
- CH.A.D.D. Canada of Regina. Regina
- Challenges Occupational Therapy Clinic. Prince Albert
- Chapple, Dorothy. Saskatoon
- Cheetham, Darla. Saskatoon
- Cherwoniak, Karen, Bill Crowter, Audrey Gronsdahl, Dr. Dave Hastings, Maureen Jolly, Dr. Paul Pabelo, Joyce Phillips, Diane Quintal & Duncan South
- Christianson, Shala. Saskatoon
- Chubb, Dennis. Saskatoon
- Community Centre for Education and Employment Training. Saskatoon
- Cormier, Edith. Regina
- Council for Exceptional Children
- Cowan, Scott & Jan. Saskatoon
- Creighton School Division No. 111, Creighton
- Curriculum and Instruction Branch, Saskatchewan Education
- Cymbalisty, Darlene. Saskatoon
- Daugela, Edith.
- Daugela, Margaret. Saskatoon
- DesJardins, Eleanor. Regina
- Dittrick, Janet. Saskatoon
- Dittrick, Kenneth. Saskatoon
- Donaldson, Marilyn. Saskatoon
- Dumelie, Gil. Regina
- Earl, Marlene. Martensville
- Early Childhood Intervention Program Saskatchewan, Inc. Saskatoon
- Education Workers' Steering Committee, CUPE. Regina
- Ekdahl, Bonnie & Carl. Regina
- Ekdahl, Bradley. Regina
- Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities
- Erickson, John. Moose Jaw
- Estevan School Division No. 95, Estevan
- Eston-Elrose School Division No. 33. Elrose
- Family Resource Centre. Moose Jaw
- Faulds, Janet
- Forest, Shannon
- Franklin, Lorne & Rose. Saskatoon
- Golden Plains School Division #124. Lafleche
- Gore-Hickman, Dr. Rick
- Gorst, Janice. Meadow Lake
- Gossen, Judith. Saskatoon
- Gray, Jennifer. Regina
- Gray, John & Erin. Regina
- Gray, Ron & Judy. Wawota
- Greg, Plosz. Silton
- Grozell, Larry & Joan. Saskatoon
- Gunnlaugson, Gladius. Saskatoon

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- Harvey, James and Helen. Saskatoon
 - Heintz, Dallas & Kathy. Saskatoon
 - Hersikorn, Shari. Meadow Lake
 - Hnatiuk, Tony & Eva. Saskatoon
 - Holman, Jane. Regina
 - Indian Head School Division No. 19. Indian Head
 - Johnston, Karen. Prince Albert
 - Kalk, Shirley. Buffalo Narrows
 - Karwacki, Grant. Saskatoon
 - Kelleher, Jackie. Aberdeen
 - Kennedy, Deena. Foam Lake
 - Kettel, Nick and Heather. Moose Jaw
 - Kindersley School Division No. 34. Kindersley
 - Krentz, Les & Jo Brown. Saskatoon
 - Kunz, Larry & Debra. St. Gregor
 - Kyle Composite School. Kyle
 - LandsWest School Division No. 123, Resource Room Teachers. Wilkie
 - Lavergne, Paulette & Lee Fuller, Saskatoon
 - League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents
 - Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan, Board of Directors'. Saskatoon
 - Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan, Regina Chapter. Regina
 - Lechman, Brenda. Saskatoon
 - Les `ecoles fransaskoises, Regina
 - Lloydminister Early Childhood Intervention Program. Lloydminister
 - Luchinski, Roberta. Radville
 - Lukan, Michael & Laurianne. Saskatoon
 - MacDonald, Debra and Jay. Regina
 - Mason, David
 - Mathiason, Sharon. Saskatoon
 - Matthews, Dr. Peter C. Saskatoon
 - McCann, Mary. Saskatoon
 - McKnight, Deloise & Laurie Semenoff. Saskatoon
 - Meadow Lake School Division No. 66. Meadow Lake
 - Melfort School Division No.100. Melfort
 - Moosomin School Division No. 9. Moosomin
 - National Association for Child Development. Quill Lake
 - Nergard, Raymond & Kathy. Bengough
 - Nesdole, Evelyn. Saskatoon
 - Neufeld, Vicki. North Battleford
 - North Central Health District Early Childhood Intervention Team
 - North East Regional Association for Community Living. Porcupine Plain
 - North West Catholic School Division No. 16 North Battleford
 - Northern Lights School Division No. 113. LaRonge
 - Olson, Teddi. Yorkton
 - Otolaryngology Section of the Saskatchewan Medical Association. Saskatoon
 - Ottenbreit, Randy and Deb
 - Outlook School Division No. 32. Outlook
 - Over the Rainbow Preschool. Saskatoon
 - P.J. Gillen Elementary School. Esterhazy
 - Panchyk, Sheryn. Strasbourg
 - Parkland Early Childhood Intervention Program. Yorkton
 - Patterson, Pat. Saskatoon
 - Phillips, Sandra. Prince Albert
 - Planning, Evaluation, and Children's Services Branch, Saskatchewan Education
 - Potashville School Division No. 80. Esterhazy
 - Prairie West School Division No. 75. Swift Current
 - Prince Albert Early Childhood Intervention Program. Prince Albert
 - Provincial Interagency Network on Disabilities
 - Quintal, Diane. Saskatoon
 - Racette, Phillip. LaRonge
 - Ratke, Ben. Saskatoon
 - Regier, Christin. Saskatoon
 - Regina and District Association for Community Living. Regina
 - Regina Catholic Schools No 81. Regina
 - Regina Health District, The Women and Children's Portfolio. Regina
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- Regina Public School Teachers' Association. Regina
 - Regina School Division No. 4. Regina
 - Region #6 LEADS Special Education Brief Committee
 - Region 2 Supervisors' and Consultants' Group
 - Regional Directors of Education
 - Regional Superintendents of Children's Services.
 - Reifferscheid, N. Gull Lake
 - Robertson, Dr. Gladene. Saskatoon
 - Rosetown School Division No. 43. Rosetown
 - Ross, Janet. Regina
 - Roth, Terry & Laurette. Carlyle
 - Ruest, Agnes M. Saskatoon
 - Saskatchewan Abilities Council Inc.
 - Saskatchewan Abilities Council, Regina Branch. Regina
 - Saskatchewan Abilities Council, Saskatoon Branch. Saskatoon
 - Saskatchewan Association for Community Living, Prince Albert Branch. Prince Albert
 - Saskatchewan Association for Community Living
 - Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres. Saskatoon
 - Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials. Saskatoon
 - Saskatchewan Association of School Councils
 - Saskatchewan Association of School Paraprofessionals
 - Saskatchewan Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists
 - Saskatchewan Association of Visual Language Interpreters, Inc. Regina
 - Saskatchewan Brain Injury Association
 - Saskatchewan Cerebral Palsy Association. Saskatoon
 - Saskatchewan Children's Advocate Office
 - Saskatchewan Concerned Parents for Children with Learning Disabilities Inc. Prince Albert
 - Saskatchewan Council on Children
 - Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Society. Regina
 - Saskatchewan Deaf Children's Society, Inc. Saskatoon
 - Saskatchewan Fetal Alcohol Support Network, Inc.
 - Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission
 - Saskatchewan Office of Disability Issues
 - Saskatchewan Preschool Auditory Rehabilitation Centre
 - Saskatchewan School Trustees Association
 - Saskatchewan Social Services, Child Day Care Division. Regina
 - Saskatchewan Social Services, Special Placements Committee. Yorkton
 - Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation
 - Saskatoon (East) School Division No. 41. Saskatoon
 - Saskatoon Association for Community Living. Saskatoon
 - Saskatoon Catholic School Division No. 20. Saskatoon
 - Saskatoon Downtown Youth Centre Inc./EGADZ, Youth Centre. Saskatoon
 - Saskatoon Public School Division, Special Education Report on the Education of Children Who are Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing. Saskatoon
 - Saskatoon Public School Division. Saskatoon
 - Saskatoon Society for Autism Inc. Saskatoon
 - Scenic Valley School Division No. 117. Neudorf.
 - SCEP Centre. Regina
 - Schellenberg, Gale. Saskatoon
 - Schindelka, Bernice. Saskatoon
 - Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan. Regina
 - Schmiedge, Margot. Regina
 - Shamrock School Division No. 38, Shamrock
 - Simmermon, Lisa and Brian Johnson, Regina
 - Smith, Corey. Saskatoon
 - Smith, Orleen
 - South Saskatchewan Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Team. Regina
 - South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre, Regina
 - SouthEast Early Childhood Intervention Program. Carlyle
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- Special Education Unit, Saskatchewan Education
 - Sperling, David & Rebecca. Kerrobert.
 - Stang, Bev and Tarcy Stang. Saskatoon
 - Steinke, Sheldon & Shalila, Lanigan
 - Stewart, Elisabeth M. Saskatoon
 - Strand, Linda
 - Stratyчук, Brad. Saskatoon
 - Stromberg, Raylene. Saskatoon
 - Stuhr, Christian. Swift Current
 - Sulz, Margaret. Avonlea
 - Tavener, Sandra. Martensville
 - Taylor, Jacquie
 - Temple-Jones, Jan. Nipawin
 - Thickett, Dave & Vivian. Meadow Lake
 - Thompson, Lois
 - Tiefenbach, Karl & Kathy. Regina
 - Tisdale School Division No. 53. Tisdale
 - University of Regina, Regina
 - University of Saskatchewan. Saskatoon
 - Wadena School Division No. 46. Wadena
 - White, Wendy. Saskatoon
 - Wiebe, Geraldine
 - Wilkie, Arlene
 - Wilson, Anne
 - Yorkdale School Division No. 36, Board of Education, Yorkton
 - Yorkdale School Division No. 36, Special Education Personnel. Yorkton
 - Yorkton Big Brothers and Sisters Assoc. Yorkton
 - Young, Shelley. Saskatoon
 - Zentner, Roxanne. Saskatoon
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Appendix F: Attendance at School Division Forums

Saskatoon Forum

- Battlefords School Division
- Biggar School Division
- Davidson School Division
- Landswest School Division
- Les `ecoles fransaskoises
- Meadow Lake School Division
- Rosetown School Division
- Saskatchewan Valley School Division
- Saskatoon West School Division
- Tisdale School Division
- Wakaw School Division

Regina Forum

- Estevan Catholic School Division
- Indian Head School Division
- Moose Jaw Public School Division
- Moose Jaw RCSSD
- Moosomin School Division
- Regina (East) School Division
- Scenic Valley School Division
- Thunder Creek School Division
- Weyburn Catholic School Division
- Weyburn Central School Division

Attendance

Teachers:	35
Teacher Assistants:	17
Parents:	19
Directors:	16
Principals:	20
Resource/Special Education Teachers:	20
Special Education Coordinators:	13
<u>Trustees:</u>	<u>14</u>
 Total	 154

Appendix G: Schools Visited by Committee Members

- Biggar Elementary School, Biggar, Biggar School Division No.50
 - Cando Central School, Cando, Biggar School Division No.50
 - Carlton Comprehensive High School, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan Rivers School Division No.119
 - Confederation Park Elementary School, Saskatoon, Saskatoon Public School Division No.13
 - Eyebrow School, Eyebrow, Davidson School Division No. 31
 - Grenfell Elementary School, Grenfell, Scenic Valley School Division No. 117
 - Hepburn School, Hepburn, Saskatchewan Valley School Division No. 49
 - Kamsack Comprehensive Institute, Kamsack, Kamsack School Division No.35
 - Kenaston School, Kenaston, Davidson School Division No. 31
 - L. P. Miller Comprehensive School, Nipawin, Nipawin School Division No.61
 - Marshall School, Marshall, Battle River School Division No. 60
 - Norquay High School, Norquay, Crystal Lakes School Division No.120
 - P.J. Gillen Elementary School, Esterhazy, Potashville School Division No. 80
 - St. Anne Elementary School, Saskatoon, St. Paul's R.C.S.S.D. No.20
 - Tisdale Elementary School, Tisdale, Tisdale School Division No.53
 - Valley Manor Elementary School, Martensville, Saskatchewan Valley School Division No. 49
 - Walter Murray Collegiate, Saskatoon, Saskatoon School Division No.13
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Appendix H: Resource Materials

- Achilles, C., Finn, J., & Bain, H. (1998). Using class size to reduce the equity gap. *Educational Leadership*, 55, 40-43.
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