

Chapter 3

Section 3.02

Education of Aboriginal Students

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Follow-Up on Section 4.05, 2014 Annual Report

In November 2015, the Committee held a public hearing on our 2014 follow-up to our 2012 audit of Education of Aboriginal Students. The Committee tabled a report on its hearing in the Legislature in March 2016. The full report can be found at www.ontla.on.ca/committee-proceedings/committee-reports/EducationAboriginalStudents.

The Committee made six recommendations and asked the Ministry of Education (Ministry) to report back by the end of July 2016. The Ministry formally responded to the Committee on July 20, 2016. A number of issues raised by the Committee were similar to the audit observations in our 2012 audit and 2014 follow-up. The status of the Committee's recommendations is shown in **Figure 1**. **Figure 2** shows the recommendations and the status details

that are based on responses from the Ministry, and our review of the information provided.

The Committee's recommendations primarily required that the Ministry provide the Committee with updated information on outcomes, Ministry processes and activities in place to improve outcomes for Indigenous students. Most of the Committee's recommendations have been fully implemented. The recommendation for the latest available results of Indigenous student achievement will be fully implemented in fall 2017 when the Ministry releases the results for the 2013/14 and 2015/16 school years (results for the 2014/15 school year were not available due to labour disruptions) in its third progress report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework.

Figure 1: Status of Actions Recommended in November 2015 Committee Report

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

	# of Actions Recommended	Status of Actions Recommended			
		Fully Implemented	In Process of Being Implemented	Little or No Progress	Will Not Be Implemented
Recommendation 1	1		1		
Recommendation 2	1	1			
Recommendation 3	1	1			
Recommendation 4	1	1			
Recommendation 5	1	1			
Recommendation 6	1	1			
Total	6	5	1	0	0
%	100	83	17	0	0

Figure 2: Committee Recommendations and Detailed Status of Actions Taken

Prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 1 The Ministry provide the Committee with its most recent results of the Indigenous student achievement gap. Status: In the process of being implemented by fall 2017.</p>	<p>The educational achievement of Indigenous students is measured using the Provincial Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAQO) test results for reading, writing and mathematics in Grades 3, 6, 9 and 10.</p> <p>The latest publicly available results of Indigenous student achievement cover the 2011/12 school year and were included in the Ministry's 2013 Progress Report, entitled <i>A Solid Foundation: Second Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework</i>. This report contained baseline data for achievement results among self-identified Indigenous students.</p> <p>The Ministry advised that the results for the 2013/14 and 2015/16 school years will be published in the third progress report on the implementation framework in fall 2017. (EQAQO scores for the 2014/15 school year were not available due to labour disruptions.)</p> <p>From the 2011/12 to 2013/14 school years, EQAQO results for self-identified Indigenous students have improved in at least five of the nine EQAQO assessment indicators. In addition, the gap between self-identified Indigenous students and all students combined has narrowed in at least two of the nine EQAQO assessment indicators.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 The Ministry provide the Committee with an update on its discussions with Aboriginal partners and other education stakeholders aimed at setting measurable student achievement targets. Status: Fully implemented.</p>	<p>The Ministry informed us that student-achievement targets for Indigenous students are the same as those for all students: an 85% high-school-graduation rate within five years of starting high school and a 75% success rate on elementary EQAQO assessments.</p> <p>In the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework Implementation Plan, the Ministry established 10 performance measures to monitor and track progress in four priority areas: using data to support student achievement; supporting students; supporting educators; and engagement and awareness-building. The Ministry has not established targets for these performance measures.</p> <p>The Ministry has engaged Indigenous and education-sector partners through the Minister's Advisory Council on First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education (Advisory Council), and the Minister's Advisory Council on First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Working Group (Working Group). According to the Ministry, the Advisory Council and Working Group provide a forum for feedback on Ministry initiatives and raise issues related to the education of Indigenous people in Ontario's publicly funded school system. They also seek to arrive at mutually acceptable solutions to support student achievement and well-being, and to help close the achievement gap. The Advisory Council had requested to be involved in the development of the Ministry's third progress report on the implementation framework. In early 2016, a subcommittee of the Working Group was created to "collect certain data and obtain input to inform the development of the third progress report and the framework implementation plan." Discussions held up to that point dealt with identification of appropriate performance measures for the framework implementation plan, information needed to assess performance measures, and possible ways to collect it.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>The Ministry provide the Committee with a summary of its report-back processes that ensure funds are spent for their intended purposes.</p> <p>Status: Fully implemented.</p>	<p>Beginning in 2014, the Ministry required all school boards to develop a Board Action Plan on First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education. The objective of these plans was to identify the activities that boards would undertake to support the strategies and actions identified in the framework implementation plan. The Ministry advised that funding is provided to boards to support the activities outlined in the action plans.</p> <p>The Ministry provided \$4.9 million in the 2014/15 school year and \$5.6 million in 2015/16 to support board action plans. This funding was outside of the Grant for Student Needs (GSN), the main funding to support elementary and secondary school operations. Funding to support board action plans is flowed to boards in three instalments—60% at the time an agreement is signed, 20% when the Ministry receives and approves an interim financial report, and 20% when the Ministry receives and approves a final report. The Ministry analyzes the interim and final reports to ensure that boards are making progress toward meeting the strategies and actions identified in the action plans, and that funds are being used appropriately. In assessing the action plans, the Ministry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensures that interim and final reports outline in detail the activities school boards have implemented (including the dates of events, the number of participants, board and community partners, and the initiation and progress of work to date), and that spending reflects implementation and aligns with the funding provided to the boards; • reviews program indicators, outputs and evidence-based outcomes for the activities listed; • disburses payments according to the transfer-payment agreement if there is sufficient evidence that work is under way or complete, and that spending aligns with the funding provided; • may hold back or reduce payments in cases where analysis indicates that progress is not being made in accordance with the action plan and transfer-payment agreement; and • collects refund payments from boards if, upon review of final reports, the funding provided for activities outlined in action plans was not fully spent. <p>For the 2016/17 school year, funding to support board action plans will be allocated through GSN funding. Funding for board plans totalled \$6 million, and the boards will have to submit their action plans to the Ministry by September 30, 2016, their interim reports by April 28, 2017, and their final reports by August 31, 2017.</p> <p>Additional funding for Indigenous students is provided through a supplement to the GSN called the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Supplement, and through other education program grants. (See response to Recommendation 4 for a list of the supplements and other grants.) The accountability and reporting framework for the GSN requires boards to report on their intended and/or actual use of the funding in their financial submissions—estimates, revised estimates and financial statements—to the Ministry, with additional financial reporting requirements for individual supplements/grants. For example, for the Native Languages Allocation, boards report the number of elementary pupils enrolled in the program and the number of credits that secondary students take. For the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Studies Allocation, boards report the number of credits that secondary students are enrolled for. And for the Per-Pupil Amount Allocation for 2016/17, boards will be required to show that at least \$82,760 of the funding is spent on the salary and benefits of the person dedicated to support implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework. They will also have to confirm that any remainder has been used to support the framework through their action plan, with any unspent funds carried forward to the following school year. In future years, it is expected that any money allocated to support the implementation of strategies and actions identified in board action plans must be spent within the school year.</p> <p>In addition, boards are required to report how they allocate this supplement to cover expenses, specifically reporting on how much of the funding is used for classroom expenses such as teachers, teacher assistants and textbooks, and non-classroom expenses such as co-ordinators and consultants. The Ministry uses this financial reporting to monitor how boards spend the funding to ensure it is used for intended purposes.</p>

Committee Recommendation	Status Details		
<p>Recommendation 4 The Ministry provide a briefing note to the Committee highlighting what they believe is the funding gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students that includes both qualitative and quantitative data. Status: Fully implemented.</p>	<p>The Ministry funds school boards through several grants that take into account such unique needs as a board's demographics, individual school locations, specific program take-up, special education, and the achievement gap of both the individual board and the community profile within the board.</p> <p>All students in Ontario's provincially-funded school system, including Indigenous students, are funded at the same level. The Ministry also provides additional funding to provincially-funded school boards to target the specific needs and priorities of Indigenous students. Funding is delivered primarily through GSN transfer-payment agreements. Within the GSN is targeted funding, known as the First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Supplement, to improve the achievement and well-being of Indigenous students, and to close the achievement gap between Indigenous students and all students combined. The supplement is designed to support programs for Indigenous students, as outlined in the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework. The supplement includes a component based on Indigenous identification derived from either the Census or self-identification by Indigenous students. The funding formula for the Board Action Plan Allocation was updated in 2016/17 to give greater weight to components that use voluntary, confidential Indigenous student self-identification data. In 2016/17, The Ministry also updated the Per-Pupil Amount Allocation with data from the 2011 National Household Survey.</p> <p>The Ministry provides additional targeted investments for the education of Indigenous students through the Education Programs-Other (EPO).</p> <p>Total additional funding in each of the last three years for the education of Indigenous students is summarized in the table below:</p>		
	2014/15 (\$ million)	2015/16 (\$ million)	2016/17 (\$ million)
Funding through the Grants for Student Needs, First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Supplement			
Native Languages Allocation	7.6	9.4	9.9
First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Studies Allocation	18.7	21.4	24.8
Per-Pupil Amount Allocation	20.8	20.6	23.4
Board Action Plans on First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Allocation	through EPO	through EPO	6.0
Education Programs-Other (EPO)			
Board Action Plans on First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education	4.9	5.6	through GSN
Other EPO funding for Indigenous education	6.0	7.3	7.2
Total additional funding for Indigenous education	58.0	64.3	71.3

Committee Recommendation	Status Details
<p>Recommendation 5 The Ministry provide the Committee with an update on its tripartite agreement discussions. Status: Fully implemented.</p>	<p>In April 2013, the Ministry established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Nishnawbe Aski Nation and the federal government committing the parties to work together to improve educational outcomes for First Nation students in First-Nation-operated and provincially funded schools. The five priority areas established in the MOU were improving student support services, enhancing curriculum, exploring ways to improve governance and administration, enhancing human resources, and boosting parental participation. Specific activities undertaken in response to this agreement include a successful funding proposal in September 2015 for \$91,000 under the Strong Schools, Successful Students Initiative of the Education Partnerships Program to support a best-practices conference; a forum to discuss leadership, board governance, student-achievement initiatives and special-education funding; a transfer-payment agreement signed in January 2016 outlining activities to be undertaken to achieve the five priority areas in the MOU; and a roundtable discussion on student transitions from remote communities, held in July 2016.</p> <p>In January and May of 2016, the Ministry held teleconferences with representatives of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, and Grand Council Treaty #3 (GCT3) to negotiate and draft a MOU and joint action plan. Priority areas identified included establishing a GCT3-specific education resource centre; developing tuition agreements, transition plans, early-learning plans and curriculum; planning professional development opportunities; and creating linkages to the provincial education system. MOU negotiations with the federal government and GCT3 were ongoing at the time of the follow-up. The Ministry expected to have a signed MOU in place by March 2017.</p> <p>The Ministry is also working with the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians to develop and finalize a MOU and Joint Action Plan. The Ministry anticipates that the MOU will be finalized and ready for signature in December 2016. Priority areas to be addressed include language and culture; relationship building; and transitions.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6 The Ministry provide the Committee with a summary of how the various board strategies collected by the Ministry are being used to improve educational outcomes for First Nation students transitioning to the provincial education system. Status: Fully implemented.</p>	<p>For the 2015/16 fiscal year, 40 boards identified transition programs under way in their communities, including providing dedicated staff to support transitioning students; early-years transition programs to ease kindergarten transitions; establishing elementary-to-secondary-school student mentors; and data-sharing at Native Advisory Committee meetings where students share their transition experiences. In addition, through their school-board action plans, boards report to the Ministry the evidence-based outcomes they have achieved for each of the 16 school-board strategies outlined in the First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework Implementation Plan. For example, one board reported that in relation to the strategy to “increase opportunities for the participation of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students in student voice, student engagement, and peer-to-peer mentoring activities,” it provided a volunteering opportunity to 25 students from local First Nation communities to participate in a “Gathering at the Rapids” meeting in partnership with Algoma University. Another board reported that an Elder and Cultural Teachers Residence Program related to the strategy of “continuing to work with local First Nations to implement successful Education Service Agreements and to support successful transitions for First Nation students” had highly positive reviews from students and staff.</p> <p>Between May and June 2016, the Ministry’s Indigenous Education Office hosted regional meetings with education stakeholders and Indigenous partners. These meetings provided an opportunity for boards to share best practices and lessons learned in the implementation of their board action plans.</p>