

# ***Highlights***

## **Review of Prince Edward Island's Provincial Common Assessment Program**

### ***Building on Strengths; Enhancing the Program***

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## Introduction

One sign of a successful organization is that it periodically reviews the effectiveness of its practices. Since the Provincial Common Assessment Program had been in place for more than 10 years, the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture believed it to be an opportune time to conduct an external, independent review. Following a competitive procurement process, the Government of PEI selected RMJ Assessment to review the assessment program. The Review provided an opportunity to take note of the accomplishments of the past decade while examining the overall approach to student assessments to stay current with best practices and be reflective of the needs of Island learners.

Data and information for the Assessment Program Review were derived from several sources, including interviews with Department staff, data and document reviews, Canadian and international jurisdictional scans, stakeholder interviews, focus-group discussions, an online survey, and written submissions.

## Overview of Recommendations

The Provincial Common Assessment Program benefits the province in many ways:

- Educators, students, and parents/guardians receive information about individual student learning progress, which can be used to improve teaching and learning.
- Stakeholders obtain information about how students are performing across the province, which supports accountability.
- The Department, school boards, and educators have access to valid, reliable, and comparable information about student learning to inform/guide adjustments to curriculum, teacher professional development, and appropriate interventions for student learning.

Overall, the Review confirmed that the Provincial Common Assessment Program is functioning well, and the current good practices provide a strong foundation upon which to build and refine the Program. RMJ Assessment made 30 recommendations (including sub-recommendations) and 32 suggestions for the Department's consideration, which, when implemented, will further strengthen overall practices and procedures and enhance the value of the Assessment Program for all stakeholders, especially Island learners. The Review Team provided the Department with numerous technical recommendations and suggestions associated with assessment design and development. Although the Suggestions for Consideration and technical advice are not included in the *Highlights* document, they may be accessed in the full report titled *Final Report: Review of Prince Edward Island's Provincial Common Assessment Program* (December 14, 2018) at:

[https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/eelc\\_assessment\\_review\\_report.pdf](https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/eelc_assessment_review_report.pdf).

Following are selected recommendations, which are organized by assessment themes and based upon stakeholder input, research evidence, standards of best practice, provincial assessment purposes, as well as practical considerations.

## **Subjects and Grades Assessed**

Recommendations:

- Continue to administer provincial Literacy assessments to students in Grades 3 and 6.
- Continue to administer the Reading assessment at the Grade 3 level and the Reading and Writing assessments at the Grade 5 level for French Immersion students.
- Continue to administer provincial Mathematics assessments to students in Grades 3, 6, 9, and 11.
- Reintroduce a Language Arts assessment in Grade 9 or a Literacy assessment in Grade 10.

## **Census versus Sample Assessments**

Recommendations:

- Continue to administer census assessments for the Grades 3, 6, and 9 (or 10) assessments.
- Continue to administer the Grade 11 Mathematics assessments to all students enrolled in the given Grade 11 mathematics courses.

## **Timing and Frequency of Assessments**

Recommendation:

- Continue to administer Provincial Common Assessments to students on an annual basis toward the end of the school year (and each semester for semestered courses).

## **Value and Use of Data**

Recommendation:

- Develop a plan to assist all stakeholders to understand the intended purpose(s) of the Provincial Common Assessments, the intent of the various reports, how the reports can and should be interpreted, and what follow-up steps can be taken to ensure improvement is actioned.

## **Adaptations and Exemptions**

Recommendations:

- Establish firm guidelines for student exemptions on Provincial Common Assessments and monitor their implementation to ensure they are followed appropriately.
- Explore the feasibility of expanding available adaptations for students taking provincial assessments.
- Consult with educators to establish clear guidelines regarding what teaching aids may remain or be removed/hidden during provincial assessments.

## **Participation in National and International Assessments**

Recommendation:

- Continue provincial participation in the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

## Information and Communication

Recommendations:

- Document all assessment-related processes (e.g., item development, assessment construction, marking, data analysis, and reporting).
- Develop, provide in-servicing on, and publish (at least on the Department's website) a Framework document that includes information about
  - purpose(s) of the provincial assessments;
  - differences between large-scale and classroom assessments and the complementary nature of assessment for learning, assessment as learning, and assessment of learning;
  - alignment with provincial curriculum and current research on assessment in the given subjects;
  - definition of the curriculum content that will/will not be assessed;
  - what adaptations and special provisions are/cannot be provided; and
  - how the assessments are developed, administered, marked, and reported on.
- Develop a plan that provides for regular communication (and in a variety of ways, tailored to the audiences) with all stakeholders on assessment-related issues and topics.

## Human Resources

Recommendations:

- Review priorities regarding staffing needs of the Achievement and Accountability unit of the Department.
- Hire French Immersion staff to develop and manage the primary and elementary assessments.

## Summary

The recommendations to continue administering the assessments annually to all students and for all groups, according to the current model, are based on:

- general support expressed in the interviews, focus groups, and online survey;
- research/jurisdictional scans, which indicate PEI's Assessment Program is consistent with models adopted by most Canadian jurisdictions and notable countries internationally;
- continued relevancy of the original purposes of the Assessment Program;
- standards of best practice in which the assessment model should be aligned with assessment purposes; and
- practical considerations of school disruption, measurement error, and cost associated with random sampling versus census (all students) assessment.

RMJ Assessment's Review Team, Dr. Richard Jones, Dr. Pierre Brochu, Dr. Joanne Reid, and Sandy DiLena, would like to acknowledge and thank the many hundreds of the province's students, parents/guardians, classroom teachers, principals, education stakeholders, and members of the public who contributed to this important project.

The Review confirmed that Provincial Common Assessment Program is functioning well and provides a strong foundation upon which to make further refinements. When the recommendations and suggestions are implemented, with the engagement of all stakeholders, a much-enhanced Assessment Program will be realized.