

# MANITOBA'S COMMISSION ON KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 12 EDUCATION

## Seven Oaks School Division

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### Long Term Vision

- The long term vision for Manitoba's education system must continue to reflect broad goals rather than narrow targets. Better outcomes for our students and the elimination of achievement gaps matters, but if the pursuit of those goals leads to reduced student engagement and the abandonment of important goals like fostering creativity, citizenship and health, opportunities for students will be diminished, they will be less engaged and we will not realize the improvement we are striving for.
- Gaps in outcomes and achievement for Indigenous children, children in care and children affected by poverty must be narrowed and eliminated. This is the greatest challenge facing us. Poverty and racism affect outcomes but they do not determine them. Schools can't do everything but they can do something. We need to clearly understand what we can do that makes a difference and we need to focus on doing those things really well.
- Enhance the capacity of the system to improve through program renewal, innovation and school reorganization. Evidence and data needs to be linked to program and practice. Practices that are dated, not supported by evidence and research, and ineffective need to be identified and changed. Schools and programs need to be reorganized to reflect shifting demographics, societal change and current evidence and research.
- Value Manitoba's diversity as a strength by supporting language programs, reflecting diversity in staffing and curriculum and by acting on the Commission on Truth and Reconciliations Calls to Action.

### Student Learning

- Manitoba should embrace key elements of successful systems like Finland (a common curriculum with high expectations for all learners, student services that identify and remedy learning difficulties early, inclusion and valuing the professionalism of teachers).
- We should rethink vocational education transitioning from early entry (age 14) lab based programs to late entry (age 16) cooperative internship programs. This will provide students with a stronger academic base, more educated choice, greater flexibility and be more current with industry standards and needs. It will cost less, be more successful and contribute to workforce development.

- Reduce or eliminate approaches to education that segregate students and lower expectations for them. All students should have access to quality teaching, healthy peers and rich engaging learning opportunities. Students without advantages need schooling that provides advantage.
- Expand opportunities for students to benefit from real world experience through mentorships, internships and cooperative placements using approaches like Big Picture Learning's Met School model and Cooperative Vocational Education. The University of Waterloo has demonstrated that this can be brought to scale.
- Support comprehensive, targeted pre-school parenting and language development programming particularly home visiting programs supporting vulnerable families. These initiatives are inexpensive and effective. Seven Oaks "Partners in Learning Program" is an effective school based model and our North Forge Literacy and Numeracy Challenge initiative is a promising cost effective home visiting model.
- Encourage school organization models that leverage the power of strong enduring teacher student relationships (multi-age classes, looping, middle years, teacher advisor programs). All of our high schools have well developed teacher advisor programs. Only 8% of Seven Oaks high school students miss more than 10 classes a semester. Province wide the average is 21%.
- Maintain formula based funding for special needs. The former student based funding system incentivized a deficit view of students, stigmatized them and led to an over reliance on special needs staffing and program models that didn't always serve students well.

## Teaching

- Maintain the wages, pensions, benefits and working conditions enjoyed by teachers. It is vital to continue to attract talented individuals into teaching.
- Develop or maintain opportunities for the continuing development of teachers (time for collaboration, support and development of new teachers through mentorship). There is no path to improved outcomes without good teaching.
- Support and strengthen programs to ensure that Indigenous and visible minority students see themselves reflected in their school's teaching staff (University of Winnipeg's Access Programs, CATEP, ITEP, WEC).
- Address areas of teacher shortage particularly French Immersion. Also this should include maintaining distinct support for the unique context of teaching in the French Immersion program.

- Enhance the role of principals as principal teachers and instructional leaders. Restrict clinical supervision responsibilities to new teachers and those in difficulty. Maintain school leaders as members of the Manitoba Teachers' Association.

## **Accountability**

- Keep accountability and responsibility local. Ensure that schools establish processes to track, review and respond to student progress. Schools should know the progress being made by every student, know who is experiencing difficulty and why and should be responding to those students experiencing difficulty in a timely and effective fashion. Seven Oaks schools use regular classroom review meetings, IEP reviews, reviews of student report cards and reviews of provincial assessment data to achieve this.
- Require school divisions to report annually, tracking trends in student outcomes over the past five years indicating where progress is being made and reporting on plans for improvement. Make these reports public.

## **Governance**

- Maintain a governance structure that is local, elected and accountable. Amalgamations may be required in some circumstances, but amalgamation in and of itself is unlikely to produce either improvement in outcomes or cost effectiveness.
- Encourage school divisions to review and renew programs, facility use and patterns of school organization. Such reviews and reorganizations have greater potential to improve programming and limit costs than division amalgamations.

## **Funding**

- Correct the gross inequities in mill rate and cost per pupil by strengthening the equalization provisions of education funding. Excluding Frontier School Division and DSFM which are unique, cost per pupil ranges from \$11,074 to \$16,028. Mill rates range from 7.7 to 21.4 and there is no correlation between expenditure and mill rate. This is unfair to both students and taxpayers.
- Eliminate or control costs to parents. Seven Oaks has managed to eliminate costs to parents for field trips, lunch supervision and musical instrument rentals and has greatly reduced the cost of school supplies through bulk purchasing. These measures save parents an estimated \$740 per child per year and remove substantial barriers to participation. The provision of musical instruments increased enrolment in high school band programs by as much as 50%.
- Challenge school divisions to direct a greater percentage of their budgets to the classroom. Seven Oaks directs 82.4% of its budget directly to the classroom. The provincial average is 78.7%.