DIVISION SCOLAIRE

LOUIS RIEL

SCHOOL DIVISION

SUBMISSION TO

Manitoba's Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education

May 2019

Thriving Learners ∞ Flourishing Communities

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Our Vision, Mission and Values

Vision
Our Vision is for all members of our community to excel as caring, confident, capable, and resilient life-long learners who contribute to a democratic and sustainable world.

Mission
Our Mission is to provide a safe, inclusive, and engaging environment, where personal and collective learning and growth are valued, and each one of us reaches our full potential.

We can achieve this by:
- partnering with families and the community
- encouraging bold and creative thinking
- supporting respectful conversations
- responding positively and proactively to student, staff and community needs
- engaging in evidence-informed decision-making
- monitoring and acting on educational and organizational results
- building collective expertise
- empowering students for success in school and in life

Our Values
The core values that guide our collective efforts in achieving our Vision and Mission:

1. Shared Responsibility and Collaboration: Encourage staff, students and parents to create collaborative learning goals; promote and support caring, trusting and productive relationships
2. Learning and Well-Becoming: Provide extensive professional training and growth opportunities in the form of educational networks and job-embedded learning; promote a student-centred approach to teaching and learning; nurture a culture that supports and encourages the continual success of staff, students and families
3. Evidence-Informed Decision-Making: Use our collective expertise along with multiple sources of best evidence to inform decisions
4. Equity and Reciprocity: Ensure instructional resources are allocated in a manner that addresses individual and community needs; implement the education-specific calls-to-action outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; ensure newcomers receive the support they need to thrive; invest in efforts to acknowledge, understand and reduce the impact of poverty and all vulnerabilities
5. Inclusion and Diversity: Nurture a community of learning and well-becoming for all that reflects the diverse aptitudes, abilities, identities and experiences of our communities; promote, develop and champion our plurilingual programming (English, French Immersion, French in English schools, Indigenous languages and Heritage languages)
6. Autonomy: Support and encourage staff, our students and the community to make informed, uncoerced decisions, which enhance their capacity to express their creativity, individuality and moral independence
7. Alignment: Ensure allocations of resources, organizational structures, improvement plans, professional learning efforts, policies and procedures, strategic priorities and goals all support our vision and mission

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Message from the Louis Riel School Board Chair

On behalf of the Louis Riel School Board, I'd like to thank the commission for its dedication and willingness to have a meaningful dialogue about the future of education in Manitoba. Any conversation that can lead to greater student engagement, student success, and student achievement is one we want to be a part of. We see this review as an opportunity for all Manitobans to participate and collaborate in shaping the future of public education in our province, while ensuring the needs of future students and families are met.

Success in LRSD stems from our board working collaboratively with LRSD's senior leadership so we can collectively bring our dedication, expertise and strengths to the table. Together we lead and manage responsibly, with student success central to strategic decision making, budgeting and the charting of our future path.

The commission stated that recommendations arising from the consultative process "will be designed to create an education system that achieves better outcomes for students and reflects the economic and societal needs of Manitobans, both today and in the future." The desire to see a continued focus on achieving the best outcomes for our learners, and how we accomplish this goal as system-leaders of LRSD, forms the basis of our joint written submission.

If the goal of the commission is to make recommendations that will "yield desired levels of student achievement and outcomes" the board encourages the commission to reconsider their assertion in *Public Consultation Discussion Paper* that suggests "increases in funding" should result in "desired levels of student achievement and outcomes."

Rather, we encourage a restructuring of the current funding model that would result in funding being better targeted to where it is needed. This would be informed by the evidence and expertise that school boards and school division leaders gather and analyze to make investments that are equitable, encourage excellence and engage students.

School divisions and their school boards provide a locally elected and accountable structure to ensure current and future students have a fulfilling public-school experience and graduate prepared and excited about what comes next.

In addition, we feel compelled to underscore how valuable local taxation is in Manitoba. This ensures we can offer students and families in LRSD the strongest supports, the most innovative and impactful teaching practices with local accountability. It also ensures responsible spending of local taxpayer dollars and a bold, locally developed and attainable vision for future learner success.

As such, we feel confident this joint submission from the board and the LRSD leadership teams reflects the important and necessary collective work we are so proud to celebrate in the division.

Sandy Nemeth, Chair of the Louis Riel School Board

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Message from the Superintendent

LRSD's vision is for *all members of our community to excel as caring, confident, capable, and resilient life-long learners who contribute to a democratic and sustainable world*. We have used this perspective to help build our collective written response to the commission's invitation for input on reimagining Kindergarten to Grade 12 education in Manitoba.

Our submission provides a response to each of the six focus areas as outlined in the *Public Consultation Discussion Paper* as well as an additional report on French Immersion in our division we feel is worthy of an additional focus area.

Our submission has been a broad collective and collaborative undertaking. Teams comprised of educators and trustees were created to research and write a report for each focus area. Using our lived experiences in LRSD along with evidence-based research that has long informed our collective efforts to improve student learning and well-becoming, we have compiled information that identifies a bold path to achieving excellence in education in Manitoba.

Our submission is comprised of four sections:

1. Executive Summary – A synthesis of the collective thinking and thoughts from each of our teams that captures the key points for each of the commission's six focus areas along with the inclusion of an additional focus area that is specific to French Immersion in LRSD

2. What our Community is Saying – Provides the Louis Riel School Board's perspective on each of the commission's six areas of focus as well as reports summarizing our community consultations

3. Who We Are – Offers historical, demographic and financial information, as well as insight about LRSD's distinct learning community, including 13 French Immersion schools that serve more than 35 per cent of all students in LRSD

4. Focus Area Studies – Comprehensive and distinct studies related to each of the commission's six focus areas with an additional report on French Immersion

I hope the collective considerations and aspirations shared in our submission offer the commission a thoughtful and constructive perspective from a learning community that makes up more than 12 per cent of Manitoba's student population in its public education system.

If any of the members of the commission require additional information or would like to engage in a deeper exploration about the ideas expressed in our submission, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We wish the members of the commission every success as they assume the immense responsibility to reimagine public education for future generations of Manitobans. We look forward to the commission's final report and recommendations with great anticipation.

Christian Michalik, Superintendent

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Our Treaty Acknowledgement

The Louis Riel School Division acknowledges the land on which our learners, staff and families gather is Treaty One Territory and the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe and homeland of the Métis Nation.

LRSD is committed to a renewed relationship with Indigenous learners, families, staff and leaders.

Our division recognizes the importance of the implementation of the education-specific calls-to-action outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and have made significant local investments to address these calls-to-action, specifically #62 and #63, that positively impact the success of LRSD Indigenous learners.

LRSD has also implemented the Circle of Courage as a whole-learner framework and as a reference tool in our strength-based class profile process in all 40 LRSD schools.

Based on the work of Stanley Coopersmith, the Circle of Courage speaks to a holistic approach of educating the whole child, an approach we in LRSD see as essential to developing all learners' physical, intellectual, social, emotional and moral qualities.

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Special Recognition

LRSD would like to thank all of our learners, families and staff who have shared their thoughts and perspectives to help the division understand what they hope the future of education looks like in their community and province-wide.

LRSD would also like to recognize a dedicated and passionate group of educators for their help in researching and writing this submission.

Kimberley Adair-Gagnon	Andrea Kolody
Jeff Anderson	Steven Lawrie
Ron Cadez	Adriano Magnifico
Brian Cameron	Tyler Milloy
David Charney	Lauren Mitchell-Lawson
Darcy Cormack	Warren Nightingale
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Amy Haworth	Laurie Ryz
Cameron Johnson	Sharad Srivastava

Executive Summary

Introduction

Manitobans are actively engaged in dialogue about the six focus areas outlined in the commission's *Public Consultation Discussion Paper* as there are bold questions being asked about the state of the public education system. The answers could lead to significant changes to our much-cherished public schools, for not only this generation of Manitobans but for generations to come.

When bold questions are posed, one should be expected to provide similarly bold answers. While the ideas brought forward in the LRSD submission are daring, they are also deeply rooted in the divisions' collective desire to see all learners in Manitoba thrive and an equitable and inclusive public education system flourish. LRSD challenged itself to look at everything it's done in the division, everything it is presently doing and what it humbly sees as ideas that may serve as a reimagining of a progressive, more holistic public education system for all learners in Manitoba—no small task. LRSD hopes the commission recommends that any reform of public education in Manitoba will continue to value and leverage local innovations and investments.

A central idea in LRSD is to include the Circle of Courage framework as a holistic and Indigenous inspired approach to learning. Here are some of the bold innovations and investments LRSD sees as essential elements of a comprehensive cradle-to-career approach to levelling and raising the achievement bar in our province:

1. A whole-learner approach to developing caring, capable and confident adults who will contribute to inclusive and equitable prosperity for all Manitobans
2. Implementation of the education-specific calls-to-action outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
3. A systemic approach to health, well-being and well-becoming
4. Early years education structures and play-based pedagogies
5. Project-based and career-focused middle and high school pedagogies
6. A culture of accountability that genuinely increases our collective capacities from a strength-based perspective built on an ethos of trust and collaboration
7. An evidence-informed collaborative inquiry approach to instructional improvement decisions that leverages and enhances the rich data from the Provincial Manitoba Report Card
8. Researched-informed enhancements to existing governance and administrative structures
9. The power of incrementalism to finance and implement lasting legacies of innovations
10. Public education as an integral part of a systemic poverty eradication strategy

LRSD is excited about this opportunity to share the division's research, discoveries and suggestions with the commission as well as the chance to engage in a conversation with our fellow Manitobans about the future of education in our province.

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Focus Area 1: Long-term vision

1. What should the goals and purpose of K to 12 education be in a rapidly changing world?

    a. LRSD suggests three key pillars—Learning and Well-becoming, Democracy, and Sustainability— should guide the review of a system as complex and multi-layered as our public education system.

    b. LRSD's vision, mission and values statements propose the goals and purpose of education are to nurture a community of learning and well-becoming that reflects the diverse aptitudes, abilities, identities and experiences in our community. A similar position is reflected in Manitoba Education and Training's (MET) current Mandate, Mission, Vision and Priority Areas.

    c. Through extensive consultation with learners, staff, and the community this past year, the newly ratified motto of LRSD is Thriving Learners ∞ Flourishing Communities. This motto links these two aspirational ideas together and proposes that it is not possible to achieve one without the other. To ensure each student is a thriving learner, the division must ensure each learner is supported by a flourishing community.

    d. To rise to this challenge, everyone who serves in public education needs to willingly share responsibility and collaborate with families and the community to effectively and equitably respond to our learners' needs and aspirations.

    e. The long-term vision for public education the commission should consider recommending to government is a framework that leverages an ongoing and dynamic community dialogue about the values-based and process-focused targets that need to be set for our learners in the public education system. This will support the future prosperity of our graduates as well as all Manitobans.

    f. Along with most Manitobans and the government, LRSD shares a common desire to reimagine learning and well-becoming as a journey that is cradle-to-career. The division sees this whole-learner approach as a way to develop caring, capable and confident adults who will contribute to Manitoba's future prosperity by collaborating as democratic citizens to solve an impending climate catastrophe, reduce the growing wealth gap, and champion a more democratic and just world.

    g. On the matter of impending climate catastrophe as noted above, our youngest learners are pleading with us to confront this reality and to make exploring solutions part of their educational journey. They are also imploring us to help them discuss and discover solutions to the growing wealth gap and ways to champion a more democratic and just world. LRSD considers these requests as essential components of a whole-learner and responsive curriculum designed for the 21st century. Creating a learning culture that values relevance as much as rigour will help us move away from an old and unsustainable "industrial model" of education. These are also key goals as part of the global response to creating a better world by 2030.

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h. When thinking of championing a more democratic and just world, LRSD continues to be amazed by our learners' efforts to create school cultures that respect the spectrum of sexuality and gender in our community. Our [governance](#) and [pedagogical](#) obligations need to support that [journey](#).

i. LRSD is also inspired by countless examples of holistic play-based and project-based learning that the division believes has the potential to be scaled, system-wide.

j. In 2019, a holistic, learner-centred, learning-focused, responsive, relevant and engaging education system that is connected to the real-world needs to become the new "model."

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current system?

   a. Many of us in LRSD share Ken Robinson's concern "that while education systems around the world are being reformed, many of these reforms are being driven by political and commercial interests that misunderstand how real people learn and how great schools actually work." LRSD hopes one of the outcomes of the commission's work will be to value "a more holistic approach that nurtures the diverse talents of all our children" advocated by Robinson and countless other educational thinkers.

   b. Robinson also states, "[h]ealthy economies depend on people having good ideas for new businesses and the ability to grow them and create employment. In 2008, IBM published a survey of what characteristics organization leaders need most in their staff. They spoke with fifteen hundred leaders in eighty countries. The two priorities were adaptability to change and creativity in generating new ideas" (Ken Robinson, 2015). LRSD is proud of our ongoing commitments and investments in the Arts and sees it as important as traditional core disciplines. In doing so, LRSD shows that the Arts, and the creativity that stems from it, acts as a catalyst in all disciplines.

   c. LRSD is emboldened by Robinson's message that "[t]o engage properly with their economic purposes, schools need to cultivate the great diversity of young people's talents and interests; to dissolve the divisions between academic and vocational programs, giving equal weight to both areas of study; and to foster practical partnerships with the world of work so that young people can experience different types of working environments firsthand" (Ken Robinson, 2015). LRSD is proud of our ongoing commitments and investments in Technical Vocational learning and believes it is essential to a holistic educational journey that supports Manitoba's future prosperity.

   d. While MET's current [Mandate, Mission, Vision and Priority Areas](#) are powerful positioning statements that echo Robinson's message, LRSD suggests few Manitobans know or understand MET's Vision and Mission. Even fewer understand the multi-year strategic plan built to achieve these priorities and goals. All public education employees in Manitoba need to actively participate in an ongoing dialogue about our broadly shared vision, mission, priorities and goals for public education.

e. Governments (provincial and locally elected boards) need to collaborate more regularly and extensively with the communities of schools they serve about the strategic priorities and expected goals for our public education system. Beyond the commission's recommendations, there is a need to establish and refine a long-term, coordinated and collaborative approach to visioning, planning, monitoring and reporting.

f. Recognizing the desire for a strong, collaborative and coordinated education system, the commission should consider the importance and value of sustained engagement of parents and communities with their democratically elected school boards.

g. The document *School Partnerships: A Guide for Parents, Schools and Communities* should be reviewed and updated to align with the realities of public education in 2019.

h. A coordinated multi-year strategic planning process between government, school divisions, and schools could create a structure based on these collaborative and reciprocal relationships that help achieve coherence and alignment while ensuring agility and innovation.

i. LRSD is implementing a multi-year strategic planning process inspired by the systemic planning process in Ontario's public education system. The division suggests that the commission consider adapting and developing a similar collaborative and coordinated systemic framework for multi-year strategic planning in Manitoba.

3. What are the most important things for students to gain from their K to 12 education?

a. As the government of Manitoba's Vision for public education boldly proclaims: *every learner will complete a high school education with a profound sense of accomplishment, hope and optimism (having prepared them for lifelong learning and citizenship in a democratic, socially just and sustainable society).*

b. When considering the conditions that will inspire excellence in our learners, it must begin with the thoughtful cultivation of concern for others, the development of empathy and purposeful life in the service of the common good.

c. Risk-taking and resilience are two essential ideas as important as literacy and numeracy to develop intellectual curiosity and critical thinking. Risk-taking, and by implication, struggle and failure, are important yet often neglected themes in education. Making and learning from mistakes is the necessary growth experience that helps shape a person's ability to develop resilience, grit and to learn the value of remaining solution focused in the face of adversity (Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2007). Failure and overcoming failure are implicit to well-becoming, developing a sense of self-efficaciousness and living the excitement of discovery or learning fought for, and hard-won (Dweck, 2007; Couros, 2015).

d. To nurture confidence and resilience in our learners, the modern classroom must provide for emotional and intellectual safety (Katz, 2012) so that learners can be the

innately curious learners they were meant to be, unafraid to take risks, co-constructing novel and creative ways of learning, thinking, doing and being (Couros, 2015; Fullan and Langworthy, 2013; McGregor, 2012).

4. What could our system do better to help students achieve these important goals?

   a. Education is a systematic and planned process designed to nurture the development of human potential in all learners. By cultivating the harmonious growth of the physical, intellectual, social, emotional and moral qualities inherent in all learners, they can thrive as life-long learners who contribute to flourishing communities.

   b. LRSD believes that to become a resilient, caring, capable, confident and lifelong learner who can contribute to a democratic, inclusive, and sustainable world, public education should embrace a "whole learner" or holistic approach as advocated by countless educational thinkers. Contemporary research proposes using Indigenous ways of understanding to frame a holistic educational journey. When looking at school divisions nationally and internationally, LRSD is inspired to continuously make its system more holistic (or, comprehensive).

   c. A vision of education that nurtures a journey from cradle to career for every learner in Manitoba, obligates the public education system to invest in

      i. early-years programming by implementing

         1. universal Full-Day Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten (such as other high-performing jurisdictions in Canada and abroad)

         2. Family Centres in all elementary schools that connect families with their neighbourhood school to create a community learning hub that provides welcoming, inclusive, play-based learning environments and programs for parents and toddlers to thrive and develop strong beginnings for school

      ii. holistic approaches that include Indigenous perspectives such as the Circle of Courage framework. There are countless examples across Manitoba schools, including a systemic example in LRSD, that when applied with care and rigour, an Indigenous inspired holistic approach to learning can make the structures and norms of colonialism become less obtrusive for all learners

      iii. a learning culture that moves strategically from an early and middle years play-based interdisciplinary journey to collaborative models of multi-disciplinary project-based learning in high schools (in LRSD, high school models include *Propel*, a project-based learning incubator; the *Career Internship Program*, a big-picture style school with internships and interdisciplinary projects for all styles of learners; *Career Cohorts* in all high schools that allow learners to design their

own courses based on career interests, skills interests and personal experiences using a unique tool called the *LEAN Career Design Canvas*)

    iv.   a pedagogical, political and economic culture that values the need to establish welcoming, responsive, inclusive and equitable environments for all learners.

d.   The Mental Health Commission of Canada released a 2010 report called *Making the Case for Investing in Mental Health in Canada*. The report showed the prevalence of mental illness was 23.4 per cent in individuals aged nine to 19. Acknowledging these alarming statistics and the impact it is having in schools and communities is critical.

e.   The Mental Health Commission report shows investments in evidence-based early intervention and prevention have a significant positive effect on helping close achievement gaps while generating cost savings in the long-term.

f.   In collaboration with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, all 40 LRSD schools are implementing the Mental Health Initiative, which provides schools with the time to meet, plan, and implement strategies and support into their school plans.

g.   As the Manitoba government looks for ways to improve student outcomes, the research suggests an important investment in a systemic mental health approach for all Manitoba schools is an essential element to levelling and raising the achievement bar in our province. Furthermore, there is very strong evidence that investments in the well-being and well-becoming of children and youth yield a significant financial return over time, and that strategies designed to prevent problems are far less expensive to implement than remedial responses later (OECD, 2006).

h.   According to the latest reporting from Statistics Canada (2017), the gap between children and adults living in low-income households was widest in Manitoba (21.9 per cent of children, compared with 13.5 per cent of adults). To address Manitoba's status as having one of the highest child poverty rates in the country and to mitigate the impact of poverty on our learners, LRSD has made local investments in:

    i.   a small-scale full-day Kindergarten pilot ($441,000 in 2018-19);

    ii.   12 Family Centres ($1M in 2018-19) strategically located across the division;

    iii.   a divisional nutrition fund ($100,000 in 2018-19) to supplement the countless small grant applications schools struggle to have approved to help feed hungry children;

    iv.   a community school model, the René Deleurme Centre (RDC), in our lowest socio-economic status communities most impacted by poverty; clinical and student services staff; maintaining reasonable class sizes.

i. LRSD implores the commission to study and recommend ways the public education system can be a partner in a more community-based, system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication (and in the interim mitigation).

Focus Area 2: Student learning

1. What are the conditions required to achieve excellence in student achievement and outcomes in Manitoba?

    a. When considering the conditions required in classrooms for children and youth to flourish, it is important to consider the relationships between mental and physical health, well-being, safety and student learning. When learners feel they're part of a school community, they will actively engage in academic and non-academic activities (OECD, 2017).

    b. Manitoba teachers have embraced the goal of intellectual achievement in the writing of the newest French and English language curricula. With Manitoba classrooms being "rich in diversity, where learners and teachers share multiple ways of knowing and diverse backgrounds and identities," (MET, 2019) the unique ways of processing language and literacy need to be honoured, with a strong sense of belonging being essential to positive learning communities where our learners can thrive. MET (2019) asserts that "educators are called upon to imagine rich, generous, and inclusive learning spaces and experiences in which all learners engage deeply and meaningfully." The Manitoba Language Arts curricula offer a progressive, nimble, competencies-focused 21st-century curriculum model for future curricula development in our province.

    c. In considering literacy and reading, the Reading Apprenticeship is a powerful approach to learning invested in by MET and LRSD. The Reading Apprenticeship approach affirms a strength-based approach to differentiation where, "we see ample evidence that by helping students find their own reasons and entry points for reading challenging texts, we can support them in developing both their affective and their intellectual engagement with academic texts" (Schoenbach, Greenleaf & Murphy, 2012, p. 2).

    d. Reading Apprenticeship's holistic model of learning parallels other learning frameworks that inspire teachers' professional learning in LRSD such as our recent learning fellowships with Dr. Marian Small (a leading Canadian mathematics educator) and Brenda Augusta (a Manitoban with more than 30 years of experience in building teacher capacity). You can read about our work with Brenda in her book: Making Writing Instruction Work.

    e. LRSD is proud of its longstanding partnership with the St. Boniface Hospital Albrechtsen Research Centre to create the It's All About Me (IAAM) program at the Youth BIOlab Jeunesse.

f.   The division has also promoted the most recent cognitive science discoveries and suggest the commission explore the importance of integrating the latest research in cognitive science as part of an explicit expectation in all curricula.

g.   Integrating the latest research in cognitive science and the rapidly evolving understanding of the mind-body connection into our practice is important. An example would be to ensure movement and exercise is included throughout the day as it has been proven to help people function better both intellectually and emotionally as well as help address anxiety, and depression.

h.   The commission's *Public Consultation Discussion Paper* states: *"*Perhaps the most important educational challenge Manitoba is facing today is the persistent gap in achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The historical, moral and economic imperatives to close this gap is critical. It is essential that these be addressed." LRSD agrees.

i.   Implementing the education-specific calls-to-action outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is paramount. LRSD has made significant local investments to address these calls-to-action, specifically #62 and #63, that positively impact the success of our Indigenous learners that may inspire the commission's recommendations to government.

j.   Supported by the expertise and leadership of its Indigenous Education team, LRSD has implemented a variety of strategies to embed Indigenous pedagogies in our systemic educational practices:

    i.   all 40 LRSD schools have implemented the Circle of Courage as a whole-learner framework and as a reference tool in our strength-based class profile process;

        1.   The Circle of Courage comprises four quadrants: Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. These are based on the work of Stanley Coopersmith and speak to a holistic approach of educating the whole child. All learners must have their needs met in each of the quadrants. If their needs are not being met, it is up to educators, families and the community to help them complete their circle by fostering opportunities to improve absent, incomplete or distorted elements within each of the quadrants.

    ii.   system-wide instruction and integration of Indigenous themes into language arts, social studies, math and science frames learning for all grade 4 students in LRSD;

    iii.   furthermore, supported by a Treaty Education Support Teacher, LRSD is implementing Treaty Education in all 40 schools;

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iv. LRSD has developed Indigenous Learner Communities (the Echo program) in our high schools that are accessible to all students. Recently, LRSD has joined the Medical Careers Exploration Program to offer our Indigenous students experiential strength-based educational/mentorship in the healthcare system;

v. additionally, LRSD is developing an Early Years Ojibwe language program for all learners in LRSD. Ojibwe is being taught in Kindergarten and Grade 1 classrooms and the Louis Riel School Board is looking at a systemic implementation plan for K-3 as part of our multi-year strategic plan for 2019-2023.

k. These interventions, along with committed professionals in the classrooms and on the front lines, have enabled our division to improve Indigenous graduation rates from 47 per cent in 2013 to 69 per cent in 2018. These improvements can be attributed to a thoughtful, strategic and systemic implementation that considered the competing needs of learners and the system. This plan resulted in a cohesive, comprehensive and elegant solution to the complex problem of Indigenous achievement, without forsaking the needs of immigrant, refugee or other subsets of learners. These outcomes are the result of local autonomy working toward a vision that has been co-constructed by its stakeholders.

l. While LRSD is encouraged by the improving educational success of our Indigenous learners, removing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners remains an ongoing priority.

m. A learner-centred, learning-focused holistic approach to public education can only be achieved if all stakeholders in the public education system are mindful of class size and composition.

2. Who is ultimately responsible for student success?

a. Student success is a community's shared responsibility, meaning everyone is responsible for student success—it does not fall to any one person or party. It starts with a learner's personal sense of self-efficacy, and how to nurture that learners' belief in their ability to accomplish a learning task.

b. This leads to the complex and dynamic relationship between a learner, other learners in a classroom (in a school) and a teacher's (a school's) efforts to create a learning culture and journey that enhances and facilitates all learners' sense of self-efficacy. (Bandura, Mercer, 2012) [Guiding principles and frameworks related to this learning and teaching journey are explored in Focus Areas 3 and 4.]

c. To be systemic and sustained, this collective endeavour to support student success must be supported by school-level and system-level leadership. [Approaches related to this collaborative relationship between teachers, school-level leaders and system-level leaders is explored in Focus Areas 3 and 4.]

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d. Systemic and sustainable improvement efforts require societal investments informed by a process of evidence-based decision making that is managed by the school and system-level leadership, governed by locally elected trustees and a provincial government accountable to the communities they serve.

e. To flourish, a public education system needs broad community support. This is achieved by nurturing a relationship with the families and neighbourhoods served by schools and school divisions.

Focus Area 3: Teaching

1. How can we help teachers and school leaders become most effective?

   a. Nurturing a culture of relational trust and shared leadership creates the conditions for effective professional learning.

   b. Teacher professionalism, expertise, curiosity, creativity, scholarship, and collaboration needs to be valued and nurtured—it is essential to any improvement effort.

   c. Building collective teacher capacity by understanding and supporting teachers' professional learning needs leads to a dedicated, highly competent teaching force—teachers in numbers, working together for the continuous betterment of the public education system. Asking teachers to implement a systemic reform initiative requires leaders at all levels learning alongside them and supporting the process.

   d. Professional learning is a central pillar in LRSD. It is our belief that an increase in collective teacher pedagogical capacity results in an increase in student achievement. "The research has been clear and consistent for more than 30 years—collaborative cultures in which teachers focus on improving their teaching practice, learn from each other, and are well led and supported by school principals result in better learning for students" (Fullan, 2011, p.2). The Louis Riel School Board has consistently valued and invested in professional learning with the understanding that providing teachers with time and opportunities to learn together is the best way to improve student learning. LRSD has developed several highly effective collaborative professional learning models that have resulted in improved learner proficiency in the key areas of literacy and numeracy.

   e. In LRSD, experiential job-embedded professional learning models such as the Personalized Professional Learning initiative and The Writing Project have been effective ways to strengthen teacher capacity in effectively differentiating instruction and feedback, planning intentional learning targets and co-constructing success criteria. Evidence is showing that LRSD teachers are embedding these powerful pedagogies into practice.

f.   The LRSD Senior Leadership Team (SLT) builds and nurtures collective leadership capacity. The SLT asks the question: "What do school leaders need to learn to support what teachers need to learn?" In turn, school leaders ask: "What do teachers need to learn to support what students need to learn?"

g.   Our team's leadership practices are guided by the following belief: "Professional learning that allows educators to grapple with complex challenges of practice, which grow out of student learning needs, has the best possibility of leading to different and effective ways of thinking and doing in schools" (Steven Katz, Lisa Ain Dack, John Malloy, 2017).

2.   What improvements could teachers make to better help students achieve their goals?

a.   An on-going cycle of collaborative evidence-informed teacher inquiry to refine or rethink instructional practices that support student learning is at the heart of any sustainable and systemic continuous improvement effort. Schools in LRSD are collaborating with schools from across the province to adapt and implement models of collaborative evidence-informed teacher inquiry such as Simon Breakspear's Agile Schools, Linda Kaser's and Judy Halbert's Spirals of Inquiry, and Laura Lipton's and Bruce Wellman's Collaborative Learning Cycle.

b.   Robinson's (2011) extensive research related to the impact of educational leadership on student learning identifies teacher learning and development as the most significant of the five practices that influence student learning with an effect size of 0.84.

c.   Using Leithwood's system-level and school-level leadership frameworks, LRSD leaders have been reflecting on their personal leadership practices. Leaders have been identifying personal areas of strength, as well as areas for growth to help teachers strive toward continuous improvement by actively engaging with *The Learning Conversations Protocol: An Intentional Interruption Strategy for Enhanced Collaborative Learning*. Katz and Dack (2013) describe this protocol as a strategy designed to transform "great discussions" through the process of analysis, debate, and challenge to increase professional learning to a deeper and more successful level.

d.   Instructional leadership is improving teacher and leader effectiveness in LRSD. School leaders and LRSD coordinators work alongside teachers as an instructional leader to accomplish collective goals related to student learning. By strengthening collegial relationships, school leaders in LRSD are creating cultures of collaborative inquiry to improve student learning.

e.   Inspired by Ontario, other provinces and national ministries of Education, LRSD advocates that the commission considers developing system-level and school-level leadership frameworks to guide a systemic and sustained leadership collaborative inquiry cycle of learning for Manitoba schools.

f. The commission may want to consider a <u>Manitoba Learning and Well-Becoming Secretariat</u> modelled on <u>Ontario's Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat</u> to support leadership and instructional effectiveness in Manitoba schools. Since 2010, LRSD has referenced the professional learning materials published by Ontario's Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat to guide our literacy and numeracy work.

Focus Area 4: Accountability for student learning

1. How can the education system develop a stronger sense of shared accountability for student learning?

   a. If student learning is the heart of public education, then the assessment is its heartbeat. Assessment serves multiple purposes (Gregory, Cameron & Davies, 1997, 2000, 2001; Earl & Katz, 2006). It must inform programming for individual students, measure growth, inform caregivers of their child's academic performance and be used to provide public accountability for education. It is important to remember that each of these multiple forms of assessment serves unique purposes (Gregory, Cameron & Davies, 1997, 2000, 2001).

   b. LRSD has long advocated for an evidence-informed approach to instructional improvement decisions. The division has developed professional learning structures that leverage the rich data the LRSD, and more recently the <u>Provincial Manitoba Report Card</u> provides, to focus evidence-informed collaborative inquiry cycles to connect job-embedded professional learning with improved student learning (i.e. the Collaborative Learning Cycle).

   c. A student-centred approach to classroom structure and management ensures student feedback is specific, personalized and relevant, achieving the impactful differentiation as described by John Hattie (2012), beginning with teachers knowing, for each learner, where they are in relation to the success criteria. Frey, Fisher and Hattie (2018) argue that when learners have a clear understanding of the learning intentions and success criteria, they become assessment capable learners. Additionally, Frey, Fisher and Hattie (2018) encourage student-centred assessment practices and designing learning opportunities where learners use "goals and results to fuel their own learning" (Frey, Fisher and Hattie, 2018, p.46).

   d. Learning structures that empower learners to self-monitor and adjust their pace and path, thereby becoming their own teachers, are essential in achieving academic excellence and the life-long learning necessary to thrive (Almarode, Fisher, Thunder, Hattie & Frey, 2019).

   e. John Hattie (n.d.) recently ranked collective teacher efficacy as having the greatest effect on student learning. He defines this as a "collaborative conversation based on

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evidence." LRSD has developed and continues to refine technologies to collect and analyze multiple relevant data sources to better focus planning and collaborative work.

f. LRSD has created and continues to refine data dashboards that allow system and school leaders to visualize and analyze measures of learning achievement in relationship to grade specific cohorts of learners; learning over time; family of schools; Indigenous learners; the gender of learners; EAL learners; English program learners; French Immersion program learners; socio-economic factors; attendance; specific instructional approaches; and interventions.

g. These division-based and school-based data dashboards continue to evolve and provide quick access to data used to guide collaborative data inquiries with teachers.

h. This ongoing and collaborative work that connects professional learning efforts to evidence of improved student learning also provides opportunities to revisit assessment practices and to encourage teachers to set valid and reliable student learning targets.

i. Leveraging the Provincial Manitoba Report Card, the commission should study the development of made-in-Manitoba Student Learning Data dashboards to support and enhance our collective data literacy, guide teacher collaborative inquiry cycles and build collective knowledge to measure teacher and student learning improvements.

j. Rather than repeating standardized high-stake test approaches to accountability that fail to improve teaching and learning, MET, in collaboration with school divisions should develop a cycle of multi-year norming studies for literacy and numeracy in early, middle and high school to:

    i. frame collaborative teacher inquiry cycles to improve teaching and learning;

    ii. enhance teacher assessment, evaluation and reporting expertise.

k. To illustrate a development cycle of multi-year norming studies, rather than the problematic use of standardized high-stakes testing, the following is an early years example of a recent effort that LRSD hopes to expand to middle and senior grade levels.

    i. In the 2013-14 school year, students in Grade 2 in the English program and Grades 2 and 3 in the French Immersion (FI) program were assessed in several key literacy areas to develop a set of norms to enhance our collective understanding of learning outcomes in Early Literacy. The following assessments were used to develop the norms and administered three times throughout the year.

        1. Grade 2 English: Instructional reading level (Fountas & Pinnell), BURT Word Test, writing vocabulary from Marie Clay Observation Survey

        2. Grade 2 FI: Instructional reading level (GB+ or Fountas & Pinnell), all five Marie Clay Observation Survey tasks, test du sons

3. Grade 3 FI: Instructional reading level (GB+ or Fountas & Pinnell), test du sons, writing vocabulary from Marie Clay Observation Survey

l. This norming study has been used to guide cycles of inquiry to inform improvements in teacher and student learning such as the LRSD Early Years Literacy Assessment Guides (in both English and French) that frame a systemic approach to literacy assessment in the Early Years.

2. Is the current system providing equitable learning outcomes for all students?

a. If Manitoba is to be a leader on the world stage of education, we must collectively decide what is to be measured, what constitutes excellence and what matters most for our learners. We must develop, value and nurture made-in-Manitoba learning and assessment frameworks and teachers' professional capacities and judgements—it is these frameworks that become drivers of meaningful change. Without taking into consideration what has been identified in Manitoba through the curriculum and asserted through provincial assessment frameworks, the efforts to effect positive and lasting improvement for student learning are ill-advised.

b. In LRSD, our overarching strategic goal is to develop key instructional and learning frameworks, common assessment and evaluation criteria and a culture of collaborative inquiry focused on student achievement data to:

i. guide systemic and evidence-based approaches to literacy and numeracy instruction;

ii. promote on-going dialogue to develop a more reliable (consistent) and valid (accurate) collective understanding of how student achievement is reported on the Provincial Manitoba Report Card. More specifically, a clear definition of what a "1" versus "2", "3" and "4" rating means for all students in all of our schools;

iii. improve student literacy and numeracy achievement in K to 12.

c. Some of the key takeaways from our monitoring systems are:

i. effective teacher learning is the core lever to improve student learning (in other words, engaging teachers to innovate and refine their collective instructional practices results in improved student learning)

ii. leveraging the Provincial Manitoba Report Card to connect professional learning to evidence of improved student learning promotes more accurate, consistent, meaningful, and thoughtful communication about learning achievement to learners, parents, teachers and the public

d. Since 2007, LRSD has been developing our collective understanding of a multidimensional framework and assessment instrument for describing and promoting

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student engagement. The three specific areas of student engagement for LRSD are social, academic and intellectual and all are related and dependent on each other.

e. OurSCHOOL is an evaluation system that includes a dynamic web-based student survey, with optional surveys for teachers and parents. The assessment provides leading indicators of student engagement and wellness, and aspects of the classroom and school learning climate that research has shown affect student engagement and learning outcomes. The survey provides a variety of analytic charts, including one that "examines the role of instructional challenge in student engagement using a schema developed by Csikszentmihalyi" (1990, 1997).

f. LRSD has implemented the Early Years Evaluation (EYE), a pan-Canadian assessment framework used to identify the developmental skills of children aged three to six years. It provides teachers with leading indicator data on child development to better prepare for children transitioning to school. More recently, LRSD is also using the EYE to monitor child development in our Family Centres and improve the programming it offers parents.

g. LRSD hopes the commission will consider developing structures that leverage the rich data the Provincial Manitoba Report Card and other pan-Canadian evaluation systems such as the OurSCHOOL or the EYE provide; focusing on evidence-informed collaborative inquiry cycles to enhance our collective data literacy; and connecting job-embedded professional learning with improved student learning.

h. Manitobans need to avoid rhetoric that describes the journey of trying to understand and improve the public-school system using international, national and provincial test results as a high-stakes contest: pitting countries, provinces, school divisions, schools and individual learners against each other in a race of winners and losers.

i. There needs to be a systemic, sustained, data-informed and teacher-led collaborative inquiry initiative aimed at improving student learning. This system should leverage the Provincial Manitoba Report Card and provide a virtuous cycle of improved teacher and student learning that, over time, provides the only way to improve the validity and reliability of the most important professional judgements made about a learner's journey in the form of grades on the Provincial Manitoba Report Card and on transcripts to post-secondary institutions.

Focus Area 5: Governance

1. What type of governance structures are needed to create a coordinated and relevant education system?

    a. This first question implies the existing system is uncoordinated and irrelevant. The LRSD would argue the contrary. The existing system with its division of powers between the

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provincial government and school boards has served Manitobans well and continues to do so today. LRSD would agree; however, governance structures can always be improved.

b. LRSD's Organizational Chart illustrates a collaborative culture of shared responsibility and accountability that is essential to a learner's journey.

c. This organizational chart reflects LRSD's focus on learners while incorporating Indigenous perspectives on leadership. Unlike previous hierarchical organizational charts, learners, supported by their parents and guardians, are at the centre of LRSD operations.

d. As proposed in Focus Area 1, a coordinated multi-year strategic planning process between government, school divisions, and schools could create a structure that helps bring about additional coherence and alignment while ensuring agility and innovation based on these collaborative and reciprocal relationships.

e. LRSD has implemented a multi-year strategic planning process inspired by the systemic planning process in Ontario school districts. The division suggests the commission consider adapting and developing a similar collaborative and coordinated systemic framework for multi-year strategic planning in Manitoba.

f. LRSD's senior leadership's professional obligations are guided by Dr. Ken Leithwood's framework. In a study commissioned by Ontario's Institute for Education Leadership and Council of Ontario Directors of Education, Dr. Ken Leithwood "summarizes evidence about the characteristics of school systems, boards or districts that are successful at improving the learning of their students, as well as the leadership needed to develop and sustain such districts on the part of those in director and superintendent positions." Using Leithwood's work as a reference, LRSD suggests the commission propose the development of a made-in-Manitoba framework that makes explicit the leadership and governance obligations in Manitoba's public education system:

    i.   Establish broadly shared mission, vision and goals founded on ambitious images of the educated person;
    ii. Provide coherent instructional guidance;
    iii. Build division and school staffs' capacities and commitments to seek out and use multiple sources of evidence to inform decisions;
    iv. Create learning-oriented organizational improvement processes;
    v.   Provide job-embedded professional development;
    vi. Align budgets, personnel policies/procedures and uses of time with district mission, vision and goals;
    vii. Use a comprehensive performance management system for school and district leadership development;
    viii. Advocate for and support a policy-governance approach to school board practice;

ix. Nurture productive working relationships with staff and stakeholders.

2. Should there be changes to how schools, school divisions, school boards and the Department of Education and Training are organized? If so, what changes are needed? Should there be any changes to who does what and how decisions are made? If so, what changes?

   a. As the commission ponders the type of governance structures needed to create a coordinated and relevant education system, it must consider what current research reveals about the effects of past school district consolidation:

      i. Only the amalgamation of the smallest school districts (500 to 1,000 students) yields economies of scale (Schiltz & De Witte, 2017);

      ii. Amalgamation of larger school districts generates diseconomies of scale which are difficult to predict (Berliner, 1990; Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1994; Schiltz & De Witte, 2017);

      iii. The last round of school division amalgamations in Manitoba resulted in sizeable cost increases (FCPP, 2005);

      iv. Amalgamation affects communities negatively through unemployment, the closure of businesses, lower property values, increased travel time, and reduced parent engagement in schools (Berliner, 1990; Wionzek, 1995; Duncombe & Yinger, 2010);

      v. There is no evidence that amalgamation improves academic performance. In fact, small school districts outperform large school districts, controlling for socio-economic factors (Cox, 2010; Howley, 1989; Taylor, 2011).

      vi. The existing system with its division of powers between the provincial government and school boards has served Manitobans well and continues to do so today. Local school boards connect with the communities they serve and are responsive to their needs. Local school boards collaborate with one another to maximize student learning and use taxpayers' contributions wisely. Amalgamation reduces democratic representation and dissuades public engagement. Amalgamation is costly in terms of the time, effort, and energy it consumes.

      vii. The students of Manitoba deserve the best. They deserve a commission that works in their best interests and that grounds decision-making in research. With this in mind, the commission would be well-advised to take amalgamations of Winnipeg school divisions, or their outright abolition, off the table and to recommend enhancements to the existing governance and administrative structures rather than start anew.

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f. There are many alternatives to school division amalgamation that allow school boards to preserve their autonomy while maximizing efficiency and delivery of quality services. [Some of these alternatives are explored in Focus Area Study 5.]

b. LRSD references both Dr. Ken Leithwood's system-level and school-level leadership frameworks (see Supplemental Information) to guide our continuous improvement efforts to enhance our governance and leadership capacities.

c. The division suggests the commission consider proposing that MET and school divisions collaborate to adapt and develop similar frameworks to guide a continuous improvement initiative for governance, system-level and school-level leadership structures and capacities.

Focus Area 6: Funding

1. What actions are required to ensure that the education system is sustainable and provides equitable learning opportunities for all children and youth?

    a. LRSD is engaged with community and government agencies to support education equity and fairness for all learners through partnerships that address the factors that impact student success. LRSD believes in the importance of local autonomy to respond to the diversity of our local communities, which advances equity and fairness through specific local investments, partnerships, and shared responsibilities.

2. Is the education system currently properly funded and sustainable?

    a. The commission should review the current level of funding that supports the growing numbers of learners with special needs.

    b. The commission should review the funding that supports Manitoba's growing newcomer community. Our newcomer students' English language proficiency, school experiences, pathways of arrival to Canada, and family backgrounds differ, and our English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Newcomer programming strive to respond to these differing needs and circumstances.

    c. The commission should review the funding that supports our obligations to implement the education-specific calls-to-action outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

    d. The commission should consider examining a funding model where the public education system is an integral part of a systemic poverty eradication strategy.

    e. Access to reliable technology, hardware, software and network infrastructure is paramount for successful differentiation and personalization that is necessary to achieve equity for Manitoba learners. Some rural and northern Manitoba schools

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continue to be seriously underserved. [LRSD's Assistive Technology project](#) is showing promise.

f.   LRSD currently has the largest proportion of students in French Immersion programming in Manitoba. LRSD is also one of the fastest growing school divisions in Winnipeg. The division is working to ensure it can facilitate the capacity to grow and enhance an ageing infrastructure to serve our expanding and evolving student population.

g.   LRSD cannot achieve this obligation without additional investments in school infrastructure. The commission should study an adequate and more transparent and coordinated multi-year (multi-decade) school infrastructure planning process.

h.   Classrooms and schools are considered the "third teacher" in education (parents are a child's first teacher) and LRSD has been making incremental investments to enhance all classrooms in LRSD (some are only two years old; others are 112 years old). Ageing infrastructure and a growing infrastructure deficit must be addressed as part of a review of public education in Manitoba.

i.   The "[maker movement](#)" has inspired the creation of maker spaces in many LRSD schools. Learning, at its best, is about creativity and the act of creating. The commission should develop a multi-decade strategy to modernize learning spaces in Manitoban schools.

j.   In the context of the looming climate calamity, the greening of public-school and transportation infrastructure is a recommendation the commission must study and bring forward to the government.

k.   In 2017-18, LRSD reviewed our [Safe Routes to School](#) planning and developed a Safe Routes to School [action plan](#) as part of a broader initiative to promote active transportation in LRSD. LRSD suggests the commission study the need for a comprehensive review of safe and active transportation routes to schools in Manitoba.

l.   The commission should study the advisability and practicality of a multi-year budgeting process.

g.   [Local budgeting scenarios to support the incremental implementation of universal Full-Day Kindergarten and other investments are explored in Focus Area Study 6.]

Focus Area 7: French Immersion in LRSD

1.   The LRSD has a rich history of [French Immersion (FI) programming](#) that goes back to the start of FI in Manitoba in the early '70s. Our FI journey serves as an illustrative example of educators and parents in a community working in collaboration with locally elected school boards to develop a pedagogical culture connected to a community's shared local culture, history and geography.

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2. This collaborative culture building continues in LRSD today as evidenced by an FI program that is as strong as ever. In fact, 35 per cent of LRSD's enrolment is in FI and it's growing; this is significantly higher than the 13 per cent that is registered across the province; nearly 50 per cent of Kindergarten and Grade 1 enrolment is in FI; this is significantly higher than the 19 per cent average registration rate in the province.

3. The success of the FI program in LRSD strengthens the vitality of Manitoba's minority language community and contributes significantly to the realization of the goals of The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act (Government of Manitoba, 2016).

4. The attrition rate from K-12 in LRSD is 27 per cent. This is substantially lower than the 50 per cent attrition rate in the province. This rate measures the number of Kindergarten students in the program compared to the number from the same cohort still enrolled in Grade 12.

5. French Immersion in LRSD has evolved as a model of collaboration between the school board, school leaders, educators and community members. From this perspective, one can see that locally elected trustees can influence and support significant change and that stakeholders in education can produce amazing outcomes when they work collaboratively. A strong commitment to a clear and bold vision by all stakeholders matters and that leadership to fulfill that commitment takes courage. When educators, leaders, locally elected trustees and community members agree upon a bold vision and move together in one direction, learners thrive, and communities flourish. The FI program in LRSD serves as evidence of the value of local school boards as the best democratic representation of the voice of local stakeholders.

6. Beyond valuing and strengthening locally elected school boards, what else could the commission recommend to the government that could strengthen the FI program for Manitobans?

    a. Ensure universal access to the FI program. FI remains an optional program in Manitoba, offered by 23 of 37 school divisions.

    b. Review the FI program to differentiate for the diversity of FI programming in Manitoba.

    c. Explore additional Vocational Education opportunities in French tied to bilingual employment opportunities such as Educational Assistants or Early Childhood Educators.

    d. Explore the creation of a partnership with the Université de Saint-Boniface, similar to the Immigrant Teacher Education Program (ITEP) partnership with the University of Winnipeg, to aid internationally trained teachers to gain experience in the Manitoba teaching profession. This could be through a unique curriculum held during evenings and weekends while being employed by a school division during the day in an instructional internship.

    e. Provide incentives to recruit and train French-speaking teacher candidates in the education program at the Université de Saint-Boniface to support the growing French Immersion populations across Western Canada.

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f. Support and promote the Université de Saint-Boniface's capacity to be the French Faculty of Education to develop a French-speaking teacher workforce for Western Canada.

g. Support and promote the Université de Saint-Boniface's capacity to develop a doctoral program for FL1 and FL2 programs in Western Canada.

h. Support the continuation of the Bureau de l'éducation française for FI programs by having pedagogical consultants who are exemplary teachers in their subject area in FI in those roles. This department would ideally be led by an assistant deputy minister who speaks French and understands FI programming.

French in the English Program Schools

7. In Manitoba, more than 57,000 students are learning French in the English Program. LRSD has a rich history of French programming and recognizes the positive impact of second language learning on students' general cognitive abilities and communication skills. Accordingly, the division endorses the provision of opportunities for all students to learn French as an additional language.

8. Since English and French are the two official languages of Canada, LRSD values the continued implementation of French instruction in English Program schools. This provides all LRSD learners with opportunities to learn French, even when they have minimal or limited access to the French language outside the school environment.

9. The division believes instruction in French in English Program Schools supports student learning in several critical aspects:

    a. It maximizes authentic situations, in the school environment, that promote communication in the French language

    b. It develops students' ability to communicate in French with fluency and accuracy

    c. It develops literacy skills in both languages.

    d. It promotes an appreciation of French cultures and French diversity in Canada as well as in other regions of the world, and in so doing, strengthens students' understanding of the relationship between cultural and linguistic development.

10. The division is committed to supporting the continued evolution and long-term sustainability of French instruction and to enhancing the program's integrity and effectiveness in LRSD English Program Schools.

(adapted from Louis Riel School Division Policy IHAH-1, 2019)

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In the **Focus Area Studies** Section of the submission, you will find expanded studies to support each of the Focus Area highlights from the Executive Summary.

The next section of the LRSD submission contains the Louis Riel School Board's perspective as well as the LRSD community's perspective on the commission's focus areas. There are additional sections pertaining to our history as a recently amalgamated school division and some important enrolment, class size, staffing and budget information.

What our Community is Saying

The Louis Riel School Board's Perspective

The Louis Riel School Board fully supports the work of the Manitoba Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education. Our board, along with senior leadership in LRSD work tirelessly to ensure all learners have the opportunity to reach their potential through a number of ways. Some of the ways we are helping achieve collective success in LRSD is through:

- a commitment to regular and meaningful consultation with all stakeholders to inform policy, practice, strategic planning, and budgeting
- a deep and thorough understanding of the needs of students and families in LRSD
- an understood obligation to ensure resources are allocated equitably, appropriately, strategically, and responsibly
- a recognition of the diversity that exists in LRSD, along with the unique challenges and opportunities it presents
- identifying and building partnerships and relationships that lead to better outcomes for our students and our system as a whole
- a board governance model that ensures data- and evidence-driven decision making to help learner success and achievement,
- regular reporting and complete transparency

While our area of expertise and our role and responsibility as a board is governance, we have chosen to submit considerations to all focus areas. In doing so, we hope to draw the necessary attention to the importance and success of our governance work as it helps ensure the success of all who work and learn in LRSD.

Focus Area 1: Long-term vision

The board planning processes are deliberately and necessarily future-oriented. This ensures both the financial and human resources needed for successful outcomes are in place, now and for future learners.

Our strategic priorities support all learners and help them achieve their full academic, emotional, physical and intellectual potential. We also want to ensure all learners are engaged in learning, with strong literacy and numeracy skills, and actively contributing to their communities.

- With a focus on equity of outcomes, the board has invested in a full-day Kindergarten pilot project in nine classrooms in four LRSD schools where the impact of poverty on both students and families is significant. As a result of this investment, early data shows:
  - a lower percentage of learners at risk for reading difficulties
  - a dramatic increase in social-emotional skill development
  - improved social skills

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- o a lower number of learners being identified with vulnerabilities upon entering grade one
- Family Centres in 12 LRSD schools are a place where parents and families play and learn together. A focus on supporting families with preschool children is proving to ease the transition to school, encourage parent involvement in their child's education, and build an important relationship between home and school earlier on.
- MyBlueprint, ECHO, Indigenous Language Program, Propel, and the Medical Careers Exploration Program are but a few of the many examples of investments the Board has made in recognition of our rapidly changing world, and with specific and measurable outcomes in mind.
- Scheduled to be complete by June, and supported by our new Vision, Mission, Values and Motto statements, our multi-year strategic plan will provide a bold, visionary and comprehensive roadmap for the future of LRSD. It will define how we lead, what our community can expect, and what all students will experience on their K-12 journey in LRSD.

Focus Area 2: Student learning

Schools and classrooms look vastly different than even five years ago. The impacts of poverty on learning are well understood and documented. We know protecting and promoting student physical, emotional and mental health is key to enhanced resilience, reduced depression and anxiety, and improved grades.

- LRSD schools and buildings are safe, nurturing and trusting environments, where all who enter feel welcome, valued and supported.
- LRSD Policy on Human Diversity specifically and deliberately commits to safe, inviting, and inclusive learning environments and workplaces.
- The board prioritizes efforts and investment to mitigate the negative effects of poverty on the success of LRSD students such as the:
  - i. reimaging of the René Deleurme Centre as a community hub to provide support for families connected to three neighbouring schools in partnership with Manitoba Tourism Education Council, Boys & Girls Club of Manitoba, Morrow Avenue Daycare, Public Schools Finance Board, Red River College.
- The board invests in, and promotes, mental health and well-being initiatives for students and all LRSD employees under the purview of our Healthy Living Coordinator.
- Professional learning ensures school administrators, teachers, staff, and student services professionals have the tools and skills to assist students and each other at all levels while modelling a commitment to personal wellness.
- Students have access to a variety of learning environments and pathways to success such as:
  - i. Propel, a project-based learning pathway in Nelson McIntyre Collegiate is an investment that offers a non-traditional learning environment with a proven track record of success;
  - ii. Louis Riel Arts and Technical Centre graduated 192 students in 2018, and runs six programs accredited by Apprenticeship Manitoba;
  - iii. BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) in most high schools by 2021;

    iv.   an ongoing partnership with Microsoft allowing access to new technologies and platforms for students and staff;

    v.   a policy and investments in single-track French immersion schools that result in lower attrition rates and students graduating with a high degree of proficiency and competency in spoken and written French;

    vi.   an Indigenous Youth Council, an Indigenous Language Program, the development of the Medical Career Exploration Program, an online tool that teachers can use to deliver Treaty education, an Indigenous Interactive Classroom for grades 4-6, and Graduation Powwow.

- A treaty acknowledgement made in the spirit of reconciliation before all divisional events and gatherings and at the beginning of every public board meeting.
- ECHO was developed in 2012 to help Indigenous learners' transition to high school and be successful in an environment reflective of Indigenous culture.

Focus Area 3: Teaching

The board places a high priority on ensuring teachers, school leaders and senior administration are effective in their roles, successful in their careers, and supported with regular professional learning opportunities throughout their time in LRSD. They should be engaged and challenged, enjoy trusting relationships with learners, staff, and peers, and feel supported in bringing new experiences and approaches to learning into their schools, classrooms, and the boardroom. The board wants the best teachers in front of learners, the best administrators in our schools, and the most competent, professional, and knowledgeable senior leadership in our board office. We attain this by supporting:

- flexibility and latitude in creating classrooms and programs where students thrive, bold and creative thinking take place, and collaboration is encouraged. One example is the reimagining of Nelson McIntyre Collegiate (NMC) that offers a whole school learning environment that has increased engagement, grades, and attendance. Math teachers from NMC have been recognized with Manitoba's Excellence in Education Awards for two consecutive years;
- opportunities for teachers to engage, share effective practices and learn from each other. Collaborative Wednesdays in our high schools are but one example where we have evidence of collaborative practice leading to engaged student learning;
- a robust professional development fund for all staff that translates into a positive impact on student success;
- policies GCNA and GCNB, which are indicative of processes and practices in place to ensure our teachers and school leaders are prepared and confident in their roles;
- divisional numeracy and writing teams who are supporting teachers in providing innovative and creative programs and teaching methods in classrooms. Most of our teacher professional development now occurs within a family of schools from kindergarten to high school.

Focus Area 4: Accountability for Student Learning

Shared and equal responsibility for learner success is critical in the K-12 public education system in Manitoba. Learners, parents, school boards, superintendents, school administrators, teachers, and Manitoba Education and Training all have unique, important and necessary roles as stakeholders.

- Our learners need to be in school, completing assigned work, and participating in the assessment processes to ensure all accountability stakeholders can do their part to ensure students have what they need to succeed.
- Parents know what their learners need, what is working and what isn't, and what meaningful assessment and reporting should entail. We recognize parents as an important part of the accountability that is critical to student success, well-being, achievement and engagement.
- The board is the democratically elected governor of LRSD. It allocates funding, creates policy, and budgets with fiscal responsibility and helps to steward the health and wellness of LRSD. The superintendent is recognized as being responsible for the day-to-day operations of a school division. The board and superintendent relationship are crucial in helping define a strategic plan that supports all aspects of education.
- School administrators lead with the intent of meeting the needs of all students in their schools while supporting staff, teachers and students in achieving excellence both personally and professionally.
- Teachers in LRSD are collaborative learners and focused on learner success. They know they are supported by divisional administration and the board in taking measured risks, introducing bold and innovative strategies to enhance and support learning, and that they are key to inspiring excellence.
- The Government of Manitoba and Manitoba Education and Training develop curriculum, fund a portion of public education, and structure tests/exams to assess the academic performance of Manitoba students.

The *Public Consultation Discussion Paper* asks, "how the education system can develop a stronger sense of shared accountability for student learning." We believe the key components are:

- Regular and meaningful conversations between home and school
- Regular and meaningful conversations between school and senior administration
- Regular and meaningful conversations between senior administration and the locally elected school board
- Regular and meaningful conversations between school boards and the Minister of Education and Training
- Recognizing, capturing and listening to students when they tell us what is going well, what needs work, what they need and what they don't.
- Investing in Family Centres and Community Liaison Workers and recognizing their value in how they build important and positive connections between home and school.

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Focus Area 5: Governance

Residents of the LRSD Community are well served by their locally elected school board. Our governance model is structured to ensure a coordinated system that places student success at the forefront. We are committed to transparency, accountability, consultation, regular reporting, and the building of partnerships and relationships. All the elements of our existing governance structure are relevant in public education in 2019.

- The LRSD Annual Report to the Community provides data and information and is a true celebration of shared success in the division.
- A multi-year strategic plan, currently in development and informed by learners, parents, teachers, staff and administrators, will lay out the roadmap to success for both current and future learners.
- The board regularly consults with our community, meeting with all parent councils annually, and engaging and consulting with our community through multiple mediums.
- The board's Community Connections Committee is expressly tasked with building relationships in the greater LRSD community and has met extensively with seniors' groups, service groups, retired teachers, students, parents, and parent councils. We know what our community needs, values and wants for LRSD learners and families.
- The board meets annually with City Councillors, MLAs, and union groups.
- The board invests in a formal evaluation of our superintendent and ourselves as a board every year, to ensure we are achieving our goals for student and teacher success.

In 2019, we will have reviewed all board and administrative policies, board by-laws and our trustee code of conduct, and adopted new Mission, Vision, Value and Motto statements.

Through consultation with our community, and listening intently to learner, parent and community voice, LRSD has unique programs that are increasing student engagement and improving learner learning—programs which are not found in any other school division in Winnipeg.

Investing time in learning about our culturally and economically diverse community means the needs of our learners and their families are being met; needs that if not addressed and supported can negatively impact learning, self-esteem, and well-being.

A commitment to vocational and technical programs, athletics, fine art, music, and performing arts means our students acquire skills, travel, act, sing, and make music, and in doing so, develop friendships, find passion, mature, and grow.

The board makes these kinds of investments because our learners, parents, staff and the greater community told us they are needed, wanted, and valued.

Programs, services and supports, most of them unique to LRSD and possibly, one-of-a-kind in Winnipeg, are in LRSD because local community voice and community need compelled our board to invest. They include:

- High school enrichment programs for Indigenous learners
- Summer learning programs for elementary school learners
- A reimagined high school experience at Nelson McIntyre Collegiate that includes Propel, Imagine, and Weeks Without Walls.
- Hiring of a School Resource Officer
- A 'whole community' approach for students and families at Victor Wyatt, Victor Mager and Lavallee Schools consisting of a Parent Mentorship Program, Hospitality Training Program, connection with Elders, Boys and Girls Club, in partnership with Morrow Avenue Daycare, Public Schools Finance Board, Canada-Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Agreement and Red River College.
- MyBlueprint career planning for grades 9-12, now being piloted with grades 7 and 8
- Additional supports for learners with special needs
- An expanded team of Educational Assistants
- A flourishing International Student Program
- Expanded music, performing and visual arts programs
- Investment in Louis Riel Arts and Technology Centre, which includes a high school apprenticeship program
- Highly successful FI program, partially due to a commitment to single track FI schools
- Middle Immersion, expanding to a second school for fall of 2019 based on community demand
- Powwow Club, and a Graduation Powwow
- Investments in full-day kindergarten
- Family Centres in 12 schools
- Indigenous language, culture and teachings

Local voice influencing local choice is the definition of elected school boards. Centralizing that voice, or removing it completely, risks removing the unique programs and supports learners and families of LRSD have come to expect, rely on, look forward to, and enjoy.

These programs exist because schools belong to communities, local taxation can be used for funding, and because they meet the direct and distinct needs of our community. More importantly, they motivate students toward attaining the success we want for each one of them.

Focus Area 6: Funding

The board feels compelled to underscore how valuable local taxation is in Manitoba. It ensures we can offer learners and families the strongest supports, the most innovative and impactful teaching practices, data that ensures responsible spending of taxpayer dollars, and a bold and attainable vision for learner success well into the future.

The board hopes the commission examines the current funding model and its potential to continue to adequately and strategically fund public education as well as any additional desired outcomes.

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Community Consultations

The importance of having constant input and feedback from learners, staff and our community in LRSD cannot be understated as it helps build the roadmap for success in the division. To capture the thoughts, perspectives and top priorities from these groups, we invited them to participate in two separate and distinct Thoughtexchange consultations. Invitations were sent to everyone in LRSD asking people to participate in this online and interactive discussion and feedback platform. All submitted thoughts were done anonymously to ensure people focused on the idea, rather than who shared it, while the intelligence software, along with artificial intelligence and machine learning, revealed important insights and actionable data. This was used in concert with regular meetings as well as other opportunities and mediums for our community to submit their ideas.

January 2019 Thoughtexchange

In this consultation, to stimulate and frame the conversation, we posed the question, "What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations for the future of our students and their education in our schools?"

In 20 days, 3,349 participants logged in from across LRSD. They collectively shared 4,722 thoughts and provided 112,871 rankings on the thoughts being submitted.

April 2019 Thoughtexchange

During a three-week period in April, a second Thoughtexchange was held. Once again, all staff, students and parents were invited to participate. In this consultation, we opened the conversation with the question, "As we work together to realize our vision, what new directions and opportunities will best ensure our students thrive and out community flourishes?"

We had 1,684 participants in this discussion who shared 1,728 thoughts. A total of 55,965 ratings on those thoughts were captured.

Consolidated Report on Community Consultation

The following report captures all of the ideas, aspirations, and perspectives our community shared with LRSD during our Thoughtexchange consultations. To delve deeper into the data with additional visual representations and breakdowns, please visit our online and interactive consolidated report.

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Louis Riel School Division
Manitoba Commission on K-12 Education

thoughtexchange

The Louis Riel School Division (LRSD) engaged their community in a series of conversations about visioning and implementing the hopes and aspirations for student learning through to 2030. Participants were invited to share thoughts, rate the thoughts of others and discover the results of the exchange. Read on to learn about the themes that emerged in these exchanges.

DIVISION SCOLAIRE
LOUiS RiEL
SCHOOL DIVISION

5,910 Participants

7,486 Thoughts

202,229 Ratings

PARTICIPATION BY ROLE

24%	(1,364)	Parents
37%	(2,129)	Staff
39%	(2,272)	Students

ABOUT THOUGHTEXCHANGE

Thoughtexchange is a software solution that brings people together to share thoughts, rate thoughts of others and discover what people have to say. Participants tend to rate an average of 20-30 thoughts. Thoughtexchange software uses an algorithm that ensures all thoughts have the same chance to be rated, and also that new thoughts are seen as much as early thoughts. The diagram below shows the three steps of the Thoughtexchange process.
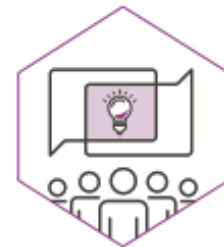
SHARE
Thoughts are shared independently and anonymously.

STAR
Thoughts are rated by everyone, without bias.

DISCOVER
Actionable insights are revealed in real-time creating buy-in.

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THEMES

Thoughts are grouped together by topic to form themes. The theme names reflect the key words for each topic. Of the 7,486 thoughts submitted across the exchanges, the thoughts rated above 3.8/5.0 were themed to establish priorities, for a total of 1,639 themed thoughts. Representative thoughts are selected based on the bayesian average - a weighted average that takes into account the number of people who have assigned ratings. Representative thoughts for each theme are shown alongside their average star rating and the number of people who rated each thought.

FOCUS AREA 1: LONG TERM VISION

The following themes highlight the Long Term Vision priorities for the LRSD community:

- Citizenship
- Life Skills
- Quality Education
- Cradle to Career
- School Environment/Culture

The goals and purpose of K to 12 education are for all members of the community to excel as caring, confident, capable, and resilient life-long learners who contribute to a democratic and sustainable world.

I would like students to become responsible and caring citizens. Responsible and caring citizens will make a stronger and more empathetic society.

4.4 ★   19 👤

Teach kids life skills in high school. How to build resumes, interview for jobs, cook healthy meals, do banking and how to do taxes. Those are what will help contribute to a better society when they are out of school.

4.1 ★   37 👤

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The following thoughts highlight both appreciations and concerns voiced about the current system:

I hope that the LRSD remains a community of learners committed to lifelong learning and supporting students towards a successful future. We should always be looking at the big picture and reflecting on how we can improve as professionals and individuals to best guide students.

4.2 ★   17 👤

Extra-curricular opportunity equity. I am hopeful that socio-economic standing doesn't influence what opportunities students can experience (i.e. travel for a sport or music event).

4.1 ★   27 👤

The following thoughts represent what the community feels are the most important things for students to gain from their K to 12 education:

Middle years and High School curriculum that offers students opportunities to be exposed to various career sectors. Exposing students to the many career options available in the workforce will help guide their subject choices in high school and beyond.

4.2 ★   37 👤

That they will graduate with the tools they need to either enter directly into the workforce and/or post secondary education.

4.2 ★   36 👤

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FOCUS AREA 2: STUDENT LEARNING

The following themes highlight the Student Learning priorities for the LRSD community:

- Holistic Learning
- Social-Emotional Skills and Wellness
- Mental Health
- Critical Thinking and Adaptation
- Literacy & Numeracy

- Resiliency
- Poverty
- Field Trips
- Breaks
- Student Support

To ensure each student reaches their full potential in Manitoba there must be a safe, inclusive, and engaging environment, where personal and collective learning and growth are valued.

Continuing to place high importance on mental health, community building and belonging for students. Learning is social and students thrive when their personal sense of belonging and safety needs are met.

4.4 ★   27 👤

To insure that all students have mastered the basics of academics. Reading, writing, and Math. This should be the purpose of school. It's why there are public schools in the first place. So everyone can have basic academic skills.

4.3 ★   55 👤

Ultimately, student success is a shared responsibility where we encourage staff, students, parents, and government to create collaborative learning goals, and promote and support caring, trusting and productive relationships.

Foster the whole child, aka building relationships and taking care of the person, and helping our students develop into conscientious and caring humans.

4.3 ★   19 👤

We need to address poverty in our communities. If our students come to school without basic needs being met, it makes it incredibly difficult for them to develop essential academic skills. This impacts the entire learning environment as some students fall behind.

4.3 ★   27 👤

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FOCUS AREA 3: TEACHING

The following themes highlight the Teaching priorities for the LRSD community:

- Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment
- Help and Support
- Classroom Support

- Professional Learning & Teacher Efficacy
- Inclusion
- Experiential Learning

Teachers and school leaders can become most effective when they are provided extensive professional training and growth opportunities in the form of educational networks and job-embedded learning.

We need people in this profession who are passionate about what they do and interested in meaningful change and innovation. Creating an atmosphere that is dynamic, exciting, and flexible allows educators to be at their best.

4.3 ★   27 👤

Increase PD for EAs and implement an ongoing review process that is collaborative with teachers to see if support is effective and appropriate. EAs work with the students with the highest needs but have the least amount of training among staff.

4.3 ★   21 👤

Teachers better help students achieve their goals by promoting a student-centred approach to teaching and learning; nurturing a culture that supports and encourages the continual success of staff, students and families.

We need more support in the classroom for all learners because of the huge range of learning abilities and social emotional needs. This is important because we want to make sure that all students receive the necessary supports to help them realize their full potential.

4.4 ★   25 👤

To foster the idea that all students, regardless of gender, race, and cognitive ability, are educated in an inclusive environment. All students should be able to feel a sense of belonging, feel respected, and value who they are while attending our schools.

4.3 ★   21 👤

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FOCUS AREA 4: ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STUDENT LEARNING

The following themes highlight the Accountability priorities for the LRSD community:

- Academic Success
- Safety & Accountability

The education system can develop a stronger sense of shared accountability for student learning by nurturing a community of learning and well-becoming for all that reflects the diverse aptitudes, abilities, identities and experiences of our communities.

I believe that it is important that students feel confident in their learning. Students should feel as though they are able to succeed through guided learning.

4.2 ★   20 👤

Adults who work with children understand that behaviour is communication and seek to help the child to get the help they need to be successful. Supports the development of trusting relationships which are foundational to growth, development and learning.

4.2 ★   19 👤

While improvements are always possible, the current system provides equitable learning outcomes for all students by: ensuring instructional resources are allocated in a manner that addresses individual and community needs; implementing the education-specific calls-to-action outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; ensuring newcomers receive the support they need to thrive.

Providing special needs/at-risk students with opportunities to learn OUTSIDE the classroom so they can develop skills without the distractions. Inclusion is great for social skills but students with special needs need spaces to learn and focus in an environment that works for them.

4.2 ★   20 👤

Focus on character building and self esteem, not anti-bullying. The end result will be stronger kids who are confident in who they are. Kids/people who feel loved and appreciated don't have a need or desire to lash out and hurt others. Focus on the Do's not the Don'ts.

3.9 ★   53 👤

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FOCUS AREA 5: GOVERNANCE

The following themes highlight the Governance priorities for the LRSD community:

- Leadership and Administration
- Connection with Families
- Engagement
- Communication

The existing system, with its division of powers between the provincial government and school boards, has served Manitobans well and continues to do so today. Local school boards connect with the communities they serve and are responsive to their needs.

Working together as a school-home partnership. This is in the best interests of the learner.

4.1 ★   27 👤

It is important that families, schools and students all work together. This is important to get multiple viewpoints and have everyone's voice heard. It is important that our community is an active member in decisions.

4.0 ★   26 👤

Continue to foster and encourage collaboration. It's a critical skill and will help foster community.

4.1 ★   20 👤

LRSD leadership and staff should reflect the diversity of the LRSD community. So that the plans and strategies reflect the community and its values.

3.6 ★   18 👤

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FOCUS AREA 6: FUNDING

The following themes highlight the Funding priorities for the LRSD community:

- Transportation, Facilities and Services
- Class Size and Planning for Growth
- Technology
- Measuring & Meeting Student Needs

To ensure a sustainable education system, we must ensure the allocations of resources, organizational structures, improvement plans, professional learning efforts, policies and procedures, strategic priorities and goals support our learners, staff and the community. This will allow them to make informed, un-coerced decisions, which enhance their capacity to express creativity, individuality and moral independence.

Invest in the school environment of our older buildings. Learning should not be hindered by lack of air conditioning. Underprivileged children do not get a break from the heat when they live in apartments without a/c and come to school to learn without it, too.   4.2 ★   21 👤

Students' needs are met with appropriate resources to succeed emotionally and academically. Such as class size, teachers/EAs. Class sizes are rising and we have lower student to teacher/EA ratio. EAL, emotional, and academic needs are growing.   4.2 ★   20 👤

More places to sit/study. Library and lunch areas are frequently full.   4.1 ★   29 👤

Accessible Technology. We are a technology driven school and yet there are many students who cannot afford a device (a proper lap top etc.).   4.0 ★   27 👤

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FOCUS AREA 7: FRENCH IMMERSION

The following themes highlight the French Immersion priorities for the LRSD community:

- ▪ French Immersion & Languages

The success of the French Immersion program in LRSD strengthens the vitality of Manitoba's minority language community and contributes significantly to the realization of the goals of The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act.

The district needs to see both French Immersion and English schools as equal platforms for educating all types of learners and needs.   4.0 ★   25 👤

Keep our single tract schools for French immersion. Children need to be immersed completely in the French language for the program to be successful.   3.9 ★   28 👤

In French Immersion, it is important to continue to encourage students to speak French from Kindergarten to Grade 12. It is important because teachers are not always consistent with their expectations for the students in different levels.   3.9 ★   26 👤

It is very important to maintain immersion centres where the French language is spoken by all staff members, and students. Research has shown that students are much more fluent than those in dual-track schools.   3.9 ★   26 👤

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Who We Are

The LRSD spans across St. Vital, St. Boniface and Norwood, in the southeast quadrant of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Our division serves a diverse student population from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds including Indigenous students and newcomers to Canada.

History

The LRSD grew out of three different legacy divisions: the St. Vital, St. Boniface and Norwood School Divisions.

In a broad sense, the creation of LRSD began in 1998 with the voluntary amalgamation of the Norwood School Division and the St. Boniface School Division.

Four years later, the LRSD was established when Manitoba's premier at the time, Gary Doer, directed a number of school divisions - rural and urban - to amalgamate. This brought together the new St. Boniface School Division with the St. Vital School Division.

The new division was named the Louis Riel School Division on February 5, 2002, and officially amalgamated on July 19 of the same year.

Our Name

The historical figure from which our division draws its name, Louis Riel, grounds LRSD in Manitoba's tradition, culture, and history; however, and in keeping with this visionary figure, we strive for progress and innovation. The name for our division emerged from several suggestions provided by the residents of both communities.

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LRSD by the Numbers

Schools	English Program	French Immersion Program
Elementary Schools	21	10
High Schools	5	2
Dual-track Elementary School		1
Technical and Vocational Training	1	
Community Learning Centre	1	
Total	28	13

* Data updated in April 2019

Our Students

	English Program	French Immersion Program
Grades K-8	6,094	4,294
Grades 9-12	4,040	1,078
Total	15,506	

* Data updated in April 2019

Class Size

Average Class Size	
K-3	20.48
4-8	23.67
K-8	21.96

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Our Staff		
	Teaching	Non-Teaching
English Schools	759	638
French Immersion Schools	316	146
Dual Track Schools	43	27
Administrative Staff	71	149
Total	2149	

* Data updated in April 2019

2019-2020 Budget

Regular Instruction	$ 109,927,440
Student Support Services	$ 39,381,148
Community Education	$ 2,661,002
Divisional Administration	$ 6,374,470
Instructional & Other Support	$ 7,477,998
Transportation	$ 4,630,570
Operations & Maintenance	$ 20,320,408
Fiscal and Capital	$ 4,411,474
Total	$ 194,359,468

The 2019-2020 budget supports a growing and diverse student population by funding existing and new frontline staffing positions, essentially 11 new teachers, 2.5 new student services teachers and 20 new educational assistants. We achieve this measured effort to protect frontline staff and make targeted investments to enhance public education in LRSD by increasing the Special Requirement on local property taxes by 2% and reducing operating expenses.

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Focus Area Studies

The following studies were researched, compiled and written by independent groups of LRSD educators to inform and support the Executive Summary. To preserve their methodology and conclusions, we are including their reports in the format they were submitted.

Focus Area 1: Long-term vision

The purpose and goals of public education in a rapidly changing world

The LRSD value statements propose that one of the purposes and goals of education is to nurture a community of learning and well-becoming for all that reflects the diverse aptitudes, abilities, identities and experiences of our communities. We see a similar position reflected in Manitoba Education and Training's (MET) current Mandate, Mission, Vision and Priority Areas.

> Citizenship, Sustainability and Wellbeing are essential to ensure that all students are prepared in their role as global citizens who are sensitive to and have respect for other cultures and are prepared for active involvement in addressing issues of economic, social-cultural, and environmental sustainability. The cognitive, emotional, social and physical (and for some, spiritual) domains of wellbeing must be supported to meet the conditions needed for students to learn, grow and develop a positive sense of self.
> https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/edu/mandate.html

In April 2019, LRSD ratified a new Vision, Mission, Motto and Values. In these collective statements, the division believes that for students to achieve well-being, to be resilient lifelong learners, and able to contribute to a democratic, inclusive, and sustainable world, public education should embrace a "whole child" or holistic approach as advocated by countless contemporary and historic educational thinkers such as, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Ralph Waldo Emerson or Henry Thoreau, and more recently, contemporary research that proposes Indigenous ways of understanding to frame the educational journey.

Whether it's the Whole Child Approach proposed by the ASCD, UNESCO's Education 2030 Framework for Action, ministries of education worldwide (New Zealand, Finland, Australia), Indigenous inspired approaches such as the Circle of Courage framework that serves as a thread throughout LRSD's written submission. LRSD advocates for a comprehensive (holistic) approach to education from birth to adulthood (cradle to career).

The demands of the 21st century require a new approach to education to fully prepare students for college, career, and citizenship. Research, practice, and common sense confirm that a whole child approach to education will develop and prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of today and tomorrow by addressing students' comprehensive needs through the shared responsibility of students, families, schools, and communities... A whole child approach, which ensures that each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, sets the standard for comprehensive, sustainable school improvement and provides for long-term student success.

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ASCD's Whole Child approach is an effort to transition from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the long-term development and success of all children. Through this approach, ASCD supports educators, families, community members, and policymakers as they move from a vision about educating the whole child to sustainable, collaborative actions. ASCD is joined in this effort by Whole Child Partner organizations representing the education, arts, health, policy, and community sectors.

The commission and LRSD share a common desire to prioritize democratic citizenship, sustainability and well-being for our learners who will as capable and confident adult citizens who value democratic institutions, have the wherewithal to address the climate crisis and inclusive of human diversity and all people's needs. Our world is, and will increasingly become, one that will demand innovation and collaboration to move to a sustainable economy that avoids climate catastrophe, reduces the growing wealth gap, and creates a more democratic world.

In a review of a system as complex and multi-layered as our education system, we suggest three key pillars— Democracy, Sustainability and Well-being—are worthy of further examination and exploration.

Democracy

Teachers in LRSD are constantly developing new ethics and values-based learning opportunities on topics such as social justice, inclusion, and empathy. At one time, these were elements of what teachers would refer to as the "hidden curriculum." Now, they are essential skills in the 21st-century classroom. As learners develop capacity in these areas, they gain independence, resilience and a strong understanding of how to be resourceful in a global and networked world. Teachers help nurture the development of these competencies by creating authentic situations of meaningful engagement where students intrinsically come to the table with a desire to expand their learning. It is about developing the ability to be OK with not knowing the answer but being confident in the ability to find it. Ultimately, as students graduate in LRSD, they leave with a solid education foundation, skill sets that can be further honed, and an understanding of why inclusion and diversity in their world, as well as around the world, should be celebrated and protected.

Sustainability

Never in history has the speed in which we can access information been so instant—nor has the ability to network and collaborate in a plethora of online platforms. Thanks to a shift in philosophy, professional capacity, funding, and assistive learning technology, new teaching methods are being introduced that leverage this resource for long-term learning opportunities.

Thankfully, the core education models of the past where a premium was put on "knowing the right answer on the test" have evolved. Now, literacy in all its forms has taken centre stage and redefined what learning is all about. Literacy and numeracy are embedded in learning experiences across all

subject areas, in school and outside of them, as they are essential skills adults need to succeed in the workplace and to be engaged citizens.

As students develop these skills and their knowledge on their journey from K-12, a wider view of the learner is important to consider in terms of long-term sustainability and success, which is to look at the whole person we are helping to shape. To do this, we need to look at the varying states of mental health of our learners as they enter public schools, which is having an impact on their journey through the public education system.

Schools need to provide an education that incorporates a spectrum of essentials, from technological, mental, and intellectual education to helping ensure learners can excel as caring, confident, capable, and resilient life-long learners who contribute to a democratic and sustainable world.

Well-being and Well-becoming

In 1995, The World Health Organization instituted the Global School Health Initiative to "mobilize and strengthen health promotion and education activities at the local, national, regional and global levels. The Initiative is designed to improve the health of students, school personnel, families and other members of the community through schools." This suggests the need for overarching complementary and comprehensive services to strengthen capacity for living, learning and working in healthy environments.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada released a 2010 report called *Making the Case for Investing in Mental Health in Canada*. Within this report, they present alarming statistics on the prevalence of mental illness in individuals aged nine to 19. As educators, we need to acknowledge these findings and the impact it has on public education.

> *In 2011, an estimated 1.04 million young people aged 9-19 were living with a mental illness. This represents 23.4% or nearly one in four young people. Children and youth who experience a mental illness are at much higher risk of experiencing a mental illness as adults. The prevalence of childhood associated with mental illnesses (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, and conduct disorder) is much higher for males than females. Of the 170,000 children and youth in Canada with ADHD in 2011, 87% were male.*

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FIGURE 4 - ESTIMATED 12-MONTH PREVALENCE OF MENTAL ILLNESSES AMONG PEOPLE AGED 9-19 IN CANADA
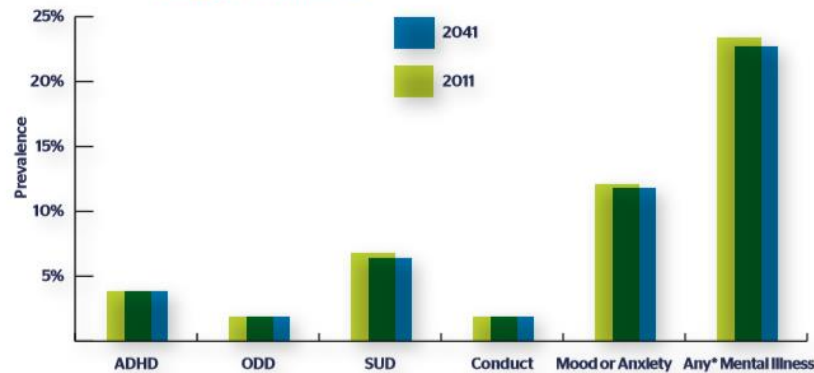
The Mental Health Commission report shows investments in evidence-based early intervention and prevention can generate cost savings. In LRSD, in collaboration with the WRHA, all of our schools are invested in implementing the Mental Health Initiative, which provides schools with the time to meet, plan, and implement strategies and supports into their school plans. Not only does research suggest additional mental health supports in schools have the potential for cost savings, it could have a significant positive effect on helping close achievement gaps.

Not only are some learners entering schools with mental illness, poverty is playing a huge factor in public education as well. In 2018, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Manitoba, published a document acknowledging many learners are poorly prepared for education as they are "relative to other kids, behind the 'start line' from the beginning." The paper states poverty is not simply an inner-city phenomenon but one that extends to suburban areas as well. Staff in schools attempt to mitigate the effects of poverty on learners that, in turn, helps reduce barriers, but schools can't operate in silos and need the comprehensive support of Family Centres to have a positive effect in the long-term. The report also suggests a "whole community" approach with schools and the school division being important partners. As our written submission illustrates, LRSD has made it a priority to seek additional opportunities to develop relationships with Indigenous organizations, staff, and Elders. There are other opportunities to explore in the quest for excellence in education, such as addictions facilities, after school and sports programming, and childcare. There are many positive initiatives under way that support the well-being of families with barriers in our learning communities, but this is a growing and underserved segment that could benefit from increased resources. In our rapidly changing world, the pace of change is almost too fast for those already struggling to sustain their basic needs and is an important consideration to address in order to create long-term sustainability in public education.

The Goals of K-12 Education

Through extensive consultation with students, staff, and the community this past year, the newly ratified motto of LRSD is: Thriving Learners ∞ Flourishing Communities. This motto links the two statements together and proposes that it's difficult to have one without the other. As a goal, ensuring

Thriving Learners ∞ Flourishing Communities

we, as a community, ensure we have thriving learners in our public education system is one well worth pursuing. And, if the effect of this commitment and support results in flourishing communities, we can all celebrate that success.

This consultation with the community also helped the LRSD create goals that will centre around providing safe, inclusive, and engaging learning environments where all learners thrive and are given the support to achieve their full potential.

What we heard from our community allows our board and the senior leadership team to align and complement the allocation of resources, organizational structures, improvement plans, professional learning efforts, policies, procedures and strategic priorities with the goals of public education and the larger provincial mandate.

LRSD also suggests the goals of K to 12 education should seek to nurture a community of learning and well-becoming for all that reflects the diverse aptitudes, abilities, identities and experiences of all learners. It should promote, develop and champion plurilingual programming (French Immersion, French in English Schools, Indigenous languages and Heritage languages).

In LRSD, we often reflect on our history, the specific needs of our community and building pathways to the future. Although we are guided by our priorities and principles, we are constantly seeking input, best practices and ensuring we are always positioned for success, for our staff, our learners and community.

To ensure long term success and to each our collective goals, we also need to share responsibility and partner with collaborating agencies to equitably respond to student and community needs.

Competencies, Skills Development and Career Readiness

The daily demands on today's learners and classrooms are more complex than ever before. Every school in Manitoba faces pressures related to rapid and unpredictable societal, economic and demographic changes related to the climate crisis, globalization, robotization, the advent of artificial intelligence, the growing wealth gap, and the ongoing systemic racism and bigotry expressing itself in radical nationalist political movements. These realities add to the complexity of nurturing hope and optimism in our young learners as they journey to adulthood.

Many jobs and workplaces are in the midst of fundamental transformation (World Economic Forum, 2016) in which "socioeconomic, geopolitical and demographic developments and the interactions between them will generate new categories of jobs and occupations while partly or wholly displacing others." The report notes that by 2020, workers will need to develop new skills to enable "new cross-functional roles for which, employees will need both technical, social and analytical skills" (World Economic Forum, 2016).

Teachers in LRSD keep learners needs first, to emphasize student voice, to integrate personal self-awareness into all activities, and to connect with real audiences that stimulate relevant and meaningful content and skills development. The post high school world that awaits them demands skills,

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competencies, character, digital capability, and career savvy, all important, relevant and interdisciplinary education that will ensure the best possible educational outcomes.

A focus on competencies and skills development stimulates career readiness that enables the learners of tomorrow to successfully navigate a world of continual disruption. Michael Fullan's (2018) 6C's—critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, citizenship, and character—are promoted in LRSD K-12 programming. LRSD has added a 7th C – 'career' – to the Fullan pieces to promote career path planning that make course work relevant and purposeful to future aspirations.

In LRSD, we are developing a systemic learning culture that moves strategically from an early and middle years play-based interdisciplinary journey to collaborative models of multi-disciplinary project-based learning in high schools. Such models include *Propel,* a project- based learning incubator; The *Career Internship Program*, a big-picture style school with internships and interdisciplinary projects for all styles of learners; *Career Cohorts* in all high schools that allows students to design their own courses based on career interests, skills interests and personal experiences using a unique tool called the *LEAN Career Design Canvas*.

A unique partnership with *RBC Future Launch* has resulted in the creation of the *LRSD Skills Credential*, a program that provides opportunities for all high school students to complete workshops in digital branding, KATA problem-solving, financial investment, ethics training, career planning, and customer-service diagnostics that connects students to their course work and builds a culture of engagement and deep learning (Fullan, Quinn, McEachen, 2018).

A key purpose of education is to build learners' competencies to participate in post high school life with dexterity, confidence, and career savvy. The rapid pace of technological, economic, demographic, and geopolitical change requires that students be better prepared to truly realize their place in the world. By the end of their K-12 experience, students must understand who they are, what talents, aptitudes and competencies they've developed, what skills they want to acquire, and who values their skills and attributes beyond school walls.

Education Equity and Fairness for All: Local Autonomy and Partnerships to Address Factors that Impact Student Success

LRSD is engaged with community and government agencies to support education equity and fairness for all, through partnerships to address the factors the impact student success. LRSD believes in the importance of local autonomy to respond to the diversity of our local communities. We are advancing equity and fairness for all through specific local investments, partnerships, and shared responsibilities.

Implementing the education-specific calls-to-action outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

LRSD has made significant local investments to address the education specific calls-to-action (specifically #62 and #63) outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address factors that impact the success of our Indigenous students. LRSD has created an Indigenous Education Support Team, and

collaborated with the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba and other community leaders and Elders in Indigenous education to address the following specific recommendations:

> *62. We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:*

Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Indigenous peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade 12 students.

> *63. We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:*

Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.

- *Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.*
- *Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.*
- *Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.*

Some of the significant investments we have made through our local autonomy to address the calls-to-action and improve Indigenous students' success include:

- Ojibwe Language Program – destined to be offered to all Early-Years students
- Treaty Education for all students in grades K-12 – *a vehicle to disseminate information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history*
- Echo Program in High Schools – to promote successful transition to high school and provide cultural safety and enrichment for Indigenous students
- Graduation Powwow – to integrate

While LRSD is encouraged by the improving educational success of our Indigenous students, removing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners remains an ongoing priority.

Supporting and Enhancing Our Newcomer Programming

Through specific local investments, partnerships, and shared responsibilities, LRSD is supporting equity and fairness for newcomer learners and addressing the factors that impact learners' success.

In partnership with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, LRSD has invested and made contributions-in-kind to support newcomer community members, students and their families.

The Neighborhood Immigrant Settlement Program is led by the Supervisor of Student and Family Support and supervised by the Director of Student Support Services. This program resides at the Rene Deleurme Centre where Neighbourhood Immigrant Settlement Workers serve hundreds of newcomer families in our local community.

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As well, LRSD has made local investments to create a Divisional team of 14.5 Itinerant EAL teachers and 14.5 Educational Assistants to support the many newcomer students, including refugee students and families with significant needs.

Mitigating the Impact of Poverty

LRSD is supporting equity and fairness for students living in poverty, through specific local investments, partnerships, and shared responsibilities.

There is well-researched and documented evidence that show how poverty impacts learning and is a barrier to equity and fairness in education. PISA 2015 concentrates on two goals related to equity: inclusion and fairness. While Canada achieves high performance and high equity in education opportunities, in Manitoba, where child poverty is higher than any other province, socio-economic status continues to have a negative impact on students' opportunities to benefit from education and develop their skills, no matter how well the overall education system is performing. Education systems share the goal of equipping students, irrespective of their socio-economic status, with the skills necessary to achieve their full potential in social and economic life.

According to the latest reporting from Statistics Canada, the gap between children and adults living in low-income households was widest in Manitoba (21.9% of children, compared with 13.5% of adults). In an attempt to mitigate the impact of child poverty, LRSD has made local investments in: full-day Kindergarten; Family Centres; a community school model in our most vulnerable communities; clinical and student services staff; and maintaining reasonable class sizes.

Low-income rates for children and adults, by province, 2015

percent
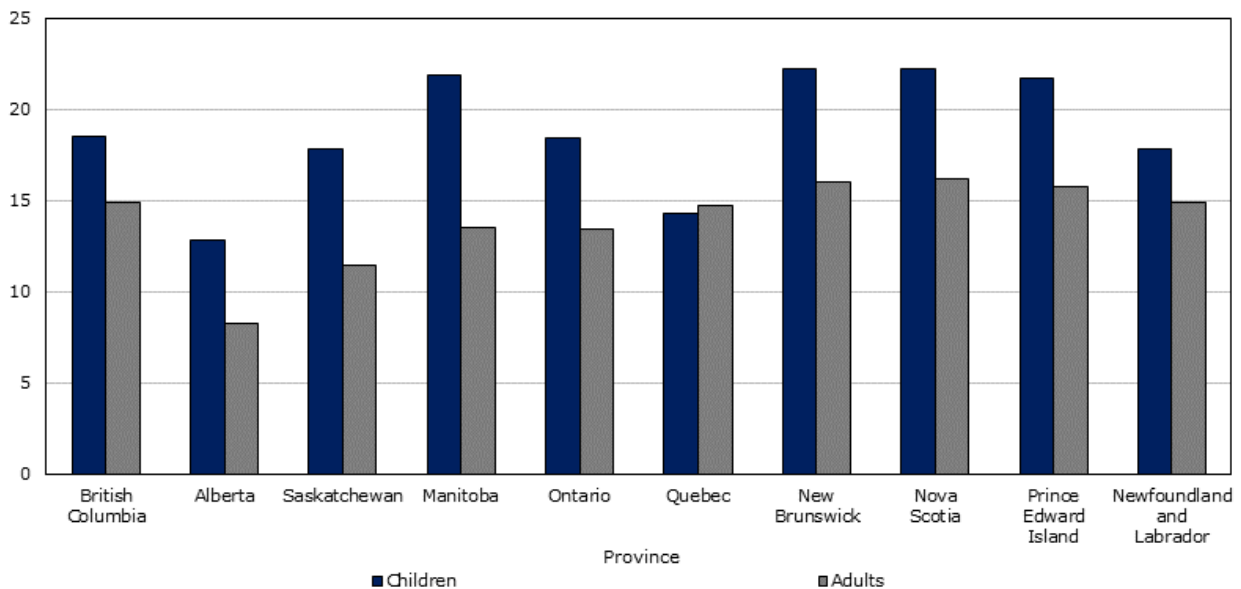
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2016.

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There is strong evidence that show investments in the well-being and well-becoming of children and youth yield a significant financial return over time, and that strategies designed to prevent problems are far less expensive to implement than remedial responses later. (OECD, 2006)

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Focus Area 2: Student learning

What are the conditions required to achieve excellence in student achievement and outcomes in Manitoba? Who is ultimately responsible for student success?

To answer important questions such as these, a perspective should be selected that is reflective of both the goals and values of Manitoba Education and Training (MET) and LRSD.

The Circle of Courage, as described in the book *Reclaiming Youth at Risk – Our Hope for the Future* (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2002) provides a model viewpoint that is valued by both MET and LRSD and that infuses Indigenous ways of knowledge that may offer a framework to rethink the public education system in Manitoba. In the commission's public consultation discussion paper, there is significant concern regarding outcomes for Indigenous students, specifically around graduation rates (Manitoba Education and Training, 2019, p. 8) further reinforcing the appropriateness of using this lens to provide answers.

Referencing *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*, MET describes the Circle of Courage as "a model of positive youth development" that "integrates Native American philosophies of child-rearing, the heritage of early pioneers in education and youth work, and contemporary resilience research." (MET, 2002, p. 2).

The Circle of Courage has four quadrants: Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. These are based on the work of Stanley Coopersmith regarding self-worth and speak to a holistic approach of educating the whole child. All learners must have their needs met in each quadrant and if they're not being met, it is up to educators and other supportive adults in their life to help them complete their circle by fostering opportunities to improve absent or distorted values within these quadrants. As Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern surmise: "[o]ne cannot mend the circle of courage without understanding where it is broken" (p. 61).

Belonging

The first quadrant, and arguably the most important and foundational one, is Belonging. This is a learner's belief that they are loved. Education cannot occur without a relationship based on trust. Without this relationship, "children desperately pursue 'artificial belongings' because this need is not fulfilled by families, schools, and neighborhoods," (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, p. 48). It is well known that if students are in a stressful environment, they cannot work to full capacity as stress chemicals flood their brains. Only when learners are in an environment where they feel they belong and are valued; can they achieve their full potential.

Mastery

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The Mastery quadrant allows the learner to believe they can succeed. When one believes they can succeed, they become more engaged. Increased engagement promotes further mastery with the task at hand, which in the case of education, is learning. The link between engagement and mastery is cyclical. Daniel Pink, a leading authority on motivation, lists mastery as one of the key elements of motivation, along with autonomy and purpose. Pink states that "only engagement can produce mastery" and that mastery "has become essential in making one's way in today's economy," (Pink, 2009, p. 109).

Independence

The power to make decisions and have control over ones' life is the central theme of the Independence quadrant. This power fosters "motivation to attain a given goal and responsibility for failure or success" (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 2002, pp. 52-53). Traditional schooling taught and relied primarily on compliance through extrinsic motivators such as rewards and punishments—the opposite of independence. The philosophies of Standing Bear, Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern state that "[c]hildren were never offered prizes or rewards for doing something well. The achievement itself was the appropriate reward and to put anything above this was to plant unhealthy ideas in the minds of children and make them weak" (p. 54). It is imperative that all school systems nurture citizens that "make decisions, solve problems, and show personal responsibility" (MET, 2002, p. 2) while being intrinsically motivated to do so. It is critical these and other supporting skills are taught in school at an age-appropriate level with the goal of full independence at graduation.

Generosity

This quadrant provides the student with the understanding they have purpose in their life. In the words of a Lakota Elder, "You should be able to give away your most cherished possession without your heart beating faster," (MET, 2002, p. 2). This is also an important foundation for the learners we help shape in the public education system.

We want the learners in our public schools to have safe learning environments and a sense of belonging, but we should strive for a society as described by Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern: "Core values of sharing and community responsibility were deeply engrained in the community. Giving was not confined to property, but rather permeated all aspects of Native culture" (p. 58). Noted author and researcher in the area of citizenship, Dr. Joel Westheimer, describes three types of citizens that are required for society to function in his book *What Kind of Citizen?;* the Personally Responsible, Participatory and the Social Justice Oriented Citizen (p. 39). These citizens exist in a world where generosity is a key cornerstone and all citizens have something to contribute or a purpose in society.

How Learners Can Achieve Success

The universal longing for human bonds is cultivated by relationships of trust so that the child can say, "I am loved" (MET, 2002). When considering the conditions required in our schools and classrooms to create spaces for children and youth to flourish, we must consider the relationships between mental and physical health, well-being, safety and student learning. When learners feel they're part of a school community, they will actively engage in academic and non-academic activities (OECD, 2017).

LRSD has invested in building staff capacity in understanding and implementing social-emotional learning (SEL) as a framework for classroom instruction and student engagement. Students who participate in SEL focused programming have demonstrated improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance that reflect an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement (Child Development, 2011, p. 7).

Manitoba has embraced this belief in the writing of the newest curriculum, *Children and youth have unique and diverse ways of developing and expanding their language and literacies* (MET, 2019). With Manitoba classrooms being "rich in diversity, where learners and teachers share multiple ways of knowing and diverse backgrounds and identities" (MET, 2019) the unique ways of processing language and literacy need to be honored, with a strong sense of belonging being essential to positive learning communities where our learners can thrive. MET (2019) asserts that "educators are called upon to imagine rich, generous, and inclusive learning spaces and experiences in which all learners engage deeply and meaningfully". The Manitoba English Language Arts Draft document is a progressive 21st century curriculum that can serve as a model as curriculum continues to evolve and be written in our province.

If belonging comes from a sense that a person feels loved, Mastery is derived from a sense of a person's agency over their own success. From the struggling learner to the gifted, from the newcomer family to the five generation Canadian, and from the affluent to the impoverished, today's public-school classrooms are as diverse as ever. As such, academically responsive teaching is necessary for Manitoba students to achieve excellence. Carol-Ann Tomlinson describes differentiation as, "an approach to teaching in which teachers proactively modify curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the diverse needs of individual students and small groups of students to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in a classroom" (Tomlinson et al, 2003, p. 121).

Given the reality of diverse learners in Manitoba classrooms, educators are not positioned to simply consider student-specific strengths and needs, they are tasked with how to respond to the individual learners in their care to ensure equity for all (Tomlinson et al, 2003). "Equality of opportunity becomes a reality only when students receive instruction suited to their varied readiness levels, interests, and learning preferences, thus enabling them to maximize the opportunity for growth" (Tomlinson et al, 2003, p. 120). A student-centred approach to learning is necessary to achieve high levels of progress with the "non-negotiable belief that all students are capable of brilliance" (Christensen, 2009, p. 2). Christensen (2009) expands on the importance of strength-based approaches, describing classroom

structures and routines that provide her with the time to confer 1:1 with students, build on their strengths and set meaningful, achievable progress goals.

This approach to classroom structure and management ensures student feedback is specific, personalized and relevant, achieving the impactful differentiation as described by John Hattie (2012), beginning with teachers knowing, for each learner, where that student is in relation to the success criteria. Frey, Fisher and Hattie (2018) argue that when students have a clear understanding about the learning intentions and success criteria, they become assessment capable learners. Additionally, Frey, Fisher and Hattie (2018) encourage student-centred assessment practices and designing learning opportunities where students use "goals and results to fuel their own learning" (Frey, Fisher and Hattie, 2018, p.46).

Assessment for learning structures that empower learners to self-monitor and adjust their pace and path, thereby becoming their own teachers, are essential in achieving academic excellence and the life-long learning necessary to thrive. (Almarode, Fisher, Thunder, Hattie & Frey, 2019).

In LRSD, experiential job-embedded professional learning models such as The Personalized Professional Learning Project and The Writing Project initiatives are effective ways to strengthen teacher capacity in effectively differentiating instruction and feedback, planning intentional learning targets and co-constructing success criteria. Teachers within LRSD are embedding these powerful pedagogies into practice.

In considering literacy and reading, the Reading Apprenticeship is a powerful approach to learning invested in by MET and LRSD. The Reading Apprenticeship approach affirms a strength-based approach to differentiation, "we see ample evidence that by helping students find their own reasons and entry points for reading challenging texts, we can support them in developing both their affective and their intellectual engagement with academic texts" (Schoenbach, Greenleaf & Murphy, 2012, p. 2). Reading Apprenticeship focuses on four dimensions (Social, Cognitive, Knowledge and Personal) linked through metacognition and metacognitive conversations that provides a framework with a proven track record for building critical thinking and personal and interpersonal competencies (Schoenbach, Greenleaf & Murphy, 2012).

Access to reliable technology, hardware, software and infrastructure, is paramount for successful differentiation and personalization necessary to achieve equity for Manitoba learners. LRSD has recently launched an Assistive Technology Initiative, striving for equitable opportunity for all students in the learning community, regardless of their strengths and challenges. The assistive technology offered by Microsoft within OneNote and other applications in its Microsoft Office Suite, for example, allow for multi-language translation, in real-time, levelling the playing field for English language learners and newcomer students. A 1:1 device ratio for students, which has been in effect in several schools in LRSD, allows for timely and meaningful feedback. It also provides opportunities to access resources and learning supports anytime, anywhere and should be considered a condition necessary for excellence within the Manitoba's elementary and secondary education landscape.

The third quadrant foundational to an individual's well-being is independence. Defined by its opposite, independence is the antithesis of obedience. These contrasting concepts are reflective of the dichotomous relationship between the old industrial model of a classroom and today's new, flexible, fluid and responsive learning space. Today's learning spaces must be places to foster the many qualities and skills earlier described. Given that independence shapes a person's sense of responsibility and self-discipline (Brendtro, Brokenleg & VanBockern, 2002), it must be fostered to help students develop a sense of the importance of their democratic citizenship. Children must become empowered to be decision makers, problem solvers and demonstrate a sense of personal responsibility. In essence, they must develop the skills to become the masters of their own destiny (Brendtro, Brokenleg & VanBockern, 2002; McGregor, 2012). They can then begin to debate ideas and question authority, not just moral but intellectual as well. Teaching children the power of independence provides them with a sense of agency over their own future as well as being citizens who are responsible for themselves and accountable to their community and society at large (Brendtro, Brokenleg & VanBockern, 2002; Raulston Saul, 2014). Our classrooms must therefore provide the environment for children to explore, collaborate, and learn with little concern for failure or risk.

Failure, better described as struggle, is an important but often neglected theme in education and is an important aspect of independence. We must all be allowed to learn from our mistakes. Struggles, failure, and making mistakes are the necessary growth experiences that help shape a person's ability to develop resilience, grit and to learn the value of remaining solution-focused in the face of adversity (Duckworth, 2016; Dweck, 2007). They also provide staples for developing mental well-being and the excitement of discovery or learning fought for, and hard won (Couros, 2015). It is for this reason that an ongoing obsession with standardized tests and old colonial markers for success have become archaic, superficial, so narrow in their focus that they can be described as problematically one dimensional and simplistic. They do not describe or respect Indigenous learners' ways of knowing and learning (Battiste, 2016). The modern classroom must provide for emotional and intellectual safety (Katz, 2012) so that children become risk takers and construct novel and creative ways of learning, thinking, doing and being (Couros, 2015; Fullan and Langworthy, 2013; McGregor, 2012).

In the LRSD, we have implemented a variety of strategies to embed Indigenous pedagogies in our systemic and classroom practices. All 40 schools have implemented the Circle of Courage as a cultural/moral framework and as a reference tool in our strength-based class profile process. System wide instruction of Indigenous themes integration into language arts, social studies, math and science frames learning for all grade 4 students in our division. Further, supported by a Treaty Education Support Teacher, we are implementing Treaty Education in all 40 schools. In our high schools we have developed Indigenous Learner Communities (the Echo program) that are accessible to all students. Additionally, we are developing an Early Years Ojibwe language program for all learners in LRSD. Ojibway is being taught in Kindergarten and Grade 1 classrooms and the Louis Riel School Board is looking at a systemic implementation plan K-3 as part of our multi-year strategic plan for 2019-2023. This language program applies the concept of cultural sensitivity through language use and understanding (Morcom, 2014).

These interventions, along with committed professionals in the classrooms and on the front lines, have enabled our division to improve Indigenous graduation rates from 47% in 2013 to 69% in 2018. These improvements can be attributed to a thoughtful, strategic implementation that considered the competing needs of the students and the system. This plan resulted in a cohesive, comprehensive and elegant solution to the complex problem of Indigenous achievement, without forsaking the needs of immigrant, refugee or other subsets of learners. These outcomes are the result of local autonomy working toward a vision that has been co-constructed by its stakeholders.

Generosity

When considering the conditions that will inspire excellence in our students we must begin with the thoughtful cultivation of concern for others, the development of empathy and a belief in each student of a purpose beyond themselves, a purpose for the greater, common good. "We must abandon the banking concept of teaching and learning and adopt a concept of students as conscious beings. We must pose problems of human beings in relation to their world, the development of the critical intervention into reality, developing dialogue with one's ideas and with others to break any circles of certainty that imprison reality and the growth of understanding" (Freire, 1993). Teachers' thoughtful nurturing of the learning environment extending beyond the classroom walls create the conditions for students to become their best selves, to develop their voice, to find their way and to grab hold of their agency as learners.

The recent Manitoba Commission on Education discussion paper (April, 2019), indicated that many children are 'not ready' for schools and are lacking the foundational readiness skills for school success. The LRSD recognizes the need for quality, evidence based Early Years programming. As such, we have implemented Family Centres in many of our schools to provide parent and toddler programs in a play-based environment with a focus on literacy and numeracy. Family Centres provide safe, inclusive environments for parents and toddlers to thrive, and develop strong beginnings for school. Recent Early Years Evaluation data indicates students who have actively participated in LRSD Family Centres are demonstrating increased school performance in Kindergarten.

The LRSD has invested in full-day Kindergarten in multiple schools, acknowledging the gaps in learning in neighborhoods marked by complex and generational poverty as a means to mitigate these impacts. Recognizing that investing resources in early years programming results in long term gains for students, the LRSD has taken bold steps to ensure equity.

Greene (1988) suggests that, "For too many individuals in the modern society there is a feeling of being dominated and that feelings of powerlessness are almost inescapable." She goes on to suggest, "that such feelings can to a large degree be overcome by conscious endeavor on the part of individuals to keep themselves awake, to think about their condition in the world, to inquire in to the forces that appear to dominate them, to interpret the experiences they are having day by day. Only then can they develop the sense of agency required for living a moral life" (Greene, 1978, pp.43-44). It is in the

thoughtfully nurtured learning environment where teachers create the conditions for learning to occur; where students develop positive thinking skills, learn to question the status quo, seek understanding and develop an appreciation for differences.

Generosity underpins all genuine teacher-learner interactions; it comes in many forms and is found in simple human behaviours such as demonstrating respect and honouring diversity (Brokenleg, 1999). In creating the conditions for learners to achieve success, teachers attend to the social emotional and academic needs of their students. They recognize the need to establish a welcoming, responsive environment that respects all learners. As students develop the foundation needed for a generous life, they become aware of themselves in relation to those around them, of the breadth of choices and opportunities and the extent of their impact on others. Teachers recognize that for every learner to complete a high school education with a profound sense of accomplishment, hope and optimism (Manitoba Education, 2019) they must embrace all learners as capable, contributing members and cannot, "treat equity and excellence as two separate concepts without reinforcing the age-old idea that learning experiences that engage students in actively learning to think through the ideas of the disciplines they are studying and success in school are only for some students (Dunleavy and Milton, 2009).

"Good teaching is an act of generosity" (Parker, 1990, p. 1).

Conclusion

The Manitoba Minister of Education has articulated the importance and relevance of the Circle of Courage framework (Brendtro, Brokenleg & VanBockern, 2002). This framework is meant to honour Indigenous ways of knowing and learning in the day-to-day work of our Manitoba schools. In the *Public Consultation Discussion Paper* from the Manitoba Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education, it states:

> Perhaps the most important educational challenge Manitoba is facing today is the persistent gap in achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The historical, moral and economic imperatives to close this gap are critical. It is essential that these be addressed.

This is a primary area for focused improvement. When the Circle of Courage framework is properly applied, the structures and norms of colonialism become less obtrusive in schools. This model would support a more balanced and healthier foundational framework for Manitoba's Indigenous youth (Brendtro, Brokenleg & VanBockern, 2002). At the same time, it would also provide a positive, fluid and adaptive framework for all learners to realize their full potential through public education. Applying this model as a deeply embedded pillar in education would open the door to success not only for Indigenous students but for all students.

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In order to bring forward bold change, one must address the many underlying issues related to colonialism in Manitoba's schools (Battiste, 2002, 2016; Brendtro, Brokenleg & VanBockern, 2002; McGregor, 2012; Restoule, 2000, 2013). Old concepts such as: standardized testing, cultural homogeneity and student conformism, to name a few, have no place in a modern classroom (Battiste, 2002, 2016). Researchers such as Michael Fullan and Marie Langworthy (2013) have articulated the foundational conditions to achieve excellence in student achievement outcomes in Manitoba. Their wisdom is shared by a diversity of researchers that have delved deeply into understanding how these attributes can be taught in school. There is general agreement that for student success in the new global learning environment, children must have self-regulation skills (Garcia-Winner, 2007; Shanker, 2013), social and emotional abilities (Fullan & Langworthy, 2013; Goleman, 1995; Neufeld & Maté, 2013; Greene, 2017; Ablon, 2018), goal setting, self-assessment and reflection skills (Fullan & Langworthy, 2013; Earl & Katz 2006, Tomlinson & Moon, 2013; Gregory, Cameron & Davies, 1997, 2000, 2001;), a growth mindset (Couros, 2015; Dweck, 2007; Fullan & Langworthy, 2013) and innovative, creative and analytical thinking skills (Couros, 2015; Elder & Paul, 2012; Fullan & Langworthy, 2013; Robinson, 2016).

The demands of this new and rapidly changing reality need to be addressed in a systemic rethinking of our public education system. Education must remain the great equalizer, the foundation of a healthy democracy, but for that to be a robust and effective endeavor, we must boldly reimagine education for the future.

The LRSD has provided bold, creative, cohesive and responsive ways to answer the key question: What are the conditions required to achieve excellence in student achievement and outcomes in Manitoba? By framing our strategies in the Circle of Courage, we offer that by infusing Indigenous pedagogies in structured and systematic ways, we honor, support and pay homage to the Indigenous peoples of Canada who should rightfully see themselves represented in the structures of modern education.

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Focus Area 3: Teaching

How can we help teachers and school leaders become most effective? What improvements could teachers make to better help students achieve their goals?

To ensure a comprehensive and complete answer, the LRSD looked carefully at current practices, insights on how we work together in LRSD and the important structures that help to guide and maximize our collective efficacy.

Hattie's research emphasizes the relevance of Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE) to understand how teachers and school leaders become more effective. According to Hattie (n.d.), CTE is significantly influential on student achievement. Hattie reports CTE as having an effect size of d=1.57, which in comparison to the effect of feedback (d=0.72) and classroom management (d=0.52) is pointedly greater (Hattie, 2015). This research and results provide underpinnings to the pedagogical beliefs and practices that have become essential to the collaborative approach and shared leadership that exists within LRSD along with the structures that are in place to ultimately foster increased student success.

An LRSD Organizational Chart was created to provide a visual of the shared and collaborative culture that is essential to a learner's journey and that the learner and the family are at the heart of why we exist, who we serve.

There are multiple sources of national, provincial, divisional and school-based data related to academic outcomes, cognitive development, language development, social/emotional development, physical development, engagement, demographic trends, ethno-cultural diversity, and socio-economic that LRSD regularly reads and references. These sources provide an understanding of the complex relationships and factors that influence a learners' learning and growth.

With ongoing and collaborative exploration of this data, it informs the LRSD about the diversity of needs in our schools and communities and how to prioritize. It also helps teachers and school leaders become more effective practitioners in the area of teaching and learning. The complex interconnectedness of the data and our ability to understand those connections also reinforces the importance of working collaboratively to ensure we are effectively meeting the increasingly complex needs of our students, families, and the communities across all 40 schools that we serve within our division.

Professional Learning

Professional learning is a central pillar in LRSD. It is our belief that an increase in collective teacher pedagogical capacity results in an increase in student achievement. "The research has been clear and consistent for more than 30 years—collaborative cultures in which teachers focus on improving their teaching practice, learn from each other, and are well led and supported by school principals result in better learning for students" (Fullan, 2011, p.2). The Louis Riel School Board has consistently valued and invested in professional learning with the understanding that providing teachers with time and opportunities to learn together is the best way to improve student learning. To that end, LRSD has

developed several highly effective collaborative professional learning models that have resulted in evidence of improved learner proficiency in the key areas of literacy and numeracy.

One example of LRSD's successful approach to professional learning is the Personalized Professional Learning (PPL) initiative co-developed by the Instructional Support Team, teachers and senior and school leaders. This initiative gives teachers the chance to delve into a question of inquiry related to their school goals and the specific needs of their classroom, based on the evidence they have collected about their students. They are supported by a collaborative learning partner who is a member of the divisional itinerant Instructional Support Team. The teacher spends three intensive learning days with colleagues investigating explicitly chosen research materials that connect to their goal and then spend time over the course of many months with their collaborative learning partner co-learning, co-planning, co-teaching and co-reflecting on teaching innovations and evidence of improved student learning in the classroom. Teachers who participate in the PPL experience are encouraged to share their learning with colleagues. This type of collaborative learning is consistent with best practices for professional learning as defined in the literature (Leithwood, et al, 2004; Fullan, 2011; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Sahlberg, 2011; Hattie, n.d.).

Another successful example of collaborative and job-embedded learning is the LRSD Writing Project. This initiative has reached students in every elementary school in LRSD. Over a period of several years, teams of teachers have learned about effective writing instruction techniques based on the Optimal Learning Model (OLM) (Routman, 2008 & 2012) and combined them with assessment instruction from the work of Ann Davies (2011). The learning was done through modeling, observation, co-teaching, reflecting and sharing. Teachers visited demonstration classrooms in hub-schools where colleagues generously shared their learning and modelled writing instruction with their students and now many LRSD teachers have become the modellers for others. This program continues with teachers leading the professional learning for their colleagues.

Professional Learning Networks

Dufour and Marzano (2011) connect school improvement with people improvement and recommend that leaders commit to building collective capacity. "If school and district leaders are to create the conditions that help more students succeed at learning at higher levels, they must build the capacity of educators to function as members of high-performing collaborative teams" (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, pg. 86).

To build collective capacity, school environments must carefully consider how professional learning takes place. Dufour and Marzano state that professional learning must be continuous and not isolated and that it should be embedded in teachers' current practice. Professional learning should be aligned with school and divisional goals and focused on improving results rather than activity based. For professional learning to be most effective it should be collaborative with investment from the group as opposed to an individual endeavor.

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A Professional Learning Community should be approached as a process that helps educators become more effective by working differently, not harder. There are three big ideas that drive the PLC process: (1) all students should learn at high levels, (2) collaboration and collective effort is needed by staff to meet the needs of all students, and (3) teachers must have a means of knowing if students are learning that is based on evidence. If educators are mindful of those three big ideas within their PLC, they will likely be much more successful.

Professional Learning Networks (PLN) have been a longstanding professional learning structure in LRSD, enabling teachers to connect with one another around special areas, interests, and grade levels with the purpose of improving practice. The PLN structure inspired the PPL and the Writing Project.

LRSD has provided significant financial and organizational supports for teachers to create PLNs which may include teachers from different schools coming together with a common inquiry. These PLNs have resulted in many innovative teaching approaches. Teachers gather to investigate research, try out the techniques in their classrooms and then come together to share their challenges and successes. Examples of these PLNs are Arts Integration, early literacy intervention, guided math and math centres, and many others. As with the OLM, many of these PLNs involve teachers opening their classrooms to other teachers to observe and learn.

Another more recent example of LRSD nurturing and investing in professional communities of collaborative inquiry and practice are the mid-week networks in each of its high schools. Teachers are provided with a weekly hour of dedicated time to meet in teams to work towards a goal grounded in evidence of student learning and is intended to create opportunities for teachers to implement collective changes in their practice. These goals must be in line with school goals and/or divisional priorities, which in turn lead to student improvement. Teams are required to share their learning trajectories and the impact they have had on student learning.

The common thread to professional learning efforts in LRSD is the value of a job-embedded collaborative inquiry to build collective pedagogical expertise.

Supports in Education

The two main support teams in LRSD are the Learning Supports Team and the Clinical Services Team.

Learning Supports Team:
LRSD employs a small team of coordinators, consultants and itinerant teachers to support more than 15,500 students in LRSD. They support the collective effort to improve classroom pedagogy by providing frameworks for professional learning, co-learning, co-planning, and co-teaching in classrooms as well as planning and coordinating division-wide initiatives and managing resources. The Learning Supports Team can be subdivided into more defined support teams:

- the Instructional Support Team

- the Indigenous Education Team
- the Positive Behaviour Support Team
- the EAL Support Team

Together, these teams help bring 40 schools together to shape the "big picture" in LRSD. They connect leaders and teachers across the division who are working towards the same goals, provide enrichment opportunities for students, and ensure equity of resource allocation. Each coordinator's position is 1.0 FTE and they oversee the following areas: Arts Education, Physical Education and Healthy Living, Library Services, Student Services, ICT, French in English Schools, Instructional Support, Workplace Safety and Health, and Indigenous Education.

Clinical Services Team:
Students, their families, teachers and school leaders are supported by the Clinical Services Team. Services include School Psychology, School Social Work, Speech Language Pathology, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy. Collectively, the clinical team offers a range of expertise to support our collective understanding of student strengths and needs across all domains such as mental and physical health and development, speech-language and social-emotional development and specific learning difficulties. Students may experience barriers to engagement or successfully participating in learning activities in a variety of educational settings as a result of having additional developmental and learning needs. Using a range of assessment practices, clinicians identify strengths, challenges and effective support strategies to improve learners' outcomes. They facilitate understanding of student needs and behaviours, which sets a foundation for strengthening relationships and interventions.

Clinicians work in collaboration with school teams to implement recommended strategies using a range of approaches such as supporting school support plans, co-teaching in the classroom, providing and supporting small group targeted instruction, working directly with individual learners and through support provided to families. This can also include helping families connect with additional community resources.

The Role of School-Level and System-Level Leaders

The role of the school leader is multi-faceted with commitments to many different and important areas of development. Some of these responsibilities include promoting public education in LRSD, supporting student learning, developing and nurturing climate and culture, fostering professional practice, and ensuring resource management.

To effectively meet the diverse needs within our schools, a collaborative approach to leadership has become the foundation of the work we do in LRSD. Fullan (2001b), suggests that as society becomes more complex, leadership must become more sophisticated in its approach to meet these needs. Fullan correlates complexity with change, which provides implications for educational leaders to rethink outdated practices that are no longer adequate in relation to the complex realities and needs of a

modern school in 2019. Therefore, solitary leadership and decision-making and a narrow, Eurocentric, colonial, market-driven vision are no longer appropriate responses to the changing needs in our schools and the larger society. Hoy and Miskel (2013) claim that "school organizations are so complex and the tasks so wide ranging that no single person has the energy and skill to handle all of the leadership functions" (pg. 445).

School leaders in LRSD promote and nurture collaborative inquiry as a cornerstone to increasing teacher effectiveness. Common teacher preparation times, collaborative time during staff meetings, midweek networks, and release time to allow for job-embedded learning opportunities are just a few ways that Principals in LRSD enable collaborative opportunities. Goleman (2002), defines teamwork and collaboration as a leadership competency in which leaders can "draw others into active, enthusiastic commitment to the collective effort, and build spirit and identity" (pg. 256). "Leadership must come from many sources. The teacher in a collaborative culture who contributes to the success of peers is a leader; the mentor, the grade level coordinator, the department head, the local union representative are all leaders if they are working in a professional learning community" (Fullan, 2001b, pg. 266). Collaboration needs to continue to be emphasized and is essential to school improvement.

Building Collective Capacity

Fullan (2006) defines capacity building as, "any strategy that increases the collective effectiveness of a group to raise the bar and close the gap of student learning. For us, it involves helping to develop individual and collective knowledge and competencies; resources; and motivation" (Fullan 2006, pg. 9). School leaders in LRSD are actively engaged in building collective capacity as an essential component for school improvement and as Fullan (2003) states, this cannot be done "without a dedicated, highly competent teaching force – teachers in numbers, working together for the continuous betterment of the schools. And you cannot get teachers working like this without leaders at all levels guiding and supporting the process" (pg. 5). Fullan (2010) suggests that leaders should be concerned with capacity building individually and collectively. Fullan (2010) claims that when a group has a shared purpose, along with similar skill sets, they create conditions to get things done. Collective capacity is a strategy that will continue to yield success in our schools. School leaders must also understand where teachers are and what they need to help build capacity most effectively.

A Professional Learning Plan (PLP) and the Teacher Evaluation process serve as important springboards for dialogue that enable principals to support teachers as they continue to develop their own capacities. In LRSD, teachers complete PLPs on a yearly basis and are encouraged to tie their learning goals to those of the school plan priorities. Teachers are also encouraged to work collaboratively in grade-level teams to help them meet their goals. Teacher Evaluations offer the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue by recognizing strengths and providing feedback for areas of improvement.

Collegial Relationships

Collegial relationships are a critical component of being collaborative in LRSD. Sergiovanni (1992) characterizes collegiality as a professional virtue that can contribute to many benefits within a school. "Understood as a form of professional virtue, collegiality is another powerful substitute for leadership. The more the virtue becomes established in a school, the more natural connections among people become, and the more they become self-managed and self-led, so that direct leadership from the principal becomes less necessary" (pg. 86). Sergiovanni also states true collegiality is rare in schools and is connected to school culture, which further emphasizes the importance of paying attention to school culture and developing it appropriately. Sergiovanni describes collegiality as being reciprocal but requiring "the proper professional attitude or orientation" (pg. 91), which can be influenced through the role of a leader.

Leaders Engaged as Learners

Using Leithwood's system-level and school-level leadership frameworks, leaders in LRSD have been engaged in reflecting on our personal leadership practices. Leaders have been engaged in identifying personal areas of strength, as well as areas for growth to help us as we strive toward continuous improvement by actively engaging with *The Learning Conversations Protocol: An Intentional Interruption Strategy for Enhanced Collaborative Learning*. Katz and Dack (2013) describe this protocol as a strategy designed to transform "great discussions" through the process of analysis, debate, and challenge to increase professional learning to a deeper and more successful level.

Instructional leadership is another approach to improving teacher and leader effectiveness that is being exercised in the LRSD. School leaders and LRSD coordinators work alongside teachers as an instructional leader to accomplish collective goals related to student learning. By strengthening collegial relationships, school leaders in LRSD are creating cultures of collaborative inquiry to improve student learning.

Robinson's (2011) extensive research related to the impact of educational leadership on student learning identifies *leading teacher learning and development* as the most significant of the five practices that influence student learning with an effect size of 0.84.

Common understanding of measurable outcomes

Teachers and leaders need clarity when planning, teaching and evaluating. The better the goals are understood collectively, the better they can be communicated to students and the more consistent and valid the assessment and evaluation of student learning. Literacy and numeracy improvements require clear definition of what is expected for a specific population of students. This common understanding is essential for professionals to have a productive dialogue that leads to student improvement.

LRSD knows the importance of developing a clear and common understanding in curricular areas. Over the last several years, to continuously improve literacy rates in the division, a common definition of

success has been built through the collaborative creation of the reading and writing continua. Since 2010, LRSD has brought its educators together to analyze student work samples and develop tools that define what quality looks like at all grade levels. The writing continuum links outcomes to specific student writing samples so that teachers can better understand each definition. These tools are useful as a guide to planning and evaluating but are most effective when they are used as a foundation for professional conversations around student work, which is consistent with what are commonly seen as best practices leading to improvement.

> "Work across departments or grade levels or revisit syllabi, curriculum paths and the learning pathways. This process helps ensure that teachers are working toward the "end," rather than engaging students in an irrelevant collection of activities, assignments, assessment tasks and tests. We communicate a common vision to students and parents when we collaborate with our colleagues in creating a definition of quality and illustrating it with selected samples of student work. This helps everyone work towards the same goals." (Davies, Herbst & Parrott Reynolds, 2012, p.31)

As previously mentioned, John Hattie (n.d.) recently ranked collective teacher efficacy as having the greatest effect on student learning. He defines this as a "collaborative conversation based on evidence." LRSD has developed many resources to collect and collate relevant data sources to better focus planning and collaborative work. For example, the division has created and continues to refine data dashboards that allow system and school leaders to visualize and analyze report card results in multiple ways. These can be sorted and explored by: grade, term, year, school, family of schools, Indigenous, gender, EAL learners, English program, French Immersion program, and socio-economic factors. These division-based and school-based data dashboards provide quick access to data used to guide collaborative data inquiries with teachers. This ongoing and collaborative work that connects professional learning efforts to evidence of improved student learning also provides opportunities to revisit assessment practices and to encourage teachers to set valid and reliable student learning targets.

Evidence-informed collaboration

In LRSD, evidence informed planning and decision-making is an essential part of our professional culture. We rely on multiple sources of evidence to inform our efforts in improving student achievement. Triangulating the evidence of learning ensures the reliability and validity of data sources. Lipton and Wellman (2012) describe the collaborative learning cycle as a framework to create a learning environment that will support group exploration of data. It offers an inquiry-based approach that engages group members through specific cognitive processes that centre around three phases: (1) activating and engaging, (2) exploring and discovering, and (3) organizing and integrating. Engaging in data-driven inquiry allows our teachers and leaders opportunities to develop viable solutions with increased commitment to those solutions. "When they employ structural scaffold such as the collaborative learning cycle, they experience increased confidence, perseverance, and success in working productively with data and with each other" (Lipton & Wellman, 2012, pg. 36). The structured engagement we promote in LRSD invites the processes of evidence-informed collaborative inquiry and problem solving to emerge in a noncoercive, teacher-led and collegial atmosphere. By using data

collaboratively, collegial relationships are fostered, and the outcomes of this inquiry-based work provides meaningful possibilities to support student learning.

With multiple and rich sources of data at the centre of the conversation, LRSD also provides its educators time to run through data inquiries, as described by Lipton & Wellman (2012), that lead to specific school-based and problem identification, and solution proposals that teams of teachers and their school leaders extrapolate from the multiple sources of available evidence. LRSD educators and leaders use reliable and relevant sources of data to lead to gains in student learning as shown in the Figures 1 and 2.
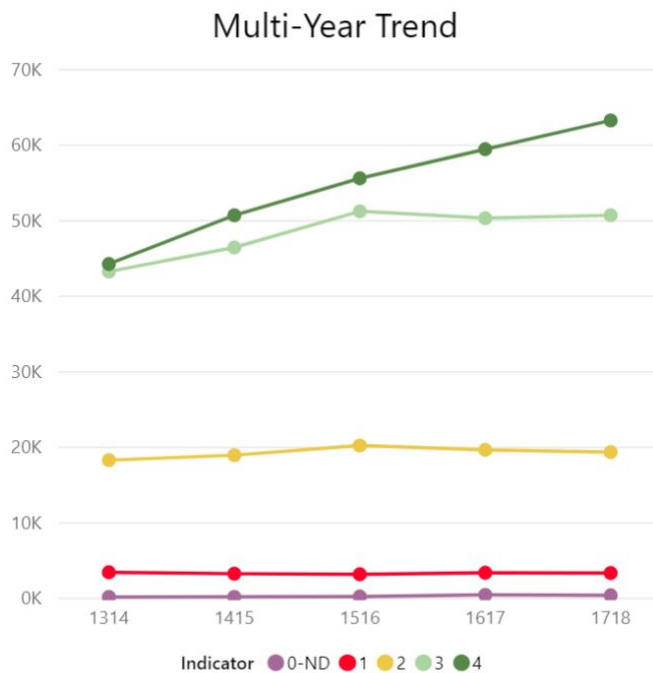

Figure 1 ELA Grades 1 - 8
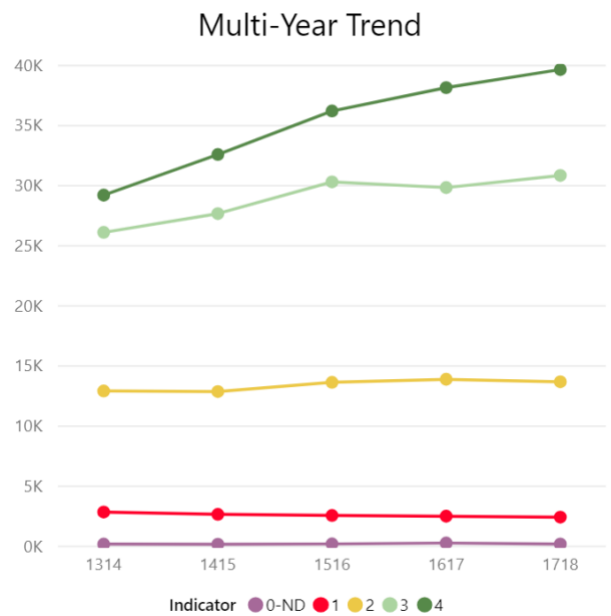
Figure 2 Mathematics Grades 1 - 8

Home and School Relationship

In LRSD, we work diligently to foster the home and school relationship as an important factor in contributing to the success of our students and families.

Home and school relationships can be cultivated at an early age in a child's development through the programming offered in our Family Centres. The programs target and support children and their parents from age 0 – 6 and exist in 12 elementary schools across our division. Family Centres have developed a direct partnership with Healthy Child Manitoba through the St. Vital Parent Child Coalition and the St. Boniface Parent Child Coalition. All of the Family Centres operate under a common framework and are guided by specific goals developed with the support of the community coalitions that focus on nurturing healthy families and communities.

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Across LRSD, we employ Community Liaison Workers (CLW) who serve as direct supports to families and can bridge the home and school relationship through their involvement with families. These roles serve as an invaluable resource to our newcomer families as they navigate their new communities, but also families impacted by poverty and trauma. CLWs are instrumental in nurturing trust with the school system and helping families connect with resources and outside agency supports.

Home and School partnerships continue to remain a priority in all our schools through the divisional practice of Opening Day Conferences. These conferences set the foundation for relationships between home and school and enable connections to be established from the onset of the school year.

"The purpose of these Conferences is to promote open and immediate communication between home and school and build positive relationships, thereby enhancing student achievement. Parents have an opportunity to share information about their children, and teachers can offer a process that encourages goal setting and responds to questions about their expectations. The Conferences can assist students' transition to a new class by heightening their comfort with a new teacher before the first "official" day of classes. For students who will experience the same teacher as the previous year, the Conferences provide a chance to update each other about summer experiences and resume goal setting from the previous year of learning" (Divisional Guidelines for Opening Day Conferences, 2006).

Lavallee School is one of 33 schools the province has designated a Community School. The school serves as a centre of support to families and offers programming and resources that contribute to the well-being and well-becoming of families. The access to community resources in a local setting is beneficial to supporting communities at risk, increases learning potential and are contributors toward positive change.

Working closely with Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) is a longstanding structure that strengthens the home and school partnership. School Trustees demonstrate their commitments to schools by attending PAC meetings regularly. The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendents also participate in PAC meetings throughout the school year. PAC representation is encouraged at annual budget meetings and regular PAC Appreciation evenings provide opportunities for ongoing consultation and acknowledgement of parents' important contributions and the value of the PAC structure.

The role of teachers' associations and professional bodies in the teaching profession

To serve the best interests of our community, two groups coexist in LRSD. The Louis Riel Teachers' Association (LRTA) includes teachers, principals, vice-principals, supervisors, consultants, directors and clinicians. The principals and vice-principals have also developed their own sub-committee of the LRTA – the Louis Riel Association of School Administrators (LRASA). Administrators meet to discuss relevant leadership issues as well as invite Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS), LRASA and provincial Councils of School Leaders (COSL) members to present on relevant topics to the group.

The LRTA values principals in their membership and more than a decade ago, created a constitutionally designated position for a principal to have a seat on the association executive. The LRTA has also had a principal at the negotiations table for more than a decade. These positions were created as a result of a request made by LRASA members to LRTA and through support for these positions from LRTA members.

While some may view the placement of school leaders in the same union as teachers as an inherent conflict of interest, LRSD has found this to be a productive and collaborative model that best serves the needs of all stakeholders. While it is true that principals are responsible for managing the school, their primary role is in keeping with the historic roots of the title—the principal teacher. In LRSD, teachers and principals work together to examine practices, analyze student performance data, create collaborative cultures and inspire innovation.

LRSD faculty value this collaborative model that promotes open dialogue, nurtures a trusting relationship, and builds collegial learning and working environments. The benefits of this model are consistent with the results of a study done in California where union-management partnerships were encouraged and developed. "This study shows that schools with higher levels of union-management partnership also have higher levels of communication and collaboration. Moreover, schools with higher levels of collaboration also have higher levels of student performance and performance improvement." (Rubenstein & McCarthy, 2014, p. 6).

In Canadian jurisdictions where this partnership does not exist, school leaders have less time to be the principal teacher or support improvements in teaching and learning in their schools. "Principals in British Columbia devote far more of their time to warding off and adjudicating labor-management disputes than is the case in other provinces. This deprives them of precious time that could be used to focus on improving instruction." (Canadian Association of Principals & Alberta Teachers' Association, 2015, p.83). In Manitoba, and especially in LRSD, a strong partnership continues to thrive between principals and teachers that allows both groups to maximize their focus on student learning.

This model of close collaboration between teachers and administrators is not common in associations around the province. However, it has been proven to be very effective in LRSD. In fact, there is currently a motion that will be voted on later in May of 2019 to place two COSL members on the MTS provincial executive much like LTRTA has a principal on its executive. Those outside of LRSD also see value in this closer and more collaborative relationship between the principal teachers and the classroom teachers.

Professional Standards

The LRSD has developed policies and tools to support processes that review and govern teacher and leadership ethics and professional competency. Policies GBEA (Staff Ethics: Conflicts of Interest) and GBEB (Divisional Standards for Employee Conduct) govern the ethical behaviour of all staff and provide direction and a process to follow in order to resolve problems with behaviours that conflict with the policies. Principals, Vice-Principals and senior divisional leadership use these policies along with others, including policy ACF/ACG (Interpersonal Relations and Resolution of Concern About Harassment/Discrimination) to guide necessary interventions or to direct staff to appropriate solutions to problems.

LRSD also has clearly articulated criteria for teacher and leader professional competencies that are based on current research. For teachers, a rubric was developed in collaboration with LRTA and LRASA to guide self-reflection and to inform personal professional development planning. This rubric is based on Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* (2013). School and divisional leaders are asked to

follow a similar process, but with different sets of criteria. Their self-reflection tools are taken from the Ontario Institute for Education Leadership's document *The Ontario Leadership Framework* (2013).

All of LRSD's frameworks for professional competency are founded on widely accepted research that define best practices for educators and leaders. These rubrics are supported by evaluation policies that promote professional growth, but also outline processes for dealing with situations that require more intensive supports and specific actions. For teachers, this process is outlined in policy GCNA (Supervision: Instructional/Teaching Staff) and for school leaders, this process is outlined in policy GCNB (Supervision: Leadership/Administrative Staff). The Assistant Superintendent of People Services plays an integral role in the more intensive supervisory situations to ensure accountability to the defined ethical and professional standards.

Conclusions

- Principal and Vice-Principal – Principals and vice-principals need to be certified teachers, building capacity within school teams by working collaboratively as lead learners alongside teachers, using data as an anchor to school plan priorities.

- Professional Development – Provide sufficient time, resources and professional autonomy to support job-embedded, purposeful, targeted and collaborative professional development for teachers and school leaders. Professional learning needs to be supported at a divisional level by a team of experienced coordinators.

- Role of Teacher Associations – Support and encourage local MTS associations to develop meaningful partnerships with principals and vice-principals that include leader representation on local associations to foster trusting, collaborative relationships that are focused on improving professional practice and student learning.

- Professional Standards – Development of professional standards of professional practice for teachers and leaders need to be research-based and developed collaboratively by educators, school leaders and teacher associations.

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Focus Area 4: Accountability for student learning

How can the education system develop a stronger sense of shared accountability for student learning? Is the current system providing equitable learning outcomes for all students?

If student learning is the heart of public education, then assessment is its heartbeat. Assessment serves multiple purposes (Gregory, Cameron & Davies, 1997, 2000, 2001; Earl & Katz, 2006). It must inform programming for individual students, it must serve to measure growth, it must be used to inform caregivers of their child's academic performance, but it must also be used to provide public accountability for education. We must remember however, that each of the multiple forms of assessment serve unique purposes (Gregory, Cameron & Davies, 1997, 2000, 2001). International and national assessments serve to inform the general public with regards to the performance of our system in relation to other countries or provinces. They are not intended to drive public policy but rather as a measure of success of policy implementation over time. They seek to measure system efficacy through a set of averages (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2016; O'Grady et al., 2015). When jurisdictions examine their performance and see either growth, stagnation or regression, the assessment results become an indicator for review and an evaluation of the education system, not the students.

The process of system review and evaluation must include other data sources to understand the components driving both strengths and weaknesses within an education system. This composite review of the international and national assessment data, as being among many other data sources, should offer context and inform decision making for governments. Given that the data from international and national assessments cannot be disaggregated to division or school level, it behooves the province to dig deeply into provincial enrollment data, report card data and census data for important contextual information to underpin decision making related to our system's needs. Standardized or normative testing results being used in isolation to drive policy is akin to using body temperature to diagnose an illness. In fact, a person's temperature indicates that further investigation is required. More data sources are needed to determine the nature of the illness and plot a course of treatment. A person's health must be seen holistically, as part of a larger system, and other symptoms may be found by looking more deeply into the cause of the elevated temperature. Temperature alone, serves only to indicate a problem, diagnosis and treatment comes from an analysis of other symptoms and indicators. Similarly, using the PISA and OECD scores alone to make a definitive judgement about the wellness of Manitoba's education system is misguided, as these international and national test-specific scores are not a comprehensive measure of learning in Manitoba's public schools. Since 2013, Manitoba has a common report card that offers a provincial framework for teachers to report on student achievement of provincial curriculum expectations. In LRSD "Table A" below shows most students fall in the 3 and 4 range on the Grades 1-8 report card in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. In our teachers' professional judgement, most of our students have a good to very good understanding of grade level competencies and expectations.

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English Language Arts: 5-year average of students scoring either a 3 or 4 on the provincial report card	
Writing	73%
Reading	80%
Mathematics: 5-year average of students scoring either a 3 or 4 on the provincial report card	
Knowledge and Understanding	83%
Problem Solving	80%

Furthermore, Provincial assessment scores for Grade 12 ELA and Math in LRSD are consistently within a range of +/- 2% to the provincial average over the history of the test administration. These test specific scores are not a comprehensive measure of learning in mathematics and language arts. They should be considered more relevant test-specific measures of student performance in the context of Manitoba's public education system, as they are based on outcomes taught rather than generic concepts deemed relevant by outside organizations, measured throughout the world population.

If Manitoba is to be a leader on the world stage of education, we must decide as a province what is to be measured, what constitutes excellence and what matters most for our students. We must develop, value and nurture our made-in-Manitoba learning and assessment frameworks and teachers' professional capacities and judgements—it is these frameworks that become drivers of meaningful change. Without taking into consideration what we have identified in Manitoba through curriculum and asserted through provincial assessment frameworks, we are ill-advised in our efforts to effect positive and lasting improvement for student learning.

Within the context of the commission's mandate, as stated in the provincial discussion paper, we must delve more deeply into how to best provide system accountability in a way that supports Indigenous learners. The infusion of Indigenous ways of knowing into curriculum, and curriculum delivery provides structures for children to learn from their mistakes, encourage risk-taking and strengthen the bonds between the individual, the community and the land (Battiste, 2002, 2016; Restoule, Gruner & Metatawabin, 2013; Ross, 2006). These are qualities being described as necessary and desirable for modern learners (Earl & Katz, 2006; Fullan, 2014, Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2017). Indigenous pedagogies described by Battiste (2016) promote relationships, problem solving and creativity by developing an individual's ability to infer from previous experience or models witnessed, and whereby a person can actively transfer their learning to new situations.

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Indigenous pedagogies value the process of learning and favor an approach where an individual must consider herself/himself in a larger world context (Wilson & Restoule, 2010). This type of approach is essential in meeting the needs of the learner, regardless of their ethno-cultural or socio-economic backgrounds (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2017; Earl & Katz, 2006; Fullan, 2014). Ultimately, Indigenous ways of knowing and learning are characterized by an innate ability to self-assess and adapt in any given situation and positions summative assessment as being rooted in life experience (Ross, 2006). Traditionally, experience was often gleaned from life and death situations. For example, experiencing a hunt, surviving a famine, or enduring some other potentially life altering situation all formed an educative experience (Ross, 2006). The teachings of the Elders through story, observation and modelling supported the development of life sustaining skill sets for the purpose of survival (Ross, 2006). Summative assessment therefore was a weighty event and was solely the responsibility of the learner. This Indigenous lens gives life to the more modern terms of *assessment for, as and of learning* (Earl & Katz, 2006; Gregory, Cameron & Davies, 1997), which are currently touted in our modern educational literature and practice as essential to develop in our children. The purpose of formative assessment must not be forgotten as its chief aim is to inform programming for students. By honoring Indigenous way of knowing and learning in the assessment process, all learners receive pertinent feedback and develop their abilities to reflect and adjust throughout the learning process.

In LRSD, we have implemented a variety of strategies to both embed Indigenous pedagogies in our systems. We have also developed programming to meet the specific needs of the Indigenous population. LRSD has implemented the Circle of Courage as a tool in our strength-based class profile process. Additionally, the division supports all grade 4 teachers to develop Indigenous theme integration into math and science. We have implemented Treaty Education in all classrooms in our schools and developed high school programming such as the Echo program. We have Ojibwe language instruction in many of our classrooms and plan large scale implementation as part of our multi-year strategic plan.

As stated earlier, good, embedded Indigenous pedagogy allows teachers to focus their summative assessments and classroom practices in ways that result in positive societal and scholastic outcomes. We now celebrate graduations in our division at a Graduation Powwow, held every year and accessed by any student wishing to celebrate in this traditional way. These interventions, along with committed professionals in the classrooms and on the front lines, have enabled our division to improve graduation rates for Indigenous students from 47% in 2013 to 69% in 2018. This level of growth is due to thoughtful and strategic implementation. These objectives were the result of a committed board supported by our senior leadership team that courageously ratified the development and implementation of Indigenous programs. These programs are supported by our senior leadership team who also monitor the impact of its investments. In LRSD, we value a culture of shared accountability informed by multiple sources of evidence to improve student learning by addressing the complex local needs of our 40 schools and the communities they serve.

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The over emphasis or misinterpretation of international and national test results as the only measure of success or failure of the Manitoba education system is misinformed and a disservice to the students, families and staff in Manitoba's public schools.

Success and improvement are rooted in our ability to embrace growth over achievement (Hattie, 2015), and to measure success beyond economics. These assessments may inform politics, policy and help electoral stakeholders feel that teachers are accountable however, real accountability is far more complex because, as Indigenous pedagogies inform us, true summative assessment is a measure of the quality of the society we create. Accountability then is a shared responsibility not easily measured but palpably felt. For the purpose of government and public confidence, shared accountability should consider multiple data sources over time. We must be less concerned with standards that measure averages than with standards of collective excellence.

Evidence informed decision-making through collaborative efforts with all parties, from government and agency partners to school boards and staff, that puts the best interest of learners in mind, is paramount to achieving shared accountability. When everyone who is responsible for the success of Manitoba's learners understanding their needs and capacities in all facets of their lives, this shared accountability and responsibility can lead to proactive measures and a greater chance of success.

According to Hattie (2015), "the focus of collaboration needs to be on the evidence of impact, common understandings of what impact means, the evidence and ways to know about the magnitude of this impact and how the impact is shared across many groups of students." At the school level, collaborative agreement about what constitutes a year's worth of progress is important and it is significant to note that a year's worth of progress may differ from curricular grade level expectations as assessed by a standardized test.

LRSD embraces and nurtures job-embedded models of professional learning that includes collaborative dialogue to measure and reflect on the impact of collective pedagogical innovation. At the school team level, job-embedded learning is the most effective way to foster collective efficacy and shared responsibility for student achievement. LRSD's models of Student Services delivery, Personalized Professional Learning, Positive Behaviour Support, Ed Tech Mentors and The Writing Project are all examples of successful job-embedded learning working towards shared accountability for student success.

A fundamental tension in public education in Manitoba is a recent political narrative that characterizes the challenges we face as catastrophic instead of a pedagogical narrative that promotes a strength-based approach to improving student achievement. In LRSD, our evidence-informed journey suggests that the Manitoba Provincial Report Card can provide the evidence to inform job-embedded professional learning guided by collaborative inquiry to improve student learning.

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Conclusion

The challenge for leaders and policy makers is to promote, develop and sustain evidence-based pedagogical practices while also ensuring system accountability. Communication across all levels of the system is critical to meeting the challenge. In order to ensure that stakeholders are informed about research-based assessment practices the system must also provide information. That information needs to be communicated by policy makers so that they can support educating the public. We must embrace the Provincial Manitoba Report Card as part of a systemic and clearly articulated tool for shared accountability.

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Focus Area 5: Governance

What type of governance structures are needed to create a coordinated and relevant education system? Should there be changes to how schools, school divisions, school boards and the Department of Education and Training are organized? If so, what changes are needed? Should there be any changes to who does what and how decisions are made? If so, what changes?

The first question posed under the topic of Governance found in the Manitoba Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education's *Public Consultation Discussion Paper* implies the existing system is uncoordinated and irrelevant. The LRSB would argue the contrary. The existing system with its division of powers between the provincial government and school boards has served Manitobans well and continues to do so today.

Legal Status of School Boards

Repatriated and amended in 1982, the Canadian Constitution establishes the nation of Canada, defines its system of government, clarifies the distribution of powers between the federal and provincial levels, and grants citizens' rights and freedoms (Séguin, 1995). Section 93 of the Constitution Act designates education as a provincial responsibility.

At the time of Confederation, all provinces chose to centralize certain functions in the Ministry of Education and to entrust others to local administrative units—school districts—with democratically-elected representation, school boards (Fleming and Hutton, 1997). Provincial laws and regulations define what school boards must do (their duties), what they cannot do, and what they may choose to do (their powers) (Fleming, 1997; Fleming and Hutton, 1997; Giles and Proudfoot, 1994). The latter permits school boards to tailor their services to the particular needs of their region and promote innovative problem-solving approaches.

As school boards are defined by provincial laws, it is the prerogative of provincial governments to alter them as they see fit, provided provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms relating to the education of official-language linguistic minorities are respected. Specifically, section 23 of the Charter "guarantees the minority language community a degree of management and control over minority language educational facilities…to ensure that their language and culture flourish." (Government of Canada, 2019). Even though immersion programs deliver instruction in the minority language, they serve a distinct clientele; namely, second-language learners. Section 23 guarantees "a program that is appropriate to the needs of the minority and reflects its values and culture, including extracurricular and recreational activities" (Government of Canada, 2019).

The LRSD recognizes the authority of the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM) to provide minority language education in the province of Manitoba and acknowledges "the integrity of minority schools is essential to their operation" and that they are "not intended to teach outsiders the language of the minority" (Government of Canada, 2019). It is on the basis of these beliefs that LRSD transitioned the Français partiel (50/50) program formerly offered at École Provencher to French Immersion beginning in 2008.

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Whereas the DSFM bears a constitutional responsibility to serve the province's linguistic minority, French Immersion remains an optional program in Manitoba, offered by 23 of 37 school divisions. The LRSD boasts the highest number of French Immersion students in the province, with 35% of all students enrolled in the program. The success of the French Immersion program in LRSD strengthens the vitality of Manitoba's minority language community and contributes significantly to the realization of the goals of The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act (Government of Manitoba, 2016).

Historical Overview of the Number of School Districts in Canada

At the end of the 19th century, school boards in Canada served relatively small geographical areas. School boards often looked after a single school and there were more trustees than teachers (Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission, 1994; Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants [FCE], 1994; Fleming and Hutton, 1997; Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association, 1993). The number of school districts increased considerably as new territories were settled and the demand for secondary schools became more widespread. In 1924, Manitoba reached a maximum of 2,094 school districts (Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission, 1994). Since that time, the number of school districts has decreased substantially (see Table 1).

Table 1: Decrease in the Number of School Districts in Canada[1]

Province	Number of School Districts			
	Early 1900's	1980's	2002	Present Day
British Columbia	830	77	59	60
Alberta	– [2]	181	66	65
Saskatchewan	4,522	124	114	28
Manitoba	2,094	57	37	37
Ontario	5,700	169	72	72 (+ 10 authorities)
Quebec	1,788	189	70	72
New Brunswick	422	42	0	7
Prince Edward Island	432	5	3	1
Nova Scotia	85 [3]	22	7	1
Newfoundland	270	27	10	2

[1] Numbers are approximate and are derived from the following sources: Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission, 1994; Éducation, Formation professionnelle et Jeunesse Manitoba, 2001, 2002; Fleming, 1997; Fleming and Hutton, 1997; Green and Pierce, 1997; Pierce, 1997; Reddyk, 1996; Saskatchewan Education, 1996; Canadian School Boards Association, 2018.

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Since the beginning of the 20th century, the number of school boards in Canada has declined from a maximum of approximately 15,000 to fewer than 350 — a reduction of nearly 98% in an era where the population increased by nearly 700% (Government of Canada, 1902; Statistics Canada, 2018). Despite the tendency toward population increase, the size of school boards in Canada varies enormously. In 2018-2019, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) serves approximately 246,000 students (TDSB, 2019), whereas Manitoba's 208,796 students are located in 37 school divisions and districts (Manitoba Education & Training, 2019).

The Minister of Education, Kelvin Goertzen, questions the number of school divisions in Manitoba and in Winnipeg specifically (quoted in Braun, 2018):

> "You look at some other provinces (and cities), you know Edmonton and Calgary, cities that are larger than the City of Winnipeg and they only have one school division. And so the question is; Why do we need so many, maybe, in Winnipeg or in different parts of rural Manitoba? Maybe there's a good answer for that in Manitoba, maybe the Manitoba context is different. But I think that will have to be explored because, on the face of it, something doesn't seem quite right here. That's part of what the consultation will be about."

Two essential questions arise: Is there an optimal size for a school district? Should the Government of Manitoba amalgamate school districts within its jurisdiction?

Optimal Size of a School District

The optimal size of a school district is the number of students where any increase or decrease would result in adverse effects, such as lower academic performance or additional costs (O'Brien, 1993; Wionzek, 1995). Undoubtedly, the optimal size of a school district is a complex concept, varying significantly as a result of many factors, including: financial resources; the range of services offered; topography; and the social, cultural, historical, and political circumstances of the community in question (Coleman and LaRocque, 1984; O'Brien, 1993; Pellicer, 1999). This complexity limits the practicality of this notion. Indeed, Newton (1982) totally rejects the notion of optimal size:

It is not a matter of saying how big is 'big', and then labelling units of local government 'good' and 'bad' according to their size. Nor is it a matter of searching for an optimum size. Rather, the aim must be to trace the relative effects (if any) of size on the structures and processes of local government. (p. 191)

Accordingly, governments contemplating school district amalgamations must consider the negative consequences on finance, democracy, and learning outcomes.

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Financial Implications of School District Amalgamations

Cost savings are the primary justification for school district consolidation (Duncombe & Yinger, 2010). Indeed, Fleming (1997) cites cost savings as the main objective of the school board amalgamations carried out in Canada at the end of the 20th century. Cost savings were also the goal of the last round of amalgamations in Manitoba, as indicated by then Minister of Education Drew Caldwell by press release: "By reducing the number of school divisions, we have an opportunity to reduce administrative duplication and costs at the school division level and to focus those resources into the classroom for the benefit of our children" (Government of Manitoba, 2001).

It is widely believed that amalgamation of school districts into larger administrative units brings about a more efficient use of tax dollars through the realization of economies of scale (Cox, 2010). There is very little concrete evidence to support this hypothesis (Streifel et al., 1991; Duncombe et al., 1995; Duncombe & Yinger, 2010). In fact, it would appear that unforeseen additional expenses, called "diseconomies of scale", absorb the savings before they materialize; as a result, the soundness of school district amalgamations has been called into question (Boyne, 1995; Brasington, 1998; Cox, 2010; Duncombe & Yinger, 2010; FCCP, 2005; O'Brien, 1993; Rogers et al., 1986; Sancton, 2000; Vojnovic, 1998).

Let's take a closer look at the economies and the diseconomies of scale. According to the concept of economies of scale, the cost of producing a service decreases according to the quantity of services produced (Boyne, 1995; Cox, 2010; Duncombe & Yinger, 2010; Giesen, 1998; Walberg, 1992). It follows then that the amalgamation of two or more school districts should result in a reduction in the total cost per pupil if the quality of education remains constant.

In theory, cost savings seem possible, but these economies of scale are more elusive in reality. Indeed, in an analysis of per pupil spending in Manitoba school divisions before and after amalgamation (see Table 2), the Frontier Centre for Public Policy (FCPP) (2005) observed that:

> Rather than an overall decrease in costs, amalgamated divisions are reporting significant increases. In total, spending in amalgamated school divisions went up by more than $27 million in one year. Despite the predicted cost savings, spending in each of the amalgamated school divisions is noticeably greater than it was the year prior to amalgamation. (p. 3)

Table 2: Per Pupil Spending in Amalgamated School Divisions in Manitoba
(Source: FCCP, 2005, p. 3)

School Division	Pre-Amalgamation 2002/2003	Post-Amalgamation 2003/2004	Difference	% Change
Border Land	$7,320	$7,689	+ $369	+ 5.0
Frontier	11,154	12,341	+ 1187	+ 10.6
Louis Riel	6,970	7,360	+ 390	+ 5.6
Mountain View	7,638	8,051	+ 413	+ 5.4
Park West	7,590	8,156	+ 566	+ 7.5
Pembina Trails	7,592	7,903	+ 311	+ 4.1
Prairie Rose	7,757	8,086	+ 329	+ 4.2
Prairie Spirit	8,193	8,544	+ 351	+ 4.3
Red River Valley	7,114	7,892	+ 778	+ 10.9
River East-Transcona	6,761	7,083	+ 322	+ 4.8
Southwest Horizon	7,918	8,349	+ 431	+ 5.4
Sunrise	7,135	8,166	+ 1031	+ 14.4
Average	**$7,762**	**$8,302**	**+ $540**	**+ 7.0**

Walberg (1993) outrightly rejects the notion of economies of scale in education.

> "…schools are not businesses that may reap economies of scale. They are not like factories or fast-food restaurants, where routinization can improve product quality. The service delivered by schools is complex. It cannot be mass-produced and simply handed to a receiving student" Walberg (p. 4).

In addition, this author attributes the 500% increase in total expenditure incurred by the American school districts between 1940 and 1990 to the diseconomies of scale caused by the 1100% increase in the number students per district.

An analysis of Flemish school districts concluded that "potential cost savings are the largest within the smallest districts, to the optimal scale of 6,000 to 7,000 students per district. Consolidations beyond this optimum result in diseconomies of scale" (Schiltz & De Witte, 2017). The diseconomies of scale caused by amalgamation are often very difficult to predict, recognize and understand (Berliner, 1990; FCE, 1994). They vary from situation to situation, but may result from: harmonization of collective agreements, pension benefits and working conditions; increased costs related to student transportation and employee mileage; storage of surplus property; the construction of a new central office; a decrease in provincial grants; and a decrease in registrations resulting from transfers to private schools (Berliner, 1990; Erhardt, 1997; FCPP, 2005; Rogers et al., 1986; Wionzek, 1995; Young, 1994).

In addition to the direct costs incurred by school boards, there are also indirect costs absorbed by the community, such as unemployment, the closure of businesses, lower property values, increased travel time for employees and students, and weaker connections between parents and schools (Berliner, 1990; Wionzek, 1995; Duncombe & Yinger, 2010). In other words, some of the savings realized by school boards end up costing society in other ways.

The FCPP (2005) concluded that "with the exception of very tiny school divisions with fewer than 1,000 students, there is no evidence that smaller divisions are any less efficient than larger school divisions." Indeed, the FCPP attributes the bulk of administrative savings realized during the most recent round of amalgamations in Manitoba to remote school divisions with small student populations; urban divisions,

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on the other hand, experienced increased administrative costs. Based on their analysis, the FCPP criticized the provincial government's decision to proceed with amalgamation:

> In the absence of any evidence that larger school divisions are more cost-effective than smaller school divisions, one wonders why the province went ahead with the school board amalgamations in the first place. Regardless of the reasons for this decision, the fact remains that amalgamation has proven to be a costly and divisive experiment that has consumed time and resources which could have gone toward meaningful education reform. In the future, the provincial government should ensure that major initiatives will have a positive effect on teaching and learning before they are implemented. (p. 5)

In a comprehensive analysis conducted on behalf of the California Legislative Analyst's Office, Taylor (2011) observed that:

> neither the academic research nor our own review offers persuasive evidence that consolidating small districts would necessarily result in substantial savings or notably better outcomes for students. […] Thus, while it might be easier for the state to have fewer agencies to oversee, the data does not convincingly support a dramatic change to current state policy such that small districts—those serving between 100 and 1,000 ADA—be forced to consolidate. (p. 17)

Furthermore, Taylor (2011) counsels against "dedicating scarce funding resources to provide new fiscal incentives to promote greater district consolidation." (p. 17)

In short, the financial implications of amalgamations are complex. Contrary to popular belief, bigger is not necessarily better. While the amalgamation of small school districts may generate potential cost savings, the same is not true where large school districts are concerned. Based on the current research cited above, Winnipeg school divisions, the smallest of which has a student population of 8,430, would not stand to realize any cost savings through amalgamation.

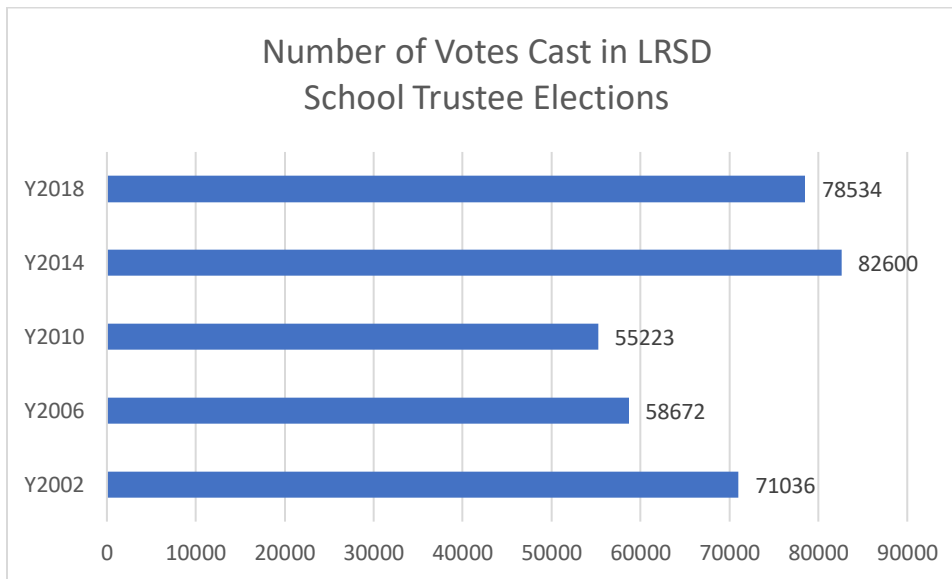## Consequences of School District Amalgamations on Democracy

Simply put, amalgamation weakens democracy. As the size of an administrative unit increases, representativeness decreases as does the effectiveness of communication (Dahl and Tufte, 1973; FCE, 1994). When two or more existing school districts are combined into a single body corporate, voters are less likely to know their elected representative personally or to be able to speak to them directly. Trustees are more likely to live far from a large segment of the electorate and to inform themselves of public opinion indirectly (Dahl and Tufte, 1973). In short, the decision-making process moves further away from the electorate.

Proponents of school district amalgamations often justify their views by citing high numbers of acclaimed candidates during school board elections. Others point to low rates of participation in trustee elections or to low trustee turnover from election to election (Kives, 2019).

Such criticism does not apply to LRSD, however. Since its inception in 2002, only two of 45 trustees have been elected by acclamation and nearly 350,000 votes have been cast in trustee elections (see Figure 1). With more than 95% of trustees elected at the ballot box and active voter participation, democracy is being served in LRSD.

Figure 1: Number of Votes Cast in LRSD School Trustee Elections

(Source: City of Winnipeg, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018)

Some view school district amalgamations–or indeed their outright abolition–as a means of silencing the voice of women. Upon hearing of the government's intention to eliminate elected school boards, Sandra Margettie, a long-serving trustee of the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board, lamented "The women are being ousted out. We fought to get to the table, and then they take the table away" (Alphonso, 2018). Indeed, women are elected to office at considerably higher rates at the school board level. In a Canada-wide overview, the Canadian School Boards Association reports the proportion of female trustees in 2015 to be 55% (CSBA, 2018), significantly higher than the proportion of female MLA's in the current Manitoba Legislature: 25% (Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2019) or of female MP's in the current Parliament of Canada: 32% (House of Commons, 2019).

LRSD has a proud record of female representation. Since its inception in 2002, three of the five elected school boards have seen a female majority, with the overall average of female representation sitting at 44%. Two of these women, Christine Melnick and Colleen Mayer, have pursued their political careers at the provincial level. Clearly, the role of a school board trustee represents an important entry point for women to enter politics and gain valuable experience. Any move to reduce the number of trustee

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positions would only stand to stifle the voice of women and to diminish their potential contributions as elected representatives.

Consequences of School District Amalgamation on Learning

Student learning is the central mission of any education system. Larger school districts benefit from many factors such as: greater budgetary flexibility, more diversified programming, opportunities to create specialized positions and richer professional development, especially for specialists.

All these advantages are already apparent in the urban school divisions serving Winnipeg. Further consolidation of Winnipeg's school divisions would be subject to the law of diminishing returns, whereby input outweighs output.

Despite the potential advantages of large school districts, several studies have shown small school boards produce better results. In a comprehensive review of this issue, Howley (1989) concluded that the academic performance of small school districts is statistically higher than that of larger school districts, controlling for socio-economic factors. The same relationship is observed when comparing small to large schools, with small schools providing significantly better outcomes for students from racial minorities and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Cotton, 1996; Giesen, 1998; Hobbs, 1988; Howley, 1989; Ornstein, 1989; Stevenson and Pellicer, 1998; Taylor, 2011).

Howley attributes the superior results of small school districts to small class sizes, comparatively better education funding, more effective use of financial resources, and the synergistic collaboration of students, staff and community.

Young (1994) supports these views, citing various disadvantages of large school boards, including an impersonal atmosphere, a lower rate of participation in extracurricular activities, a more negative attitude towards school, less interest on the part of parents, and a higher dropout rate. Through a longitudinal analysis of the consolidation of urban school districts in Tennessee, Cox (2010) determined that amalgamation "produced a less efficient and effective school district, one costing the taxpayers more with limited, if not, abated outcomes." Similarly, in a comprehensive review of the literature, Cotton (1996) concluded that "states with the largest schools and school districts have the worst achievement, affective, and social outcomes."

Many of the benefits associated with large school districts are already evident in the urban school divisions that serve Winnipeg. Further consolidation will not yield better student outcomes. To the contrary, it will divert much needed time and resources to the creation of new administrative structures that are less effective, less efficient, and less responsive to local needs.

Alternatives to School District Amalgamation

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There exist many alternatives to school district amalgamation that allow school boards to preserve their autonomy while maximizing efficiency and delivery of quality services. Berliner (1990) lists a variety of collaborative solutions, examples of which abound in the LRSD (see Table 3).

Table 3: Collaborative Solutions that Maximize Efficiency and Delivery of Quality Services

Solution	Definition (Berliner, 1990)	LRSD Examples
Inter-District Sharing	"Two or more districts voluntarily and cooperatively exchange and improve school programs by combining resources" (p. 3)	LRSD works closely with other Winnipeg school divisions to negotiate competitive pricing from suppliers for frequently purchased items.
Partial Reorganization	Alteration of "the structure of service delivery and day-to-day school operations" that relies on "a joint commitment to sharing resources for mutual benefit" (p. 4)	The Louis Riel Arts & Technology Centre provides quality vocational training to students from many neighbouring school divisions, as well as to mature students from Winnipeg and beyond.
Extra-District Cooperation	Establishment of "professional relationships outside the K-12 system" (p. 5)	LRSD partners with numerous community agencies to enrich learning of students (e.g.: St. Boniface Research Centre It's All About Me Program,) and staff (e.g.: University of Winnipeg Community-Based Aboriginal Teacher Education Program).
Intermediary Units	"Structured organizations that exist apart from the districts and facilitate inter-district sharing" (p. 5)	LRSD collaborates with other school divisions and Manitoba Education to provide intensive programming within a specialized setting to students living with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The examples cited are a small sample of the numerous innovative initiatives undertaken by LRSD to maximize student learning and ensure that taxpayers' contributions are used wisely. It is not necessary to amalgamate Winnipeg school divisions to achieve and improve what already exists.

Conclusion

Current research dispels the popular belief that bigger is better. Amalgamation of school districts winds up increasing expenditures rather than curtailing them. It does not yield any significant improvement to student learning outcomes and diverts precious time, energy, and resources away from initiatives that lead to such improvements.

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Brought about by two amalgamations (the amalgamation of Norwood and St. Boniface School Divisions, and then the amalgamation of St. Boniface and St. Vital School Divisions), the LRSD has lived consolidation first-hand. Further consolidation of the school divisions serving Winnipeg would be unproductive, and some might even call, wasteful.

As the Commission ponders the type of governance structures needed to create a coordinated and relevant education system, it must consider what current research reveals about school district consolidation.

- Only the amalgamation of the smallest school districts (500 to 1,000 students) yields economies of scale (Schiltz & De Witte, 2017).
- Amalgamation of larger school districts generates diseconomies of scale which are difficult to predict (Berliner, 1990; Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1994; Schiltz & De Witte, 2017).
- The last round of school division amalgamations in Manitoba resulted in sizeable cost increases (FCCP, 2005).
- Amalgamation affects communities negatively through unemployment, the closure of businesses, lower property values, increased travel time, and reduced parent engagement in schools (Berliner, 1990; Wionzek, 1995; Duncombe & Yinger, 2010).
- There is no evidence that amalgamation improves academic performance. In fact, small school districts outperform large school districts, controlling for socio-economic factors (Cox, 2010; Howley, 1989; Taylor, 2011).
- The existing system with its division of powers between the provincial government and school boards has served Manitobans well and continues to do so today. Local school boards connect with the communities they serve and are responsive to their needs. Local school boards collaborate with one another to maximize student learning and use taxpayers' contributions wisely. Amalgamation reduces democratic representation and dissuades public engagement. Amalgamation is costly in terms of the time, effort, and energy it consumes.
- The students of Manitoba deserve the best. They deserve a commission that works in their best interests and that grounds decision-making in research. With this in mind, the commission would be well-advised to take amalgamations of Winnipeg school divisions off the table and to recommend enhancements to existing administrative structures rather than start anew.

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Focus Area 6: Funding

Before considering the questions pertaining to funding, LRSD is providing the commission with an overview of budgeting in our division.

Key Highlights from the 2019-2020 Budget Process in LRSD

The Louis Riel School Board ratified its 2019–2020 budget on the evening of Tuesday, March 12, 2019. The budget supports a growing and diverse student population by funding existing and new frontline staffing positions, which includes 11 new teachers, 2.5 new student services teachers and 20 new educational assistants. We achieve this measured effort to protect frontline staff and make targeted investments to enhance public education in LRSD by increasing the Special Requirement on local property taxes by 2 per cent and reducing operating expenses.

LRSD shared a great deal of information at two annual public budget consultation meetings. These are some key highlights.

Key Highlights from the Consultations

LRSD is a growing school division with growth projected to continue for the next decade.
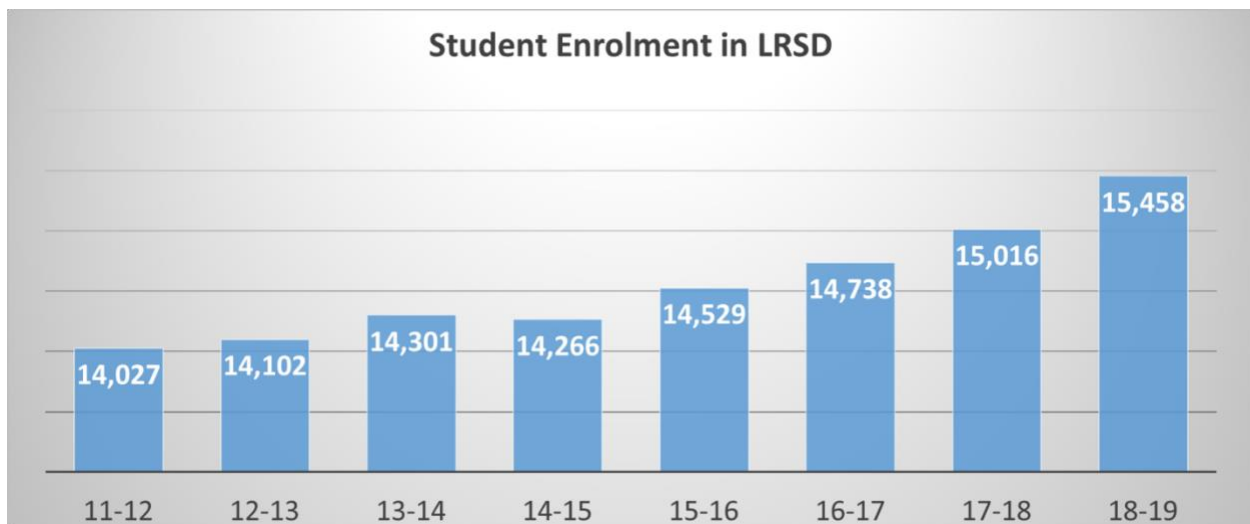
LRSD growth is due in large part to new developments in Sage Creek, Bonavista Estates, and south of Aldgate in River Park South. The divisions' growth is also due to the community welcoming newcomer Canadians that help propel the economic vitality of our city and our province.

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Growing Newcomer Community

2014 — 1178
2015 — 1264
2016 — 1399
2017 — 1592
2018 — 1666
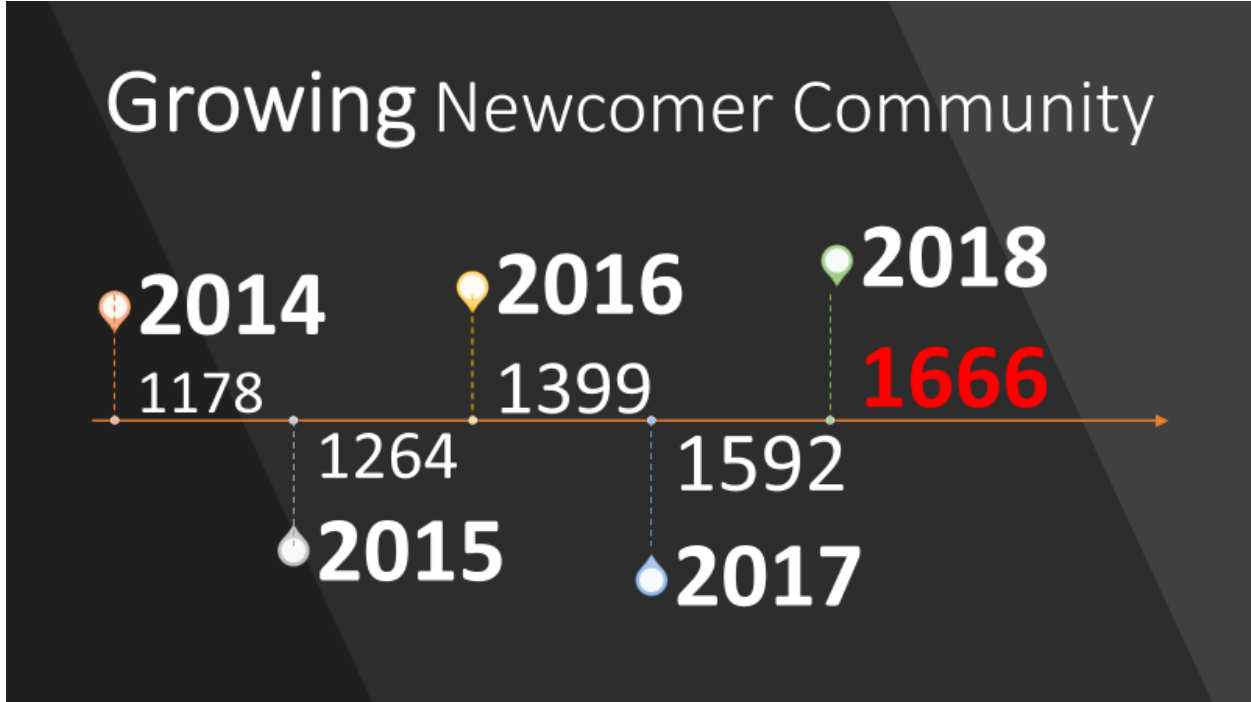
One important way LRSD supports our growing newcomer student population is to help them learn English. In 2018-2019, 29 staff are helping support 11 per cent of our total student population to learn English as an additional language.

English as an Additional Language Staff

2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013	2013 - 2014	2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017	2017 - 2018	2018 - 2019
11.31	11.31	13.31	17.01	19.50	22.50	27.00	29.00

Student enrolment: 14,027 → 15,458
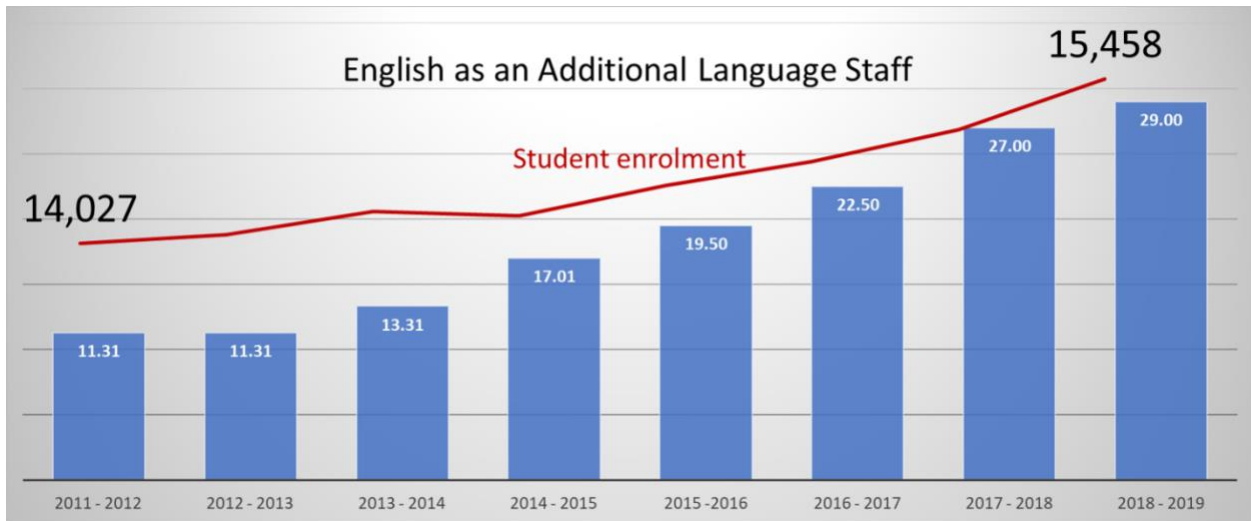
These specialized staff members support LRSD classroom teachers. The board has made these frontline staff members a priority. In 2018-2019, 825.79 full-time equivalent (FTE) classroom teachers are caring for 15,458 students.

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Classroom Teachers

Student enrolment

Year	Classroom Teachers (FTE)
2011 - 12	705.41
2012 - 13	702.93
2013 - 14	734.66
2014 - 15	736.53
2015 -16	764.83
2016 - 17	790.12
2017 - 18	811.82
2018 - 19	825.79

Student enrolment: 14,027 (start) to 15,458 (end)
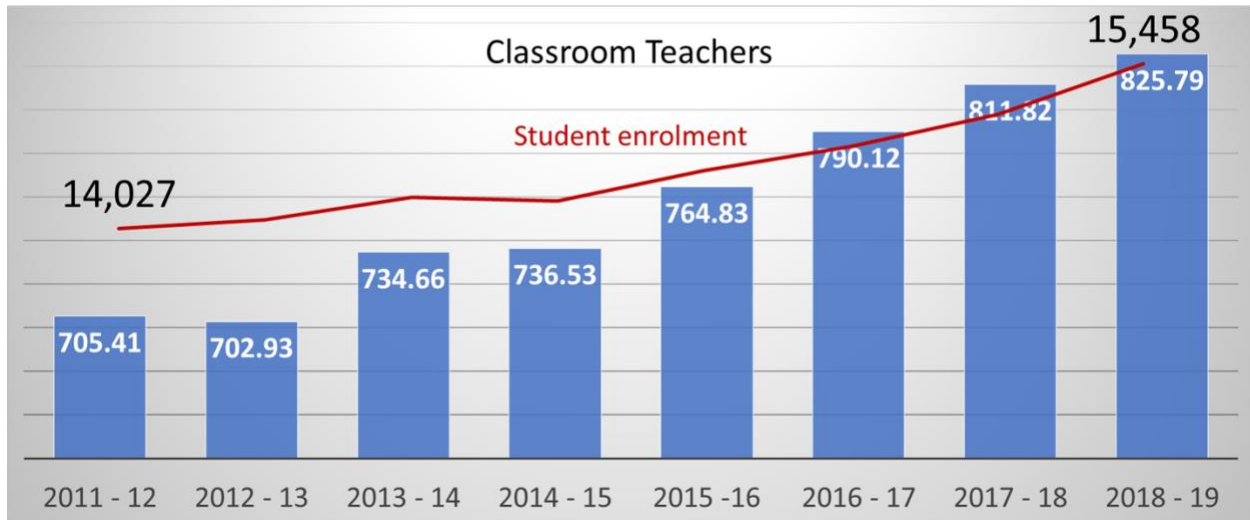
These 825.79 (FTE) classroom teachers also serve a growing diversity of student needs. In 2018-2019, they are supported by 451.26 (FTE) dedicated educational assistants in the classroom, 144.20 (FTE) student support services teachers and 46 (FTE) clinical services staff.

Educational Assistants in Schools
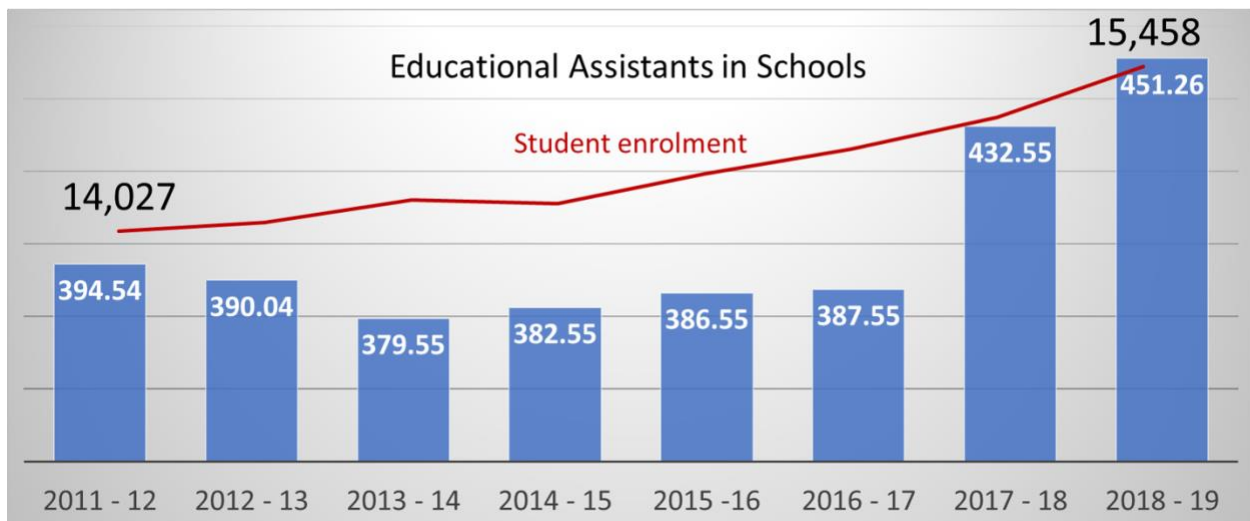
Student enrolment

Year	Educational Assistants (FTE)
2011 - 12	394.54
2012 - 13	390.04
2013 - 14	379.55
2014 - 15	382.55
2015 -16	386.55
2016 - 17	387.55
2017 - 18	432.55
2018 - 19	451.26

Student enrolment: 14,027 (start) to 15,458 (end)

The board's focus has been to grow our educational frontline staff to serve the increasing student needs, but educators are also supported by a cadre of devoted custodial, clerical, technical, and transportation staff that has largely remained unchanged in supporting the growing student and educational staff populations in our schools.

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Support Staff in Schools
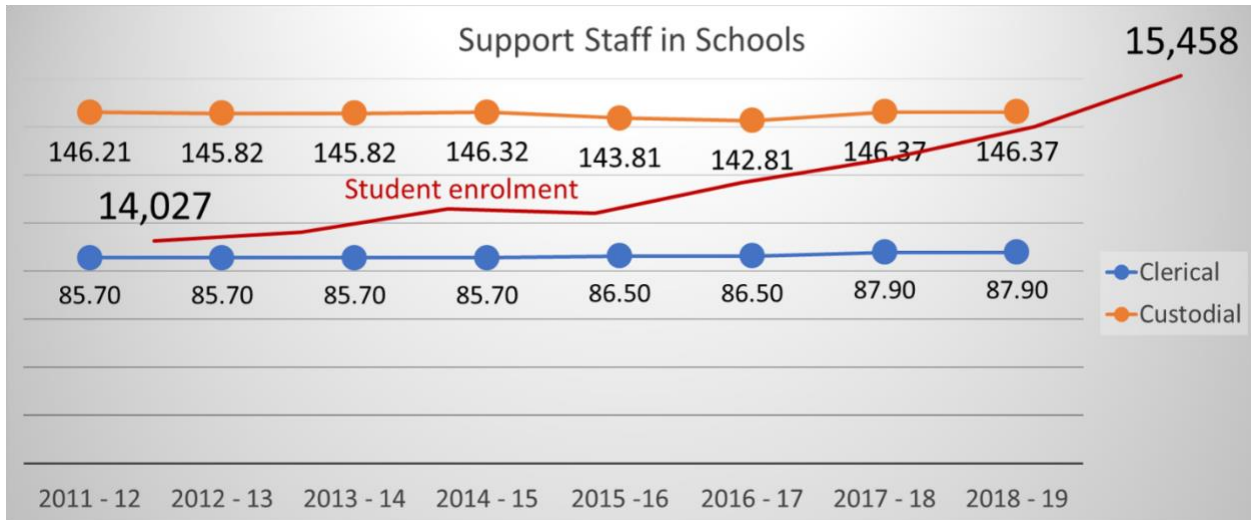
The board was able to achieve increases in frontline staff to support growing enrolments; growing newcomer populations; growing diversity of student needs; greater equity; greater capacity; and maintaining reasonable class sizes. They also found dollars to repair aging infrastructure and add spaces to overcrowded schools? How will LRSD be able to do the same in 2019-2020 and beyond?

Revenue Sources

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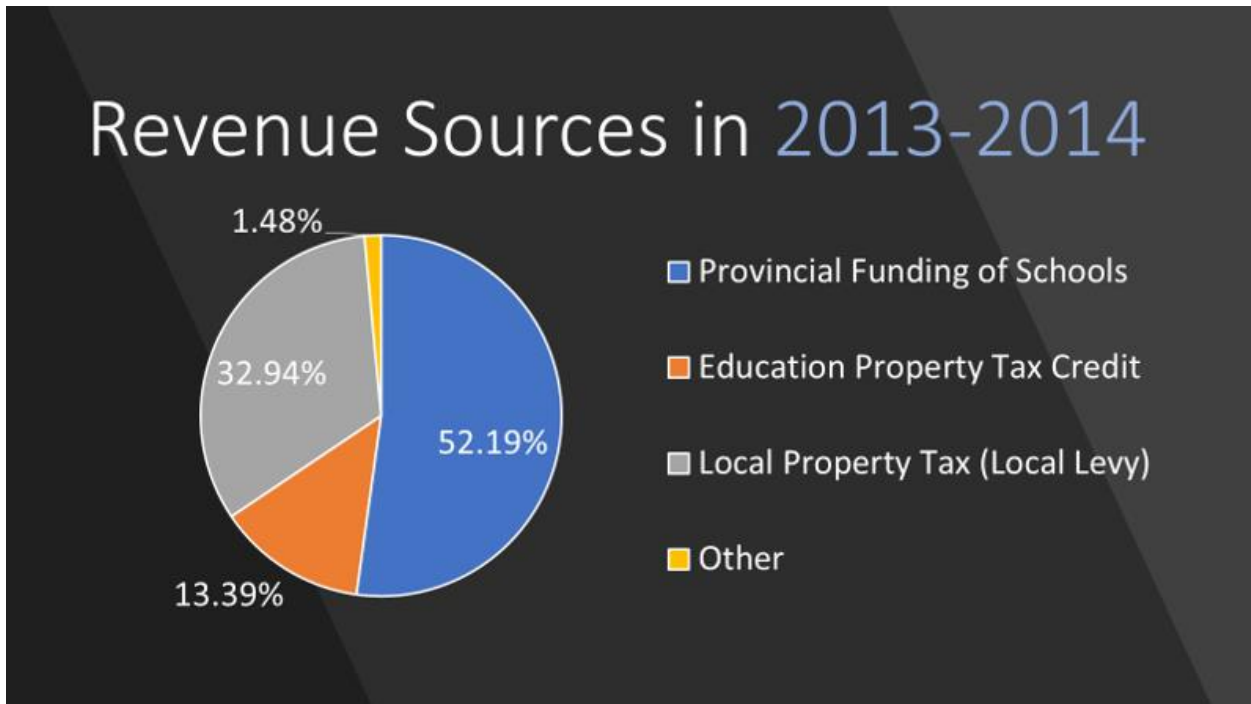
Revenue Sources in 2019-2020

- Provincial Funding of Schools — 45.00%
- Education Property Tax Credit — 11.48%
- Local Property Tax (Local Levy) — 41.74%
- Other — 1.78%
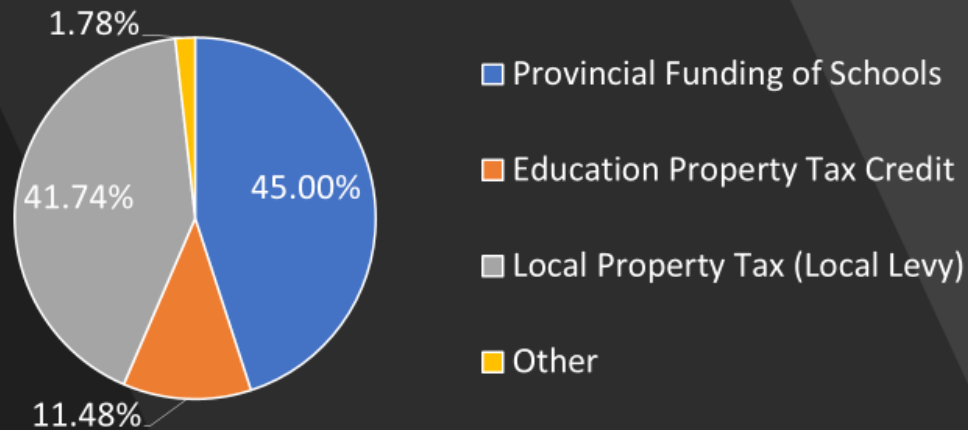
What LRSD has seen in terms of revenue is a shift to the local property owner. When looking at the provincial funding of schools in LRSD in 2013–2014, it was 52 per cent, in contrast to 45 per cent in 2019–2020. Thankfully, LRSD is a growing community, with a growing property tax base.

Shifts from the board office to the classroom have also been an important way we've achieved increases to frontline staff (classroom teachers and educational assistants).
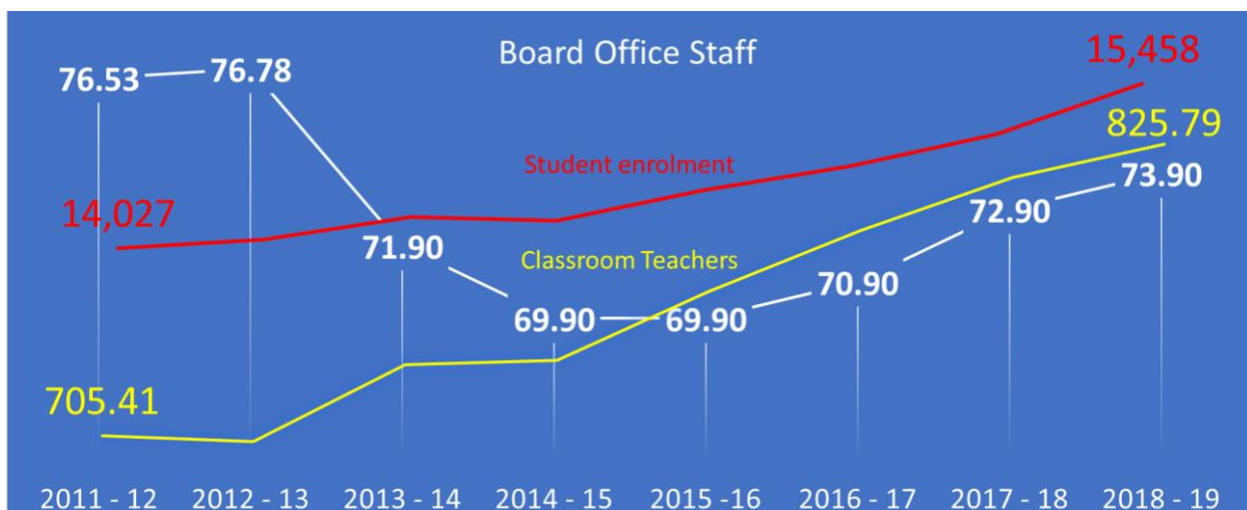
Long before the recent call for belt tightening, LRSD had made shifts to reduce the number of staff members in the board office as a means of redistributing resources to increase frontline staff, including reductions to the Senior Leadership Team and Coordinators.

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Senior Leadership Team

12 — 12 — 10 — 10 — 10 — 10 — 10 — 10

Student enrolment: 14,027 ... 15,458

Classroom Teachers: 705.41 ... 825.79

2011 - 12 | 2012 - 13 | 2013 - 14 | 2014 - 15 | 2015 -16 | 2016 - 17 | 2017 - 18 | 2018 - 19

Coordinators

18.8 — 18.8 — 13.0 — 11.0 — 11.5 — 11.5 — 10.0 — 10.0

Student enrolment: 14,027 ... 15,458

Classroom Teachers: 705.41 ... 825.79

2011 - 12 | 2012 - 13 | 2013 - 14 | 2014 - 15 | 2015 -16 | 2016 - 17 | 2017 - 18 | 2018 - 19

Through local property tax contributions, ongoing efforts to find efficiencies and redistribute resources, LRSD has been able to keep class sizes manageable.

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K-3 Classroom Average
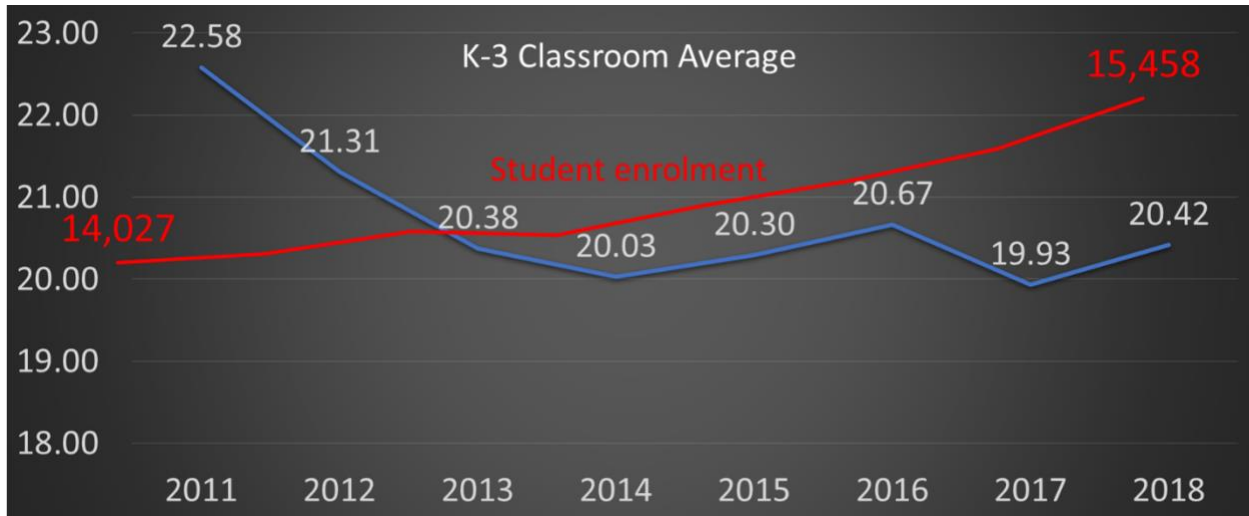
Each year, the school board responsibly uses some of its surplus (collected mainly from our International Student Program fees) to address school system and societal inequities that impact our students' ability to achieve improved outcomes.

Expenditures out of Surplus in 2018-19

City of Winnipeg costs to run the Trustee elections	$182,000
Technology in the classroom	$325,000
Band/Music equipment	$150,000
Supports for students with special needs (example: evacuation mats)	$136,000
Furnishings for Ecole Sage Creek School, Ecole Guyot, College Beliveau	$190,000
Summer Programs for newcomers and children living in poverty	$315,450
Family supports to address poverty and support newcomers	$214,810
Nutrition Programs	$100,000
International enrichment for LRSD students	$80,000
Active Transportation – Safety Audit recommendations	$100,000
Boy and Girls Club and RDC	$160,000
Teacher staffing to support international students in high schools	$563,000
Total	**$2,508,260**

Achieving a Balanced Budget for 2019-2020

Due to limited revenue (2 per cent increase to the Special Requirement and 1.2 per cent Provincial Funding Increase), it is impossible to meet all the system's needs. And, just how can LRSD protect the investments we have made to address growing societal inequities and ageing infrastructure?

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To achieve a balanced budget that looks after students by maintaining the frontline (classroom teachers and educational assistants) and protects investments for 2019–2020, the board will need to consider some of the following:

- Increasing class size (We will limit this change to a very small increase to the average class size.)
- Reducing the
  - professional learning budget
  - information technologies operating budget
  - instructional operating budget
  - student services operating budget
  - budget to support unfunded capital projects
  - board office operating
  - divisional admin cap from 3% to less than 2.7%
  - board office, clerical and custodial staff (through attrition)

2019-2020 Budget	194,359,468
Total Budget Increase	4,521,339
Total Budget Percentage Increase	2.38%
Tax Increase on Average House	2.94%
Increase Cost per Average House	57.79
Increase to Special Requirement	2.00%

Budget 2019-2020

- **Decreases** to operating expenses
- **Decreases** to the Divisional Admin Cap to 2.7%
- **Limited increases** to the average teacher salary and contractual salary obligations
- **Limited increases** to the frontline to address
  - Increasing enrolment (11 new teachers)
  - Increasing needs (20 new educational assistants and 2.5 new student services teachers)
- **Very limited** increases to address
  - Transportation needs
  - Ageing infrastructures
  - Addressing École Sage Creek School's overcapacity

Looking at it another way, the majority of the 2019–2020 budget goes towards regular instruction and student support services (a combined total of 77 per cent); another 10 per cent goes to operations and maintenance; and 2 per cent goes to transportation. Community activities (Adult Learning Centres, and Community Education and Services) make up a combined 2 per cent, while Instructional and Pupil Support Services make up 4 per cent. Divisional Administration is capped by the province at 2.7 per cent, and 2 per cent represents Fiscal and Transfers to Capital.

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Budget for 2019-2020

- 57% Regular Instruction
- 20% Student Support Services
- 2% Adult Learning Centres
- 1% CommunityEducation & Services
- 2.7% Divisional Administration
- 1% Instructional & Pupil Support Services
- 4% Transportation
- 2% Operations & Maintenance
- 10% Fiscal & Transfers to Capital
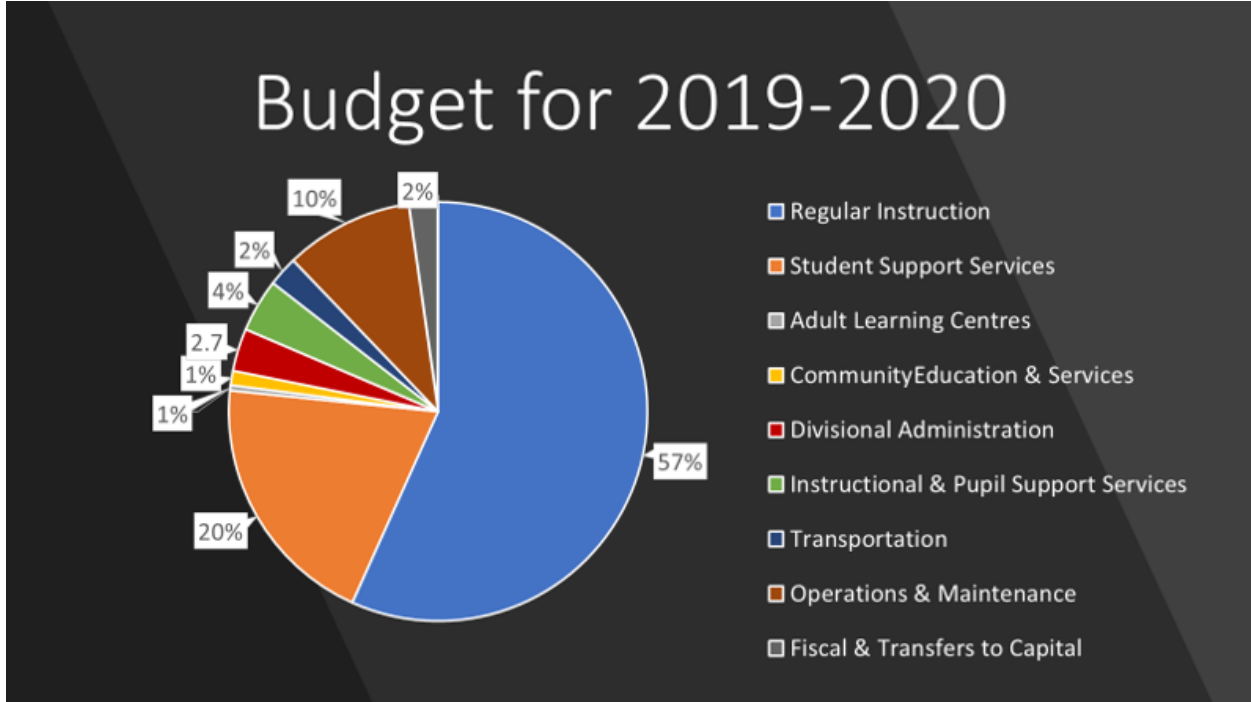
As part of our 2019-2020 budget development consultations, LRSD did explore strengthening future multi-year investments with our community.

Strengthening Investments for the Future

Full-Day Kindergarten (2018-19)
- 4 Schools
- Total Cost: $441K

Full-Day Kindergarten (2027-28)
- 30 Schools
- Total Cost: $3.5M
- *This does not include renovations or equipment.*

Year	New FTE's	Cumulative FTE's	Total Increase in Cost
2021-2022	4.5	4.5	$440,916
2022-2023	5	9.5	$489,907
2023-2024	5	14.5	$526,650
2024-2025	5	19.5	$531,916
2025-2026	5	24.5	$547,874
2026-2027	5	29.5	$564,310
2027-2028	3	32.5	$338,583

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Strengthening Investments for the Future

In 2018-19, Ojibway Language in several K and some Grade 1 classrooms

- 2 Teachers and 3 Support Staff
- Total Cost: $350K

Ojibway Language K-3 (2021-22)
- 3 Teachers and 10 Support Staff
- Total Cost: $1.1M

Year	New Staff	Increase in Cost
2021-2022	$74,580	$74,580
2022-2023	$152,143	$226,723
2023-2024	$495,155	$721,879

Strengthening Investments for the Future

12 Family Centres in 2018-19
- 24 Staff
- Total Cost: $1M

22 Family Centres in 2030-31
- 46 Staff
- Total Cost: $2M
- *This does not include renovations or equipment.*

Year	New Staff	Total Increase in Cost
2021-2022	$86,605	$86,605
2022-2023	$88,337	$174,942
2023-2024	$90,104	$356,952
2024-2025	$91,906	$356,952
2025-2026	$93,744	$450,696
2026-2027	$95,619	$546,315
2027-2028	$97,531	$643,847
2028-2029	$99,482	$743,329
2029-2030	$101,472	$844,801
2030-2031	$103,501	$948,302

Now, let's explore the Focus Area questions.

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1. What actions are required to ensure that the education system is sustainable and provides equitable learning opportunities for all children and youth? Is the education system currently properly funded and sustainable?

It is refreshing to read that the primary objective of the current review is to improve student learning. One could assume that cost reductions might be the only impetus for review in the public sector. After all, what taxpayer wouldn't want and expect both performance and accountability from the public education system?

Educators want the same.

When it comes to funding in LRSD, the division continues to invest in our growing and diverse student population. Our budgets are developed in consultation with the community, and since there are complex needs in many of our communities, this whole community approach is critical to ensure success for all students in LRSD.

If we can agree that education is an investment rather than a cost, then we should start by saying this is a system worth funding. The following recommendation proposed during Ontario's 1994 Royal Commission on Learning speaks to this sequence:

> "We recommend that the Ministry of Education and Training first decide what it considers to be an adequate educational program for the province, and then determine the cost of delivering this program in various areas of the province, taking into account different student needs and varying community characteristics, such as geography, poverty rates, and language, that affect education costs." (For the Love of Learning, Chapter 18, Recommendation 162.)

The same needs, priorities, strengths and challenges exist in education in Manitoba.

82% of the budget in LRSD is associated with teacher salaries and benefits, given that "the greatest influence on student progression in learning is having highly expert, inspired and passionate teachers and school leaders working together to maximise the effect of their teaching on all students in their care" (Hattie, 2015). Teachers have a positive impact on learners and their ongoing development needs to be supported in order to ensure this long-term influence on students.

Responding to Needs of Manitoba Students

As stated in the *Public Consultation Discussion Paper:*

> "personal circumstances can either privilege or put students at risk in terms of learning and educational outcomes, which significantly impacts planning and resource decisions at the school and school division level" (page 4).

If these personal circumstances are significantly different from one area or school division to the next, then local planning and resource decisions might be more responsive. A clear example of such differences can be found in French Immersion (FI) enrolment. While the percentage of students in Immersion is 12 per cent in the province, it is 35 per cent in LRSD in 2019 and is projected to further

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increase in the coming years (in 2018-19, 48 per cent of students in Kindergarten and 51 per cent in Grade 1 are in FI). The Manitoba Public Schools Act acknowledges that "democratic local school divisions and districts play an important role in providing public education that is responsive to local needs and conditions." The FI program nurtured in LRSD creates such a local need and condition that requires a local approach.

Another statement in the *Public Consultation Discussion Paper*:

> "achievement gaps [that] are widening between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, and [the] high degree of variability in student achievement … observed when data is analyzed geographically" (page 7).

LRSD has made it a priority to improve the way our students are taught about Indigenous culture. Through programs such as the Pow Wow Club, Echo, the development of an Ojibwe language program for Kindergarten and Grade 1 students, events such as the Graduation Powwow, and a growing understanding of Indigenous teachings, we are valuing and celebrating our Indigenous communities' culture and identity. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action compel us to be leaders in a time of healing. In LRSD, The Circle of Courage is a model that integrates Indigenous perspectives with contemporary research about well-being and resiliency and serves as a lens for school planning, student needs, classroom profiles, and system planning.

The discussion paper states "despite regular increases in funding, the overall system is not yielding desired levels of student achievement and outcomes" (page 15).

Solely increasing the education budget by more than the cost of living is not a solution. Our evidence-based collaborative inquiry cycles exist to monitor the success of our investments and to improve professional practice in relation to student achievement. This is also about ensuring fiduciary accountability at it relates to the investment of taxpayer dollars in support of a public education system. Furthermore, a focus on continuous student improvement rather than grade-level milestones channels "the narrative away from standards and achievement and [moves] it towards progression" (Hattie, 2015).

Equity and Funding Models

The LRSD and our province share the goal of equitable funding for schools. If we rely solely on property taxes, inequities arise because of the type and assessed values of properties within our boundaries. While it is probably due for some review, "the current education funding formula has an equalization proponent built into it, which further balances the inequity of assessment between divisions" (Draper, 2019). These measures help balance the costs and educational opportunities for students regardless of their school division.

While it may fall outside the scope of this review, the provincial government appears to be exploring a new funding formula. Per the discussion paper: "Other provinces are, or have, moved away from dual level funding of education. It is an approach that has drawn some criticism and has been characterized as uneven in application and inequitable" (page 6). The model of dual-level funding alone surely cannot be the problem, given the many other sectors that are funded in concert by different levels of

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government. A central management of all revenue distribution will only be more *equitable* if the allocation of funds is informed by the evidence-informed needs at the local level.

Coordinating Services for Families

Ontario's 1994 commission recommended "a new kind of co-ordination at the local level of the many provincial government ministries and social service agencies that provide support services to children and their families." In her report recommending a restructuring of public education in Nova Scotia, Glaze (2018) goes further with suggestions with respect to how school facilities can be efficiently managed. There may be some merit to the *SchoolsPlus* or "wrap-around facilities" notion of schools serving as community hubs. In her report, Glaze states:

> "Nova Scotian students, families, and communities must be entitled to the same quality and variety of opportunities, from curriculum-related courses to health care access and social services. These strategies must be developed collaboratively with other relevant departments, agencies, and key stakeholders."

Regardless of how they are funded, families can benefit from the coordination of various family services in proximity. Over more than a decade, we have seen success in helping coordinate community services for our families in our 12 family centers strategically located across LRSD's geography. Family Centres provides parents with free programming to develop their skills and knowledge on early learning and literacy development, nutrition and health, as well as positive parenting and community building. Last year, 1,175 families utilized the division's Family Centres for a total of 30,544 visits.

In the past two years, our reimagining of the René Deleurme Centre (RDC) community of schools—Lavallee School, Victor Mager School and Victor H. L. Wyatt School—has shown promise. Using a whole community collaborative, consultative and researched-based approach in partnership with the University of Winnipeg, we are successfully addressing the many challenges learners and their parents/guardians have identified such as: high levels of complex poverty; growing rates of children in care; intergenerational trauma caused by residential schools; and increasing population of newcomers experiencing barriers to employment and difficulties with financial and social stability.

While literacy and numeracy have always been two of the building blocks of a learners' journey in our public schools, there are many dimensions to learning such as social-emotional learning, mental health and well-becoming, schools may be better positioned to ensure these supports than other public institutions, even if they require resources beyond the academic pursuits for which funds in education are allotted.

As schools become more able to consistently meet many of these other important needs of our learners, there is greater argument for learners to spend more time at school at a younger age. As eluded to earlier in this document, Manitoba's public education model must strongly consider switching to a full-day Kindergarten program, wherever possible. In looking at the poverty rates in the province, as well as the number of children in care (see table below), having Kindergarten children in school each day for a full day would not only better prepare them academically by providing double the contact time for

literacy and numeracy development, but also provide more opportunities for fine-motor, gross-motor, and social-emotional development.

Children and youth in out-of-home care in 2018				
	Children in care	Population (0-17)	Rate per 1000	Year
BC	6950.00	895180.00	7.70	2017
Alberta	27147.00	775175.00	35.02	2008*
Saskatchewan	5227.00	229100.00	22.80	-018
Manitoba	10328.00	293240.00	35.20	2018
Ontario	125281.00	2349600.00	53.32	2013*
Quebec	1521298.00	31529.00	20.72	2014*
Newfoundland and Lab	970.00	79710.00	12.20	2018
Nova Scotia	1706.00	194389.00	8.80	2007
PEI	196.00	27805.00	7.00	2016
New Brunswick	675.00	150030.00	4.50	2011
Nunavut	226.00	12315.00	18.30	2017
Yukon	152.00	7840.00	19.40	2016
NWT	395.00	12810.00	30.80	2007
*(maltreatment investigations)				

Manitoba has also seen a significant increase in numbers relating to children in care. The percentage of Manitoba children in care relative to the overall child population almost doubled from 2001 to 2017, from 1.9% to 3.5%. These increased numbers may be a broad measure of the well-being of children in the community and the extent to which families are struggling to support, care and provide safety for kids.

Another complex element is poverty. In Manitoba, one in three children under the age of six lives in poverty. This is approximately 1.7 times higher than the national rate. One in eight children in Manitoba live with food insecurity, which is also higher than the national average. This issue becomes immediately apparent once learners who have been impacted by poverty are ready to enter Kindergarten. One in four of these learners are not ready in at least one area of early development (physical, social, emotional, cognitive and general knowledge) when they enter the school system. Since many students are behind developmentally even before they start school, having available supports for them and their

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families are critical during the preschool age. Access to Family Centres, such as one that was developed at RDC for its family of schools, is a critical piece in supporting families, as well as helping learners develop and progress socially through Kindergarten.

While increased opportunities for belonging and attachment would benefit learners, families would also benefit from increased flexibility for work and providing for their kids around a full school day. It would also limit the amount of child-care required during the week, which itself is an incredible burden for parents. While some families have already benefitted from full-day Kindergarten programming, an equitable approach would be to offer this option to all families.

According to a comprehensive, multi-year study, *The Early Advantage: Early childhood systems that lead by example* by the National Center on Education and the Economy—a think tank focused on the connection between education and economics—states that many of the top performing education systems in the world such as Singapore and Finland have developed a thorough and accessible pre-school system. The lead of the study, Sharon Lynn Kagan, states that "For many countries, investments in young children are the mark of prudent thinking and wise resource allocation often approaching the top of the list of requisite investments."

Strategic Use of Schools in the Community

While harmonizing various services is helpful for families, they are only accessible to many if they are offered in the community in which they reside. Currently, many students must leave their neighborhood to attend school, either to access desired programming (such as French Immersion) or because their community school is over capacity. The formulae that guides decisions in the current Public Schools Finance Board model does not always account for this variable. LRSD has advocated for sufficient classroom space to house students within their own community such as at École Sage Creek School, where overcrowding is an issue.

At the same time, the LRSD has been offering programming in schools that are less utilized. MyConnect programming for middle-years students at Glenwood School and project-based programming for high school students in Propel at Nelson McIntyre Collegiate are just two examples. Further, the division has re-drawn catchment areas, changed grade levels for certain schools and flipped buildings between English and French Immersion populations in order to make efficient use of classroom space in existing buildings.

The Importance of Transparency

LRSD is increasing efforts to be even more accountable to its resident families as they have a right to know how their money is being spent. Financial performance is accounted and shared in our Annual Report to the Community. LRSD constantly seeks community input to make decisions about future action and the spending required. In addition to community forums related to budgets and programming, the division has consulted with students, staff and the community through *Thoughtexchange*, an online and interactive discussion platform.

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At first glance, the notion of reducing the number of school divisions may strike taxpayers as a good fiscal decision. However, the Frontier Centre for Public Policy (2005) describes the amalgamation of 54 Manitoba divisions to 37, as "a costly and disruptive undertaking largely void of positive benefits." They report that administrative cost savings from these amalgamations in the first-year total roughly $560,000 or 2.6%, while spending in the amalgamated school divisions went up by $27 million in that same period.

LRSD supports a public education system that is responsible, accountable and sustainable. Schools are more accessible to families than many other important service and an education system can only be effective if all the needs of a student are met. Meeting these needs is required for successes well beyond academic performance. And, meeting these needs comes at a cost.

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Focus Area 7: French Immersion in LRSD

The LRSD has a rich history of French Immersion (FI) programming that goes back to the early '70s start of FI in Manitoba. Its evolution is an excellent example of educators and parents in this community working in collaboration with locally elected school boards for what they collectively believe is best for learners and their education. This support and collaboration continue in LRSD today as evidenced by an FI program that is as strong as ever. In fact, nearly 50 percent of Kindergarten and Grade 1 students in LRSD are enrolled in FI.

The roots of the LRSD FI program stem from the français program of the '70s. As more English students attended français schools, and the Francophone community was on a journey to advocate for their own governance structure. Both the francophone and anglophone communities became more active in pressuring school boards to develop FI schools. According to Roger Millier, former Acting Superintendent of the St. Boniface School Division, "French schools want to make French Canadians/Franco-Manitobans out of their students while immersion is a knowledge of, an affinity to [French culture]" (personal communication, March 15, 2005). Denis Robert, Principal of Collège Béliveau (the first FI high school in Western Canada), remarked he once asked a parent why his child was in FI and he said that the parent responded, "Well how else is he going to build a future if he doesn't have French" (personal communication, March 5, 2005). Robert added, "It had little to do with the language, it had to do with future opportunities." With different motivations for français program parents and FI program parents, the two clearly had formed distinct learning communities.

Parents worked with educators in both St. Boniface and St. Vital school divisions to create their first FI schools. St. Boniface built École Guyot and populated the school with students from École Lacerte in 1976. Even in these early days, parents and educators worked together to shape the school. According to former St. Boniface School Division Superintendent, Jean-Yves Rochon, immersion parents from that period told the school division, "We want the best program for our kids to learn French and we don't want a watered-down program. So, if we're going to move our kids over to a new school that you're going to call a FI school, it has to be as good as École Lacerte." (personal communication, March 4, 2005). And so, the entire model of language instruction and even Principal Therese Cameron was brought from Lacerte over to the new school.

The model they brought with them was one of a completely French learning environment, fully bilingual teaching and non-teaching staff, starting English instruction only in Grade 2 and teaching all subjects other than English Language Arts in French from Kindergarten to Grade 12. This vision was supported and encouraged by the educators. In working with trustees and parents while discussing either French milieu schools or a dual-track model, Roger Millier said, "If you want to encourage communication in a language, well you don't need the presence of another track that's going to interfere. The first thing that happens when you have two tracks is that they're going to give courses together . . . I could see the problems" (2005). Thus, the current model was implemented and has been maintained ever since.

A similar model evolved in the St. Vital school division and the history of its FI program is also rich with examples of educators and parents working together to promote a common vision. According to Terry Borys, former Superintendent of LRSD, when it came time to establish a high school in a new

development in South St. Vital, parents insisted that the newest high school in River Park South become a single-track FI High School and their pressure and passion resulted in the opening of Collège Jeanne-Sauvé. "They [French immersion parents] were a very strong association of people. They were a highly active group of parents and they worked very hard with a key educator, René Deleurme." (Terry Borys, personal communication, April 15, 2005).

Furthermore, the FI vision that was shared by parents and educators in both divisions led to political engagement and action. In St. Boniface, parental pressure both directed and supported trustees to ensure that the entire program, K-12 followed the same model. The same was true in St. Vital. "They [St. Vital French FI parents] did an awful lot of stuff to promote immersion in the St. Vital School Division and they were active to the point of getting their own trustees elected to the board." (Borys, 2005).

These are but a few examples of how local government at the school division level was crucial in responding to the needs and wants of the community. School trustees of the era took great political risks and showed great courage as they knew that dual-track schools were easier to establish politically, but with the advice of their senior leadership and pressure from the teacher and parent communities, they chose an alternate path that was politically riskier, but also better for student learning. FI in LRSD continues to be a strong example of the significance of local school boards and how they are the best advocates for their constituents.

It is local leadership working in collaboration with the community and educators that continue to maintain this unique and very successful program in LRSD. For example, in 2013, when we reached a critical point where we had no longer enough space to house all the students in south St. Vital in the two existing FI schools, the school division had to develop a plan to deal with the overpopulation. Instead of working in isolation, divisional leadership invested a tremendous amount of time and effort to consult with the community and inform trustees of possible options and their impact on the community and on student learning. Together, they chose one school and developed a plan to convert an existing English school into a FI middle school. Politically, this was a very difficult decision, but the stakeholders knew it was necessary to maintain the core values of the program while also accommodating the need for additional space. The process included a tremendous amount of consultation with all parent communities involved and their voices are evident in many of the details that came out in the final plan.

A very similar process took place when École Marie-Anne Gaboury had to swap buildings with Hastings School when overpopulation became an issue in that community. During this consultation between school communities, school trustees worked with parents, divisional leadership and educators to find solutions that were suitable to all stakeholders. Again, a similar process was used to navigate changes at École Provencher, École Henri-Bergeron, École Van-Belleghem, École Guyot and Collège Béliveau and when LRSD eventually transitions École Howden to a K-8 school. A rigorous consultation continues in Sage Creek to this day as LRSD seeks to open a second school. The trustees have committed to making one of the two schools in Sage Creek a single-track FI school so that we can offer the Sage Creek community FI programming that is consistent with the LRSD vision and goals for FI and respond to the wishes of its constituents.

The board, senior leadership and the community have all been very committed to evidence-based programming choices throughout the history of FI in LRSD and its legacy divisions. This commitment was

officially defined and clearly articulated in 2007 in the LRSD Instruction in French Immersion Program Schools policy, which was revised and adopted again in February 2019.

Based on the success and popularity of its FI program and a demand from parents of students beyond Grade 1, in 2006, LRSD created a second entry point into FI in Grade 4 in a middle immersion program. This program has been offered for several years at École Julie Riel in River Park South and the Board recently approved an expansion of the program to the North of LRSD, at École Henri-Bergeron. The board is committed to supporting the community's wishes for increased access to FI program schools.

With advice and encouragement from senior leadership and significant parental support, the board has consistently supported FI programming and have shown the political courage to maintain the core values of the program.

This support from senior leadership and the board has helped to create an environment where staff is supported in their learning and professional growth in French. Professional learning at the divisional-level and school-level are offered in French to maximize the impact on student learning. Staff also have access to a variety of resources in French, which is a great improvement from the early days of immersion, where much of the material was translated by the teaching staff. The networking in French, including Family of Schools professional learning days, has created a focus on the importance of maintaining high language standards for all staff and students.

Staff recruitment and retention

LRSD successfully recruits and retains fluently bilingual teaching and administrative staff who deliver the program from Kindergarten to grade 12. LRSD staff have been told by both graduates and faculty of the Université de St-Boniface that LRSD is a desirable place for new graduates to work. Many cite the solid reputation of the division as a leader in French Immersion education and its dedication to providing learning environments and professional supports in French as main reasons for coming to work in LRSD.

The ongoing commitment to a French learning environment

The division's commitment to a français milieu is not only an effective teacher recruitment characteristic, it has also continued to be an integral part of the success of the program. All staff, from custodians, to library-technicians, to secretarial staff and educational assistants, are bilingual and model the French language for students. All aspects of the school day take place in French, and English Language Arts are not introduced until Grade 2. LRSD continues to make a focus on French language acquisition at the Early Years a priority. Divisional staff, including clinicians (psychology, social work, speech and language pathology) are often bilingual and contribute to French Immersion learning with students in their roles. Curriculum consultants, and student services coordinators are also bilingual and specifically support the needs of students and teachers in immersion settings.

All administrator educators in immersion schools are fluently bilingual and are expected to model exemplary oral and written French communication. The Leadership Team in LRSD includes an Assistant-Superintendent who is responsible for all the FI schools, and Christian Michalik, the Superintendent, is

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also a fluent French-speaking model for the community, who greatly values the immersion program. These leaders help to shape the culture and climate in FI schools and divisional offices in LRSD. This contributes to the success and growth of the program in LRSD.

Measures of success in French Immersion in LRSD

Currently, 48 per cent of Kindergarten registrations are in FI in LRSD. This is significantly higher than the 19 per cent average registration rate in the province. More than half (51 per cent) of LRSD's Grade 1 students; 45 per cent of its Grade 2 students; and 32 per cent of its Grade 8 students are registered in FI. There has been strong growth in those numbers over the last several years because of parent's confidence in the quality of education offered in LRSD's FI program.

In LRSD, 35 per cent of all students K-12 are in FI. This is much higher than the 13 per cent that are registered across the province. The attrition rate from K-12 is 27 per cent. This is substantially lower than the 50 per cent attrition rate in the province. This rate measures the number of Kindergarten students in the program compared to the number from the same cohort still enrolled in Grade 12.

LRSD also makes up a significant percentage of the total Immersion enrolment. Even though LRSD makes up such a significant percentage of the Immersion population, its Grade 12 students consistently have higher pass rates and average score on standards tests than the provincial average.

What can be learned from LRSD's French Immersion Program's Success?

French Immersion in LRSD has evolved as a model of collaboration between a local school board, school leaders, educators and community members. From this perspective, one can see that locally elected trustees can influence and support significant change and that stakeholders in education can produce amazing outcomes when they work collaboratively. A strong commitment to a clear and bold vision by all stakeholders matters and that leadership to fulfill that commitment takes courage. When educators, leaders, locally elected trustees and community members agree upon a bold vision and move together in one direction, learners thrive, and communities flourish.

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