



Education Quality and
Accountability Office



2012-2013 ANNUAL REPORT



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Dr. Brian L. Desbiens,
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June 1, 2005–March 16, 2014



Jerry Ponikvar,
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July 4, 1997–May 16, 2014



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November 1, 2001–June 30, 2013



Dr. Bette M. Stephenson,
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Dr. Elizabeth (Lee) Ford-Jones
June 2, 2011–June 1, 2014



Abirami Jeyaratnam
October 3, 2012–October 2, 2014

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Education Quality and
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2012-2013 ANNUAL REPORT

Education Quality and Accountability Office

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A continued commitment to enhancing student learning in Ontario

For over a decade and a half, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) has been proudly providing the education community with data and supportive resources that have contributed to the improvement of instructional programs in schools across Ontario.

Over the years, EQAO has established a world-class assessment program by harnessing the experience of Ontario's educators and internationally recognized experts in the field of large-scale testing to design and administer assessments based on *The Ontario Curriculum*. The agency continues to maintain its accountability to the public and to the Ministry of Education by reporting on the results of its tests and the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education and of boards.

EQAO assessments measure student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics according to curriculum expectations and provide indicators of achievement that help evaluate and focus improvements for student learning. As an arm's-length agency of the Government of Ontario, EQAO enhances the accountability of the province's education system through the publication of school results and can be counted on to provide students, parents and the education community with objective, reliable evidence of achievement at key stages in students' education.

Since its inception in 1996, EQAO has been committed to supporting improved student learning. In fact, continuous improvement has remained a guiding principle behind all of the agency's efforts to deliver assessments of the highest possible quality. Over the years, we have placed tremendous value on input and feedback from educators, students, parents and the public. Collaboration among the education community, assessment experts and our own exceptional EQAO staff remains a key contributor to the success of our programs.

This annual report describes a number of particular achievements from this fiscal year that highlight how EQAO has continued to strengthen its engagement with the education community. This year, the agency implemented "EQAO Reporting," which is an online reporting application that enables school principals to examine achievement results in various ways, including globally for their school, in relation to demographic and student-attitude and behaviour data, and also for groups of students with specified characteristics. The primary purpose of this application is to support rich





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conversations among school staff as well as with students and parents about achievement and what can be done to improve student learning. The information available through this Web application has been extremely well received by the education community and is transforming how data are being used to strengthen school improvement planning. The application, which also includes an online training component, was implemented in August 2012 for elementary principals and will be available to secondary school principals in fall 2013. A feature that will be added for the 2013 implementation is the ability for principals to analyze student achievement on individual test items or on clusters, which will allow principals to view achievement by skill. A large number of workshops on how best to use this reporting tool were conducted for board staff, principals and school teams during the 2012–2013 school year. When developing tools such as these, the agency works closely with educators to ensure that the information is what they need on the ground to help improvement planning throughout the school.

Our values, which dictate that we must support all children to strive and to thrive, have remained a central focus and driving motivation for all we do at EQAO. All who are privileged with the responsibility to educate children have a vested interest in supporting students throughout their educational journey and share a genuine desire to have them maximize their learning potential at all stages so that they may continuously progress toward the next levels of achievement.

Indeed, EQAO has helped develop throughout the province a culture of achievement that is focused on student and staff support and development. By continuously generating and disseminating reliable data to parents and the education community, EQAO contributes to the everyday efforts of those most concerned with the academic success of Ontario students.

EQAO has always recognized that strong relationships among students, teachers, parents, government policy-makers and educational stakeholders are necessary to nurture successful learning outcomes. We value the partnerships that have been created in support of the development of Ontario students. Ultimately, we are all committed to the notion that every child matters and has a right to the best possible education. By working together, we will continue to drive the enhancement of practices used to improve student achievement in Ontario.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brian Desbiens".

Dr. Brian L. Desbiens, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Marguerite Jackson".

Marguerite Jackson, CEO



A PERSONAL NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

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In June 2013, EQAO's Chief Executive Officer, Marguerite Jackson, retires from EQAO. On behalf of the EQAO's Board of Directors and staff, I wish to extend our sincere thanks to Marguerite for her outstanding guidance, dedication and commitment to this agency. Marguerite has been EQAO's CEO for over a decade, and during this time she has provided the agency with exceptional leadership. Under her guidance, EQAO has earned distinction, both within Ontario and beyond, as a source of credible evidence that improves accountability and influences teaching and learning. Her stewardship has greatly contributed to the vital and vibrant role this agency plays in Ontario's education system. In all of the many distinguished roles Marguerite has held throughout her career in public education, she has kept the student-teacher learning relationship at the centre of all discussions and decision making. We wish her all the very best.



Dr. Brian L. Desbiens, Chair



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ABOUT EQAO

EQAO is an arm's-length agency of Ontario's Ministry of Education. EQAO's mandate is to conduct province-wide tests at key points in every student's primary, junior and secondary education and report the results to educators, parents and the public.

EQAO's tests measure student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in relation to *Ontario Curriculum* expectations. The resulting data provide accountability and a gauge of quality in Ontario's publicly funded education system. By providing this important evidence about learning, EQAO acts as a catalyst for increasing the success of Ontario students.

The objective and reliable results from EQAO's tests complement the information obtained from classroom and other assessments to provide students, parents, teachers and administrators with a clear and comprehensive picture of student achievement and a basis for targeted improvement planning at the individual, school, school board and provincial levels. EQAO helps build capacity for the appropriate use of data by providing resources that educators, parents, policy-makers and others in the education community can use to improve learning and teaching. EQAO distributes an individual report to each student who writes one of its tests, and posts school, school board and provincial results on its Web site (www.eqao.com).

VALUES

EQAO values giving all students the opportunity to reach their highest possible level of achievement.

EQAO values its role as a service to educators, parents, students, government and the public in support of teaching and learning in the classroom.

EQAO values credible evidence that informs professional practice and focuses attention on interventions that improve student success.

EQAO values research that informs large-scale assessment and classroom practice.

EQAO values the dedication and expertise of Ontario's educators, their involvement in all aspects of the assessment process and the positive difference their efforts make in student outcomes.

EQAO values the delivery of its programs and services with equivalent quality in both English and French.



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"Best of Class" Assessments

EQAO is committed to providing credible evidence of student learning based on *The Ontario Curriculum*.

The agency's full-census assessment program measures an element of the quality of the education system in Ontario and contributes to the system's accountability. One of EQAO's main objectives is to uphold the quality and reliability of Ontario's large-scale full-census assessment program, which is linked directly to the learning expectations of *The Ontario Curriculum*.



To maintain its "best of class" assessments, EQAO continually examines its current assessment model in order to ensure that it remains relevant and that its model of collecting and reporting information is effective.

When reviewing its test-development processes, EQAO employs a variety of quality-assurance measures. EQAO works collaboratively with a Psychometric Expert Panel in order to examine all aspects of its assessment cycles. The members of



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the panel are recognized national and international experts in large-scale testing. In their review of EQAO's test-development, administration, scoring, psychometric and reporting processes, the panel validates or makes recommendations for improvement. This year, items discussed included results and enhancements to the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test program, exploration of current work in online assessments, confirmation of EQAO's *Technical Report* and discussions of trends in large-scale assessments in other jurisdictions.

As an element of the quality assurance program, EQAO assigns quality assurance monitors to visit a random sample of schools during test administration. Within a three-year period, all school boards in the province are monitored. During this fiscal year, monitors observed test administrations in 180 English- and 40 French-language elementary schools and 45 English- and 20 French-language secondary schools.

In addition to the provincial assessments, EQAO is responsible for coordinating Ontario's participation in national and international assessments. This year, the Programme for International Student

Assessment (PISA) was administered in 194 schools, and EQAO released the results for the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The findings from national and international assessments and studies supplement and help establish a context for board and provincial assessment data. This information assists in setting educational priorities and is valuable for improvement planning. It also serves to measure Ontario students' achievement against national and international benchmarks.

EQAO's international reputation as an agency responsible for an excellent assessment program continues to grow, and the agency has continued to receive requests from international jurisdictions to make presentations about its successful assessment model. This year, EQAO offered presentations to delegations from the Netherlands, China, Sweden, Denmark, Brazil, Japan, Peru, Hong Kong and Kuwait.



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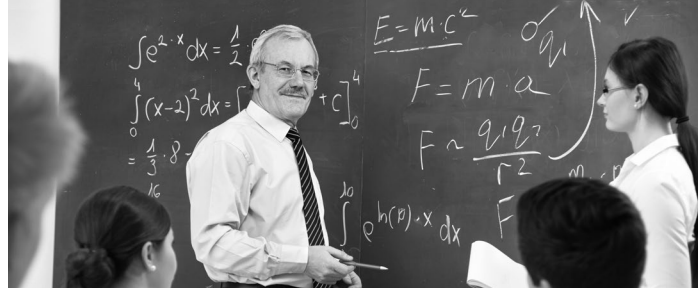
Supporting Student Progress

EQAO is committed to integrating a broad range of evidence that identifies where interventions can be made to ensure that all students have the opportunity to reach their highest possible level of achievement.

EQAO's guiding principle is that data are most valuable when they can lead to improved teaching and learning. To this end, the agency continues to provide interpretive reports that identify areas of strength and point to areas requiring improvement.

Following the administration of this year's assessments, EQAO provided reports on student achievement to students, parents, school communities, educators and the public. EQAO provides longitudinal data as a useful resource for educators and the public. New this year, for each school in the province, EQAO has published a report that tracks progress on the provincial test in Grade 3 to the one in Grade 6 for all students who were in the school for both assessments.





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EQAO also continued to release individual school and board reports along with two full provincial reports: an elementary school report, on the results of the primary- and junior-division assessments; and a secondary school report, on the results of the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). These reports included subgroup and contextual data, a summary of findings, strategies for success and profiles of schools that are using provincial assessment results to support their own improvement planning. The profiled schools are notable for their demonstration of leadership, data-driven strategies and whole-school approaches to helping every child succeed.

As a supplementary resource to support student learning, EQAO published a "Summary of Results and Strategies for Teachers" for each of the OSSLT, and the primary-division, junior-division and Grade 9 assessments. Their observations and suggested strategies for improvement, which are based on an analysis of students' performances supplemented by feedback from educators who scored the EQAO tests, assist educators in helping students develop and demonstrate literacy and numeracy skills. These publications have been posted on the EQAO Web site and distributed to schools.

In order to provide students and parents with a more comprehensive look at student achievement over time, the Individual Student Reports (ISRs) for the OSSLT have been enhanced with the student's provincial reading and

writing assessment results for Grades 3 and 6. Further, the ISRs for students in Grades 3 and 6 have been improved to include descriptions of the typical performance at each level and suggestions for helping students progress to the next achievement level.

Research on the results of province-wide tests has shown that there is a clear relationship between achievement in elementary and secondary school. This means that students who meet the provincial standard in early grades are more likely to carry that success to later grades. Those who do not meet the provincial standard in early grades are at a greater risk of not having the literacy and numeracy skills they will need in secondary school and beyond. Therefore, pinpointing the needs of students early and providing support makes a difference.

To ensure that parents and students are able to use data and other evidence to help improve student achievement, EQAO published *A Parent's Guide to Understanding Your Child's Results* (for the primary and the junior divisions). The descriptions of student performance on EQAO assessments in the guide provide parents with a clearer picture of what an EQAO level designation means in terms of their child's performance on the assessments. This guide also suggests some specific strategies that parents can use to support their child's learning.

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Building Capacity

EQAO has a strong commitment to building capacity for the use of data through service to educators, parents, government and the public.



EQAO Reporting

Over the years, EQAO has served as a catalyst for transforming data into action for schools across the province. The use of the agency's reliable assessment information has helped teachers formulate their next steps for student learning and implement them in their classrooms. Notably, EQAO data have shaped priorities for schools and school-board initiatives to improve student learning.

The interpretation and use of student achievement data are key foundational goals for the agency. EQAO has conducted a series of presentations, information-sharing sessions, seminars, learning forums and workshops across the province on the topics of EQAO assessment practices and resources.



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From April 1, 2012, to March 31, 2013, EQAO's School Support and Outreach Team, which is made up of former school principals, presented to 5983 educators, 1472 parents and 2883 teacher/principal candidates and instructors.

Seven parent forums, which focused on addressing parents' questions about EQAO assessments, were attended by a total of 400 participants. These forums were organized by members of the Outreach Team and engaged parents in an open and meaningful dialogue about the resources they required and how the agency can best support them. To further assist parents, EQAO published the brochure "A Guide for Parents and Students: EQAO Tests in Secondary School" (for Grade 9 and OSSLT) and released it on its Web site in 21 languages. The agency also distributed the brochure to all schools.

Over the course of the year, several other sessions were held by the Outreach Team to assist stakeholders in supporting improved student learning. Presentations and seminars were held in both English and French in all regions of Ontario. These presentations were held at Lakehead University, in Thunder Bay, for 500 teacher candidates, and at Laurentian University, in Sudbury, for 125 faculty of education students.

EQAO continued to facilitate communication with school boards by hosting forums that help educators learn from

their school data and collect strategies from schools that have been putting provincial assessment data to good use.

In 2009, EQAO launched the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement program to recognize the good work done by such schools. In 2012, 22 elementary and secondary schools from across Ontario received this distinction. Established in honour of Dr. Bette M. Stephenson, former minister of both Education and Colleges and Universities from 1978 to 1985 and director emeritus of EQAO's Board of Directors, the recognition program acknowledges publicly funded schools from across Ontario that have been making effective use of EQAO data and information from other sources to enhance and support the progress of their students. The recognized schools are not necessarily the ones with the best provincial assessment results; however, they are representative of all the great schools throughout the province that have adopted an action plan based on their unique circumstances and have made notable improvements, as demonstrated by the positive trend in their EQAO results over time.



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Valuable Research Data

EQAO has a commitment to demonstrate that all of its practices are grounded in research-based knowledge.

EQAO remains committed to conducting insightful research and supporting the work of independent education and public policy researchers. The agency has established its own research program, which examines factors that influence student achievement and ensures that the agency's assessment methods and tools are the most appropriate for Ontario's education system.



Several research publications were issued during the 2012–2013 fiscal year. In particular, EQAO published the bulletin “The Impact of School Structure on the Achievement of Grade 6 Students on EQAO Assessment,” which summarized the results of a research study that focused on whether students who move to a middle school at Grade 6 have different achievement results from those who remain in the same school from Grade 5 to Grade 6.



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The study examined the effect of different grade-level configurations on the reading, writing and mathematics achievement of Grade 6 students in English-language schools on the junior-division EQAO assessment.* The study considered the following grade configurations: 4/5–8, 6–8, JK/K–6 and JK/K–8. It is of interest that the analysis did not reveal a meaningful relationship between school grade-level configuration and Grade 6 student achievement scores in reading, writing and mathematics.

EQAO also published the research report *Comparison of the Performance of Ontario Students on the OSSLT/TPCL and the PISA 2009 Reading Assessment*, which explores the possibility of linking student results from the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test/Test provincial de compétences linguistiques (OSSLT/TPCL) and the PISA 2009 reading assessment. A large number of 15-year-old students participated in both tests in a short time frame. This provided the opportunity to link their

scores on the two tests and analyze similarities and differences in performance to gain insights that could inform curriculum development. The study showed evidence that the provincial standard on the OSSLT/TPCL is comparable to the PISA standard for minimum competency in literacy.

A version of this research paper was published in the professional journal *Educational and Psychological Measurement* in February 2013.

EQAO also published *An Analysis of Questionnaire and Contextual Data for Grade 9 Students in the Academic and Applied Mathematics Courses*. This report presents the results of the first phase of a larger research project designed to examine the relationships between student achievement on the EQAO Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics and a number of student and teacher factors.

* Since nearly all have JK/K–8 configurations, a similar analysis was not possible for French-language schools.

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This phase of the research involved an analysis of the use of EQAO results as part of the final course mark for English- and French-language academic and applied mathematics courses, a summary of student demographic characteristics and questionnaire responses, and cohort analyses.

The results identify a number of student-background and questionnaire-response variables that are related to student achievement in both the academic and the applied courses. Of particular interest, the research revealed that a larger proportion of students who knew the assessment would count toward their final grade achieved the provincial standard than those who did not know the assessment would count.

The research also showed that students in the academic course were more likely to complete homework and reported fewer absences from mathematics class than those in the applied course. Both homework completion and regular attendance are related to higher achievement levels.



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Findings also indicated that a larger portion of students in the applied course than in the academic course had not met the standard in Grade 3 and had not met the standard in Grade 6. In addition, of the students who had not met the standard in Grade 6, those who enrolled in the applied course were more likely to have had lower achievement levels in Grade 8 mathematics than those who enrolled in the academic course, which indicates that achievement in earlier grades is a strong predictor of achievement in later grades.

The research also revealed that students in the academic course generally have more positive attitudes toward mathematics than those in the applied course. Positive attitudes are also associated with higher achievement levels.

Finally, the research revealed that the percentage of students with special education needs in the applied course is approximately four times that in the academic course. The percentage of students achieving the provincial standard is considerably smaller among students with special education needs than among the general student population.



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Effective Business Practices

EQAO is committed to strategically aligned business practices that enhance the agency's ability to focus on and deliver key priorities and commitments.

For only \$17 per student, or about \$32 million in total for the 2012–2013 fiscal year, the provincial testing program measures how well students across the province are meeting the reading, writing and mathematics expectations defined in *The Ontario Curriculum* at key stages in their education.



For only **\$17** per student

the provincial testing program measures how well students across the province are meeting the reading, writing and mathematics expectations defined in *The Ontario Curriculum* at key stages in their education.



The cost of all of EQAO's activities is equivalent to

0.15%

of the average per-pupil funding allocation by the Ministry of Education.

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The cost of all of EQAO's activities is equivalent to 0.15% of the average per-pupil funding allocation by the Ministry of Education. This is a minimal cost to perform an independent evaluation of the use of tax dollars in our publicly funded education system and to produce the objective, comparable data that are so widely used to improve programs for all students in Ontario.

In its goal to ensure effective and efficient fiscal and business processes, EQAO maintains rigorous management practices in compliance with Management Board of Cabinet directives and all relevant legislation. The agency has established thorough internal controls that have been validated by external audits.

In its effort to ensure effective business practices, EQAO continues to leverage technology in order to enhance its internal and external operations and delivery of programs. EQAO uses technology in order to report results efficiently. All elementary principals had access to the enhanced reporting system to review the 2011–2012 assessment results for their school. A large number of workshops and webinars for principals were also conducted. EQAO Reporting was implemented for the 2011–2012 assessments for all elementary school principals. This application involved extensive online training and videos.

In addition, EQAO has moved forward with its work on strategic information and information-technology projects initiated in 2011. As planned, EQAO's new Event Management System is currently being developed internally, and development will

continue throughout the summer. The system will assist EQAO in managing participation at events (i.e., committee events, scoring, forums) and hiring contract employees more efficiently and effectively. It will reduce the manual effort necessary to identify and qualify applicants and to manage event logistics. The system will eventually support EQAO's implementation of computer-based scoring and assist in informing payments to committee members and scorers. A pilot test is planned for late 2013, and the launch is scheduled for March 2014. The plan is to have the new system ready for implementation for the 2013–2014 scoring events.

Specifications have been completed for the public Web site redevelopment, and the redesign and reconstruction of the site is currently in progress. The redesigned site will make the wealth of EQAO information more readily accessible to students, parents, educators and the public, and provide access to relevant tools and information to support student achievement. The redesign will also leverage Web content management technology to improve and simplify the maintenance of the site. The public release of the Web site is scheduled for 2013–2014.

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Year ended March 31, 2013



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

March 31, 2013, with comparative figures for 2012

	2013	2012
FINANCIAL ASSETS		
Current assets:		
Cash	\$ 2,728,486	\$ 3,672,633
Board restricted fund	7,444,020	5,560,594
Accounts receivable	1,426,702	478,018
	11,599,208	9,711,245
FINANCIAL LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities:		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	1,932,336	3,172,697
Deferred revenue	—	2,175,404
	1,932,336	5,348,101
Net financial assets	9,666,872	4,363,144
NON-FINANCIAL ASSETS		
Prepaid expenses	792,311	709,949
Tangible capital assets	311,524	487,501
	1,103,835	1,197,450
Accumulated surplus	\$ 10,770,707	\$ 5,560,594

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AND ACCUMULATED SURPLUS

Year ended March 31, 2013, with comparative figures for 2012

	2013	2013	2012
	Budget (Unaudited)	Actual	Actual
Revenue:			
Ministry of Education:			
Base allocation payments	\$ 32,008,545	\$ 31,855,682	\$ 32,857,743
Other	—	552,805	524,768
	32,008,545	32,408,487	33,382,511
Expenses:			
Service and rental	16,699,484	15,317,704	16,505,943
Salaries and wages	11,516,411	11,801,670	12,077,453
Transportation and communication	3,228,270	1,734,925	3,738,685
Supplies and equipment	564,380	519,479	535,662
	32,008,545	29,373,778	32,857,743
Annual surplus before the undernoted	—	3,034,709	524,768
Recognition of deferred revenue	—	2,175,404	—
Annual surplus	—	5,210,113	524,768
Accumulated surplus, beginning of year	5,560,594	5,560,594	5,035,826
Accumulated surplus, end of year	\$ 5,560,594	\$ 10,770,707	\$ 5,560,594
Accumulated surplus is comprised of:			
Externally restricted		\$ 3,326,687	\$ —
Internally restricted		7,444,020	5,560,594
		\$ 10,770,707	\$ 5,560,594

Full audited financial statements are available on the EQAO Web site, www.eqao.com, or by request at 1-888-327-7377.

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