



Education Quality and
Accountability Office



2013-2014 ANNUAL REPORT



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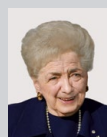
Dr. Brian L. Desbiens,
Chair
June 1, 2005–December 31, 2014



Jerry Ponikvar,
Vice-Chair
July 4, 1997–May 16, 2014



Bruce Rodrigues,
EQAO Chief Executive Officer
July 1, 2013–June 30, 2016



Dr. Bette M. Stephenson,
Director Emeritus



Roland Boudreau
June 2, 2011–June 1, 2014



Hélène Chayer
June 25, 2008–June 11, 2016



Dave Cooke
June 25, 2008–June 4, 2016



Dr. Dieudonné Detchou
January 13, 2010–May 7, 2015



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



Abirami Jeyaratnam
October 3, 2012–October 2, 2014

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2013-2014 ANNUAL REPORT

Education Quality and Accountability Office

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Dr. Brian L. Desbiens,
Chair

Bruce Rodrigues,
EQAO Chief Executive Officer

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND THE CEO

Ontario's education system is currently undergoing transformation; everything from the knowledge and skills being taught to the way instruction is delivered to the role of technology in modern learning is being re-examined. Correspondingly, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) has experienced change over the last year with the appointment of a new CEO and a new Chief Assessment Officer.

In keeping with the growth and transformation of the system, student assessment is changing, and EQAO will remain at the forefront of efforts to fashion the new, modern provincial assessment program that's right for Ontario. Whatever the future holds, honest, reliable and transparent information about how our students are achieving in specific areas of their learning will be vital to the system's progress. EQAO is perfectly positioned to continue playing a leadership role in this area.

EQAO's future, like its past, is all about partnerships—partnerships with educators, with parents and with education policy-makers. We are all united by our dedication to do the very best by Ontario students. We are eager to continue working in close partnership with all of our stakeholders toward this common goal.

The data produced by EQAO's world-class assessment program offer an independent gauge of how well students are meeting the reading, writing and mathematics expectations defined in *The Ontario Curriculum* at key stages in their education. The assessment of student achievement through provincial standards-based tests continues to provide a reliable measurement of student learning of curriculum expectations. By assessing the majority of students in our education system, EQAO is able to provide valuable and objective data at the individual student, school and board levels. EQAO results, alongside board and classroom assessment data, have proven effective for monitoring progress and allowing school communities to make evidence-based decisions in their planning. This annual report details many of the activities and accomplishments of the past year that highlight EQAO's continued vital role in Ontario's education system.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Desbiens".

Dr. Brian L. Desbiens, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Rodrigues".

Bruce Rodrigues, CEO





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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 assessments at key points in every student's primary, junior and secondary education and report the results to educators, parents and the public.

EQAO's assessments 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 assessments 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 assessment results also allow EQAO to track students as they progress through the education system and to relate their achievement pathways to their demographic characteristics and to trends in student attitudes.

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 the quality of the education system in Ontario and contributes to the system's accountability to the parents who entrust our schools with their children's education and to the taxpayers who finance it. One of EQAO's main objectives is to uphold the quality and reliability of Ontario's large-scale full-census assessment, which is linked directly to the learning expectations of *The Ontario Curriculum*. To maintain its "best of class" assessments, EQAO continually examines its assessment model in order to ensure that it remains relevant and that its model of collecting and reporting information is effective and appropriate for Ontario.





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When reviewing its assessment-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 the panel are recognized national and international experts in large-scale assessment.

As an element of the quality assurance program, EQAO assigns monitors to visit a random sample of schools during assessment administration. During these visits, the monitors observe and gather information about the consistency of the assessment administration and review the effectiveness of EQAO's assessment policies, procedures and resources. Information collected through this process assists EQAO in monitoring compliance with its administrative guidelines and helps the agency refine procedures for future assessments.

Over a three-year period, all school boards in the province are monitored in this way. During this fiscal year, monitors observed assessment administrations in a total of 285 schools: for the OSSLT/TPCL, 25 English and 10 French; for primary and junior, 180 English and 40 French and for Grade 9, 20 English and 10 French.

EQAO retains scholars-in-residence, who develop a deep understanding of the agency's work and are invited to provide objective feedback about its assessment practices.

The scholars-in-residence mentor the agency's psychometric team and provide valuable information and advice to EQAO's leadership. Scholars-in-residence are widely recognized as accomplished in their field. This year, EQAO wishes to acknowledge and congratulate one of its scholars, Dr. Mark D. Reckase, Ph.D. Professor, Michigan State University, who was the recipient of the E.F. Lindquist Award presented by the American Educational Research Association in April 2014.

As part of its commitment to ensuring that the agency's assessment methods and tools are the most appropriate for Ontario's education system, EQAO published the results of a third-party review of the quality of its assessments. Dr. W. Todd Rogers, scholar-in-residence, and professor at the Centre for Research in Applied Measurement and Evaluation at the University of Alberta, conducted the review. This review resulted in a report and a bulletin called *What Is the Quality of EQAO Assessments? Excellent!* These publications provide detailed information about how Ontario's provincial assessments are developed and what contributes to their high technical quality. A video summarizing the key steps involved in the three-year life cycle of an assessment has been produced. The animated video explains the creation, testing, administration and scoring of EQAO assessments. It was launched in spring of 2013.

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In light of its 15th anniversary in 2012, EQAO published a report titled *EQAO: Ontario's Provincial Assessment Program—Its History and Influence*. It describes the evolution of the agency's work over the past 15 years. The report highlights the knowledge gained from the agency's testing, EQAO's programs and the impact the agency has had on the education community. More specifically, it demonstrates how teachers, principals and administrators have used the information provided by the provincial assessments in conjunction with the results of school- and classroom-based assessments to guide decisions in order to improve programs for all students.

In addition to the provincial assessments, EQAO is responsible for coordinating Ontario's participation in national and international assessments. In 2012, EQAO administered the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and results were reported in December 2013. PISA is an international program initiated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) undertaken every three years to assess the achievement of 15-year-old students in three domains: reading, mathematics and science. Each PISA administration focuses on one domain.



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In 2012, mathematics was the major domain, and reading and science were minor. In 2012, 65 countries participated, including 34 OECD countries. In Canada, approximately 21 000 15-year-olds from approximately 900 schools participated across the 10 provinces. Of these students, 3699 were from Ontario—2353 from the English-language system and 1346 from the French.

Results revealed that Ontario students are generally performing well in all three domains. Their reading and science achievement on the 2012 administration was similar to that of 2009, while math performance declined. In Ontario, the difference in performance between high- and low-achieving students was smaller than the OECD average, which is an indication of equity in educational outcomes in the school system.

In preparation for the sixth administration of the 2015 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), EQAO administered a field test to students in Grades 4 and 8 in March and April 2014. Thirty-eight English- and four French-language schools were randomly selected to take part in the study. In Grade 4, 802 English- and 59 French-language students participated. In Grade 8, 1159 English- and 104 French-language students participated. In each grade, a total of approximately 1200 Ontario students participated in the study.

The findings from national and international assessments and studies supplement the provincial assessments and help establish a global context for Ontario student achievement. The information from them assists in setting educational priorities and informs *Ontario Curriculum* development. It also serves to measure Ontario students' achievement against national and international benchmarks.



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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.

In order to improve student achievement, performance must be measured with credible evidence. EQAO assessments are one source of reliable information that is comparable from school to school and board to board across the province. Furthermore, by making results publicly available and provincially comparable, EQAO is able to bring attention to areas that need improvement, as was demonstrated again with the release of the 2013 provincial assessment results.





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In 2013, results indicated that Ontario elementary schools improved at helping students to become good readers and to communicate well when they write. Student achievement in reading continues to rise; 68% of Grade 3 students and 77% of Grade 6 students are now meeting the provincial reading standard, an increase of seven percentage points and eight percentage points, respectively, over the past five years.

Achievement in writing also continues to rise; 77% of students in Grade 3 and 76% of students in Grade 6 can now make themselves clearly understood when writing and are using appropriate grammar, spelling and punctuation at the expected level.

However, results also revealed that elementary programs are losing ground in the effort to help students achieve and maintain math success—particularly in Grades 4 through 6. In fact, only 67% of Grade 3 students and 57% of Grade 6 students met the provincial standard. Moreover, in each of the last five years, there have been increasing numbers of students who no longer meet the provincial standard in Grade 6 despite having met it in Grade 3 (almost one in five, in 2013).

To support professional conversations about mathematics, EQAO conducted two workshops for educators with a focus on the connection between proportional reasoning and the mathematics items in the primary and junior EQAO assessments.

Marian Small, a Canadian author, consultant and former dean and professor at the University of New Brunswick who has worked extensively in the field of mathematics, led the full-day workshops, which had the theme "Understanding the Intention." Dr. Small worked with school-team participants to examine their EQAO data and identify student learning needs. The teams worked at deepening their understanding of curriculum expectations in mathematics, and how such understanding can influence instructional practice that leads to deep-rooted student learning. Dr. Small explored the developmental continuum of mathematics skills from elementary to secondary, with some emphasis on proportional reasoning.

As an additional resource, EQAO developed and published a video titled "How Many Nickels Make a Dollar? The Importance of Proportional Reasoning in Your Child's Math Development" and posted it to EQAO's YouTube and Vimeo channels. The video explains what proportional reasoning is, why it is important and what parents can do to support its development in their children. The video was viewed more than 3000 times in eight months.

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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.

The agency's assessment results identify trends in student learning at the school, board and provincial levels and help pinpoint curriculum areas that need attention; data are used as a reference point by educators to help improve programs in their schools. To facilitate the analysis and review of EQAO data for these purposes, EQAO has developed an online reporting tool called EQAO Reporting. This tool allows educators to generate reports on their students dynamically, and to cross-reference their results with demographic and contextual information concerning student attitudes, perceptions, mobility, language spoken at home and other socio-economic factors.





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Empowering educators to leverage EQAO data is one of the foundational goals of the agency. This year, EQAO conducted a series of presentations, information-sharing sessions, seminars, learning forums, consultations and workshops across the province on the topics of EQAO assessment practices and resources. From April 1, 2013, to March 31, 2014, EQAO's School Support and Outreach Team, which is made up of school principals, presented to 5695 educators. These sessions helped the educators learn to use EQAO data as a foundation to support the vital work they do in their classrooms and schools every day.

Honouring the fact that parents are significant partners in supporting student achievement, EQAO strives to help them understand how to use its data and resources to support their child's learning and to engage with their child's school in discussions about achievement and improvement planning. In total, EQAO presented to 1454 parents across the province.

More than 300 parents attended eight forums EQAO hosted to address their questions about the assessments. Organized by members of the Outreach Team, these forums engaged parents in an open and meaningful dialogue about the resources they required and how the agency can best support them. In addition, EQAO held 20 evening presentations for parents, which were

well attended by more than 1000 participants. To engage parents further, two parent involvement committee conferences were held, with 80 participants attending.

Over the course of the year, the Outreach Team held several other sessions to assist stakeholders in supporting improved student learning. The team held presentations and seminars in English and French for teacher candidates in all regions of Ontario. They visited a total of more than 3100 students at the faculties of education at Nipissing, Lakehead, York, Queen's, Tyndale, Trent, Laurentian, Brock and Charles Sturt Universities, as well as the University of Ottawa, the University of Western Ontario and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.

EQAO also continued to promote discussions with school boards by hosting forums that help educators learn from their school data and in return help EQAO learn about how data are used to inform school improvement planning.

EQAO will keep providing a range of resources for the education community. Follow-up discussions and feedback on training activities and information products clearly show they are well received and are building capacity for the use of data.

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Requests for EQAO presentations from international jurisdictions continue to increase. The agency's assessment program has an international reputation for excellence, and delegations are highly interested in learning about its successful assessment model. This year, EQAO presented to representatives from Bangladesh, Jamaica, Sweden, India and China.

In 2009, EQAO launched the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement program to recognize the good work done by schools across the province. In 2013, 28 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 representative of all the many 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.

“ The schools profiled this year have been recognized for their success in improving student learning and for their effective use of EQAO data to help guide their reflective practice. Their remarkable outcomes are a testament to how good information in the hands of dedicated professionals can be a winning combination for supporting student achievement. These school stories will no doubt serve to inspire other schools across the province. ”

Bruce Rodrigues, EQAO Chief Executive Officer

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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 has an active research program through which it examines various factors that influence student achievement and reviews its assessment methods and tools to ensure they are the most appropriate for Ontario's education system.

Several research projects were published in 2013–2014. *Starting Early: Teaching, Learning and Assessment—Linking Early-Childhood Development with Academic Outcomes—A Detailed Look* linked students' Early Development Instrument (EDI) assessment results in kindergarten with their provincial test results in Grade 3.



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The study found that students with low EDI scores—i.e., those in the “vulnerable” or “at-risk” groups—were much less likely to achieve the provincial standard on the primary-division provincial assessment than those with high EDI scores. This was true for each of the five domains assessed by the EDI: physical health and well-being; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; and communication and general knowledge.

However, the study also found that many students deemed vulnerable in language and cognitive development in kindergarten were able to reach the provincial standard in Grade 3. This research underscores the need for support and intervention for students who struggle in kindergarten in order to close the learning gap so they can develop critical reading, writing and math skills before the end of the primary division. The release of this research received extensive media coverage.

EQAO released a second research project related to tracking student achievement over time. *Longitudinal Results of Province-Wide Assessments in English-Language Schools: Trends in Student Achievement and Implications for Improvement Planning in Mathematics and Literacy* tracked students as they advanced through Ontario's four provincial tests from 2004 to 2012.



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This research showed that the majority of students who don't demonstrate solid reading, writing and math skills in high school also struggled in elementary school. Additionally, EQAO also published two detailed studies: *Tracking Student Achievement in Mathematics Over Time in English-Language Schools: Grade 3 (2006) to Grade 6 (2009) to Grade 9 (2012) Cohort* and *Tracking Student Achievement in Literacy Over Time in English-Language Schools: Grade 3 (2005) to Grade 6 (2008) to OSSLT (2012) Cohort*.

Much like the EDI research, this study showed that early struggles can be overcome. Most students who did not meet the provincial standard in Grade 3 but who improved to meet it in Grade 6 carried that success into secondary school. This research, which is summarized in the infographic "Some Students Are 25 Times More Likely to Lack Basic Literacy Skills in High School," reminds educators and parents to pay close attention to students' provincial assessment results and provide ongoing support to students who do not achieve the standard in their early years.

In the area of math achievement, EQAO published a *Comparative Examination of the Influence of Selected Factors on Achievement in Grade 9 Academic and Applied Mathematics Courses in English-Language Schools in Ontario*. This research investigated the similarities and differences in background characteristics and questionnaire responses between students enrolled in the Grade 9 academic and applied mathematics courses, as well as which student, teaching and contextual variables are most strongly related to student achievement.

The results showed that students in the academic course were more likely to complete homework and report regular attendance—two factors related to higher achievement levels. The results also showed that a larger proportion of students in the applied course than in the academic course did not meet the standard in both Grade 3 and Grade 6. High achievement in earlier grades has been shown to be a strong predictor of high achievement in later grades. Finally, the results showed that students in the academic course had more positive attitudes toward math than those in the applied course. Positive attitudes are associated with higher achievement levels. These findings provide useful information to educators as they review classroom practices and program delivery in schools.

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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 about \$32 million in total for the 2013–2014 fiscal year, the provincial assessment 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. That works out to about \$17 per student in the publicly funded education system, which is equivalent to 0.15% of what the Ministry of Education spends per student. 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.



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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. The design of EQAO's new Web site is complete, and user acceptance testing is in final stages.

Content creation will be the final phase prior to launch, which is expected for the 2014–2015 school year. EQAO's new Event Management System is also near completion. It will assist

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.

For only
\$17
per student

the provincial assessment 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.

EQAO to manage participation in events (e.g., committee meetings, scoring, forums), hire contract employees, reduce the manual effort necessary to identify and qualify applicants, manage event logistics, support the implementation of computer-based scoring and inform payments to committee members and scorers.

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Year ended March 31, 2014

EQAO's audited financial results for operations ending March 31, 2014, were funded through Ministry of Education allocations.



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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

March 31, 2014, with comparative information for 2013

	2014	2013
FINANCIAL ASSETS		
Current assets:		
Cash	\$ 2,465,219	\$ 2,728,486
Cash—Board restricted	7,519,706	7,444,020
Accounts receivable	509,291	1,426,702
	10,494,216	11,599,208
FINANCIAL LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities:		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	1,699,144	1,932,336
Net financial assets	8,795,072	9,666,872
NON-FINANCIAL ASSETS		
Prepaid expenses	779,608	792,311
Tangible capital assets	856,098	311,524
	1,635,706	1,103,835
Accumulated surplus	\$ 10,430,778	\$ 10,770,707

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AND ACCUMULATED SURPLUS

Year ended March 31, 2014, with comparative information for 2013

	2014	2014	2013
	Budget	Actual	Actual
Revenue:			
Ministry of Education:			
Base allocation payments	\$ 34,197,215	\$ 32,077,100	\$ 31,855,682
Other	—	585,322	552,805
	34,197,215	32,662,422	32,408,487
Expenses:			
Service and rental	17,296,125	17,214,265	15,317,704
Salaries and wages	12,421,334	12,033,560	11,801,670
Transportation and communication	3,894,492	2,970,677	1,734,925
Supplies and equipment	585,264	783,849	519,479
	34,197,215	33,002,351	29,373,778
Annual surplus (deficit) before the undernoted	—	(339,929)	3,034,709
Recognition of deferred revenue	—	—	2,175,404
Annual surplus (deficit)	—	(339,929)	5,210,113
Accumulated surplus, beginning of year	10,770,707	10,770,707	5,560,594
Accumulated surplus, end of year	\$ 10,770,707	\$ 10,430,778	\$ 10,770,707
Accumulated surplus is comprised of:			
Externally restricted		\$ 2,911,072	\$ 3,326,687
Internally restricted		7,519,706	7,444,020
		\$ 10,430,778	\$ 10,770,707

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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