



Education Quality and
Accountability Office



2016-2017 ANNUAL REPORT



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Education Quality and Accountability Office

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Dave Cooke,
Chair



Dr. Richard Jones,
Interim Chief Executive Officer

On behalf of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), we are pleased to present this report of the agency's activities during the 2016–2017 fiscal year.

In 2016, EQAO's main focus was on the move from paper-and-pencil to computer-based assessments. EQAO's shift to online assessments mirrors classroom trends toward a greater emphasis on the use of digital technology. Students tend to engage more effectively with online assessments, and the capabilities of online assessments to measure skills will likely surpass those of paper-and-pencil tests in the future.

A milestone of this initiative, called EQAO Online, was the online trial of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in October 2016. This large-scale pilot test was supposed to gauge the readiness of EQAO's system prior to the regularly scheduled OSSLT, in March 2017, and identify any remaining technical issues in the system before running the full assessment.

Regrettably, the online trial of the OSSLT was the target of a cyberattack, resulting in the trial's cancellation. On the day of the cyberattack, EQAO retained an independent third-party forensic firm, Deloitte, to conduct an investigation into the incident.

EQAO also notified the Toronto Police Service shortly thereafter, who began a separate investigation. Both Deloitte and the Toronto Police Service confirmed EQAO's original conclusion that a targeted distributed denial of service cyberattack was the cause of the technical issues that led to the cancellation of the online trial of the OSSLT.

EQAO remains committed to the online administration of future assessments. We learned many lessons from the cyberattack and are committed to consulting and collaborating with Ontario's education community to determine the best path forward.

Despite this disappointment, it is important to recognize EQAO's important achievements and to acknowledge that the agency has continued to deliver on its mandate. During this fiscal year, EQAO successfully administered all of its assessments in the traditional pencil-and-paper format. Staff continued to develop assessments and oversaw their administration and scoring. EQAO's School Support and Outreach program continued to represent a hallmark of innovation in customer service in the field of large-scale assessments. The agency's reporting of results and analyses of trends in student achievement remain valued by Ontario's education community.

In the summer of 2016, EQAO released English-language education system data that showed that 81% of Ontario's Grade 10 students were successful on the provincial literacy test—a figure that is consistent with previous years' results. Elementary school reading results continue to rise, while math results continue to decline. Half of all Grade 6 students did not meet the provincial math standard in 2016, and Grade 9 performance in math has remained relatively stable over the past five years, with a large discrepancy remaining between assessment results for students in the academic and applied programs.



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The data EQAO collected from the French-language school system showed that students increasingly met the provincial standard at the elementary level in reading and math, but a decrease has appeared this year in the percentage of students meeting the writing standard. While the majority of Grade 9 students in the academic math program met the provincial standard, only half did so in the applied program. Over the past few years, the success rate for the Test provincial de compétences linguistiques (TPCL) has increased and remained quite high.

In 2016, the Ministry of Education established a Renewed Math Strategy to give extra support to students and schools who need it to improve academic performance in math. EQAO data, which were one of a number of catalysts for the launch of the strategy, will also be an indicator of the impact the strategy has had on student performance in math over the coming years.

As well, in 2017, results from two international studies for which EQAO coordinated Ontario students' participation in 2015 were released: the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) for Grade 4 and Grade 8 students in science and math, and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which measures the achievement of 15-year-olds in science, math and reading, as well as collaborative problem solving and financial literacy, which were recently added as measurable 21st-century skills.

Results showed that Ontario students are among top PISA performers in science and reading, but more work is required in math. As well, Ontario students are in line with global counterparts in the area of financial literacy skills. Data related to collaborative problem-solving skills will be released in the coming year.

EQAO remains focused on its core mandate while continuing to identify key learnings about delivering and scoring online tests. With the help of Ontario's education community, the Ministry of Education and cyber-security experts, EQAO will be well-positioned to deliver an online assessment program to Ontario students that meets the requirements for usability, accessibility and security in the future.

In all of our efforts, we appreciate the input and collaboration of all members of the education community, as we continue to work together to help Ontario students reach their full potential.



Dave Cooke, Chair



Dr. Richard Jones, Interim CEO





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EQAO is an independent agency of the Government of Ontario that creates and administers large-scale assessments to measure Ontario students' achievement in reading, writing and math at key stages of their education. All EQAO assessments are developed by Ontario educators to align with *The Ontario Curriculum*, and they evaluate student achievement objectively in relation to a common provincial standard. EQAO data act as a gauge of quality in Ontario's publicly funded education system and are reported publicly to keep the public education system accountable to taxpayers.

EQAO provides a personalized report to each student who writes an assessment to help support individual student learning. The agency provides schools and school boards with detailed reports about their students' achievement, as well as contextual, attitudinal and behavioural information from questionnaires, in an interactive online reporting tool.

By providing these insights into learning, EQAO acts as a catalyst for increasing the success of Ontario students. Through workshops, profiles of best practices and programs like the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement, EQAO builds capacity for the appropriate use of data and provides resources that educators, parents, policy-makers and others in the education community can use to improve learning and teaching.

The objective and reliable results from EQAO assessments complement information obtained from the classroom to provide students, parents, teachers and administrators with an understanding of trends in student achievement. Such an understanding represents the basis for targeted improvement planning at the individual, school, school board and provincial levels.

In addition, EQAO investigates factors that influence student achievement, school effectiveness and best assessment practices. The agency coordinates Ontario student participation in national and international assessments to provide data that speak to how Ontario students are performing on the world stage in a number of areas, including math, science, technology, financial literacy, collaborative problem solving, reading and writing.

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At EQAO, we value

- ▶ all students having the opportunity to reach their highest possible level of achievement and well-being;
- ▶ our role as a service to educators, parents, students, government and the public in support of teaching and learning in the classroom;
- ▶ credible evidence that informs professional practice and focuses attention on interventions that improve student success;
- ▶ research that informs large-scale assessment and classroom practice;
- ▶ the dedication and expertise of Ontario's educators and their involvement in all aspects of the assessment processes and the positive difference their efforts make in student outcomes; and
- ▶ the delivery of its programs and services with equivalent quality in both English and French.



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Strategic Priorities

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In accordance with direction from the Board of Directors, EQAO develops a new strategic plan every three to five years to deliver on the agency's mandate of supporting and guiding student improvement by providing credible information about the quality of the province's publicly funded elementary and secondary education system. In 2016, EQAO adopted the following strategic priorities for 2016–2019:

■ Assessment and Evaluation

EQAO will continue to assess and evaluate important aspects of the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education.

■ Research

EQAO will conduct research into the factors affecting student achievement.

■ Communication and Engagement

EQAO will help Ontarians better understand the role of the agency, and collaborate with educators to ensure the appropriate use of the information EQAO provides so they can, in turn, help improve the outcomes of students in the publicly funded education system.

■ Business and Governance

EQAO will operate a responsible and effective organization.

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Assessment and Evaluation

EQAO's primary function is to evaluate the effectiveness of Ontario's publicly funded education system. The agency does this in part through the assessment and reporting of elementary and secondary school students' performance in relation to *The Ontario Curriculum*.

Assessments	Grade	Subjects
PRIMARY DIVISION	Grade 3 (end of primary)	Reading, writing, math
JUNIOR DIVISION	Grade 6 (end of junior)	Reading, writing, math
GRADE 9	Grade 9	Math
OSSLT	Grade 10	Literacy

Specifically, EQAO assesses all Ontario students in reading, writing and math at the end of the primary division (Grade 3) and at the end of the junior division (Grade 6); in math in Grade 9; and in literacy in Grade 10 through the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). Success on the OSSLT satisfies a graduation requirement. By assessing all students, EQAO is able to provide valuable data at the provincial, school board, school and individual student levels, and facilitates the tracking of student performance over time.





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EQAO Assessments: A Collaboration Among Educators, Researchers and Assessment Experts

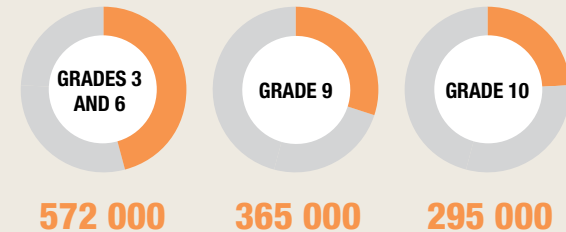
The development of EQAO assessments is a collaborative process that involves contributions from education, psychometric and assessment experts. EQAO engages Ontario educators to write all EQAO assessment items, or questions, according to specific curriculum expectations.

As part of the item-development process, the Assessment Development Committee and the Sensitivity Committee help EQAO deliver on its commitment to ensuring high-quality curriculum-based assessments that respect Ontario's diversity and the various learning needs of students.

- ▶ The teachers, school administrators, subject-matter experts and educational consultants who comprise the Assessment Development Committee verify that all items are grade- and curriculum-appropriate.
- ▶ The members of the Sensitivity Committee have experience in equity issues in education (e.g., matters pertaining to diversity, and the requirements of English language learners and students with special education needs). This committee ensures that no particular group of students is advantaged or disadvantaged by any language or content in an assessment.

Once the questions are approved by these two committees, they are field tested in schools across the province before they become part of an EQAO assessment.

1 232 000 students were assessed in relation to expectations outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*.



Number of students who were assessed in the 2015–2016 school year

Every year, EQAO is responsible for administering more than 570 000 primary and junior assessments, 365 000 Grade 9 assessments and 295 000 OSSLTs across the province.

Once assessments are written, EQAO recruits teachers and other individuals trained in education from across the province to score the tests. Assessment scores are analyzed and the resulting data form the basis for

- ▶ a provincial report of students' performance across Ontario;
- ▶ individual school and school board reports; and
- ▶ individual student reports, which are distributed to every student who writes a test.

Principals can also access contextual, attitudinal and behavioural information from student questionnaires using EQAO's online reporting tool.

When examined year over year, these data can be instrumental in identifying trends and in making operational decisions that help improve board, school, classroom and individual student achievement.



Number of schools who participated in EQAO assessments*

3978 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

913 SECONDARY SCHOOLS

* In the 2015–2016 school year

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Ensuring Fairness to All Students

For EQAO to measure the effectiveness of Ontario's public school system properly, every student must write large-scale assessments at key stages of their learning and development. EQAO is committed to collaborating with Ontario's educational community to ensure that every student can write EQAO assessments, regardless of background or circumstance.

For students with special education needs, some accommodations that are consistent with regular classroom assessment practices are permitted. Certain provisions may also be permitted for English language learners.

Technology plays a large role in assessment accommodations for Ontario students' diverse learning needs. Assessments are produced in a number of different formats, including Braille, audio and large-text versions. In the 2016–2017 school year, EQAO added Google Read&Write to its list of offered assistive technology versions, which already included Kurzweil 1000 and 3000, Word Q, Premier, Read and Write Gold, Accessible Word and Accessible PDF. All of these versions of the assessments have been offered in response to requests from educators and administrators from across the province.



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Quality Assurance Measures

EQAO has a variety of systematic processes in place during administration and scoring to ensure the quality of its assessments and the integrity of its data:

Quality-assurance monitoring: Quality-assurance monitors visit approximately five percent of Ontario schools to observe the administration of the assessments;

Booklet monitoring: Random student booklets are drawn from selected schools during and after scoring to check for potential irregularities;

Reports from individuals: EQAO conducts a systematic follow-up on any report of potential irregularities received by principals, teachers, parents or others;

Statistical analysis: EQAO performs statistical analyses of student responses to identify patterns that suggest collusion among two or more students; and

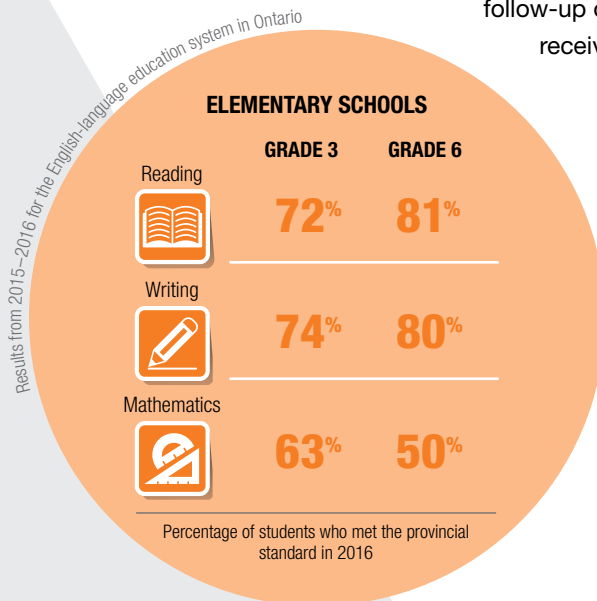
Environmental scanning: The agency regularly monitors traditional and social media, as well as other sources, for references to any potential issues with test administration.

Results from 2015–2016 for the English-Language Education System in Ontario

Assessments of Reading, Writing and Math, Primary and Junior Divisions

According to data collected from EQAO assessments written by Ontario Grades 3 and 6 students in 2016,

- ▶ the percentage of students in Grades 3 and 6 who met the provincial reading standard has increased steadily over the past five years. In 2016, 72% of Grade 3 students and 81% of Grade 6 students met the provincial reading standard, an increase of six percentage points in each grade from the results five years ago.
- ▶ the percentage of students in Grades 3 and 6 who met the provincial math standard has decreased steadily over the past five years. Half of all Grade 6 students did not meet the provincial math standard in 2016.
- ▶ there has been a drop in writing achievement for students in Grade 3 and a steady increase for those in Grade 6. For the first time, 80% of Grade 6 students met the provincial writing standard.



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Results from the 2015–2016 Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics

EQAO assessments for Grade 9 students test according to the curricula for the academic and applied courses of math offered in Ontario high schools. Data from EQAO assessments reveal that

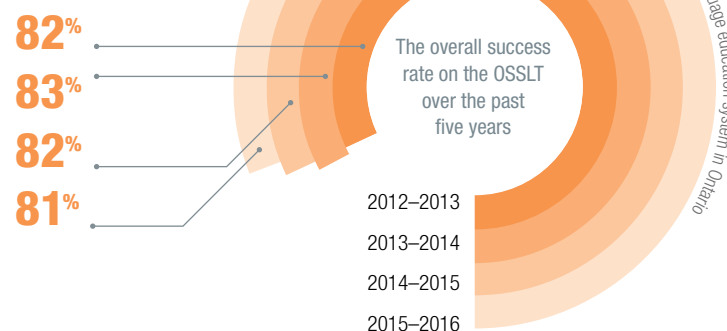
- ▶ of Grade 9 students enrolled in the academic math course, 83% met the provincial standard, compared to the 84% who did in 2011–2012, and
- ▶ of Grade 9 students enrolled in the applied math course, 45% met the provincial standard, compared to the 44% who did in 2011–2012.

EQAO assessment results and data from student, teacher and principal questionnaires have served as a key source of information for the Ministry of Education's Renewed Math Strategy, which was launched in 2016. Ontario's Renewed Math Strategy rests on an implementation model of differentiated and responsive support and capacity-

building for all Ontario schools from junior kindergarten to Grade 12, in addition to providing increased support to a select group of schools that have students with the greatest needs in math.

EQAO will continue to report trustworthy, reliable data about Ontario students' performance in math, which will help Ontarians understand whether targets are being met in this area.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL LITERACY TEST (OSSLT)



Results from the 2015–2016 OSSLT

The results for first-time eligible students from the 2015–2016 EQAO OSSLT show that

- ▶ 81% of Ontario's Grade 10 students who participated fully on the OSSLT were successful on their first try.
- ▶ over the past five years, the overall success rate on the OSSLT has remained relatively unchanged with an 82% success rate from 2011 to 2013 to 83% in 2013–2014, to 82% in 2014–2015 to 81% in 2015–2016.

GRADE 9 ASSESSMENT OF MATHEMATICS



Academic Course

83%

Applied Course

45%

Percentage of students who met the provincial standard in 2016



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Results from 2015–2016 for the French-Language Education System in Ontario

Assessments of Reading, Writing and Math, Primary and Junior Divisions

The 2016 data collected from EQAO assessments written by Grades 3 and 6 students in Ontario's French-language education system show that

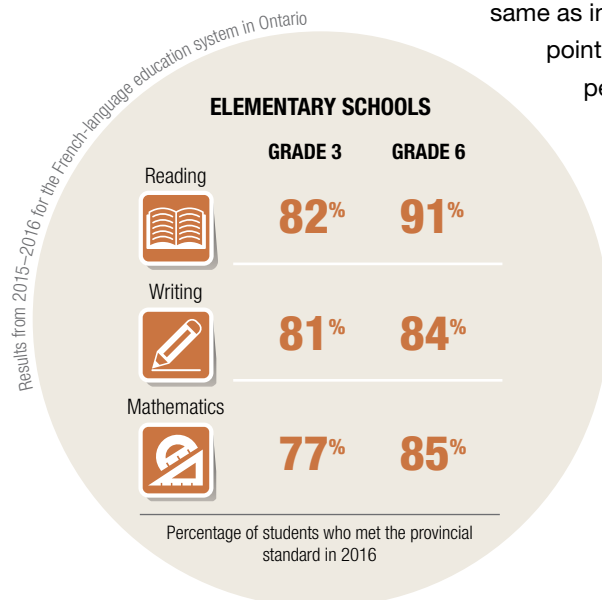
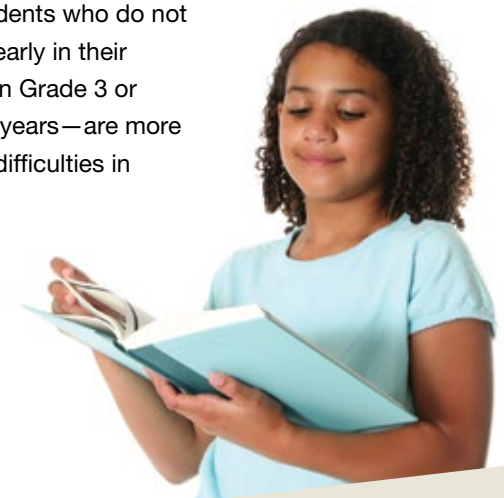
- ▶ the percentage of Grade 3 students who had not met the provincial reading standard in that grade but rose to meet the provincial reading standard in Grade 6 has remained the same as in the previous year, at 70%, two percentage points higher than in 2012. However, the percentage of students who had not met the provincial standard in grade 3 but rose to meet it in Grade 6 has decreased from 2012 in writing and in math, by seven and six percentage points to 54% and 52% respectively.

- ▶ the percentage of students who met the provincial standard in Grade 3 in reading and math has increased since 2012 by seven percentage points and

two percentage points to 82% and 77% respectively, while it has decreased by two percentage points in writing to 81%.

- ▶ the percentage of students who met the provincial standard in Grade 6 has increased in reading and math by five percentage points and three percentage points to 91% and 85% respectively, while decreasing in writing by one percentage point to 84%, since 2012.

Early identification and support of students who are not meeting literacy expectations are key aspects of student development and achievement. Assessment findings are crucial considering that EQAO analysis has shown that students who do not meet the standard early in their education—that is in Grade 3 or Grade 6, or in both years—are more likely to encounter difficulties in later years.



Results from the 2015–2016 Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics

EQAO assessments for Grade 9 students test according to the curricula for the academic and applied math courses offered in Ontario French-language high schools. Data from these assessments reveal that

- ▶ of Grade 9 students enrolled in the academic math course, 85% met the provincial standard, compared to the 78% who did in 2011–2012, and
- ▶ of Grade 9 students enrolled in the applied math course, 50% met the provincial standard, compared to the 44% who did in 2011–2012.

The monitoring of students from Grade 3 to Grade 6, and subsequently to Grade 9, teaches us that students who meet the provincial standard at the beginning of their schooling are more likely to maintain this performance in high school. Of students who had met the provincial standard in Grade 3 and Grade 6, 92% met the Grade 9 academic mathematics provincial standard and 82% met the provincial standard in Grade 9 applied mathematics.

Results from the 2015–2016 Test provincial de compétences linguistiques (TPCL)

According to the results for first-time eligible students from the 2015–2016 EQAO French-language TPCL,

- ▶ 91% of Ontario's Grade 10 students taking the test for the first time were successful. The overall success rate for the TPCL has remained high and stable for several years, increasing six percentage points from 85% in 2012.
- ▶ EQAO monitored progress by linking students' EQAO reading and writing results at the elementary level to their TPCL results in Grade 10. Of first-time eligible students who were not successful on the TPCL in 2016 and who had also written the junior-division assessment in 2012, about half had not met the provincial standard in reading (52%) or writing (46%) in Grade 6.

Results from 2015–2016 for the French-language education system in Ontario

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

GRADE 9 ASSESSMENT OF MATHEMATICS



Academic Course

85%

Percentage of students who met the provincial standard in 2016

Applied Course

50%

TEST PROVINCIAL DE COMPÉTENCES LINGUISTIQUES (TPCL)



91%

Percentage of first-time eligible students who were successful in 2016



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International Assessments

EQAO facilitates Ontario students' participation in five large-scale national or international assessments every three to five years: the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Ontario also participated in the inaugural administration of the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS).

These assessments provide a general sense of how Ontario students are doing relative to those in other jurisdictions or education systems, and they contribute to the larger picture of student achievement in Ontario in the areas of reading, math and science. Both the public and education policy-makers benefit from these high-level indications of how students in Ontario are positioned in relation to their peers across the country and around the world in specific subjects. The results from these assessments are a good complement to the information gained through large-scale census-based provincial assessments.

During the 2016–2017 fiscal year, results were released from the 2015 PISA and TIMSS assessments.

PISA

PISA is an international program initiated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and undertaken every three years to assess the achievement of 15-year-old students in three domains: reading, math and science. In 2015, the OECD also added financial literacy and collaborative problem solving as measurable 21st-century skills. Financial literacy data were released in 2017; collaborative-problem-solving data will be released over the coming year.



Science

- Only six jurisdictions (Singapore, Alberta, British Columbia, Japan, Quebec and Estonia) out of 72 had results statistically higher than Ontario's in science.
- Canada remains one of the top-performing countries in science. Close to 90% of Canadian students and 79% of students in OECD countries performed at or above Level 2 in science, which is the baseline level of science proficiency required for people to take advantage of further learning opportunities and to participate fully in modern society.



Reading

- In reading, no jurisdictions had results statistically higher than Ontario's. In 2012, three countries out of 72 performed better than Ontario; in 2009, one did.
- Canadian students' performance in reading has remained relatively stable since 2000.



Math

- In math, 11 jurisdictions (Singapore, Hong Kong-China, Quebec, Macao-China, Chinese Taipei, Japan, BSJG-China, Korea, Switzerland, Estonia and Canada) out of 72 had results statistically higher than Ontario's.
- After seeing a decline in the math performance of its students between 2003 and 2012, Canada's performance in math remained stable between 2012 and 2015 and its relative standing improved among the countries that participated in both assessments, with five countries outperforming Canada in 2015 compared to eight in 2012.



Financial Literacy

- In Canada, Ontario has the largest performance disparity between the majority-language and the minority-language school systems (the majority being the higher performing).
- For Canada overall, the top 10% of students scored 295 points higher than the bottom 10% of students. This gap compares to the 285 points across OECD participating countries, which puts Canada among jurisdictions with above-average financial literacy performance but also with an above-average level of disparity in student performance.
- Of Canadian students, 87% performed at or above Level 2 in financial literacy, which the OECD considers a baseline level of proficiency. Overall, Canadian 15-year-old students achieved a mean score of 533 in financial literacy, which is well above the OECD average of 489.





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TIMSS

TIMSS is an international assessment conducted under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), which assesses the math and science knowledge of students in Grades 4 and 8. In 2015, 56 jurisdictions, comprising 49 countries and eight benchmarking entities (i.e., regional jurisdictions such as provinces and states, including Ontario and Quebec) participated in TIMSS. In Ontario, more than 4500 Grade 4 students from 151 English and French schools participated in the assessment. In Grade 8, more than 4500 students from 138 English and French schools took part.

The international TIMSS scale centrepoint is fixed at 500, with four benchmark performance levels: Low (400 points), Intermediate (475 points), High (550 points) and Advanced (625 points).

- ▶ Internationally, 75% of students reached at least the Intermediate benchmark in Grade 4 math, and a slightly smaller proportion reached it in Ontario (70%).
- ▶ The average scale score for Ontario in math was 512, above the international centrepont.
- ▶ Overall, 25 out of 49 countries scored significantly above the Ontario average; five countries, including Canada, achieved a score statistically equivalent to Ontario and 19 countries scored significantly lower than Ontario.



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Research

Part of EQAO's commitment is to provide objective, reliable and useful data about student achievement.



The agency has a research program that undertakes research projects for two main purposes:

- ▶ to maintain best-of-class practices and ensure that the agency remains at the forefront of large-scale assessment, and
- ▶ to promote the use of EQAO data for improved student achievement.



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Through its research and innovation strategy, EQAO contributes to a body of knowledge on achieving favourable outcomes for all students. EQAO leads or collaborates on projects that examine factors influencing student achievement and education quality. The purpose of EQAO's research is to be shared as widely as possible with the public, educators, parents and government decision-makers, as they work together to improve student achievement.

In the past year, EQAO has engaged with several research partners on data-sharing and research projects. Recent research indicates an important relationship between education and health, which has prompted requests for data use from the Hospital for Sick Children. EQAO is pleased to support this important work, and it will seek to initiate or contribute to other research initiatives next year.

EQAO continues to refine its research and innovation strategy, in order to map out an integrated results-oriented knowledge-to-action approach to data literacy, education research and innovation.

Thanks to the agency's provincial reach and yearly collection of reliable student data, EQAO is a valued and trusted source of insights into student achievement.



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Communication and Engagement

As a publicly funded agency of the Government of Ontario, EQAO must demonstrate to the public that it is providing reliable and useful information that administrators, educators and government bodies can use to help improve student achievement in Ontario.



In line with this mandate, EQAO's third strategic priority, Communication and Engagement, is in place to

- ▶ **get valuable, clear and compelling information** about student learning and achievement into the public domain;
- ▶ **attract significant** public, parent, student and education community attention across Ontario,
- ▶ **stimulate** meaningful conversations about education quality and accountability;
- ▶ **prompt reflection and actions** for improving learning and achievement; and
- ▶ **enhance** the agency's reputation.



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In 2016, EQAO facilitated a comprehensive media relations campaign profiling OSSLT and primary, junior and Grade 9 provincial highlights, as well as detailed school and board results for all EQAO assessments. A significant portion of this campaign involved reaching people through traditional media, such as print, radio and television. Media outreach activities in August and September 2016 ensured that

- ▶ EQAO reached 128.4 million people through 758 traditional media stories in English and in French.
- ▶ the tonality of these stories was 85% positive and 15% neutral.
- ▶ 101 million of the 128.4 million people viewed these stories in major newspapers: the *Toronto Star*, the *Toronto Sun* and the *Globe and Mail*, as well as important Francophone outlets *Le Droit* and *La Voix du Nord*.

Over the course of this campaign, EQAO's social media communities grew by 11 percentage points, or 314 followers (276 English and 38 French). The agency attracted and retained 280 new Twitter followers (18-percentage-point increase), 18 new Facebook followers (nine-percentage-point increase) and 16 new LinkedIn followers (four-percentage-point increase).

This comprehensive media campaign led to greater EQAO brand recognition and increased public interest in EQAO assessment results, particularly in math. Partly in response to this media coverage, the Ministry of Education launched its Renewed Math Strategy in August 2016, showing that EQAO data are effective in holding Ontario's public education system accountable.

Social Media Reach

In today's information environment, leveraging social media strategically is a critical component of communication strategies. Social media is a tool for maintaining positive relationships with key audiences, particularly those who have a vested interest in Ontario's large-scale assessment program.

Social media helps EQAO to remain aware of conversations related to large-scale assessments both within the education community and among the general public. Thanks to its social media channels, EQAO is able to contribute to these discussions to promote its messaging and, when necessary, correct misinformation.

During the 2015–2016 fiscal year,

- ▶ the number of EQAO Twitter followers more than tripled, to approximately 3200,
- ▶ the number of Facebook followers increased by more than 100, to approximately 300; and
- ▶ the number of LinkedIn followers increased by more than 100, to reach approximately 500.

Of course, students use technology to engage. Our most popular tweet ever was published on March 30, 2017, at the end of that day's OSSLT administration. EQAO's response to a student inquiry on its English Twitter channel made almost 150 000 impressions, engaged an audience of over 28 000, received more than 2090 "likes," was "retweeted" more than 1300 times and received 120 replies.

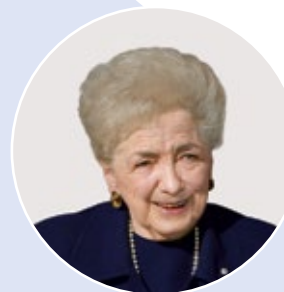
Helping to Build Data Literacy in Ontario

EQAO's primary mandate is to collect and disseminate data about Ontario student achievement in relation to the expectations outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*. Once these data are collected, EQAO publishes reports speaking to board and school performance, and creates and distributes Individual Student Reports related to individual students' performance.

Congruently, EQAO's School Support and Outreach Team delivers data-literacy workshops to school boards, schools, educators, parents and guardians, teachers in training and qualifying principals. Through these workshops, EQAO educates various members of Ontario's education community about insights that can be gleaned from EQAO data, as well as how EQAO data can be used to adjust learning strategies, resource distribution and programming to improve academic performance—which is all in line with EQAO's core mandate.

In 2016–2017, EQAO reached out to

- ▶ 10 000 principals, superintendents, teachers and board staff;
- ▶ 3000 Year 1 and Year 2 teacher candidates from 40 faculties of education;
- ▶ 350 parents and caregivers;
- ▶ 196 qualifying principals;
- ▶ 90 teachers and principal teams at a Provincial Collaborative Coaching learning event;
- ▶ 50 First Nations, Métis and Inuit teachers, administrators, board staff and parents; and
- ▶ 40 new Grades 3 and 6 teachers.



Dr. Bette M. Stephenson,
Director Emeritus

Celebrating Student Successes

Each year, EQAO collects stories of schools that have been successful in using the agency's data to improve student achievement, and recognizes them with the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement. The remarkable outcomes at these schools show how EQAO data can help educators identify areas for improvement and make targeted improvements.

EQAO shares these stories with the education community so that other schools throughout Ontario can learn about their successful practices. The success stories also generate local media coverage in the schools' communities, helping to raise awareness about the value of large-scale assessments in Ontario.



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The following 20 schools selected during the 2016–2017 fiscal year were honoured at the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement luncheon that took place as part of the EQAO Forum in May 2017:

Cardinal Carter Catholic Secondary School
Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board

Centennial Road Junior Public School
Toronto District School Board

Dunlace Public School
Toronto District School Board

Earl Haig Secondary School
Toronto District School Board

École élémentaire catholique La Vérendrye
Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est

École élémentaire catholique Saint-Jean-de-Brébeuf
Conseil scolaire catholique Providence

École élémentaire catholique Saint-Noël-Chabanel
Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud

École élémentaire publique Charlotte-Lemieux
Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario

École secondaire catholique Saint-Charles-Garnier
Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud

E. J. James Public School
Halton District School Board

Essex District High School
Greater Essex County District School Board

Governor Simcoe Secondary School
District School Board of Niagara

Maple High School
York Region District School Board

Mississauga Secondary School
Peel District School Board

Nelles Public School
District School Board of Niagara

Pleasantville Public School
York Region District School Board

St. Aloysius Catholic Elementary School
Waterloo Catholic District School Board

St. Edmund Separate School
Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

St. John XXIII Catholic School
Renfrew County Catholic District School Board

St. Luke Catholic Elementary School
Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board

Advising Other Jurisdictions on Large-Scale Assessments

Because Ontario is seen as a leader in the field of large-scale assessments, other jurisdictions regularly consult EQAO on lessons learned and best practices. During the 2016–2017 fiscal year, several jurisdictions contacted EQAO for insights and advice, and EQAO delivered presentations to delegations from Argentina, Bangladesh, China (five different presentations), Denmark, Japan and Sweden.

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EQAO is dedicated to enhancing the quality and accountability of the education system in Ontario by providing the province's educators with reliable, accurate data that can be used to improve student achievement.



As an agency of the Government of Ontario, EQAO is required by the *Agency and Appointments Directive* to set its strategic direction every three to five years. This annual report details the first year of activities in EQAO's current three-year strategic cycle.

EQAO remains committed to high-quality assessments and research, and effective information-sharing, while acting as a responsible steward of public funds. EQAO routinely monitors provincial legislation to ensure its internal protocols, procedures and guidelines are aligned with Ontario Public Service directives. In addition, all financial statements are prepared in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Board Guidelines.



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For a total of just over \$35 million for the 2016–2017 fiscal year, the provincial assessment program measured how well students across the province are meeting the reading, writing and math expectations defined in *The Ontario Curriculum* at key stages of their education. This independent evaluation of a fundamental responsibility of the public education system is delivered at a cost that works out to only \$67.17 per student writing an EQAO assessment, or \$17.89 per student enrolled in an Ontario public school. EQAO's budget represents 0.16% of total Government of Ontario expenditures in education.

EQAO is governed by a board of directors appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. During the 2016–2017 fiscal year, EQAO's Board of Directors met six times to set the goals, objectives, policies and strategic direction of the agency; review and approve EQAO's business plan, financial statements, annual report and risk assessments; and review business cases for large expenditures.

During the 2016–2017 fiscal year, EQAO underwent several noteworthy changes in its leadership team. Bruce Rodrigues, former CEO of EQAO, was named Deputy Minister of Education in Ontario. Dr. Erica van Roosmalen, former Director, Data and Reporting of EQAO, became Director, Education Research and Evaluation Strategy Branch at the Ministry of Education.

Dr. Lisa Walsh, former Chief Assessment Officer of EQAO, became Director of Education with the Avon Maitland District School Board. EQAO wishes these valued and influential team members the very best, thanks them for their commitment to student achievement and looks forward to their continued contributions to education in Ontario.

Amid these changes, EQAO continued to deliver on its core mandate to produce objective, reliable data on student achievement within budget. In addition to its 97 full-time employees, EQAO hired temporary workers on an as-needed basis to deliver on its core mandate and contracted with vendors to support staff in carrying out the agency's work. These vendors were contracted using a transparent tendering and evaluation process that was overseen by EQAO management and staff in accordance with Government of Ontario guidelines and regulations.

All of EQAO's achievements are made possible by the continued dedication and support of its employees. The agency recognizes the value and experience of its team members, and takes pride in acknowledging their ongoing commitment. The agency thanks all staff for their hard work and looks forward to continuing to benefit from their expertise as it seeks to strengthen its assessment program toward the betterment of Ontario's public education system.



This independent evaluation of a fundamental responsibility of the public education system is delivered at cost that works out to only

\$17⁸⁹ per student enrolled in an Ontario public school*

* In the 2016–2017 fiscal year

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EQAO's audited financial results for operations ending March 31, 2017, were funded through Ministry of Education allocations.



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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

To the Board of Directors of the
Education Quality and Accountability Office

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the Education Quality and Accountability Office, which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2017, the statements of operations and accumulated surplus, changes in net financial assets and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes, comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditors' Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on our judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, we consider internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

KPMG LLP, is a Canadian limited liability partnership and a member firm of the KPMG network of independent member firms affiliated with KPMG International Cooperative ("KPMG International"), a Swiss entity. KPMG Canada provides services to KPMG LLP.

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Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Education Quality and Accountability Office as at March 31, 2017, and its results of operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'KPMG LLP' with a horizontal line underneath.

Chartered Professional Accountants, Licensed Public Accountants

June 8, 2017
Vaughan, Canada

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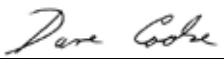
Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2017, with comparative information for 2016

	2017	2016
Financial Assets		
Cash	\$ 1,057,123	\$ 2,533,389
Cash - board restricted fund (note 2(b))	6,602,318	6,062,272
Accounts receivable (note 3)	645,151	658,445
	<u>8,304,592</u>	<u>9,254,106</u>
Financial Liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	2,160,863	2,420,695
Net financial assets	6,143,729	6,833,411
Non-Financial Assets		
Prepaid expenses (note 4)	1,010,291	1,299,480
Tangible capital assets (note 5)	671,878	2,688,445
	<u>1,682,169</u>	<u>3,987,925</u>
Accumulated surplus (note 2)	<u>\$ 7,825,898</u>	<u>\$ 10,821,336</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

On behalf of the Board:

 Chair

 Interim Chief Executive Officer

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Statement of Operations and Accumulated Surplus

Year ended March 31, 2017, with comparative information for 2016

	2017 Budget (note 10)	2017 Actual	2016 Actual
Revenue:			
Ministry of Education:			
Base allocation payments	\$ 36,019,531	\$ 31,443,684	\$ 31,797,210
Other	—	593,090	537,532
	36,019,531	32,036,774	32,334,742
Expenses:			
Service and rental	20,645,129	18,638,971	17,125,105
Salaries and wages	12,372,009	11,998,134	12,098,864
Transportation and communication	2,158,841	1,830,026	1,961,348
Supplies and equipment	843,552	2,565,081	905,081
	36,019,531	35,032,212	32,090,398
Annual surplus (deficit)	—	(2,995,438)	244,344
Accumulated surplus, beginning of year	10,821,336	10,821,336	10,576,992
Accumulated surplus, end of year	\$ 10,821,336	\$ 7,825,898	\$ 10,821,336
Accumulated surplus comprises:			
Externally restricted		\$ 1,223,580	\$ 4,759,064
Internally restricted (note 2(b))		6,602,318	6,062,272
		\$ 7,825,898	\$ 10,821,336

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

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Statement of Changes in Net Financial Assets

Year ended March 31, 2017, with comparative information for 2016

	2017 Budget (note 10)	2017 Actual	2016 Actual
Annual surplus (deficit)	\$ —	\$ (2,995,438)	\$ 244,344
Acquisition of tangible capital assets	—	(192,668)	(31,971)
Amortization and impairment of tangible capital assets (note 5)	573,920	2,209,235	638,816
	573,920	2,016,567	606,845
Acquisition of prepaid expenses	—	(1,010,291)	(1,299,480)
Use of prepaid expenses	—	1,299,480	1,004,486
	—	289,189	(294,994)
Increase (decrease) in net financial assets	573,920	(689,682)	556,195
Net financial assets, beginning of year	6,833,411	6,833,411	6,277,216
Net financial assets, end of year	\$ 7,407,331	\$ 6,143,729	\$ 6,833,411

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

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Statement of Cash Flows

Year ended March 31, 2017, with comparative information for 2016

	2017	2016
Cash provided by (used in):		
Operating activities:		
Annual surplus (deficit)	\$ (2,995,438)	\$ 244,344
Items not involving cash:		
Amortization and impairment of tangible capital assets (note 5)	2,209,235	638,816
	(786,203)	883,160
Change in non-cash operating working capital:		
Accounts receivable	13,294	639,372
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(259,832)	818,230
Prepaid expenses	289,189	(294,994)
	(743,552)	2,045,768
Capital activities:		
Acquisition of tangible capital assets	(192,668)	(31,971)
Investing activities:		
Change to board restricted fund	(540,046)	(490,476)
Increase (decrease) in cash	(1,476,266)	1,523,321
Cash, beginning of year	2,533,389	1,010,068
Cash, end of year	\$ 1,057,123	\$ 2,533,389

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2017

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (the "Agency") was established by the Province of Ontario by the EQAO Act, June 1996. The Agency was created to assure greater accountability and to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of education in Ontario. This is done through assessments and reviews based on objective, reliable and relevant information, and the timely public release of that information along with recommendations for system improvement.

1. Significant accounting policies:

These financial statements, which have been prepared in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, as established by the Public Sector Accounting Board of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada ("CPA Canada") and, where applicable, the recommendations of the Accounting Standards Board of CPA Canada, reflect the accounting policies set out below:

(a) Revenue recognition:

The Agency is funded by the Ministry of Education in accordance with established budget arrangements. The Agency receives base allocation payments in accordance with the fiscal year's approved budget. These transfer payments are recognized in the financial statements in the year in which the transfer is authorized and all eligibility criteria have been met, except when a transfer gives rise to a liability.

Other revenue is recognized at the time the service is rendered.

(b) Tangible capital assets:

Tangible capital assets are stated at cost less accumulated amortization. Tangible capital assets are amortized on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful lives as follows:

Computer equipment	3 to 10 years
Furniture and fixtures	5 years

For assets acquired or brought into use during the year, amortization is calculated from the month following that in which additions come into operation.

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Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2017

1. Significant accounting policies (continued):

The Agency considers the carrying value of tangible capital assets when events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of an asset may not be recoverable or when a tangible capital asset no longer contributes to the Agency's ability to provide goods and services. If the Agency expects an asset to generate cash flows less than the asset's carrying value, at the lowest level of identifiable cash flows, the Agency recognizes a loss for the difference between the asset's carrying value and its fair value.

(c) Measurement uncertainty:

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities, disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the year. Such estimates include providing for amortization and impairment of tangible capital assets. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

2. Accumulated surplus:

(a) Externally restricted accumulated surplus:

The Agency receives base allocation payments in accordance with the year's approved budget. Actual expenses incurred in the year could differ from the budgeted amounts. The difference between base allocation payments received and actual expenses incurred are tracked separately as externally restricted accumulated surplus.

(b) Internally restricted accumulated surplus:

A board restricted fund was established by a Board of Directors' ("Board") resolution for the purpose of examining assessment processes and researching emerging methodologies in large scale assessment in order to maintain Ontario's high quality assessment programs as best of class. The fund is currently invested in a Royal Bank of Canada current account. The Agency has the authority to retain any revenue that is not provincial funding according to the EQAO Act, June 1996, the Agencies and Appointment Directive and the Financial Administration Act.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2017

2. Accumulated surplus (continued):

	2017	2016
Balance, beginning of year	\$ 6,062,272	\$ 5,571,796
Appropriation of other income	507,323	444,819
Interest income earned on funds	84,106	90,752
Cost associated with fee-based administration (note 8)	(51,383)	(45,095)
Balance, end of year	\$ 6,602,318	\$ 6,062,272

In a prior year, the Board approved a motion to fully restrict the internally restricted accumulated surplus for the Board-approved IT strategy.

3. Accounts receivable:

Included in accounts receivable is a transfer payment in the amount of \$297,446 (2016 - \$211,988) due from the Ministry of Education.

4. Prepaid expenses:

Prepaid expenses are paid in cash and recorded as assets before they are used or consumed. As at year end, the balance is made up of the following amounts:

	2017	2016
Prepaid expenses	\$ 351,841	\$ 481,200
Prepaid secondees	658,450	818,280
	\$ 1,010,291	\$ 1,299,480

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2017

5. Tangible capital assets:

			2017	2016
	Cost	Accumulated amortization	Net book value	Net book value
Computer equipment	\$ 3,258,540	\$ 2,674,486	\$ 584,054	\$ 2,614,808
Furniture and fixtures	387,489	299,665	87,824	73,637
	<u>\$ 3,646,029</u>	<u>\$ 2,974,151</u>	<u>\$ 671,878</u>	<u>\$ 2,688,445</u>

Amortization of tangible capital assets recorded in the current year amounts to \$577,066 (2016 - \$638,816). As a result of a permanent change in the service potential of a tangible capital asset, the Agency recorded an impairment adjustment of \$1,632,169 (2016 - nil).

6. Lease commitments:

The Agency leases premises under certain operating lease arrangements with expiry dates up to December 31, 2020. Under the terms of the leases, the Agency is required to pay an annual base rent, which is predetermined based on square footage rates plus operating and maintenance charges. Future minimum annual scheduled payments are as follows:

2018	\$ 1,147,435
2019	359,280
2020	329,340
	<u>\$ 1,836,055</u>

7. Financial instruments:

The Agency's financial instruments consist of cash, board restricted fund, accounts receivable and accounts payable and accrued liabilities. Financial instruments are recorded at fair value on initial recognition. The fair values of these financial instruments approximate their carrying values due to their short-term nature.

It is management's opinion that the Agency is not exposed to significant interest, currency or credit risk arising from these financial instruments.

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Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2017

8. Allocation of expenses:

Incremental administration expenses are allocated to fee-based administration revenue. Expenses are allocated proportionately based on the number of individual student assessments administered.

9. Liquidity risk:

Liquidity risk is the risk that the Agency will be unable to fulfill its obligations on a timely basis or at a reasonable cost. The Agency manages its liquidity risk by monitoring its operating requirements. The Agency prepares budget and cash forecasts to ensure it has sufficient funds to fulfill its obligations.

There have been no significant changes to the liquidity risk exposure from 2016.

10. Budget:

The budget information has been derived from the budget approved by the Board on August 25, 2016.

Education Quality and
Accountability Office



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