

**Education Quality and
Accountability Office**



2018–2019 ANNUAL REPORT

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Board of Directors

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Dr. Bette M. Stephenson, Director Emeritus

Chief Executive Officer

Norah Marsh
June 28, 2017–June 27, 2020

Message from the Chair

On behalf of the EQAO Board of Directors, I am honoured to present the report of the agency's activities during the 2018–2019 fiscal year. The agency is committed to independently measuring the effectiveness of Ontario's publicly funded education system.

During the past fiscal year, the agency effectively fulfilled its mandate of providing information to support evidence-informed decision making. Further to the public consultation on education in fall 2018, the Government of Ontario announced its intent to broaden EQAO's mandate. The agency will collaborate with the government to confirm the scope of this renewed mandate and work toward modernization objectives in support of student learning.

Throughout its history, EQAO has continuously embraced partnership with its many stakeholders to support the education community. The agency will continue to engage with its various advisory committees and I will continue to consult with stakeholders in a proactive way. EQAO contributes important insights that support discussions about student learning at the individual, school, school board and provincial levels, and the agency looks forward to continuing to work together with Ontarians to improve achievement for all students.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cameron Montgomery". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cameron" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Montgomery".

Dr. Cameron Montgomery
Chair, EQAO Board of Directors

Message from the Chief Executive Officer

On behalf of EQAO's staff, it is my pleasure to present the agency's annual report for 2018–2019. The initiatives listed here speak to our belief that students are best served through a caring education system that is committed to continuous improvement and evidence-informed decision making. EQAO data is the only source of independent data measuring how well students are meeting curriculum expectations in Ontario, and when considered alongside other sources of data, EQAO data may help shape directions at both the local and provincial levels.

The landscape of education is constantly evolving, requiring continued engagement, reflection and action. Building upon our equity and inclusion strategy, this year we launched the EQAO Student Advisory Committee. We intentionally engaged with students from Grades 7 to 12 who had a variety of lived experiences, to help us better serve them. The committee has generated insightful feedback that will inform our approach to assessing children and youth, and we will continue to seek ways of offering assessments that are more student-centred and accessible.

Our data and research shed light on strengths and challenges in our education system and the effectiveness of strategies that support student learning. To better assist educators in their work, we addressed certain requests by implementing changes to assessment and accommodation policies, and we have created a new series of data-literacy professional-learning resources. This year, we have consulted with school districts, educators and other experts to revise the criteria of how we report on student progress so that it is more reflective of Ontario's education system and supports greater transparency of the impact of our education system on all students. We began work on these changes early in 2018 with the intention of providing a more precise measurement of achievement while being more sensitive to students who have unique learning needs that require alternative learning expectations and curricula, or who are new to the province.

In addition to reporting on student achievement, this year EQAO also conducted two important research studies. *Lessons from EQAO Data on Fundamental Math Skills: How Are Ontario Students Doing?* noted that students in Grades 3 and 6 have stronger knowledge and understanding of fundamental math skills than they have the ability to apply their skills. In *Math Superpowers*, we found that developing a positive math attitude and using math strategies early have long-term payoffs. These reports afford insights about student learning that can be considered at all levels of the education system, and other lessons can be learned from the information found on EQAO questionnaires on our website.

We deeply appreciate education professionals' dedication as we work in tandem to support each student's achievement. We know education makes a difference in lifetime outcomes for children and youth, and we are committed to providing data to support collaborative inquiries.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Marsh', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Norah Marsh
Chief Executive Officer

About EQAO

EQAO was established in 1996 following a recommendation of the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning. After consulting extensively with Ontarians and the education community, the Commission concluded that province-wide assessments would help address parents' and citizens' desire for greater quality and accountability in the publicly funded education system.

To help improve student learning, EQAO administers large-scale assessments grounded in *The Ontario Curriculum*, coordinates Ontario's participation in national and international assessments, contributes to education research and assists the education community in understanding, analyzing and appropriately using EQAO data.

We are currently in the planning stages of a multi-faceted and multi-year modernization initiative that focuses on five distinct areas:

- large-scale assessments,
- reports,
- research,
- engagement with Ontarians and
- internal business processes.

Our goal is simple. We want to provide evidence-informed insights into student learning to facilitate the success of all Ontario students. Our aim is to continually enhance our high-quality large-scale assessment program to ensure it is equitable, inclusive and reflective of Ontario's diversity so that all students can demonstrate their understanding of the provincial curriculum.

By assessing each student in relation to the learning expectations outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*, we offer independent data at the provincial, school board, school and individual student levels. We provide schools and school boards with detailed reports about their students' achievement, and a personalized report to each student who writes an assessment to help support individual student learning. Additional contextual, attitudinal and behavioural information from questionnaires offers valuable insights into student learning.

EQAO's independent data, in addition to classroom and board information, helps the education community consider key trends through collaborative inquiries. Such insights help make evidence-informed decisions when developing improvement plans that foster equitable and inclusive learning environments for students. EQAO's information also helps to guide the analysis and decisions of parents and guardians and policy-makers.

Through programs like the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement, we build capacity for the appropriate use of EQAO data. Through workshops and resources, we provide tools that educators, parents and guardians, policy-makers and others in the education community can use to align their strategies with best practices in assessment and education nationally and globally. This helps to improve learning and teaching.

Through research, EQAO investigates factors that influence student achievement, school effectiveness and best assessment practices. The agency also coordinates Ontario's participation in national and international assessments (e.g., PCAP, PISA, PIRLS, TIMMS) to provide data relating to how the province's students are performing on the world stage in a number of areas, including math, science, technology, financial literacy, collaborative problem solving, reading and writing, as well as general well-being in and out of the school environment.

Values

- EQAO values giving all students the opportunity to reach their highest possible level of achievement and well-being.
- 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 and their involvement in all aspects of the assessment processes and the positive difference their efforts make in student outcomes.
- EQAO values the delivery of its programs and services by embracing diversity and moving beyond tolerance and celebration to inclusivity.

Strategic Priorities

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:

1. **ASSESSMENT and EVALUATION:** EQAO will assess and evaluate important aspects of the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education.
2. **RESEARCH:** EQAO will conduct research into the factors affecting student achievement, equity and the quality of education.
3. **COMMUNICATION and ENGAGEMENT:** EQAO will help Ontarians better understand the role of the agency and the value of the information it provides, so they can use that knowledge to improve publicly funded education.
4. **BUSINESS and GOVERNANCE:** EQAO will operate a responsible and effective organization.

Strategic Priority 1—Assessment and Evaluation

Through its large-scale provincial assessment program, EQAO currently administers full-census assessments at key stages in each student's education. This approach:

- evaluates progress over time at the school, school board, provincial and individual student levels;
- fosters discussions about improvements to learning programs in schools and school boards across the province; and
- allows policy-makers to understand system-wide trends better, and make student-focused and evidence-informed decisions accordingly.

EQAO Assessments	Grade of Administration	Subjects
Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Primary Division	Grade 3 (Grades 1–3 curriculum)	Reading, writing, math
Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Junior Division	Grade 6 (Grades 4–6 curriculum)	Reading, writing, math
Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics	Grade 9 (Grade 9 curriculum)	Math
Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test/ Test provincial de compétences linguistiques (OSSLT/TPCL)	Grade 10 (literacy skills expected by the curriculum across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9)	Literacy

The landscape of large-scale assessments is changing both in Canada and abroad. National and international jurisdictions are moving to digitally-based assessments and/or rethinking their approach to assessment design in an effort to align their programs to the world that students experience every day.

Modernization

EQAO is also on a path to modernization to meet current and future educational needs better. Our vision for modernization will lead to assessments that better reflect student experiences in the classroom, incorporate digital tools to foster engagement and accessibility and further enhance the usefulness of the information offered to promote reflection and growth. In a balanced system of assessment, large-scale and classroom-level assessments are coherently linked through their common learning outcomes.

EQAO's Assessment and Reporting Process

In the 2017–2018 school year, 564 281 students from the publicly funded English- and French-language school systems were assessed in relation to expectations outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*:

- 275 060 primary- and junior-division students;
- 134 192 Grade 9 students and
- 155 029 OSSLT/TPCL students.

A total of 3735 elementary schools and 949 secondary schools in Ontario's publicly funded education system participated in EQAO assessments. An additional 535 private, First Nation and international schools also participated.

To conduct assessments with integrity, EQAO ensures its processes meet the highest standards in technical quality. We follow a rigorous assessment-development process led by Ontario educators to ensure that selected materials and questions are linked to curriculum expectations and are appropriate for students across the province. The data that flow from our tests are analyzed in depth, and reports are developed to provide reliable and independent insights into student achievement.

Developing Large-Scale Provincial Assessments with Students in Mind

Each year, EQAO assessments are created by Ontario educators who research, develop and select all assessment questions—also known as items. Throughout the creation process, our assessments are developed in collaboration with psychometricians and experts in various fields in the education community. An Assessment Development Committee and a Sensitivity Committee are established for each assessment. The committees help to ensure assessments remain true to *The Ontario Curriculum* and that EQAO assessments are fair, equitable and inclusive so that all students who take the assessments can fully participate and demonstrate their understanding of curriculum expectations.

Educators are selected to participate in EQAO activities based on the following criteria:

- cultural diversity;
- geographic location, to ensure representation from all parts of the province and from both rural and urban regions;
- current elementary and secondary experience (i.e., teachers, administrators, subject experts and consultants); and
- expertise in evaluation and assessment, including large-scale assessment.

Once the questions are approved by the committees, they are field-tested in schools across the province before they become part of an operational assessment. This helps ensure all questions are appropriate and that students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge by responding to them.

Administering Assessments

EQAO relies on the collaboration, support and professional judgment of educators to administer the assessments. The agency sets clear procedures and has rigorous quality-assurance processes to ensure administration is consistent across Ontario. For each assessment, we publish an administration guide that includes detailed guidelines and steps for teachers and principals to follow to ensure consistent administration across the province.¹

As part of our modernization, we have updated some of our assessment and accommodation policies to better align large-scale assessment practices with student experiences in the classroom. These updates were developed and implemented in consultation with partners across Ontario. Changes implemented during the 2018–2019 school year include the following:

- removing the requirement of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for students who require accommodations such as headphones, calming white noise or music;
- allowing English- and French-language learners taking the Grade 9 assessment to access digital or paper language resources (e.g., dual-language dictionary, translation tools);
- granting Grade 9 students access to virtual manipulatives through Internet tools and math applications; and
- encouraging educators to make the classroom environment look as it would normally during an assessment, while providing greater clarification on which displays can remain posted on classroom walls.

Scoring Assessments

EQAO assessments are scored primarily by educators who have successfully completed specific training requirements. Educators from across Ontario bring their knowledge of the classroom and of the curriculum to the scoring process, and the scoring experience provides them with professional development that deepens their understanding of evaluation. Our assessment questions are scored according to established criteria, which help to ensure the integrity and reliability of the data as well as comparability of results from year to year.

Over the course of the year, EQAO engages with more than 4400 educators and faculty of education students to score its assessments. A survey sent to scoring participants of the 2017–2018 school year assessments shows that

- more than 80% of English-language and close to 85% of French-language scoring participants for the primary- and junior-division assessments felt that the training and scoring activities would help teachers who participated in the scoring in their regular classroom practice.

¹ See, for example, Education Quality and Accountability Office. (2019). *How to Administer the OSSLT, 2019*. <http://www.eqao.com/en/assessments/OSSLT/assessment-docs/administration-guide-osslt.pdf>

- more than 90% of English-language and almost 97% of French-language scoring participants for the Grade 9 math assessment felt that the training and scoring activities would help teachers who participated in the scoring in their regular classroom practice. In addition, more than 90% of English-language and almost 87% of French-language scoring participants felt that the scoring activity was a positive professional development experience.
- close to 90% of OSSLT and of almost 87% of TPCL scoring participants felt that the scoring activity was a positive professional development experience.

Reporting Assessment Results

We aim to provide user-friendly access to our data as part of our reporting of assessment results each year. Our online reporting tool allows schools to go beyond the numbers and drill down to individual students and groups of students that they teach every day to gain further insights around student attitudes and achievement. When combined with other data sources, EQAO data and insights can assist educators in their effectiveness in serving students and engaging with parents, guardians and the communities they serve. In line with our mandate, we release assessment results and data about specific student populations yearly to help the education community understand some of the factors affecting student achievement.

The data that emerge from the assessments form the basis of

- a provincial report of students' performance across Ontario;
- school and school board reports and
- individual student reports, which are distributed by schools to parents and guardians of every student who writes an EQAO test.

The agency uses student, teacher and principal questionnaires to collect information on factors inside and outside the classroom that may affect student achievement. Such qualitative insights can provide greater context when informing decisions about supporting student learning. When examined year over year, these data can help identify trends and guide decision making on matters related to education.

In addition to achievement data, principals can access contextual, attitudinal and behavioural information for their school from student questionnaires through EQAO's online reporting tool.

Benefitting from External Expertise

EQAO employs a number of systematic quality-assurance processes to ensure the validity of its assessment data. Every year, the administration, scoring and results of each of our assessments are reviewed by independent third parties to ensure the integrity of our processes and data.

2017–2018 Assessments: Results and Observations

Each year, EQAO releases province-wide results of its assessments. Large-scale provincial assessments at key stages of a student’s education measure math and literacy achievement in relation to expectations outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*. We report results over a multi-year period to support comparisons over time, as this helps to identify trends in student learning and to provide a more accurate picture of student achievement. Such analyses help stakeholders across the province understand achievement within subject areas and course types, and among groups of students. EQAO bases its observations on five-year trends for this reason.

Interpreting the Tables in This Section

The following tables, organized by assessment, show the results over time for students in the English and the French education system. The tables show the percentages of students in Grades 3, 6 and 9 that have met each level of achievement, with Level 3 having been set by the Ministry of Education as the provincial standard. The tables also show the percentages of Grade 10 students who were successful and those who were unsuccessful on the OSSLT/TPCL. The percentages in the tables are rounded and may not add up to 100.

The “#” sign refers to the number of students reported on in the tables. The term “NE1” (Not Enough Evidence for Level 1) is used when students provided enough information to score but did not demonstrate enough evidence of knowledge and understanding on the assessment to be assigned Level 1. “No Data” and “Exempt” refer respectively to students who did not have a result, due to absence or other reason, and to students who were formally exempted from participating in the assessment or one or more components of it.

For the OSSLT, the terms “Absent” and “Deferred” refer respectively to students who did not have a result, due to absence for one of both assessment sessions, and for students who did not complete any portion of the assessment and were indicated by the school as having obtained a deferral.

Provincial results for the assessments administered in Grades 3, 6 and 9 are not available for the English-language education system in the 2014–2015 school year (“EC” in the charts). Due to labour disruptions, a significant proportion of schools did not participate in the provincial assessments that school year. In 2016, elementary schools in the Toronto Catholic District School Board did not participate in the assessments, due to labour disruptions.

Results for the English-Language Education System in Ontario

Primary Division (Grade 3) Reading	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 122 018	EC	# = 118 838	# = 126 016	# = 125 213
Level 4	12%	EC	16%	17%	18%
Level 3	58%	EC	56%	57%	57%
Level 2	23%	EC	21%	19%	19%
Level 1	4%	EC	3%	3%	3%
NE1	1%	EC	1%	1%	1%
No Data	1%	EC	1%	1%	1%
Exempt	2%	EC	3%	3%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	70%	EC	72%	74%	75%

Junior Division (Grade 6) Reading	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 127 261	EC	# = 123 592	# = 130 767	# = 132 766
Level 4	12%	EC	13%	13%	13%
Level 3	67%	EC	68%	68%	69%
Level 2	16%	EC	15%	15%	14%
Level 1	2%	EC	2%	1%	1%
NE1	<1%	EC	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	<1%	EC	1%	1%	1%
Exempt	2%	EC	2%	2%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	79%	EC	81%	81%	82%

Primary Division (Grade 3) Writing	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 122 018	EC	# = 118 860	# = 126 036	# = 125 213
Level 4	6%	EC	4%	3%	3%
Level 3	72%	EC	70%	70%	69%
Level 2	18%	EC	22%	22%	24%
Level 1	1%	EC	1%	1%	1%
NE1	<1%	EC	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	1%	EC	1%	1%	1%
Exempt	2%	EC	2%	2%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	78%	EC	74%	73%	72%

Junior Division (Grade 6) Writing	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 127 207	EC	# = 123 617	# = 130 773	# = 132 766
Level 4	12%	EC	18%	17%	20%
Level 3	66%	EC	62%	62%	60%
Level 2	18%	EC	16%	17%	16%
Level 1	1%	EC	1%	1%	1%
NE1	<1%	EC	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	1%	EC	1%	1%	1%
Exempt	2%	EC	2%	2%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	78%	EC	80%	79%	80%

Primary Division (Grade 3) Mathematics	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 127 504	EC	# = 125 471	# = 132 983	# = 132 656
Level 4	13%	EC	12%	13%	12%
Level 3	54%	EC	51%	49%	49%
Level 2	26%	EC	28%	29%	30%
Level 1	4%	EC	5%	5%	5%
NE1	<1%	EC	1%	1%	1%
No Data	1%	EC	1%	1%	1%
Exempt	2%	EC	2%	2%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	67%	EC	63%	62%	61%

Junior Division (Grade 6) Mathematics	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 127 286	EC	# = 123 666	# = 130 652	# = 132 766
Level 4	13%	EC	13%	12%	13%
Level 3	42%	EC	37%	37%	36%
Level 2	30%	EC	31%	30%	31%
Level 1	13%	EC	16%	17%	17%
NE1	<1%	EC	<1%	1%	1%
No Data	1%	EC	1%	1%	1%
Exempt	2%	EC	2%	2%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	54%	EC	50%	50%	49%

Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics Academic	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 95 914	EC	# = 97 347	# = 96 449	# = 96 996
Level 4	12%	EC	11%	13%	14%
Level 3	73%	EC	73%	71%	70%
Level 2	11%	EC	11%	11%	10%
Level 1	4%	EC	4%	5%	4%
Below Level 1	<1%	EC	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	1%	EC	1%	1%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	85%	EC	83%	83%	84%

Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics Applied	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 38 181	EC	# = 36 005	# = 34 797	# = 33 451
Level 4	9%	EC	10%	9%	10%
Level 3	38%	EC	35%	35%	35%
Level 2	34%	EC	33%	33%	33%
Level 1	11%	EC	13%	14%	13%
Below Level 1	4%	EC	5%	5%	5%
No Data	4%	EC	4%	4%	4%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	47%	EC	45%	44%	45%

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (Grade 10) Academic	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Fully Participating First-Time-Eligible Students in the Academic English Course (excluding absent and deferred students, and those not working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma)	# = 99 943	# = 97 615	# = 95 971	# = 99 051	# = 95 709
Successful	94%	93%	92%	92%	90%
Unsuccessful	6%	7%	8%	8%	10%
Absent	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Deferred	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (Grade 10) Applied	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Fully Participating First-Time-Eligible Students in the Applied English Course (excluding absent and deferred students, and those not working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma)	# = 27 272	# = 26 213	# = 24 772	# = 24 233	# = 22 700
Successful	50%	50%	47%	44%	39%
Unsuccessful	50%	50%	53%	56%	61%
Absent	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Deferred	7%	7%	7%	7%	8%

Results for the French-Language Education System in Ontario

Primary Division (Grade 3) Reading	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 7849	# = 8242	# = 8353	# = 8799	# = 8790
Level 4	38%	36%	38%	37%	42%
Level 3	41%	47%	44%	45%	42%
Level 2	16%	15%	16%	14%	13%
Level 1	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%
NE1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Exempt	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	80%	82%	82%	83%	84%

Junior Division (Grade 6) Reading	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 6832	# = 7027	# = 7386	# = 7727	# = 8102
Level 4	34%	25%	29%	30%	29%
Level 3	56%	65%	62%	61%	62%
Level 2	8%	8%	7%	7%	6%
Level 1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
NE1	0%	0%	<1%	0%	<1%
No Data	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Exempt	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	91%	90%	91%	91%	92%

Primary Division (Grade 3) Writing	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 7849	# = 8243	# = 8353	# = 8799	# = 8790
Level 4	25%	18%	17%	17%	15%
Level 3	56%	62%	65%	62%	61%
Level 2	15%	17%	16%	18%	20%
Level 1	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%
NE1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Exempt	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	81%	80%	81%	78%	76%

Junior Division (Grade 6) Writing	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 6832	# = 7030	# = 7386	# = 7727	# = 8102
Level 4	28%	18%	20%	17%	16%
Level 3	61%	67%	64%	67%	62%
Level 2	9%	11%	12%	13%	17%
Level 1	1%	1%	2%	2%	4%
NE1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Exempt	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	89%	85%	84%	84%	78%

Primary Division (Grade 3) Mathematics	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 7850	# = 8249	# = 8359	# = 8795	# = 8790
Level 4	25%	26%	22%	23%	22%
Level 3	54%	56%	55%	54%	52%
Level 2	19%	16%	20%	20%	22%
Level 1	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
NE1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Exempt	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	79%	81%	77%	76%	75%

Junior Division (Grade 6) Mathematics	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 6832	# = 7039	# = 7388	# = 7727	# = 8102
Level 4	45%	46%	46%	45%	43%
Level 3	38%	39%	39%	37%	40%
Level 2	15%	13%	13%	16%	15%
Level 1	<1%	1%	<1%	1%	1%
NE1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Exempt	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	83%	85%	85%	82%	83%

Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics Academic	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 4051	# = 3984	# = 4275	# = 4448	# = 4520
Level 4	7%	6%	7%	7%	11%
Level 3	76%	76%	78%	78%	78%
Level 2	12%	13%	11%	11%	9%
Level 1	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%
Below Level 1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	<1%	1%	1%	<1%	<1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	84%	82%	85%	85%	88%

Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics Applied	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Students	# = 1530	# = 1312	# = 1376	# = 1377	# = 1320
Level 4	9%	8%	7%	5%	8%
Level 3	42%	41%	43%	38%	43%
Level 2	38%	38%	38%	42%	39%
Level 1	8%	9%	8%	12%	8%
Below Level 1	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%
No Data	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	51%	49%	50%	44%	51%

Test provincial de compétences linguistiques (Grade 10) Academic	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Fully Participating First-Time-Eligible Students in the Academic French Course (excluding absent and deferred students, and those not working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma)	# = 3851	# = 3975	# = 3924	# = 4194	# = 4137
Successful	96%	96%	97%	97%	98%
Unsuccessful	4%	4%	3%	3%	2%
Absent	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Deferred	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Test provincial de compétences linguistiques (Grade 10) Applied	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018
Fully Participating First-Time-Eligible Students in the Applied French Course (excluding absent and deferred students, and those not working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma)	# = 1218	# = 1245	# = 1131	# = 1136	# = 1110
Successful	66%	66%	71%	73%	70%
Unsuccessful	34%	34%	29%	27%	30%
Absent	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Deferred	7%	8%	8%	6%	6%

Key Observations on the Assessment Results

There continues to be a gap in achievement between students enrolled in academic and in applied courses, which EQAO has highlighted for several years. Available data from previous years show that students who had low achievement in Grade 6 are more likely to meet the provincial standard in secondary school if they enroll in the academic courses. In fact, analysis of student outcomes going back to 2004 show that students who do not meet the provincial standard in reading and writing in the early grades are at a greater risk of not having the literacy skills required in secondary school and beyond. This persistent achievement gap that continues to exist between students enrolled in academic and in applied courses, and between students with special education needs and those without, should be addressed and looked at more closely.

The results from EQAO's student questionnaires suggest that a large number of Grades 3 and 6 students are motivated to do their best when they do reading, writing and math activities in class, yet their confidence in their abilities is lower. Despite high motivation, only about half of Grade 3 and of Grade 6 students believe they are good at math, for instance. We recognize that there are many factors that influence academic achievement, including student attitudes and perceptions of self-efficacy, and it is encouraging that motivation remains high, as this can help facilitate future academic improvement.

Recognizing Learning Strategies That Work: Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement

EQAO's annual Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement program celebrates Ontario schools for their effective use of a wide range of information, including EQAO assessment and questionnaire data, to support student learning. Through this recognition, EQAO aims to assist other schools by sharing the promising practices of the schools profiled. This year, EQAO recognized 22 schools across Ontario that supported students' positive attitudes toward math, which led to academic success. Educators at these schools developed a number of innovative strategies based on their analyses of EQAO data and other local information. The strategies they put in place were effective, as evidenced by EQAO results over the last three years. The instructional strategies these educators implemented were appropriate to their students' unique circumstances. Building on a culture of inquiry and collaboration to foster positive attitudes toward math learning, educators reinforced student confidence and led their students toward academic success and on the path to lifelong learning.

Recipients of the 2018 Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement

Eastern Ontario

- École élémentaire catholique Arc-en-ciel (Orléans)
Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est
- École élémentaire publique Madeleine-de-Roybon (Kingston)
Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario
- École secondaire catholique Béatrice-Desloges (Orléans)
Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est
- École secondaire publique Louis-Riel (Ottawa)
Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario
- John McCrae Secondary School (Nepean)
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
- Regiopolis-Notre Dame Catholic High School (Kingston)
Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board
- St. Francis Xavier High School (Gloucester)
Ottawa Catholic District School Board

Northeastern Ontario

- St. Benedict Catholic Secondary School (Sudbury)
Sudbury Catholic District School Board
- Sudbury Secondary School (Sudbury)
Rainbow District School Board

Central Ontario

- Kenner Collegiate Vocational Institute (Peterborough)
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board
- Maxwell Heights Secondary School (Oshawa)
Durham District School Board
- Sister Catherine Donnelly Catholic School (Barrie)
Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board

Greater Toronto Area

- École élémentaire Carrefour des jeunes (Brampton)
Conseil scolaire Viamonde
- École élémentaire catholique Sainte-Marguerite-Bourgeoys,
Markham
Conseil scolaire catholique MonAvenir
- Fleming Public School (Scarborough)
Toronto District School Board
- M. M. Robinson High School (Burlington)
Halton District School Board
- Springbrook Public School (Brampton)
Peel District School Board
- St. Matthew Catholic School (Mississauga)
Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

Southwestern Ontario

- Byron Southwood Public School (London)
Thames Valley District School Board
- Elmira District Secondary School (Elmira)
Waterloo Region District School Board
- Pine Grove Public School (St. Catharines)
District School Board of Niagara
- St. Gabriel Catholic Elementary School (Windsor)
Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board

National and International Assessments

EQAO continued to coordinate Ontario's participation in national and international assessments this year. These assessments provide a general sense of how Ontario students are doing in relation to those in other jurisdictions or education systems, and the results of such assessments contribute to the larger picture of student achievement in Ontario—to the benefit of both the public and education policy-makers. These assessments' results are a good complement to the information gained through EQAO's census-based provincial assessments.

The Ministry of Education has determined that Ontario students would participate in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) assessments. While EQAO does not develop these assessments, the agency supports their administration in Ontario.

During the 2018–2019 fiscal year, EQAO supported the administration of PISA, which had reading as its major focus. Results of this assessment are scheduled to be released in 2019. The detailed Canadian results from two assessments that EQAO coordinated and administered in 2016 were published in 2018: the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) released the PCAP results in April 2018 and the national results for PIRLS in December 2018. These results offer an interesting perspective on the achievement level of Ontario students.

PCAP

As a CMEC initiative, PCAP is a program of national standardized tests of reading, math and science skills administered to Grade 8 students (and Secondary II students in Quebec). Every three years, close to 30 000 students across Canada are assessed on their understanding of the curricular expectations common to all provinces and territories in three core learning domains: reading, math and science. PCAP planned for 2019 will focus on math skills.

PIRLS

Every five years, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) sponsors PIRLS, which evaluates the reading achievement of Grade 4 students around the world (50 countries participated in 2016). The study looks at 9-year-old students' ability to read literary and informational passages.

Strategic Priority 2—Research

EQAO recognizes the need for a continued focus on research to examine effective, high-quality educational experiences that support student achievement at the individual, classroom, school and system levels.

#DataInAction: EQAO's New Research Framework

During the 2018–2019 fiscal year, the agency refreshed its research framework and launched it under the name #DataInAction. Through this renewed framework, EQAO continues to offer valuable insights on student learning to parents and guardians, educators, policy-makers and the rest of Ontario. The agency commits to following these five approaches in the achievement of its research objectives:

- conducting in-house research that uses the full potential of EQAO data;
- partnering with academic researchers and their institutions;
- leveraging research that is underway at Ontario's publicly funded school boards and educational institutions;
- collaborating with ministry colleagues in research activities, particularly those related to well-being, global competencies and curriculum assessment and
- encouraging external researchers to access EQAO data and supporting open data initiatives, as appropriate.

Partnerships

Our renewed approach to the use of data in research has allowed us to engage and collaborate with research partners such as the Offord Centre for Child Studies, Datassist and People for Education.

Research Projects

This past year, EQAO conducted studies on student achievement. We published reports on factors influencing student success, specifically addressing student achievement in math, and we released a preliminary investigation into primary- and junior-division student achievement regarding fundamental math skills as outlined by the Ministry of Education.^{2, 3} A second study, based on responses given by students on EQAO Student Questionnaires, will focus on students' attitudes toward math. This report, which will be presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in April 2019, suggests that students who develop a positive attitude and use math strategies early in their school career have a greater chance at success.

² Education Quality and Accountability Office. (2019). *Math Superpowers*.
http://www.eqao.com/en/research_data/Research_Reports/DMA-docs/math-superpowers-2019.pdf

³ Education Quality and Accountability Office. (2019). *Lessons from EQAO Data on Fundamental Math Skills: How Are Ontario Students Doing?*
http://www.eqao.com/en/research_data/Research_Reports/DMA-docs/math-fundamentals.pdf

Strategic Priority 3—Communication and Engagement

EQAO is committed to promoting its data and insights so that the public and education community alike can reflect on the quality of public education in Ontario and engage in a genuine dialogue about student learning. Our approach to integrated communications leverages multiple channels and helps Ontarians to understand the role of our agency and the value of the information we provide. This approach also facilitates close collaboration with schools and school boards during the administration of assessments, and during the analysis and use of EQAO data. We regularly receive queries from the public, the media, researchers and educators on a wide array of matters, and we strive to provide answers and guidance in a timely manner.

There are multiple channels through which EQAO communicates and builds relationships with audiences, including the agency's

- website;
- social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube);
- media relations efforts;
- information centre;
- engagement with partners and stakeholders;
- presentations to school boards, schools, parents and guardians and other groups;
- events (e.g., webinars) and
- Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement program.

An important goal of our communication efforts is making available to all Ontarians compelling information about student achievement and students' attitudes to stimulate meaningful conversations about equity, quality and accountability in public education. Reflection and discussion prompt action that can support student learning across the province.

Releasing EQAO Results

This past year, EQAO undertook a multi-faceted and province-wide bilingual communications campaign focusing mainly on media engagement, digital communications and stakeholder relations.

In August and September 2018, we conducted a media campaign that

- reached 41.9 million people through approximately 514 English- and French-language news stories in traditional media, such as print, radio and television, and involving local and national outlets.
- increased engagement on the agency's English- and French-language social media channels and their communities, which grew overall by 3% or 200 followers (the increase was 4% on Twitter, 3% on Facebook and 1% on LinkedIn).

- disseminated valuable information about student success and brought attention to current issues in student learning in different subjects and student populations. Examples are math at the elementary and secondary levels; achievement in the academic and applied course types; and the relation between students' perception of their abilities and their achievement results.

Listening to Ontarians

During the government's public consultation on education, EQAO listened actively to feedback from Ontarians. In support of the consultation, we also released a submission paper that explained what modernized large-scale assessments could look like, and how updated assessments could better assist students, parents and guardians, educators and the rest of Ontario. EQAO is committed to the principles of collaboration and partnership as part of its modernization initiative and will continue to seek broad and diverse perspectives from its stakeholders as it looks to meet its mandate in more innovative ways.

Providing Direct Support to Schools and School Boards

EQAO's information centre serves as a primary contact point for not only the education community but also for parents and guardians, students, scorers and the public. The centre responds to queries and provides updates on assessment-administration procedures. This past fiscal year, we answered close to 18 000 calls and replied to approximately 5000 e-mails.

EQAO's School Support and Outreach team exemplifies the agency's proactive commitment to supporting student learning. During the fiscal year, we interacted directly with many education community members and offered nearly 200 in-person and virtual presentations and workshops on how to leverage data from EQAO assessments. The School Support and Outreach team worked with 39 English- and French-language school boards across the province and reached out to classroom teachers and teacher candidates, team administrators, superintendents, board curriculum and program leads along with researchers, secondary school department heads, and parents and guardians.

Creating Resources to Support Educators and Student Learning

To continue assisting educators in how to get the most value out of EQAO data, we added a new section called "Professional Learning" to our website. Modules were created to support professional learning and practice. The first of this new series of videos focused on the multiple-choice questions of the math component of our primary- and junior-division assessments. The video resources highlight how multiple-choice questions connect with the curriculum's achievement chart categories, including the different types of math errors, such as misconceptions and misapplications, students typically make when answering these questions.

Exchanging Knowledge About Large-Scale Assessments with Other Jurisdictions

EQAO's experience in large-scale assessment, its unique outreach initiative and its research projects provide a valuable perspective to engage with other agencies and organizations dedicated to exemplary practices in large-scale assessment and evaluation. During the 2018–2019 fiscal year, EQAO hosted for the first time a delegation from Peru and a delegation of officials from South Korea; both delegations expressed an interest to meet and learn more about EQAO and its programs. We regularly host delegations from other jurisdictions to share what we have learned from over two decades of large-scale assessment development and administration, our particular mandate and our commitment to integrating principles of equity and inclusion in all that we do. Interacting with education professionals from other provinces and countries and discussing how data can be a tool in developing plans that improve student learning and support policy-makers and educators has been vital in maintaining a dialogue and in exchanging best practices with other jurisdictions. We have also engaged with the international education community at a conference organized by the National Institute for Evaluation in Education (Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación, INEE) in Mexico, where we shared how equity and inclusion are fundamental principles integrated into Ontario's large-scale assessment program and the lessons learned so far in developing assessments adapted to the needs of all students.

Strategic Priority 4—Business and Governance

EQAO recognizes the importance of remaining accountable to Ontarians and is committed to transparency and best practices in governance. As an agency of the Government of Ontario, we abide by the *Agencies and Appointments Directive* and the Memorandum of Understanding with the Minister of Education to ensure effective operations and stewardship of public funds.

As EQAO has awaited its renewed mandate this past fiscal year, it has focused its activities on short-term improvements and conducting large-scale assessments with integrity. Additionally, we have pursued preparations for upcoming operational changes that will help establish a strong foundation for the future improvement initiatives related to our modernization.

Leading the Organization to Prepare for the Future

EQAO is governed by a board of directors appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. During the 2018–2019 fiscal year, EQAO’s board of directors held six regularly scheduled meetings, virtual and in person, to oversee the work of the agency, in line with its mandate as defined by the *Education Quality and Accountability Office Act, 1996* (the *EQAO Act*). Over the year, the board provided strategic direction and approved the agency’s business plan, financial statements, risk assessments, annual report and contract decisions in accordance with the agency’s Delegation of Authority Directive.

The past year saw some changes to the membership of the agency’s board of directors. The term of some board members expired during the year, including that of Dave Cooke, who had been a board member since 2008 and the chair since 2015. David Agnew acted as interim chair from October 2018 to February 2019. In early 2019, EQAO welcomed the Government of Ontario’s appointment of three new board members—the agency’s first full-time chair, Dr. Cameron Montgomery, and board members Emily Brown and Jim Marsh.

The board’s connection to EQAO operations is through the chief executive officer (CEO). The CEO is accountable to the agency’s board for overseeing the management and the operations of the agency and the supervision of the agency’s staff. The CEO also carries out the roles and responsibilities assigned by the board, the *EQAO Act*, the Memorandum of Understanding and the applicable agency directives set out by the Management Board of Cabinet. Under the *Public Services of Ontario Act* (PSOA), the CEO serves as the ethics executive for the staff.

Relying on Committed and Professional Staff

EQAO's accomplishments are made possible through the continued dedication and support of its 95 full-time employees. We recognize the value and expertise of every member of our team and acknowledge their strong commitment to the organization. We are thankful to our entire staff for their valuable contribution and hard work, which has allowed our agency to become the respected leader in large-scale assessment programs it is today. We look forward to continuing to benefit from our employees' expertise as we modernize our assessment program and activities to support our provincial education system.

Listening to Advisory Committees

EQAO's operational governance includes advisory committees and external work groups comprised of experts that help guide our activities and inform thinking on different aspects of our work:

- **EQAO's Advisory Committee (EAC):** This committee currently offers advice on all of the agency's activities. In addition, the committee members offer input on key EQAO policies and programs. The committee also works to find feasible solutions to problems raised by its members.
- **EQAO Student Advisory Committee (ESAC):** This committee is a unique forum for students to share their ideas and experiences. ESAC represents the student voice in our activities to ensure students are informing our thinking as we continuously improve our programs. The committee is comprised of thirty students from Grades 7 to 12 from across the province. These members offer insights on how EQAO can improve assessments and programs and increase student engagement.
- **Equity Council:** This work group is made up of external experts and works alongside staff on creating assessments that focus on equity, diversity and inclusion. The group's input helps to identify and mitigate any discriminatory biases and systemic barriers to ensure equity of opportunity for all students regardless of their background or circumstances.
- **Modernization in Measurement Advisory Panel (MMAP):** This interdisciplinary work group helps shape the future operations of assessments, scoring and reporting. The committee is composed of experts who examine facets of large-scale assessment programs such as the experiences of assessment users, authenticity and equity, psychometrics and technology, and knowledge mobilization.

Managing Public Resources Responsibly

EQAO is dedicated to effective business practices and monitors and evaluates business processes to promote the continuous improvement of its activities. Despite a reduction in our operating budget by more than 20% (more than 40% when adjusted for inflation) over the past 16 years, we continue to ensure financial and procurement accountability along with strong service delivery through all of our operations.

The large-scale assessment program we offer measures how well students across the province are meeting the numeracy and literacy expectations defined in *The Ontario Curriculum* at key stages of their academic development. During the 2018–2019 fiscal year, the cost of operating EQAO, which reports on the quality of publicly funded education and helps foster accountability, was approximately \$32 million. This amounts to a cost of \$15.69 of the \$12 300 spent annually per student enrolled in an Ontario public school. In addition, EQAO's budget represents approximately 0.13% of the government's overall education expenditures in Ontario.

Mitigating Risk Across the Agency

EQAO ensures there are processes in place at all times to control quality and mitigate risk that could affect the integrity of its assessment results and data, as the latter are key to fulfilling its mandate. Likewise, EQAO's risk-management program applies to all other aspects of the agency's operations. Risk-mitigation strategies are currently in place across the agency and are reported to EQAO's board of directors and the Ministry of Education. During this fiscal year, EQAO established its renewed Enterprise Risk Management policy and procedures in an effort to strengthen its risk-managed operations.

Financial Statements: Year Ended March 31, 2019

EQAO's audited financial results for operations ending March 31, 2019, which were funded through Ministry of Education allocations.

Financial Statements of

**EDUCATION QUALITY AND
ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE**

And Independent Auditors' Report thereon

Year ended March 31, 2019



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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

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

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (the Entity), which comprise:

- the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2019
- the statement of operations and accumulated surplus for the year then ended
- the statement of changes in net financial assets for the year then ended
- the statement of cash flows for the year then ended
- and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies

(Hereinafter referred to as the "financial statements").

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Entity as at March 31, 2019 and its results of operations, its changes in net financial assets, and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the "Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements" section of our auditors' report.

We are independent of the Entity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

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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Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the 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.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Entity's financial reporting process.

Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditors' report that includes our opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.

We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit 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.



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- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditors' report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditors' report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- Communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

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

Chartered Professional Accountants, Licensed Public Accountants

Vaughan, Canada

June 6, 2019

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2019, with comparative information for 2018

	2019	2018
Financial Assets		
Cash	\$ 3,226,653	\$ 1,590,434
Cash - board restricted fund (note 2(b))	7,917,046	6,969,154
Accounts receivable (note 3)	301,016	1,974,320
Tangible capital assets held for resale (note 5)	—	250,000
	11,444,715	10,783,908
Financial Liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	2,285,935	3,241,441
Net financial assets	9,158,780	7,542,467
Non-Financial Assets		
Prepaid expenses (note 4)	516,364	613,190
Tangible capital assets (note 5)	580,704	884,460
	1,097,068	1,497,650
Commitments (note 6)		
Accumulated surplus (note 2)	\$ 10,255,848	\$ 9,040,117

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

On behalf of the Board:

Chairman

Chief Executive Officer

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Statement of Operations and Accumulated Surplus

Year ended March 31, 2019, with comparative information for 2018

	2019 Budget (note 10)	2019 Actual	2018 Actual
Revenue:			
Ministry of Education:			
Base allocation payments	\$ 32,729,117	\$ 32,229,111	\$ 32,431,323
Other	—	1,012,197	423,234
	32,729,117	33,241,308	32,854,557
Expenses:			
Service and rental	17,685,401	17,882,491	16,225,420
Salaries and wages	12,567,330	11,815,715	12,387,720
Transportation and communication	1,859,374	1,227,020	2,335,037
Supplies and equipment	617,012	1,100,351	692,161
	32,729,117	32,025,577	31,640,338
Annual surplus	—	1,215,731	1,214,219
Accumulated surplus, beginning of year	9,040,117	9,040,117	7,825,898
Accumulated surplus, end of year	\$ 9,040,117	\$ 10,255,848	\$ 9,040,117
Accumulated surplus comprises:			
Externally restricted		\$ 2,338,802	\$ 2,070,963
Internally restricted (note 2(b))		7,917,046	6,969,154
		\$ 10,255,848	\$ 9,040,117

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Statement of Changes in Net Financial Assets

Year ended March 31, 2019, with comparative information for 2018

	2019 Budget (note 10)	2019 Actual	2018 Actual
Annual surplus	\$ —	\$ 1,215,731	\$ 1,214,219
Acquisition of tangible capital assets	—	(110,399)	(530,957)
Amortization of tangible capital assets (note 5)	333,822	414,155	318,375
	333,822	303,756	(212,582)
Acquisition of prepaid expenses	—	(516,364)	(613,190)
Use of prepaid expenses	—	613,190	1,010,291
	—	96,826	397,101
Increase in net financial assets	333,822	1,616,313	1,398,738
Net financial assets, beginning of year	7,542,467	7,542,467	6,143,729
Net financial assets, end of year	\$ 7,876,289	\$ 9,158,780	\$ 7,542,467

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Statement of Cash Flows

Year ended March 31, 2019, with comparative information for 2018

	2019	2018
Cash provided by (used in):		
Operating activities:		
Annual surplus	\$ 1,215,731	\$ 1,214,219
Items not involving cash:		
Amortization of tangible capital assets (note 5)	414,155	318,375
Impairment of tangible capital assets (note 5)	250,000	—
	1,879,886	1,532,594
Change in non-cash operating working capital:		
Accounts receivable	1,673,304	(1,329,169)
Tangible capital assets held for resale	—	(250,000)
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(955,506)	1,080,578
Prepaid expenses	96,826	397,101
	2,694,510	1,431,104
Capital activities:		
Acquisition of tangible capital assets	(110,399)	(530,957)
Investing activities:		
Change to board restricted fund	(947,892)	(366,836)
Increase in cash	1,636,219	533,311
Cash, beginning of year	1,590,434	1,057,123
Cash, end of year	\$ 3,226,653	\$ 1,590,434

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2019

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.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2019

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.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2019

2. Accumulated surplus (continued):

(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.

	2019	2018
Balance, beginning of year	\$ 6,969,154	\$ 6,602,318
Appropriation of other income	813,087	309,850
Interest income earned on funds	199,110	113,384
Cost associated with fee-based administration (note 8)	(64,305)	(56,398)
Balance, end of year	\$ 7,917,046	\$ 6,969,154

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 \$96,801 (2018 - \$1,891,740) 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:

	2019	2018
Prepaid expenses	\$ 256,719	\$ 266,246
Prepaid secondees	259,645	346,944
	\$ 516,364	\$ 613,190

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2019

5. Tangible capital assets:

			2019	2018
	Cost	Accumulated amortization	Net book value	Net book value
Computer equipment	\$ 2,394,398	\$ 1,885,220	\$ 509,178	\$ 779,892
Furniture and fixtures	433,759	362,233	71,526	104,568
	<u>\$ 2,828,157</u>	<u>\$ 2,247,453</u>	<u>\$ 580,704</u>	<u>\$ 884,460</u>

Amortization of tangible capital assets ("TCA") recorded in the current year amounts to \$414,155 (2018 - \$318,375).

In 2018, the Agency approved plans to sell certain TCA, however, was unable to do so during the course of the 2019 year. Accordingly, the Agency has expensed the full cost of the assets of \$250,000 during the year.

6. Lease commitments:

The Agency leases premises under certain operating lease arrangements with expiry dates up to December 31, 2022. 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:

2020	\$ 1,509,158
2021	1,026,848
2022	1,026,848
2023	770,136
	<u>\$ 4,332,990</u>

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2019

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.

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 2018.

10. Budget:

The budget information has been derived from the budget approved by the Board on August 23, 2018.

Appendix A: Performance Targets, Measures and Analysis

Assessment and Evaluation			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
Conduct modern assessments with quality and integrity, and leverage technology to create, administer and score assessments.	Ensure EQAO assessments, processes and results have the highest technical quality and meet national and international standards.	Administer and report on the assessments for the 2017–2018 school year.	EQAO completed the administration and scoring of the assessments for the 2017–2018 school year. All assessment results were reported on schedule.
		Conduct an updated jurisdictional review and market scan by March 2019 to better understand assessment and psychometric trends and new offerings in large-scale assessment.	EQAO broadened its understanding of assessment trends, market options and possibilities for assessment re-design.
		Research alternative assessment models, equating plans and reporting plans by March 2019.	EQAO enhanced its understanding of alternative assessment and equating models.
		Explore Ministry of Education initiatives that may affect the future of large-scale assessment, including the Education Equity Action Plan, the broadband initiative and the use of digital math tools and resources.	EQAO obtained a better understanding of the province's school board IT landscape and conducted reporting and questionnaire reviews in consultation with stakeholders to enhance its business operations.
		Develop a project plan by March 2020 updating the agency rollout of modernized assessments. This plan should include reflecting on	EQAO developed a short-term assessment stabilization plan. Modifications to assessment accommodation policies were

		past learnings and experiences and developing key activities, performance indicators, risks and costs.	implemented to align with stabilization efforts. EQAO also increased stakeholder satisfaction by better aligning assessment procedures with classroom environments.
		Coordinate Ontario's participation in national and international assessments (PCAP, TIMSS, ICILS, TALIS and PISA), and provide support for analyzing and reporting the results as they are released.	EQAO coordinated the logistics of the administrations of PCAP and TIMSS with schools and school boards.
Evaluate the public accountability of school boards, particularly how they share their EQAO results with the communities they serve.	Ensure school boards use and share EQAO data, information and research with parents and community.	Annually monitor completion of teacher and principal questionnaires by school boards.	EQAO broadened understanding about the value of principal questionnaires by integrating customized information into key CEO and CAO presentations.
Research			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
Conduct and commission meaningful research studies.	Facilitate the linking of EQAO assessment data to data from other sources in the broader education sector.	Collaborate with education partners (e.g., People for Education; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada; Modernization in Measurement Advisory Panel) to determine measures of transferable competencies.	EQAO established a Research Review Committee and continued agency engagement in research through discussions and outreach with research partners.
		Explore the relationship between full-day kindergarten and academic achievement.	EQAO increased its contribution to educational research through key partnerships to provide research into links between early

			learning and trajectories of student development.
		Conduct research to understand students with special education needs, including their accommodations and drive to succeed.	EQAO increased its contributions to educational research by providing preliminary findings on learning outcomes of students with special education needs.
		By June 2018, undertake a practitioner-based research project exploring the relationship between socio-demographic factors and student achievement outcomes.	EQAO increased its contributions to educational research by conducting an in-depth examination of mathematics trajectories.
Communication and Engagement			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
Report the results of EQAO's assessments, evaluations and research.	Provide user-friendly, interactive and technically-supported access to EQAO results.	Deliver public media campaigns that report on EQAO's provincial assessment results, reaching at least 20 million people while earning a campaign quality score of 85% or greater for achieving established campaign success criteria across education stakeholder groups.	EQAO successfully executed an integrated communications campaign from August to October 2018, reaching almost 42 million people through more than 500 unique media stories and almost 44 000 impressions on social media.
		Continue to use the interactive reporting tool to increase understanding of the effective use of EQAO data.	EQAO made systematic improvements to the internal reporting process through agency-wide coordination for future reporting cycles and streamlined its reports for greater efficiency.
		Review current business intelligence, analytics and	EQAO made systematic improvements in the structure

		reporting infrastructure and tools, and develop a plan by March 2020.	and consistency of data to support transition to the business intelligence model.
Engage with Ontarians in using EQAO information, data and research effectively.	Increase public awareness of the role and purpose of EQAO.	Provide responsive information to specific stakeholder groups to increase their knowledge and effective use of EQAO's large-scale assessment data.	EQAO continued to update its website, draw more attention to data provided through social media and undertake several stakeholder-related initiatives (e.g., physical and virtual meetings with stakeholder groups, including meetings with the EQAO Student Advisory Committee; data-literacy information released online; guides for parents and guardians in 21 languages) to increase stakeholders' knowledge and effective use of data.
		Use social media to build and grow engaged and informed communities.	EQAO improved communication about the agency's initiatives with online communities, maintained EQAO's high online-service standards and enhanced public engagement through social media.
	Engage stakeholders in the appropriate use of EQAO data and research to support accountability and evidence-informed decision making.	Provide responsive information to specific stakeholder groups to increase their knowledge and effective use of EQAO large-scale assessment data.	EQAO maintained high service standards through its information centre. The agency also revised products to support parents' and guardians' understanding of the tests.

Business and Governance			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
Provide effective governance for the agency.	Ensure that the internal governance and operational policy frameworks support the agency's operation.	Ensure all administrative policies, protocols and procedures that apply to the board of directors, staff and stakeholder committees consistently align with provincial directives and legislation and are updated within established timelines.	EQAO monitored and updated its policies, protocols, procedures and internal documents as needed and communicated them to appropriate parties as applicable.
		Develop protocols and practices that comply with the <i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act</i> (AODA), and help the agency make its business operations fully accessible.	EQAO revised its accessibility policy to align with the standards and requirements of the AODA and the <i>Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation</i> . EQAO ensured that it provided goods and services to people with accessibility needs with the same high quality as it did for those with no accessibility needs.
		Continuously monitor provincial legislation and directives, and ensure all relevant agency submissions are provided to the Ontario Public Service (OPS) within established timelines.	EQAO continued to align itself with the Ministry's directives and OPS guidelines and protocols and provided all required agency documents to the government in a timely manner.
Ensure effective business practices.	Ensure financial and acquisition accountability and exceptional service delivery.	Ensure annual financial accountability for the agency through quarterly reporting and budgetary controls in alignment with Public Sector Accounting Board guidelines.	EQAO followed all regulations pertaining to financial and procurement accountability, and auditors reviewed accounting files as part of regular practice.

		Efficiently manage procurement processes by adhering to applicable current directives and operational policies.	EQAO monitored its compliance with new and existing policies, including the new procurement directive.
	Monitor and evaluate business processes to promote continuous improvement.	Monitor and annually modify the assessment cycle to improve efficiency, privacy and security.	EQAO improved efficiencies in IT-related services, especially for private and security matters, through the creation of policies and through the stabilization of its network.
		Implement recommendations related to the enterprise-wide Privacy Impact Assessment and Threat and Risk Assessment.	EQAO made efficient systematic improvements to the structure and delivery of IT services.
		Enhance internal and external user experiences by improving agency programs, systems and processes.	EQAO reviewed internal IT security policies and advised staff of policy changes to help improve business operations.
Foster a strong organizational culture.	Promote a motivated and engaged team environment that recognizes the unique contributions of all employees.	By March 2019, create, maintain and refine initiatives that support a positive work environment.	EQAO supported a positive and engaged work environment through different employee-engagement activities.
		By March 2019, develop tactics for internal information and knowledge sharing throughout all levels of the agency.	EQAO rolled out regular initiatives successfully throughout the year, according to the internal communications strategy.
		By March 2019, expand existing employee-recognition activities and explore new ones to formalize EQAO's recognition program.	EQAO implemented the Years of Service Program and expanded the Employee Recognition Program.
		By March 2019, assemble an EQAO Equity and Inclusion	EQAO increased representation on the EQAO Advisory

		Committee that includes both internal and external representation.	Committee and increased opportunities for professional learning among committee members and staff.
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