

Chapter 20

Education—Instruction Time

1.0 MAIN POINTS

In our *2009 Report – Volume 3*, we reported on the Ministry of Education’s (Ministry) processes to achieve school division compliance in delivering student instruction time as required by the Minister, and made four recommendations. We reported our first follow-up of this audit in our *2011 Report – Volume 2* and found that the Ministry still had work to do to meet our recommendations. This chapter reports our second follow-up of actions taken by the Ministry on the four outstanding recommendations.

As of January 31, 2014, the Ministry had implemented one recommendation. The Ministry has set a definition of “instruction time” that will help to clarify expectations for delivery of the core curriculum. The Ministry still needs to monitor whether school divisions meet the Ministry’s requirement for instruction time, require school divisions to report publicly on their related performance, and take necessary corrective actions.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education sets the provincial core curriculum that provides guidance on what students are to learn and when they are to learn it. The core curriculum includes seven required areas of study. The Ministry sets a required time allocation for instruction for each of these areas of study. If the Ministry does not have effective processes to provide guidance to the school divisions for delivering required student instruction time, students are less likely to receive the required number of instruction hours. It is also more likely that students in different school divisions will receive different hours of instruction.

Our *2009 Report – Volume 3*, Chapter 4 reported that, for the year ended September 30, 2009, the Ministry of Education did not have adequate processes to achieve school division compliance in delivering student instruction time as required by the Minister. We made four recommendations. In our first follow-up (reported in our *2011 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 5), we found the Ministry had taken some action on the recommendations, but still had work to do.

This chapter reports the results of our second follow-up to assess the Ministry’s progress in addressing our past recommendations.

To conduct this review, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance*. To evaluate the Ministry’s progress towards meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. The Ministry’s management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.



3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation, the Ministry's actions up to January 31, 2014, and the status of the recommendations, including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation.

We found that while the Ministry has implemented one recommendation, it still has work to do to meet the remaining three.

3.1 “Instruction Time” Defined

We recommended that the Ministry of Education define “instruction time” to set clear expectations for delivery of the core curriculum. (2009 Report – Volume 3; Public Accounts Committee agreement May 12, 2010)

Status – Implemented

In December 2012, *The Education Regulations, 1986* (Regulations) were amended to include a definition of instructional time. As per Regulations section 20.4,

Instructional time is any time in which pupils of a school are in attendance under teacher supervision for the purpose of receiving instruction in an education program, including work experience programs, parent-teacher-pupil conferences, examinations, and other learning activities provided by the board of education or conseil scolaire.

The Regulations also define non-instruction time and establish requirements for the number of hours of instructional time for each school year (i.e., 950 hours for grades 1-12 and 475 hours for kindergarten). The Ministry communicated these changes to school divisions for the 2013-14 school year.

3.2 Require School Divisions to Publicly Report

We recommended that the Ministry of Education require school divisions to publicly report on their performance in meeting the Ministry's instruction time requirements. (2009 Report – Volume 3; Public Accounts Committee agreement May 12, 2010)

Status – Not Implemented

The Regulations require Boards of Education to notify the Minister of Education and publish their school calendar before the start of the school year. The Regulations also require the school calendars to include holidays, vacation periods, school hours of operation, kindergarten hours of operation, instructional days, and non-instructional days. Starting with the 2013-2014 school year, all school divisions had a calendar that

outlined holidays, instructional, and non-instructional days. However, these calendars do not set out requirements for instruction time by subject, or school hours of operation.

The Ministry has not required school divisions to report publicly on whether schools are providing the required instruction time in all subjects. As a result, the Ministry does not know if school divisions are meeting the required time allocations for instruction for the seven required areas of study. If school divisions are not delivering the required student instruction time, students are more likely to receive different amounts of instruction between school divisions. These factors negatively affect the quality of education that students in Saskatchewan receive.

3.3 Monitor Compliance with Core Curriculum Requirements

We recommended that the Ministry of Education monitor for all core curriculum areas of study the extent to which school divisions meet the Ministry's requirements for instruction time. (2009 Report – Volume 3; Public Accounts Committee agreement May 12, 2010)

Status – Not Implemented

As of January 31, 2014, the Ministry did not have processes to monitor the extent to which school divisions meet the Ministry's requirements for instruction time in core curriculum areas of study. The Ministry advised that, at January 31, 2014, it did not have the capacity to capture instruction time information for core areas of study in school divisions. The Ministry is looking into options for how to do this going forward. If the Ministry does not monitor whether school divisions are meeting its requirements for instruction time, it cannot determine whether students are receiving sufficient and consistent instruction for all of the core curriculum areas of study.

3.4 Take Corrective Action Where Necessary

We recommended that the Ministry of Education take corrective action where necessary to improve school division compliance with the Ministry's requirements for instruction time. (2009 Report – Volume 3; Public Accounts Committee agreement May 12, 2010)

Status – Not Implemented

As outlined in **Section 3.3**, the Ministry needs to monitor compliance with the seven core curriculum areas of study to determine whether school divisions are meeting its requirements. The Ministry needs this information to determine whether corrective action is necessary and to direct school divisions as needed. Student performance could be negatively affected as a result of insufficient instruction time. As of January 31, 2014, the Ministry had not taken action on this recommendation.

