

Chapter 37

Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81 – English as an Additional Language Programming

1.0 MAIN POINTS

By May 2018, the Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81 had implemented one of the three recommendations made in our 2016 audit of its processes to provide English as an Additional Language (EAL) programming. Regina Catholic had rationalized the number of Kindergarten to Grade 8 EAL teachers required for its EAL program.

In addition, Regina Catholic partially implemented another recommendation and made no progress on another one due to technology limitations. While Regina Catholic provided its Board of Education with better reports about its EAL programming, it continues to need to periodically analyze the results of the EAL program and provide its Board with periodic reports on the success of the EAL program.

Without the ability to track students' English-language proficiency progress, the Division cannot assess the overall success of the EAL program and make adjustments as needed.

To succeed in school, EAL students need support in adapting to a Canadian curriculum, school environment, and culture. Supports help students learn and graduate on time.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes our follow-up of management's actions on the recommendations we made in 2016.

Our *2016 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 29 concluded that Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81 had, except in the areas of our four recommendations, effective processes to provide English as an Additional Language programming to support the academic success of immigrant Kindergarten to Grade 8 students.¹

To conduct this audit engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate Regina Catholic's progress towards meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. Regina Catholic's management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To perform our follow-up audit on our recommendations, we discussed actions taken with Division management, and reviewed Regina Catholic's guidance and documentation related to EAL programming. In addition, we tested a sample of the Division's student enrolment projections, EAL student enrolment data comparisons, and reviewed board minutes.

¹ The original report regarding these recommendations can be found at <https://auditor.sk.ca/publications/public-reports/>. We reported the original audit work in *2016 Report – Volume 2* (Chapter 29, pp. 189 - 204).

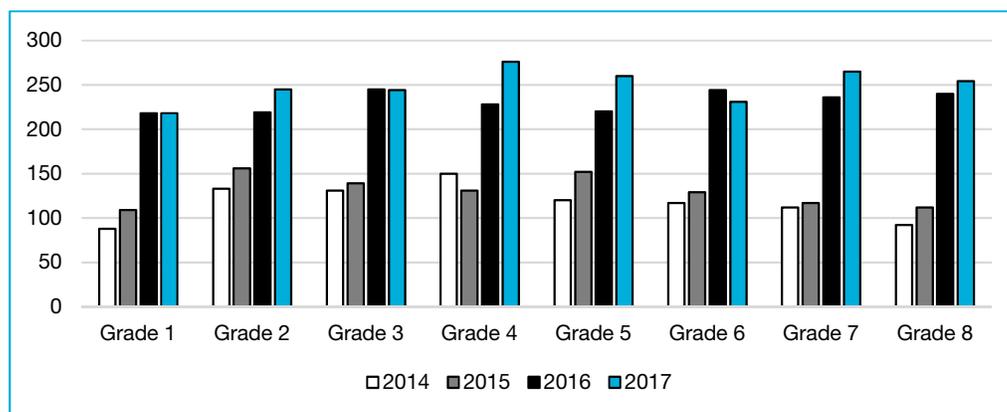


2.1 Demand for EAL Programming in Regina Catholic Significant

Regina Catholic operates 31 schools located in Regina. It is responsible for educating about 11,500 students including about 3,350 EAL students.² Regina Catholic employs over 640 full-time equivalent teachers including 12.5 EAL teaching positions at June 2018.³ At the end of the 2017-18 school year, 73% of the Division's EAL students were in Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 8.⁴

From 2014 to 2017, enrolment in Regina Catholic's EAL programming had increased by 111% with significant increases among all grade levels.

Figure 1 – Number of Regina Catholic Grade 1 to 8 Students Registered in EAL Programming^A



Source: Ministry of Education – Student Data System as of September 30, 2017.

^A Total Grades 1 to 8 Regina Catholic students registered in EAL programming during 2014-2018 were as follows: 2014: 943; 2015: 1,045; 2016: 1,850; 2017: 1,993.

Regina Catholic offers EAL programs at each of its 25 elementary schools. Providing EAL programs at each elementary school enables students to learn English and the curriculum at their neighbourhood school and in their local community.⁵

In 2017-18, Regina Catholic spent about \$1.2 million on EAL instruction and support staff and \$54 thousand on other EAL resources (e.g., classroom materials, software, professional development) (2016-17: \$1.0 million on EAL instruction and support staff and \$62 thousand on other EAL resources).⁶

English-language proficiency of immigrants, refugees, and their families is a key factor in not only attaining Saskatchewan educational goals but in enabling immigrants, refugees, and their families to contribute positively to Saskatchewan.⁷ Students new to Canada may struggle with language barriers that can hinder their academic success. Future educational and employment opportunities of students who leave school before graduating from Grade 12 are limited.⁸

² Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81, *Annual Report 2016-17*, pp. 3-4, and adapted from information provided by Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81.

³ Adapted from information provided by Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81.

⁴ Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81, *EAL/Immigration PreK - 12 Student Enrolment Data Comparison 2017-2018* for June 2018.

⁵ Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81, *English as an Additional Language Brochure*.

⁶ Adapted from information provided by Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81.

⁷ *The Ministry of Education Action Plan – English as an Additional Language and Immigration*, (2011), p. 3.

⁸ www.centerforpubliceducation.org/research/keeping-kids-school-glance (26 July 2018).

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at May 31, 2018, and Regina Catholic's actions up to that date. We found that Regina Catholic implemented one recommendation, partially implemented one recommendation, and made no progress on one recommendation. In addition, we found one recommendation was no longer relevant.

3.1 Division Forecasting for EAL Programming

We recommended that Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81 annually reassess its estimate for Kindergarten to Grade 8 English as an Additional Language student enrolment. (2016 Report – Volume 2; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 21, 2017)

Status – No Longer Relevant

We determined that the above recommendation was no longer relevant for the following reasons.

Regina Catholic re-evaluated the approximate number of new EAL students it expects to enrol each year. Since our 2016 audit, Regina Catholic increased its forecast of new EAL students per school year to between 350 and 400 students from its previous range of between 300 and 350 students. However, the Division does not plan to annually reassess estimated number of EAL students because it does not use this forecast when rationalizing EAL teaching resources. Instead, it allocates EAL staff at the beginning of a school year, and then reallocates them, as needed, using a reactive approach based on the identified need and the available resources.

As shown in **Figure 2**, actual increases in enrolment of EAL students in the last two years (since our 2016 audit) fluctuated from 389 students in 2016-17 to 370 students in 2017-18.

Consistent with our 2016 audit, Regina Catholic uses an external consultant to forecast total student enrolment for each school within the Division. The external consultant does not forecast enrolment for EAL students separately.

Figure 2—Regina Catholic's Kindergarten to Grade 12 EAL Student Enrolment Estimate and Actuals

School Year	EAL Enrolment Increase Estimate (K-12)	Actual EAL Enrolment Increase (K-12)	Difference ^A	% Difference
2012-13	300-350	486	136	38.9%
2013-14	300-350	477	127	36.3%
2014-15	300-350	382	32	9.1%
2015-16	300-350	305	-	-
2016-17	350-400	389	-	-
2017-18	350-400	370	-	-

Source: Adapted from information provided by Regina Catholic. The Division does not separately forecast EAL enrolment for Kindergarten to Grade 8.

^A Difference between actual increase and top or bottom of the range of estimated increase.



3.2 EAL Teaching Resources Rationalized

We recommended that Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81 rationalize the number of Kindergarten to Grade 8 EAL teachers required for its English as an Additional Language program. (2016 Report – Volume 2; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 21, 2017)

Status – Implemented

On a monthly basis, Regina Catholic rationalizes, in writing, the number of EAL staff required when staff document their assessment for additional support positions.⁹

In addition, the Division reviews monthly reports to determine whether it provides sufficient EAL support. The monthly reports show the total actual number of EAL/immigrant students at each school, as well as the number of students exceeding English-language proficiency level B1.2, requiring direct EAL support, and receiving direct support.¹⁰ Regina Catholic allocates support staff using a reactive approach based on the identified need and the available resources.

3.3 Further Analysis of EAL Program Results Needed

We recommended that Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81 periodically analyze the results of the Kindergarten to Grade 8 English as an Additional Language program. (2016 Report – Volume 2; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 21, 2017)

Status – Not Implemented

Regina Catholic has not analyzed whether its EAL program is successful.

Since our 2016 audit, the Division attempted to track more student EAL data. But management found the cost of manually compiling EAL student progress data outweighed the benefit of analyzing progress of EAL students on an overall basis. Management indicated that the IT system Regina Catholic uses to track student performance does not have a functionality to compile or report data. Management noted that the Division expects to start analyzing progress of EAL students on an overall basis when a new student data system becomes available for use in the fall of 2019.

Consistent with the results of our 2016 audit, the Division's EAL teachers continue to assess the progress of EAL students on a daily basis. Also as described in **Section 3.2**, the Division assesses EAL enrolment at each school to rationalize the number of EAL staff.

Without the ability to track students' English-language proficiency progress, the Division cannot assess the overall success of its EAL program (e.g., percentage of students progressing, struggling, or achieving English-language proficiency level B1.2, or graduation rates of EAL students).

⁹ Regina Catholic allocates EAL staff based on the total number of students requiring direct EAL support and the students' level of English proficiency. EAL staff include classroom teachers and other support staff such as EAL teachers, counsellors, and speech language pathologists.

¹⁰ At English-language proficiency level B1.2, a student can describe experiences and give explanations for opinions.

We recommended that Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81 provide its Board of Education with periodic reports on the success of the Kindergarten to Grade 8 English as an Additional Language program. (2016 Report – Volume 2; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 21, 2017)

Status – Partially implemented

Since, as of May 2018, the Division does not have the ability to track students' English-language proficiency progress, it had not reported this information to its Board. This information would help Regina Catholic and the Board to periodically evaluate the successful delivery of the program (i.e., if expectations were met), identify challenges (e.g., sufficient EAL instruction resources), and identify resulting program changes (e.g., other supports and resources).

Since 2016, the Board started receiving an annual EAL program overview (i.e., a report that outlines the program's strengths and challenges, and management's recommendations for program changes). However, because the Division had not set overall program expectations, the Board was not yet receiving reports on this.

The Board also continued to receive periodic information on the EAL program such as bi-monthly enrolment reports.

