

Chapter 20

North East School Division No. 200—Increasing Grade 3 Students Reading at Grade Level

1.0 MAIN POINTS

The North East School Division No. 200 implemented the one recommendation remaining from our 2016 audit. Since May 2018, North East appropriately requires that schools use a single tool to assess Grade 3 student reading levels. North East previously evaluated the effectiveness of the tool.

Focused assessments and monitoring of Grade 3 reading levels helps North East efficiently identify students who need additional support or resources.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes our follow-up audit of management's actions on the one remaining recommendation we made in 2016.¹

2.1 Background

Grade 3 reading levels are considered a leading indicator of future student performance.

North East continues to work towards meeting the Ministry of Education goal of 80 percent of Grade 3 students reading at grade level by 2020.² For the 2018-19 school year, North East reports 77.7 percent of Grade 3 students were reading at or above grade level; an improvement of 4.3 percent from the previous year.³

North East's work helps to support the improvement in reading levels for approximately 1,400 Kindergarten to Grade 3 students from Nipawin, Tisdale, Hudson Bay, Melfort, and the surrounding area.⁴

2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

Our *2016 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 11, concluded, for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2015, North East had, other than the five recommendation areas, effective processes to increase the percentage of Grade 3 students reading at grade level to meet the Education Sector Strategic Plan goal of 80 percent by 2020.

¹ The original report regarding these recommendations can be found at auditor.sk.ca/publications/public-reports. We reported the original audit work in *2016 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 11. See *2018 Report – Volume 1*, Chapter 23 for the results of the previous follow-up audit.

² Ministry of Education, *Education Sector Strategic Plan: Cycle 4 (2019-20)* (www.saskatchewan.ca/government/government-structure/ministries/education#annual-reports (20 Mar 2020)).

³ North East School Division No. 200, *2018-19 Annual Report*, p. 14.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6, 34.



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

To complete our follow-up audit, we discussed actions taken with management and reviewed documents and analysis prepared by North East.

3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATION

This section sets out the recommendation, including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to it, its status at March 6, 2020, and North East's actions up to that date.

3.1 Assessment Tool in Use Evaluated

We recommended that North East School Division No. 200 periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the tools it uses to assess student reading levels. (2016 Report – Volume 1, p. 124, Recommendation 4; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 14, 2016)

Status—Intent of recommendation implemented

North East requires schools use a single tool to assess students' reading levels—a tool which North East has evaluated.

As of May 2018, North East requires teachers to assess student reading levels using a Diagnostic Levelled Reading assessment tool, and no longer requires the use of other tools (e.g., a tool previously used to assess student reading comprehension strategies).

In 2016-2017, North East formally evaluated the tool it requires schools continue to use to assess the reading levels of Grade 3 students. The Ministry of Education allows school divisions to use this tool (as one of the Diagnostic Levelled Reading assessments) to assess Grade 3 reading levels.⁵

As of March 2020, because the Ministry continues to support the chosen tool, North East has determined there is no need to revisit its 2016-17 evaluation. We agree.

Requiring teachers to use only one assessment tool helps to ensure they and students use their time efficiently and only spend time on assessments that contribute to the Division's monitoring of reading levels and identification of students who need additional support or resources.

⁵ The Diagnostic Levelled Reading assessment measures fluency and comprehension (within the text [e.g., retell events, main idea, details, character setting, problem solving] and beyond the text [e.g., inferencing, connections, opinions]).