

Chapter 35

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

1.0 MAIN POINTS

By June 2020, the Regina Catholic Separate School Division No. 81 had fully implemented one and partially implemented the second of two recommendations outstanding from our 2016 audit of its processes to provide English as an additional language (EAL) programming.

The Division developed a process to analyze the results of its Kindergarten to Grade 8 EAL programming. It periodically collected data about students participating in the program from schools for analysis. However, the Division could not complete its analysis because of errors in the data collected. It recognized meaningful analysis needs consistent and comparable data. It plans to take steps to confirm the accuracy and consistency of the data.

Starting with the 2019-20 school year, the Division gives its Board of Education a report each year on the Kindergarten to Grade 8 EAL program. It plans to incorporate the results of its analysis into future annual reports.

Periodic analysis of, and reporting on the results of the EAL program would help the Division evaluate the program (e.g., if expectations were met, and whether students receive the support they need to improve English language skills).

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division operates 32 schools located in Regina. It is responsible for educating about 12,000 students including about 3,725 EAL students.¹ The Division employs 15.1 full time equivalent EAL teachers at June 2020.²

The Division 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.³

English language proficiency of immigrants and refugees is a key factor in not only attaining Saskatchewan educational goals but also in enabling them to contribute positively to Saskatchewan.⁴ Students new to Canada may struggle with language barriers that can hinder their academic success.

2.1 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter reports the results of our second follow-up of two recommendations we first made in our 2016 audit of the Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division's processes to provide EAL programming.

¹ Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81, *Annual Report 2018-19*, p. 6.

² Adapted from information provided by Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81.

³ Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81, *English as an Additional Language Brochure*.

⁴ *The Ministry of Education Action Plan—English as an Additional Language and Immigration*, (2011), p. 3.



Our *2016 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 29, concluded that the Division had, except in the areas of our four recommendations, effective processes to provide EAL programming to support the academic success of Kindergarten to Grade 8 students who are immigrants or refugees needing additional support to learn English.⁵ As reported in our 2018 follow-up audit, the Division implemented two of the four recommendations.⁶

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

To perform our follow-up audit, we discussed actions taken with the Division management, and reviewed the guidance and documentation related to EAL programming. In addition, we tested a sample of the Division's schools for EAL student enrolment data and made comparisons with the division-wide data used for division-wide analysis.

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 June 30, 2020, and Regina Catholic School Division's actions up to that date. We found that Division implemented one recommendation and partially implemented the other recommendation.

3.1 Improved Accuracy of English as an Additional Language Program Analysis Needed

We recommended 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, p. 203, Recommendation 3;

Public Accounts Committee agreement September 21, 2017)

Status—Partially Implemented

The Division developed a process to periodically analyze the results of its EAL program, but did not complete its analysis because of discrepancies in student data collected.

The Division implemented a 2018-19 division-wide goal for the EAL program (i.e., by June 2019, 70% of Grade 1 to 12 EAL students with global Common Framework of Reference (CFR) levels of A1.1 to A2.2 who have been receiving EAL support for at least a year will increase one global CFR level).⁷ The Division maintained the same goal for the 2019-20 school year.

⁵ *2016 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 29, p. 189-204. (4 September 2020).

⁶ *2018 Report – Volume 2*, Chapter 37, p. 253-257. (4 September 2020).

⁷ The Common Framework of Reference (CFR) is a criterion-referenced performance scale that supports educators work with EAL students. The scale is six levels of proficiency from basic A.1 to proficient C.2. There are two steps in each level of the scale. A1 and A2 are the two levels in the basic category of language growth.

In June 2019, the Division created a comprehensive spreadsheet to collect data from each of its schools about the progress of students in the EAL program (i.e., in January, and June of each year). EAL teachers received professional development training regarding the spreadsheet and collection of data.

We found the Division entered student data into the spreadsheet in January 2020, and March 2020. It used March 2020 data for the 2019-20 school year instead of June 2020. It used March data because the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the Government of Saskatchewan ordering the indefinite suspension of all classes in pre K-12 schools effective March 20, 2020 as a safety measure.⁸

We also found the Division started to analyze CFR results for students' progress year-over-year and total time spent in the EAL program, but was unable to complete its analysis due to identified problems with the accuracy and consistency of the data. It identified discrepancies between students that meet the requirement for inclusion in the EAL program and those analyzed at the school level. In addition, it noted other discrepancies in the data from the schools when it was trying to summarize the data. It plans to implement a review process for data entry in the future to confirm the consistency and accuracy of the data.

Periodic analysis helps the Division assess the success of its EAL program (e.g., percentage of students progressing, struggling, or achieving desired CFR level), and make sure students receive the support they need to improve English language skills.

3.2 Board Receives Updates on English as an Additional Language Program Successes

We recommended 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, p. 203, Recommendation 4; Public Accounts Committee agreement September 21, 2017)

Status—Implemented

The Division gave an update to its Board of Directors on the success of the EAL program. The Division plans to give its Board updates annually.

The Superintendent of Education Services first presented an update to the Board in June 2020. We found the update included discussions on staffing the EAL program, methodology used in measuring performance of students receiving programming (e.g., CFR for EAL, discussions on achievement of the division-wide goal for the EAL program, and professional development for EAL teachers). The Division expects future updates will include the results of its analysis of EAL student data.

Periodic reporting to the Board helps the Board evaluate the delivery of the EAL program (e.g., if expectations were met), and identify whether program changes are needed.

⁸ www.saskatchewan.ca/government/news-and-media/2020/march/16/class-suspensions (22 September 2020).

