

Chapter 18

Saskatoon Public School Division No. 13—Kindergarten Readiness to Learn

1.0 MAIN POINTS

By February 2025, Saskatoon Public School Division No. 13 implemented the two outstanding recommendations we first made in 2021 about monitoring its success in readying kindergarten students for learning in the primary grades.

The Division:

- Requires teachers to use Division-mandated tools to assess kindergarten students' readiness to learn. It no longer gives teachers the option of using alternative assessment tools in place of Division-mandated tools.
- Implemented an online dashboard to help it analyze kindergarten student assessment data to identify areas of struggle across its schools. As a result of its analysis, the Division relocated prekindergarten programs to two different schools in 2023–24.

Having effective processes to monitor success in readying kindergarten students for learning prepares them for future academic success in the primary grades.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

The Education Act, 1995, makes the Saskatoon School Division No. 13 responsible for the administration and management of the educational affairs of the school division, which includes readying students for learning in the primary grades when exiting kindergarten.

Saskatoon School Division No. 13 is the largest school division in the province. It educates over 28,000 students in Saskatoon and Whitecap Dakota First Nation, including about 2,000 kindergarten students in 47 schools.¹

2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter describes our second follow-up audit of management's actions on the recommendations we first made in 2021.

¹ Saskatoon Public School Division No. 13 Board of Education, *2023–24 Annual Report*, pp. 6 and 9.



We concluded, for the 18-month period ended June 30, 2020, Saskatoon Public School Division No. 13 had effective processes to monitor its success in readying students for learning in the primary grades when exiting kindergarten except for the areas reflected in our five recommendations.² By January 2023, the Division fully implemented three of those five recommendations.³

To conduct this audit engagement, 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. Division management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To complete our follow-up audit, we examined the Division's online data analysis tool (dashboard), annual assessment calendar, and its analysis of student assessment data. We also interviewed kindergarten teachers as well as Division staff responsible for kindergarten student evaluation, assessment, and monitoring.

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 February 28, 2025, and Saskatoon Public School Division No. 13's actions up to that date.

3.1 Division-Mandated Assessment Tools Used to Assess Kindergarten Students

We recommended Saskatoon School Division No. 13 confirm alternative tools, used to assess key areas of a kindergarten student's readiness to learn, and collect sufficient and relevant information. (2021 Report – Volume 1, p. 160, Recommendation 2; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 12, 2022)

Status—Implemented

Saskatoon School Division No. 13 now requires teachers to use Division-mandated tools to assess kindergarten students' readiness to learn. It no longer gives teachers the option of using alternative assessment tools in place of Division-mandated tools.

Since 2022, the Division requires kindergarten teachers to complete five Division-mandated standardized assessments. **Figure 1** illustrates each assessment tool, what each tool measures, and assessment frequencies. We found the Division communicated these expectations via an assessment calendar it sends to schools at the beginning of each school year.

² 2021 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 11, pp. 151–170.

³ 2023 Report – Volume 1, Chapter 23, pp. 215–221.

Figure 1—Standard Assessment Tools to Assess Key Areas of Kindergarten Student Development and Learning

Assessment Tool	Core Assessment Areas	Assessment Completion Dates
Early Years Evaluation Tool–Teacher Assessment (EYE–TA)	Awareness of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self and environment • Social skills and approaches to learning • Cognitive skills, language, and communication • Physical development 	October and April (in April only for students who did not achieve mastery in the fall assessment)
Phonological Awareness Quick Screener (PAQS)	A student's phonological awareness (e.g., identifying syllables, word sounds)	January and June
Alphabet Data	A student's ability to recognize letter names and sounds	October, January, and June
Mathematics Quick Screener	A student's development in numeracy areas of the provincial curriculum	October and June
Social Emotional Rubric (SER)	Sense of belonging, self-regulation, and interacting with others	October and May

Source: Adapted from Saskatoon Public School Division No. 13 records.

The Division no longer gives teachers the option of choosing alternative assessment tools (i.e., teachers must use the standard assessment tools). Based on professional judgment, teachers may use alternative assessment tools in conjunction with Division-mandated tools to provide additional one-to-one intervention for students struggling in specific areas (e.g., number recognition). However, these tools and assessments do not replace the Division's required assessments.

We interviewed two kindergarten teachers who confirmed each use Division-mandated assessments and do not use alternative assessments.

Using Division-mandated tools help to ensure kindergarten students are consistently and appropriately assessed for their progress in meeting developmental and curricula outcomes, and that they are adequately prepared for success as they transition into the primary grades.

3.2 Kindergarten Student Assessment Data Analyzed

We recommended Saskatoon School Division No. 13 analyze kindergarten assessment data to identify trends and common areas of struggle across all schools in the Division. (2021 Report – Volume 1, p. 168, Recommendation 5; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 12, 2022)

Status—Implemented

Saskatoon School Division No. 13 analyzes kindergarten student assessment data to identify areas of struggle across its schools.

Consistent with previous years, the Division continued to analyze Early Years Evaluation Tool–Teacher Assessment (EYE–TA) and attendance data for kindergarten students. Division analysis considered factors such as poor attendance, English as an additional language, and students with intensive needs.



In 2023, the Division implemented an online data analysis tool (dashboard) to help it assess the other kindergarten student assessment data as shown in **Figure 1**. We found the dashboard included all the student assessments except the mathematics quick screener assessment. Management indicated it expects to include this data in its dashboard in 2024–25.

The dashboard produces reports that show results (i.e., at benchmark, below benchmark, well-below benchmark) comparing all elementary schools in the Division. It can further break down the data for each school comparing results to the previous year, results at different points in time (i.e., beginning, middle, or end of school year), as well as results by teacher and students.

Superintendents are to have meetings with school administrators (i.e., the principals/vice principals) of their assigned schools at least five times a year at which they review data. For two schools tested, we found the superintendent met with school administrators as expected. While no minutes of the meetings are kept, we reviewed the agendas and found topics discussed included:

- Trends, challenges, or opportunities identified in the assessment data
- Supports put in place for students assessed below benchmarks
- Specific instructional practices and interventions implemented to respond to the data

This analysis, along with other data (e.g., attendance, demographics such as student age, percentage of single parent households, percentage of unemployment in certain neighbourhoods) helped the Division identify schools that would benefit from having prekindergarten programs.⁴ In 2023–24, the Division relocated prekindergarten programs to two different schools. The Division’s analysis also considered teacher allocations within its schools (e.g., need for additional supports for schools with kindergarten students with complex behavioural needs).

The Division reported to the Ministry of Education that in spring 2024 kindergarten student readiness for schools across the Division was 78.2%—an increase of almost 20% from the 59% recorded in fall 2023—demonstrating effectiveness of actions taken from its analysis (e.g., relocating prekindergarten programs) to address concerns from results.

Conducting robust analysis of kindergarten student data helps the Division identify root causes for Division-wide gaps and issues at certain schools. Thorough analysis also helps the Division support resource reallocation decisions, where needed.

⁴ Early interventions in a prekindergarten program provide struggling students with basic skills before they arrive in kindergarten and help them to subsequently transition smoothly into the primary grades.