

Better Education Starts Today

Project Overview

On March 15, 2021, the Manitoba government announced changes to the Kindergarten to grade 12 education system in Manitoba. The strategy, Better Education Starts Today, has been developed in response to the recommendations of the Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education, as well as learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic. The vision is for Manitoba students to succeed, no matter where they live, their background, or their individual circumstances.

We are committed to moving investments away from top-heavy administration and to the front lines to make the classroom experience better for Manitoba's students & teachers. We continue to **support and appreciate teachers and principals** who are working hard every day to ensure high-quality education.

Working together, we have an opportunity to improve performance and get better outcomes for all our children.

Engagement Overview

Between March 15 and April 6, 2021, we heard from 12,509 Manitobans. We asked about their perceptions of the K-12 system overall, and a variety of its aspects including its administration structure and how they perceive the planned changes.

Our goal is to work together with Manitobans to hear perspectives about your experiences with the public education system. Feedback will be used to help inform a modern Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system.

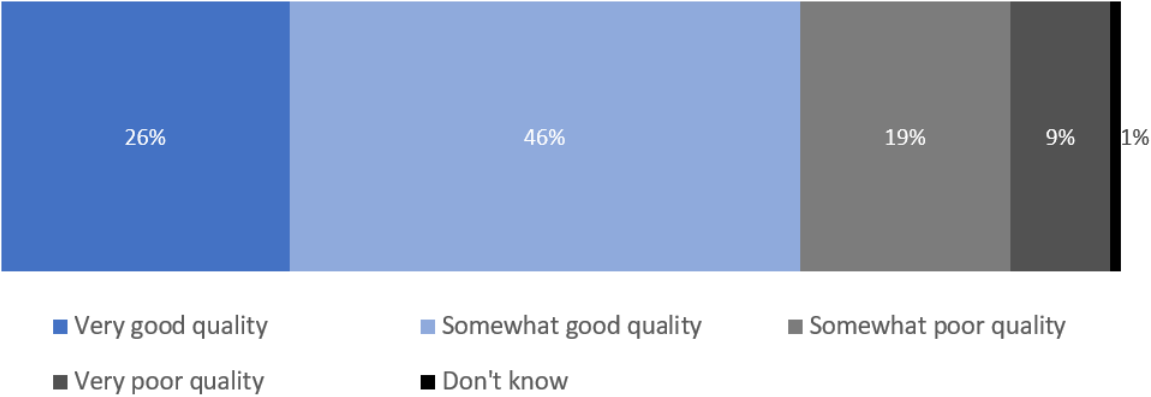
What We Heard

The Current State of Manitoba's Education System

When Manitobans were asked about their overall satisfaction with the K-12 education system in our province, 68 per cent indicated they were somewhat or very satisfied with the current system.

When asked how they would rate the quality of the system, the results were similar with 72 per cent of respondents reporting that the Manitoba education system is somewhat or very good quality.

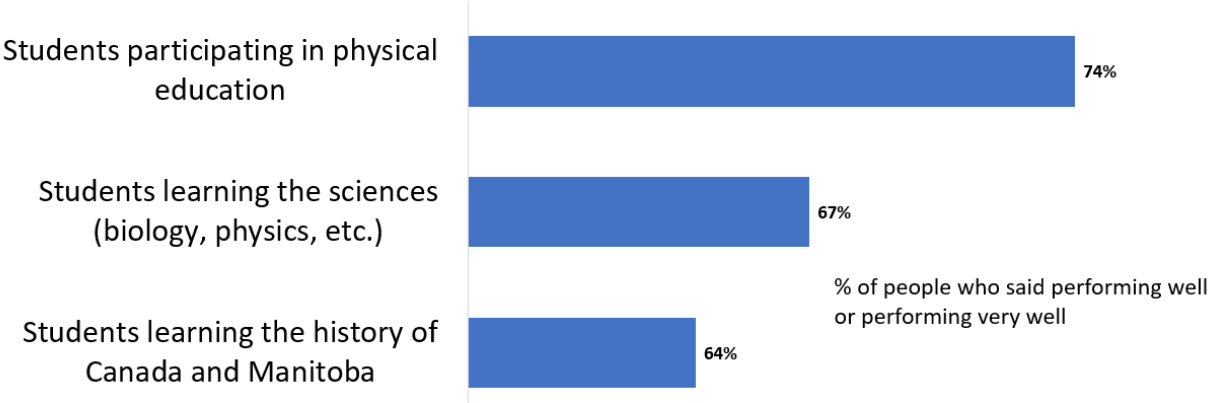
Taking everything into account, how would you rate the quality of the public education system in Manitoba today?



For the 2020-21 school year, the Manitoba government increased funding for public schools by more than \$6.6 million to a total of \$1.33 billion. When asked how they would rate the overall value Manitobans receive from the amount of money invested in the public school system, 61 per cent of respondents reported that Manitobans receive somewhat or very good value.

We also wanted to know how Manitobans feel the education system is performing in different aspects. According to Manitobans, the top 3 ranked aspects related to curriculum and school activities are: students participating in physical education, students learning the sciences and students learning the history of Canada and Manitoba.

In your opinion, how well are Manitoba schools performing on each of the different aspects of Manitoba’s public K-12 education system? Please rate how you feel about each of these aspects related to curriculum and school activities in terms of the level of performance you associate with each

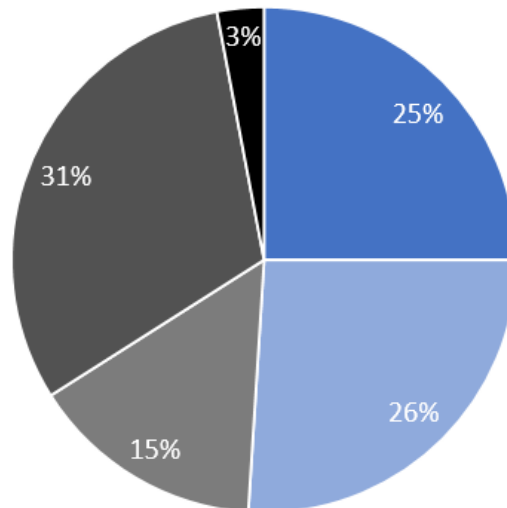


Administration of the Education System

The recently announced changes to the education system will create equity and make it more consistent province-wide, engage parents and put students first. The current 37 school divisions will be replaced by one Provincial Education Authority with 15 regions and retain the division scolaire franco-Manitoban. This new system will streamline administrative functions and target resources to the frontlines, the areas with the most need. The 15 regions will lead education delivery and provide a local focus within the provincial system.

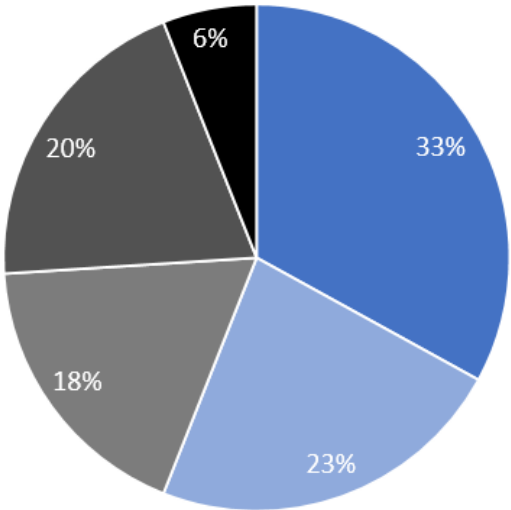
We asked Manitobans whether they agree or disagree with the following statements about the proposed changes. For each of the statements more than 50 per cent of respondent somewhat agree or strongly agree with them.

Reducing the number of school boards, trustees and bureaucracy will create savings that can be invested in the classroom.



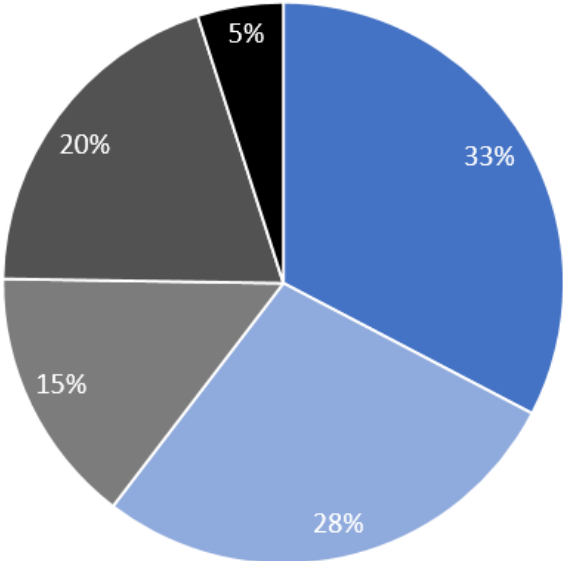
■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

Reducing school boards will harm the overall education of Manitoba children.



■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

Given that almost all major Canadian cities with student populations greater than Winnipeg have only 1 or 2 school divisions, it doesn't make sense that Winnipeg needs 6 school divisions.



■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know

The Provincial Education Authority and 15 regions plus the DSFM will support K-12 education in Manitoba in the future. The authority will lead shared service (like information technology, procurement procedures and central bargaining) will be delivered provincially and be informed by the regions. The 15 regions plus DSFM will be responsible for the delivery of K-12 education.

Overall, Respondents to the survey indicated it was very important that local input and decision making was critical for the work that Regions and the DSFM will be responsible for. For centralized roles or areas for possible shared services, respondents indicated lower support as being very important at the local level.

Survey respondents indicated that local input and decision-making was very important for:

- Identify achievement gaps and provide services and support to improve student performance (68 per cent said very important)
- Engage parents or parental involvement (66 per cent said very important)
- Deliver education programming (63 per cent said very important).

The roles with the lowest responses for local input and decision-making as very important were:

- Procurement (42 per cent said very important)
- Information Technology (48 per cent said very important)
- Report on student achievement, such as graduation rates (51 per cent said very important)
- Collective Bargaining (52 per cent said very important)

It is important to get feedback about how parents can have stronger voices in education while understanding how busy they are. We want to find new ways to engage them that respects their time and commitments. Giving parents that stronger voice through School Community Councils is an element of the changes that the Manitoba government is proposing.

Generally, respondents noted some areas and schools are doing well engaging parents but responses suggest that there is room to grow in engagement between school and parents, active parent participation, and reflective and diverse parent participation.

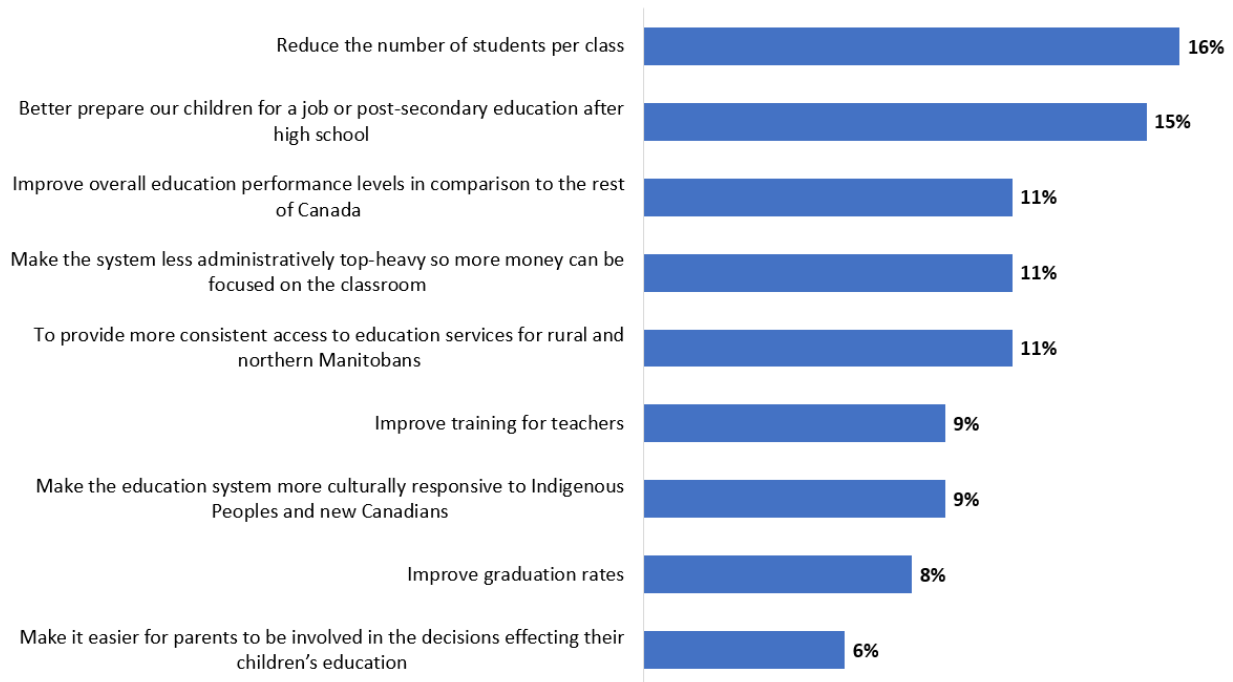
A new School Community Council model aims to enhance parent engagement broadly. Respondents indicated more than 50 per cent of the time in eight of the 11 areas of involvement asked that it was somewhat important or very important for school community councils to be involved. Feedback indicated the top three most important ways parents on School Community Councils can be involved are:

- Encouraging the involvement of parents at the school (79 per cent said somewhat important or very important)
- Changes in school programs and activities (75 per cent said somewhat important or very important),
- Organizing fundraising and events (71 per cent said somewhat important or very important)

Better Education Starts Today

The Better Education Starts Today strategy that has been developed in response to the recommendations of the Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education proposes a number of ambitious goals for Manitoba's K-12 education system and learnings from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When asked what they believe should be the primary focus or goal of the planned changes to the education system, Manitobans top two choices were reducing the number of students per class and better preparing our children for a job or post-secondary education after high school. These were followed by a three-way tie for improving student outcomes, reduce administration to shift resources to the classroom and create greater equity across the system – particularly for rural and northern regions.



Understanding that big changes can cause concern, especially with a system as impactful as the K-12 education system, we wanted to hear what statements make Manitobans feel more supportive of the proposed plans.

For example, when told that, “all savings realized through the changes will stay in the education system. By improving operations, up to \$40 million will be shifted to the classrooms to support students and teachers,” 49 per cent of Manitobans said this made them more supportive of making changes to the system.

When told that:

- “Manitoba has among the highest spending per student, yet our students are at or near the bottom of national and international rankings,” 39 per cent indicated they were more supportive
- “In a 2018 international assessment, Manitoba students ranked 9th (out of 10) in reading”, 38 per cent were more supportive
- “Only 51 per cent, of Indigenous students graduate within four years compared to 90 per cent graduation rates among their non-Indigenous peers,” 32 per cent were more supportive.

For questions or comments on the Better Education Starts Today project contact edutransformation@gov.mb.ca.