

**Education Quality and
Accountability Office**



2019–2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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Board of Directors

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February 8, 2018–February 7, 2021

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Chief Operating Officer (Interim)

Laurie McNelles, Ph.D.

Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), I am pleased to present the agency's annual report for 2019–2020. The agency is committed to supporting student learning and ensuring our public education system remains accountable to Ontarians. During the 2019–2020 fiscal year, the agency successfully administered and reported on its K–12 assessments and continued to align its assessment procedures to better serve educators and students alike. In August 2019, the agency's mandate was broadened into the post-secondary sector to include the development of a Mathematics Proficiency Test (MPT) for Ontario teacher applicants. The agency implemented this in partnership with key stakeholders and conducted a successful field test launched in February 2020.

As a public service agency, it can be influenced by unpredictable factors affecting its operations and delivery. During the 2019–2020 school year, the education sector saw labour disruptions that affected the administration of the EQAO Grade 9 winter assessments. Additionally, the international COVID-19 pandemic imposed the closure of Ontario schools, and as such, the Minister of Education cancelled EQAO assessments for the 2019–2020 school year to focus resources on the safety and well-being of students, parents and guardians and the education sector at large.

Over the course of the fiscal year, the agency saw some changes in EQAO's governance and executive leadership. In March 2020, as developments regarding the COVID-19 crisis evolved quickly, EQAO Board of Directors members David Agnew and Jim Marsh stepped down to focus on the current affairs of their respective collegial institutions. On behalf of EQAO, I would like to acknowledge their contribution to the board and to the education community at large through their commitment to EQAO, and I would like to thank them for their service and leadership.

EQAO data and research on student achievement and attitudes provide insights to effectively support education partners and stakeholders in their decision making. As EQAO embarks on its future path, the agency will continue to actively pursue its goal of providing data and research that supports improved student outcomes for every child and youth in Ontario. EQAO will do this by modernizing its programs, communicating effectively with stakeholders and communities, solidifying partnerships on research initiatives, and demonstrating its commitment to equity, quality and accountability in every aspect of its operations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cameron Montgomery". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Cameron Montgomery
Chair, EQAO Board of Directors

About EQAO

EQAO was established in 1996 following a recommendation of the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning. After consulting extensively with Ontarians and the education community, the Commission concluded that province-wide assessments would help address parents' and citizens' desire for greater quality and accountability in the publicly funded education system. In August 2019, the agency's mandate was broadened by the government to include the development of a Mathematics Proficiency Test for teacher applicants.

EQAO is an arm's-length agency of the Ministry of Education that supports student learning in Ontario. Our data, research and resources empower parents and guardians, educators, policy-makers and others with information to determine how best to strengthen student outcomes across the province.

To help improve student learning, EQAO administers large-scale assessments grounded in *The Ontario Curriculum*, contributes to education research and assists the education community in understanding, analyzing and appropriately using EQAO data.

EQAO is currently pursuing a multi-faceted and multi-year modernization initiative that focuses on five distinct areas:

- large-scale assessments,
- reports,
- research,
- engagement with Ontarians and
- internal business processes.

The agency's goal is to provide evidence-informed insights into student learning to facilitate the success of each Ontario student. EQAO aims to continually enhance its high-quality large-scale assessment program to ensure it is equitable, inclusive and reflective of Ontario's diversity so that all students and teacher applicants can demonstrate their understanding of the provincial curriculum.

By assessing each student in relation to the learning expectations outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*, EQAO offers independent data at the provincial, school board, school and individual student levels at key stages in students' K–12 educational journey. The agency provides schools and school boards with detailed reports about their students' achievement and a personalized report for each student who writes an assessment to help support individual student learning. Additional contextual, attitudinal and behavioural information from questionnaires offers valuable insights into student learning.

EQAO's data, in addition to classroom and board information, helps the education community consider key trends through collaborative inquiries. Such insights help make evidence-informed decisions when developing improvement plans that foster equitable and inclusive learning environments for students. EQAO's information also helps to guide the analysis and decisions of parents and guardians and policy-makers.

Through programs like the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement, the agency builds capacity for the appropriate use of EQAO data. Through workshops and resources, the agency provides tools that educators, parents and guardians, policy-makers and others in the education community can use to align their strategies with best practices in assessment and education nationally and globally. This helps to improve learning and teaching.

Through research, EQAO investigates factors that influence student achievement, school effectiveness and best assessment practices. The agency also coordinates Ontario's participation in national and international assessments (e.g., PCAP, PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS) that test students in math, science, technology, financial literacy, collaborative problem solving, and reading and writing and that evaluate the general well-being of students in and out of the school environment.

Values

- EQAO values giving all students the opportunity to reach their highest possible level of achievement and well-being.
- EQAO values its role as a service to educators, parents, students, government and the public in support of teaching and learning in the classroom.
- EQAO values credible evidence that informs professional practice and focuses attention on interventions that improve student success.
- EQAO values research that informs large-scale assessment and classroom practice.
- EQAO values the dedication and expertise of Ontario's educators and their involvement in all aspects of the assessment processes and the positive difference their efforts make in student outcomes.
- EQAO values the delivery of its programs and services by embracing diversity and moving beyond tolerance and celebration to inclusivity.

Strategic Priorities

In accordance with direction from the board of directors, EQAO develops a new strategic plan every three to five years to deliver on the agency's mandate of supporting and guiding student improvement by providing credible information about the quality and effectiveness of the province's publicly funded elementary and secondary education system. In 2016, EQAO adopted the following strategic priorities:

1. **ASSESSMENT and EVALUATION:** EQAO will assess and evaluate important aspects of the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education.
2. **RESEARCH:** EQAO will conduct research into the factors affecting student achievement, equity and the quality of education.
3. **COMMUNICATION and ENGAGEMENT:** EQAO will help Ontarians better understand the role of the agency and the value of the information it provides, so they can use that knowledge to improve publicly funded education.
4. **BUSINESS and GOVERNANCE:** EQAO will operate a responsible and effective organization.

Strategic Priority 1—Assessment and Evaluation

K–12 Assessments

Through its large-scale provincial assessment program, EQAO currently administers full-census assessments at key stages in each student’s education. This approach

- evaluates progress over time at the school, school board, provincial and individual student levels;
- fosters discussions about improvements to learning programs in schools and school boards across the province; and
- allows policy-makers to understand system-wide trends better and make student-focused and evidence-informed decisions accordingly.

EQAO K–12 Assessments	Grade of Administration	Subjects
Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Primary Division	Grade 3 (Grades 1–3 curriculum)	Reading, writing, mathematics
Assessment of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, Junior Division	Grade 6 (Grades 4–6 curriculum)	Reading, writing, mathematics
Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics	Grade 9 (Grade 9 curriculum)	Mathematics
Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT)/ Test provincial de compétences linguistiques (TPCL)	Grade 10 (literacy skills expected by the curriculum across all subjects up to the end of Grade 9)	Literacy

Mathematics Proficiency Test (MPT)

In August 2019, the Government of Ontario expanded EQAO’s mandate to include the development, marking and reporting of a Mathematics Proficiency Test for applicants to the Ontario College of Teachers. The EQAO mandate was also expanded to include conducting research and collecting data to assess the ability and confidence of individuals writing the test.

EQAO worked closely with its partners, including the Ministry of Education, the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ontario faculties of education, to support the implementation of this initiative. In 2019, the agency developed a public website containing sample questions to help test applicants familiarize themselves with the scope, content and testing interface of the MPT. The website also provides a detailed blueprint of the MPT, which contains an overview of the assessment and a framework for each of its two components (mathematics content and pedagogy).

Between February 18 and March 7, 2020, EQAO conducted a field test to ensure the high quality and reliability of the online test and the validity of the assessment items (i.e., questions).

Modernization

EQAO pursued its modernization vision aimed at reflecting more accurately the evolving needs of its education partners and a diverse student population. During the fiscal year, EQAO made several changes to its assessment policies and reports. The agency adapted the language it uses for assessment results to reflect students' growth mindset and the culture of support that permeates the education system. The agency also updated its accommodation policies so that additional support and adaptations may be more readily accessible to all students. As EQAO embraces continuous improvements in its assessments and programs, the agency continues welcoming perspectives from valued partners and stakeholders across Ontario.

EQAO's Assessment and Reporting Process

In the 2018–2019 school year, 572 360 students from the publicly funded English- and French-language school systems were assessed in relation to expectations outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*:

- 277 068 primary- and junior-division students;
- 137 799 Grade 9 students and
- 157 493 OSSLT/TPCL students.

A total of 3728 elementary schools and 934 secondary schools in Ontario's publicly funded education system participated in EQAO assessments. An additional 519 private, First Nation and international schools also participated.

To conduct assessments with integrity, EQAO ensures its processes meet the highest standards in technical quality. The agency follows a rigorous assessment-development process led by Ontario educators to ensure that selected materials and questions are linked to curriculum expectations and are appropriate for students across the province. The data that stem from our tests are analyzed in depth, and reports are produced to provide reliable and independent insights into student achievement.

Developing Large-Scale Assessments to Serve the Education Community

EQAO assessments are created each year by Ontario educators who research, develop and select every assessment question (also known as an item). Throughout the creation process, EQAO assessments are developed in collaboration with psychometricians and experts from various parts of the education field. An Assessment Development Committee and a Sensitivity Committee are established for each assessment; in addition, other groups informing the development of assessments are the Range-Finding and the Item Development committees. These committees help to ensure that EQAO assessments remain aligned with *The Ontario Curriculum* and that the assessments are fair, equitable and inclusive so that all students who take the assessments can fully participate and demonstrate their understanding of curriculum expectations.

Educators are selected to participate in EQAO activities based on the following criteria:

- cultural diversity;
- geographic location, to ensure representation from all parts of the province and from both rural and urban regions;
- current elementary and secondary experience (i.e., teachers, administrators, subject experts and consultants); and
- expertise in evaluation and assessment, including large-scale assessment.

Once the items are approved by the committees, they are field tested in schools across the province before becoming part of an operational assessment—that is, an assessment administered to students on a large scale where the item will be counted in the results. This process helps ensure that students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding when responding to items.

Administering Assessments

EQAO relies on the collaboration, support and professionalism of educators to administer the assessments. The agency sets clear procedures and has rigorous quality-assurance processes to ensure administration is consistent across the province. For each assessment, EQAO publishes an administration guide that includes detailed guidelines and clear steps for teachers and principals to follow to ensure consistent administration across Ontario.

Scoring Assessments

EQAO assessments are scored primarily by educators who have successfully completed specific and rigorous training requirements. Educators from across the province bring their knowledge of the curriculum and of the classroom to the scoring process, and the scoring experience provides them with professional development that deepens their understanding of evaluation. All assessment items are scored according to established criteria, which helps to ensure the integrity and reliability of EQAO data as well as the comparability of results from year to year. The agency met all scoring validity targets for its large-scale assessments during the 2018–2019 school year.

Over the course of the year, EQAO engaged with approximately 4200 educators and faculty of education students in the scoring of its assessments. A survey completed by scoring participants of the 2018–2019 school year assessments shows that

- more than 84% of English-language and close to 96% of French-language scoring participants for the primary- and junior-division assessments felt that the scoring activity was a positive professional development experience.
- more than 95% of English-language and almost 90% of French-language scoring participants for the Grade 9 mathematics assessment felt that the training and scoring activities would help teachers who participated in the scoring in their classroom practice. In addition, more than 90% of English-language and all French-language scoring participants felt that the scoring activity was a positive professional development experience.
- more than 85% of OSSLT and almost 95% of TPCL scoring participants felt that the scoring activity was a positive professional development experience.

Reporting Assessment Results

The agency aims to provide user-friendly access to the data derived from its annual reporting on assessment results. An online reporting tool allows schools and school boards to take the numbers and configure reports that provide additional insights on the attitudes and achievements of the students they educate. EQAO data is a significant element of the various sources of information that support educators in serving students and in engaging with parents and guardians, along with their communities. In line with its mandate, EQAO makes public the assessment results and data about various student populations following each assessment administration during the school year. This assists the education community in understanding some of the factors that influence student achievement.

Assessment data form the basis of

- provincial reports of students' performance across Ontario;
- school and school board reports; and
- individual student reports distributed by schools to parents and guardians of every student who writes an EQAO assessment.

Questionnaires created by EQAO are distributed during the assessment administration period to students, teachers and principals to collect information on factors inside and outside the classroom that may affect student learning and achievement. The contextual, attitudinal and behavioural insights gleaned from the questionnaires contribute to evidence-informed decisions and education plans to support student learning. Examined over a certain number of years, these data can help identify trends and guide decision making on matters related to education.

Benefitting from External Expertise

EQAO uses multiple systematic quality-assurance processes to ensure the validity of its assessment data. The administration, scoring and results of each assessment are reviewed by independent third parties every year to ensure the integrity of the agency’s data and processes.

2018–2019 Assessments: Results and Observations

Each year, EQAO releases province-wide results of its assessments. Large-scale provincial assessments at key stages of a student’s schooling measure mathematics and literacy achievement in relation to expectations outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*. The agency reports assessment results over a multi-year period to support comparisons over time, as this helps to identify trends in student learning and provide a more accurate picture of student achievement. Such analyses help stakeholders across the province understand achievement within subject areas and course types, and among groups of students.

Interpreting the Tables in This Section

The following tables, organized by assessment, show results over time for students in the English-language and French-language education systems. The tables show the percentages of students in Grades 3, 6 and 9 that have met each level of achievement, with Level 3 having been set by the Ministry of Education as the provincial standard. The tables also show the percentages of Grade 10 students who were successful and those who were not yet successful on the OSSLT/TPCL.

The “#” sign refers to the number of students reported on in the tables. The term “NE1” (Not Enough Evidence for Level 1) is used when students provided enough information to be scored but did not demonstrate enough evidence of knowledge and understanding on the assessment to be assigned a Level 1. “No Data” and “Exempt” refer respectively to students who did not have a result (due to absence or another reason) and to students who were formally exempted from participating in the assessment or in one or more components of it.

Results for the English-Language Education System in Ontario

Primary Division (Grade 3) Reading	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 118 838	# = 126 016	# = 125 213	# = 124 269
Level 4	16%	17%	18%	18%
Level 3	56%	57%	57%	57%
Level 2	21%	19%	19%	20%
Level 1	3%	3%	3%	2%
NE1	1%	1%	1%	1%
No Data	1%	1%	1%	1%
Exempt	3%	3%	2%	3%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	72%	74%	75%	74%

Junior Division (Grade 6) Reading	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 123 592	# = 130 767	# = 132 766	# = 136 122
Level 4	13%	13%	13%	13%
Level 3	68%	68%	69%	68%
Level 2	15%	15%	14%	15%
Level 1	2%	1%	1%	1%
NE1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	1%	1%	1%	1%
Exempt	2%	2%	2%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	81%	81%	82%	81%

Note: The percentages in the tables are rounded and may not add up to 100. Additionally, provincial results for the assessments administered in Grades 3, 6 and 9 are not available for the English-language education system in the 2014–2015 school year. Due to labour disruptions, a significant proportion of schools did not participate in the provincial assessments that school year. In 2016, elementary schools in the Toronto Catholic District School Board did not participate in the assessments due to labour disruptions.

Primary Division (Grade 3) Writing	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 118 860	# = 126 036	# = 125 213	# = 124 269
Level 4	4%	3%	3%	3%
Level 3	70%	70%	69%	67%
Level 2	22%	22%	24%	26%
Level 1	1%	1%	1%	1%
NE1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	1%	1%	1%	1%
Exempt	2%	2%	2%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	74%	73%	72%	69%

Junior Division (Grade 6) Writing	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 123 617	# = 130 773	# = 132 766	# = 136 123
Level 4	18%	17%	20%	22%
Level 3	62%	62%	60%	59%
Level 2	16%	17%	16%	14%
Level 1	1%	1%	1%	1%
NE1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	1%	1%	1%	1%
Exempt	2%	2%	2%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	80%	79%	80%	82%

Note: The percentages in the tables are rounded and may not add up to 100. Additionally, provincial results for the assessments administered in Grades 3, 6 and 9 are not available for the English-language education system in the 2014–2015 school year. Due to labour disruptions, a significant proportion of schools did not participate in the provincial assessments that school year. In 2016, elementary schools in the Toronto Catholic District School Board did not participate in the assessments due to labour disruptions.

Primary Division (Grade 3) Mathematics	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 125 471	# = 132 983	# = 132 656	# = 131 544
Level 4	12%	13%	12%	11%
Level 3	51%	49%	49%	47%
Level 2	28%	29%	30%	32%
Level 1	5%	5%	5%	6%
NE1	1%	1%	1%	1%
No Data	1%	1%	1%	1%
Exempt	2%	2%	2%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	63%	62%	61%	58%

Junior Division (Grade 6) Mathematics	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 123 666	# = 130 652	# = 132 766	# = 136 124
Level 4	13%	12%	13%	13%
Level 3	37%	37%	36%	35%
Level 2	31%	30%	31%	30%
Level 1	16%	17%	17%	18%
NE1	<1%	1%	1%	1%
No Data	1%	1%	1%	1%
Exempt	2%	2%	2%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	50%	50%	49%	48%

Note: The percentages in the tables are rounded and may not add up to 100. Additionally, provincial results for the assessments administered in Grades 3, 6 and 9 are not available for the English-language education system in the 2014–2015 school year. Due to labour disruptions, a significant proportion of schools did not participate in the provincial assessments that school year. In 2016, elementary schools in the Toronto Catholic District School Board did not participate in the assessments due to labour disruptions.

Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics Academic	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 97 347	# = 96 449	# = 96 996	# = 100 425
Level 4	11%	13%	14%	15%
Level 3	73%	71%	70%	69%
Level 2	11%	11%	10%	10%
Level 1	4%	5%	4%	5%
Below Level 1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	1%	1%	1%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	83%	83%	84%	84%

Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics Applied	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 36 005	# = 34 797	# = 33 451	# = 33 573
Level 4	10%	9%	10%	10%
Level 3	35%	35%	35%	34%
Level 2	33%	33%	33%	33%
Level 1	13%	14%	13%	13%
Below Level 1	5%	5%	5%	5%
No Data	4%	4%	4%	4%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	45%	44%	45%	44%

Note: The percentages in the tables are rounded and may not add up to 100. Additionally, provincial results for the assessments administered in Grades 3, 6 and 9 are not available for the English-language education system in the 2014–2015 school year. Due to labour disruptions, a significant proportion of schools did not participate in the provincial assessments that school year.

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (Grade 10) Academic	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
First-Time Eligible Fully Participating Students in the Academic English Course	# = 97 615	# = 95 971	# = 99 051	# = 95 709	# = 97 228
Successful	93%	92%	92%	90%	91%
Not Yet Successful	7%	8%	8%	10%	9%

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (Grade 10) Applied	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
First-Time Eligible Fully Participating Students in the Applied English Course	# = 26 213	# = 24 772	# = 24 233	# = 22 700	# = 22 437
Successful	50%	47%	44%	39%	41%
Not Yet Successful	50%	53%	56%	61%	59%

Note: The percentages in the tables are rounded and may not add up to 100. The percentages exclude absent and deferred students and those not working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

Results for the French-Language Education System in Ontario

Primary Division (Grade 3) Reading	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 8242	# = 8353	# = 8799	# = 8790	# = 8808
Level 4	36%	38%	37%	42%	40%
Level 3	47%	44%	45%	42%	46%
Level 2	15%	16%	14%	13%	12%
Level 1	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
NE1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Exempt	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	82%	82%	83%	84%	85%

Junior Division (Grade 6) Reading	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 7027	# = 7386	# = 7727	# = 8102	# = 8318
Level 4	25%	29%	30%	29%	33%
Level 3	65%	62%	61%	62%	59%
Level 2	8%	7%	7%	6%	5%
Level 1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
NE1	0%	<1%	0%	<1%	0%
No Data	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%
Exempt	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	90%	91%	91%	92%	93%

Note: The percentages in the tables are rounded and may not add up to 100.

Primary Division (Grade 3) Writing	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 8243	# = 8353	# = 8799	# = 8790	# = 8808
Level 4	18%	17%	17%	15%	15%
Level 3	62%	65%	62%	61%	60%
Level 2	17%	16%	18%	20%	20%
Level 1	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%
NE1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Exempt	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	80%	81%	78%	76%	75%

Junior Division (Grade 6) Writing	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 7030	# = 7386	# = 7727	# = 8102	# = 8318
Level 4	18%	20%	17%	16%	18%
Level 3	67%	64%	67%	62%	60%
Level 2	11%	12%	13%	17%	16%
Level 1	1%	2%	2%	4%	4%
NE1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%
Exempt	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	85%	84%	84%	78%	78%

Note: The percentages in the tables are rounded and may not add up to 100.

Primary Division (Grade 3) Mathematics	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 8249	# = 8359	# = 8795	# = 8790	# = 8808
Level 4	26%	22%	23%	22%	23%
Level 3	56%	55%	54%	52%	51%
Level 2	16%	20%	20%	22%	23%
Level 1	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
NE1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Exempt	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	81%	77%	76%	75%	74%

Junior Division (Grade 6) Mathematics	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 7039	# = 7388	# = 7727	# = 8102	# = 8318
Level 4	46%	46%	45%	43%	45%
Level 3	39%	39%	37%	40%	37%
Level 2	13%	13%	16%	15%	15%
Level 1	1%	<1%	1%	1%	1%
NE1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Exempt	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	85%	85%	82%	83%	82%

Note: The percentages in the tables are rounded and may not add up to 100.

Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics Academic	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 3984	# = 4275	# = 4448	# = 4520	# = 4729
Level 4	6%	7%	7%	11%	13%
Level 3	76%	78%	78%	78%	77%
Level 2	13%	11%	11%	9%	7%
Level 1	4%	4%	4%	3%	3%
Below Level 1	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
No Data	1%	1%	<1%	<1%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	82%	85%	85%	88%	90%

Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics Applied	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Students	# = 1312	# = 1376	# = 1377	# = 1320	# = 1434
Level 4	8%	7%	5%	8%	10%
Level 3	41%	43%	38%	43%	40%
Level 2	38%	38%	42%	39%	37%
Level 1	9%	8%	12%	8%	9%
Below Level 1	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%
No Data	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%
At or Above the Provincial Standard	49%	50%	44%	51%	51%

Note: The percentages in the tables are rounded and may not add up to 100.

Test provincial de compétences linguistiques (Grade 10) Academic	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
First-Time Eligible Fully Participating Students in the Academic French Course	# = 3975	# = 3924	# = 4194	# = 4137	# = 4374
Successful	96%	97%	97%	98%	96%
Not Yet Successful	4%	3%	3%	2%	4%

Test provincial de compétences linguistiques (Grade 10) Applied	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
First-Time Eligible Fully Participating Students in the Applied French Course	# = 1245	# = 1131	# = 1136	# = 1110	# = 1162
Successful	66%	71%	73%	70%	66%
Not Yet Successful	34%	29%	27%	30%	34%

Note: The percentages in the tables are rounded and may not add up to 100. The percentages exclude absent and deferred students and those not working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

Key Observations on the Assessment Results

For several years, EQAO has highlighted the achievement gap between students in the academic and in the applied courses, as students enrolled in academic courses are more likely to meet the provincial standard. Additionally, the persistent discrepancy in achievement between students with special education needs and those without also requires attention. EQAO data show that students with learning disabilities are the largest group in the cohort of students identified as having special education needs. Historically, students with learning disabilities have had a low level of achievement despite having average to above average intelligence. It would be beneficial to review supports available and strategies for success.

Data from student questionnaires offer valuable attitudinal and behavioural information about student learning in reading, writing and mathematics. The results from the 2018–2019 school year’s EQAO student questionnaires suggest that Grade 9 students enrolled in the academic course had significantly higher perceived self-efficacy in mathematics than students enrolled in the applied course. Results from the EQAO Student Questionnaire also suggest that French-language students may have been accessing materials and resources outside of school or during their own time often in a language other than French.

Highlighting Learning Strategies That Support Students: The Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement

Each year, EQAO’s Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement program celebrates Ontario schools for their effective use of information from a wide range of sources, including EQAO assessment and questionnaire data, to support student learning. Through this recognition, EQAO aims to assist other schools by sharing the promising practices of the schools profiled. Criteria for selection vary each year to highlight different areas of focus in public education.

In August 2019, EQAO was saddened to hear of the passing of Dr. Stephenson, a respected member of the EQAO Board of Directors and at the time of her death Director Emeritus. Dr. Stephenson’s lifelong passion was her unfaltering commitment to public service, having served as former Minister of Education and former Minister of Colleges and Universities in Ontario among many other accomplishments. EQAO will remember and cherish Dr. Stephenson for her many contributions to the agency and will continue to confer the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement in her memory.

National and International Assessments

EQAO coordinates Ontario's participation in the national and international assessments on behalf of the government of Ontario. These assessments are developed by external organizations and provide a general sense of how Ontario students are doing in relation to those in other jurisdictions and education systems. Results of such assessments contribute to the larger picture of student achievement in Ontario and benefit both the public and education policy-makers. National and international assessments' results are interesting additions to the information gained through EQAO's census-based large-scale provincial assessments.

Strategic Priority 2—Research

EQAO recognizes the need for a continued focus on research to determine effective, high-quality educational experiences that support student learning at the individual, classroom, school and system levels.

#DataInAction: Moving Forward with Research at EQAO

The agency’s research program adds value to large-scale assessment programs and to the development of initiatives that assist every student in the school system. EQAO believes evidence is what informs improvement in student learning. During the 2019–2020 fiscal year, the agency continued to expand its research initiative based on its #DataInAction framework while leveraging EQAO data and encouraging dynamic partnerships with education stakeholders. EQAO also reaffirmed its commitment to research by participating in conferences such as the American Educational Research Association’s annual meeting, where the agency presented its “Math Superpowers” paper. Additionally, this fiscal year, the agency’s “Lessons from EQAO Data on Fundamental Math Skills: How Are Ontario Students Doing?” research document was accepted for publication with the Ontario Association for Mathematics Education (OAME).

Student Voices

In August 2019, the agency published a report that presented original viewpoints from students across the province and offered insight about student achievement. The “Student Voices” report^[1] was born from EQAO inter-departmental collaboration. Students in Ontario were asked the question “What do you want next year’s teacher to know about you?” From students’ responses, a consensus on three key themes emerged, shining a light on students as learners within a classroom context. Additionally, EQAO published academic articles in peer-reviewed journals on the Student Voices research initiative. Also in August 2019, the agency completed and posted its *Literature Review of the Empirical Evidence on the Connection Between Compulsory Teacher Testing and Student Outcomes* in compliance with EQAO’s research responsibilities in relation to the Mathematics Proficiency Test and to inform the development of a teacher certification mathematics test in Ontario. The review is available upon request.

Supporting External Research

EQAO’s data informs discussions and research initiatives that pertain to the quality of education and the experience of students. During the fiscal year, the agency received and responded to 34 data requests that supported researchers from local, national and international faculties of education and various colleges and universities, municipalities, the Ontario Ministry of Education and EQAO partners in external research

^[1] Education Quality and Accountability Office. (2019). *Student Voices*. Retrieved from https://www.eqao.com/en/research_data/communication-docs/student-voice-report.pdf

initiatives. Some of those requests were for specific data such as behavioural and contextual information from EQAO questionnaires to support educators in schools and school boards. The agency also provided media professionals with information to assist their investigative pieces.

Strategic Priority 3—Communication and Engagement

EQAO is committed to helping Ontarians better understand the role of the agency and the value of the information it provides, so they can use that knowledge to improve publicly funded education. Through the promotion of information such as EQAO data and insights collected from assessments and questionnaires, the agency hopes the public and the education community alike can reflect on the quality of public education in Ontario and engage in a dynamic and collaborative dialogue about student learning. The agency's approach to integrated communications leverages multiple channels and fosters a partnership with schools and school boards during the administration of EQAO assessments and during the analysis and use of EQAO data. EQAO receives queries from the public, the media, educators and researchers on a regular basis and on various matters, and the agency strives to provide answers and helpful guidance in a timely manner.

There are many channels through which the agency communicates and builds relationships with audiences, including

- EQAO's website;
- social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn);
- media relations;
- EQAO's information centre;
- engagement with partners and stakeholders;
- presentations to schools, school boards, faculties of education, parents and guardians and other groups;
- conferences and events (e.g., webinars); and
- the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement program.

EQAO's communication initiatives provide valuable information about student achievement, context and attitudes in accessible ways to prompt exchanges and stimulate conversation and reflection about equity, quality and accountability in our public education system.

Releasing EQAO Results

During this fiscal year, EQAO facilitated a multi-faceted and comprehensive bilingual communications campaign, focusing mainly on media engagement, digital communications and stakeholder relations.

In August and September 2019, the agency conducted a media campaign that

- reached 67 million people through approximately 1064 English- and French-language news stories in traditional media, such as print, radio and television, and involving local and national outlets.
- increased engagement on the agency's English- and French-language social media channels and in their communities, which grew overall by 17% or 1054 followers (the increase was 14% on Twitter, 18% on Facebook and 37% on LinkedIn).

- disseminated valuable information about student success and brought attention to current issues in student learning in different subjects and student populations. Examples are math at the elementary and secondary levels; achievement in the academic and applied course types; and the relation between students' attitudes, perceptions, contexts and habits and their achievement results in math and literacy.

Developing and Delivering Support to Schools, School Boards and Communities

EQAO's information centre serves as a primary contact point for not only the education community but also for parents and guardians, students, scorers and members of the public. The centre responds to queries and provides updates on assessment-administration procedures. During the 2019–2020 fiscal year, the centre answered almost 13 000 calls and replied to approximately 4000 e-mails.

EQAO's School Support and Outreach team members exemplify the agency's commitment to supporting student learning and engage directly with education partners in the community. To help educators leverage EQAO assessment data for student success, the agency conducted more than 200 in-person and virtual presentations and workshops. The agency worked with stakeholders from more than 35 English- and French-language and Indigenous school boards across the province, interacting with classroom teachers and principals, superintendents, board curriculum and program leads along with researchers and parents and guardians. Presentations were also conducted for teacher candidates at 10 Ontario faculties of education and for teachers learning about current research in mathematics education at the annual Count Me In Math Institute conference organized by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE).

Connecting Directly to Support Student Learning

EQAO recognizes that not only educators but also parents and guardians and students need to be informed about the agency's assessment program and updated on how EQAO data can serve them. To promote participation in the conversation around student achievement and enable immediate exchanges between EQAO and Ontario communities, the agency developed a live webcast series about innovative ways to use EQAO data to support student learning. Web sessions that focused on the particulars of EQAO assessments were attended by nearly 340 students, parents and guardians across the province, many of whom were members of school councils. More than 300 Ontario educators from various schools and boards attended sessions that provided new insights into student learning journeys using EQAO data and sessions that focused on approaches to using rubrics and items in the mathematics and literacy components of EQAO assessments.

Additionally, new modules were added to the "Professional Learning" section of the agency's website. The modules explain EQAO assessments and how to use data to support educator practice and school improvement activities. Each module outlines examples of strategies and resources that proved successful in leveraging EQAO data from various assessments.

Exchanging Knowledge About Large-Scale Assessments with Other Jurisdictions

EQAO's years of experience in large-scale assessment, its unique outreach program and its research initiatives provide a useful perspective when engaging with other agencies and organizations dedicated to maintaining high quality in large-scale evaluation. During the 2019–2020 fiscal year, EQAO received interest from education professionals from other countries to meet and learn more about EQAO's initiatives, and, as a result, the agency hosted delegations of officials from South Korea and China. Hosting meetings and sharing with delegations from other jurisdictions enable the agency to compare knowledge and lessons learned from over two decades of large-scale assessment development and administration. These opportunities allow EQAO to provide information about its particular mandate and commitment to integrating principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in all its activities. Communicating whenever possible with education professionals from other provinces and countries has been vital in maintaining a dialogue and exchanging best practices about large-scale assessments.

Strategic Priority 4—Business and Governance

EQAO recognizes the importance of being accountable to Ontarians and is committed to transparency and best practices in governance in order to operate as a responsible and effective organization. As an agency of the Government of Ontario, EQAO abides by the *Agencies and Appointments Directive* and the Memorandum of Understanding with the Minister of Education to ensure effective operations and stewardship of public funds.

This fiscal year, the agency pursued short-term improvement activities and continued to conduct its large-scale assessments with integrity. Additionally, EQAO's mandate was expanded to include a Mathematics Proficiency Test, to be administered to individuals seeking teacher accreditation through the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT).

Leading the Agency to Prepare for Tomorrow

EQAO is governed by a board of directors appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. During the 2019–2020 fiscal year, EQAO's board of directors held 11 meetings, virtually and in person, to oversee the work of the agency in line with its mandate as defined by the *Education Quality and Accountability Office Act, 1996* (the *EQAO Act*). The board provided strategic direction and approved the agency's business plan, financial statements, risk assessments, contract decisions and annual report in accordance with the agency's *Delegation of Authority Directive*. The Chair of the board of directors serves as the ethics executive for board members.

The board's connection to EQAO operations is through the chief executive officer (CEO), who is accountable to the board for overseeing the management and the operations of the agency and supervising the agency's staff. The CEO carries out the roles and responsibilities assigned by the board via the Chair, the *EQAO Act*, the Memorandum of Understanding and the applicable agency directives set out by the Management Board of Cabinet. The CEO is delegated the duty to manage the day-to-day operational matters of the agency and serves as the ethics executive for the staff under the *Public Services of Ontario Act* (PSOA). In the absence of an appointed CEO, a Chief Operating Officer (COO) is delegated the same duties as the CEO until a new CEO is appointed.

With the goal of establishing its future direction for the agency, the board of directors initiated its strategic planning activity, which will continue into the next fiscal year.

Relying on Professional and Dedicated Staff

EQAO's accomplishments are made possible through the continued dedication and support of its staff. The agency acknowledges the professionalism and expertise of each member of its staff as it pursues the modernization of the EQAO assessment program and activities to support Ontario's public education system.

Collaborating with Advisory Committees

EQAO's operational direction includes advisory committees and external work groups composed of experts that help guide the agency's activities and inform thinking on different aspects of its work:

- **EQAO Advisory Committee (EAC):** This committee provides advice on agency activities, policies and programs. Additionally, the committee works to find feasible solutions to challenges raised by its members.
- **EQAO Student Advisory Committee (ESAC):** This committee acts as a unique forum for students to share their ideas and experiences, and it represents the student voice in the agency's activities, ensuring students are informing EQAO's thinking as the agency continuously improves its programs. ESAC is composed of 30 students from Grades 7 to 12 from across Ontario. These members offer insights on how EQAO can improve assessments and programs and increase student engagement.
- **Modernization in Measurement Advisory Panel (MMAP):** This interdisciplinary group helps shape the future operations of large-scale assessments and their scoring and reporting activities. The committee is composed of experts who examine facets of assessment programs such as the experiences of assessment users, authenticity and equity, psychometrics and technology, and knowledge sharing and reporting.

Managing Public Resources Responsibly

EQAO is dedicated to effective business practices and monitors and evaluates business processes to promote the continuous improvement of its activities. In alignment with applicable government directives, the agency continues to ensure accountability in human resources, finances and procurement along with strong service delivery through all of its operations.

The large-scale assessment program that EQAO offers measures how well students across the province are meeting the numeracy and literacy expectations defined in *The Ontario Curriculum* at key stages of their academic development. During the 2019–2020 fiscal year, the cost of operating EQAO, which reports on the quality of publicly funded education and helps foster accountability, was approximately \$30 million. This amounts to a cost of \$14.96 of the \$12 254 spent annually per student enrolled in an Ontario public school. In addition, EQAO's budget represents approximately 0.12% of the government's overall education expenditures in Ontario.

During the 2019–2020 fiscal year, members of the agency’s board of directors received an annual remuneration according to government appointments and directives. Dr. Cameron Montgomery, full-time chair of EQAO, received \$140 000; Gail Anderson received \$1650; Roland Boudreau received \$675; Michael Bowe and Emily Brown each received \$825; Abirami Jeyaratnam received \$900; and Pierre Riopel received \$1050, respectively, for their governance work as part of the EQAO Board of Directors.

Mitigating Risk Across the Agency

EQAO ensures there are processes in place at all times to control quality and mitigate risk that could affect the integrity of EQAO’s assessment data, as the latter are key to fulfilling the agency’s mandate. Likewise, the agency’s enterprise risk-management program applies to all other aspects of its operations, and every decision is made with consideration of potential risks and their mitigation. Risk-mitigation strategies are currently in place across the agency and are reported to EQAO’s audit and finance committee of the board of directors quarterly and to the Ministry of Education annually. During this fiscal year, EQAO focused on mitigating the most critical risks associated with its security posture and successfully migrated its data holdings to the government-operated Guelph Data Centre (GDC) in January 2020.

Financial Statements: Year Ended March 31, 2020

EQAO's audited financial results for operations ending March 31, 2020, which were funded through Ministry of Education allocations.

Financial Statements of

**EDUCATION QUALITY AND
ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE**

And Independent Auditors' Report thereon

Year ended March 31, 2020



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INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

To the Board of Directors of the
Education Quality and Accountability Office

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (the Entity), which comprise:

- the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2020
- the statement of operations and accumulated surplus for the year then ended
- the statement of changes in net financial assets for the year then ended
- the statement of cash flows for the year then ended
- and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies

(Hereinafter referred to as the "financial statements").

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Entity as at March 31, 2020, and its results of operations, its changes in net financial assets, and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the "***Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements***" section of our auditors' report.

We are independent of the Entity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.



Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Entity's financial reporting process.

Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditors' report that includes our opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.

We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Entity's internal control.



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- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditors' report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditors' report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- Communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Chartered Professional Accountants, Licensed Public Accountants

Vaughan, Canada

June 3, 2020

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Statement of Financial Position

March 31, 2020, with comparative information for 2019

	2020	2019
Financial Assets		
Cash	\$ 2,670,114	\$ 3,226,653
Cash - board restricted fund (note 2(b))	8,377,930	7,917,046
Accounts receivable (note 3)	1,296,128	301,016
	<u>12,344,172</u>	<u>11,444,715</u>
Financial Liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	2,081,365	2,285,935
	<u>2,081,365</u>	<u>2,285,935</u>
Net financial assets	10,262,807	9,158,780
Non-Financial Assets		
Prepaid expenses (note 4)	462,990	516,364
Tangible capital assets (note 5)	468,362	580,704
	<u>931,352</u>	<u>1,097,068</u>
Commitments (note 6)		
Economic dependence (note 11)		
Subsequent event (note 12)		
Accumulated surplus (note 2)	<u>\$ 11,194,159</u>	<u>\$ 10,255,848</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

On behalf of the Board:

_____ Chair

_____ Chief Operating Officer

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Statement of Operations and Accumulated Surplus

Year ended March 31, 2020, with comparative information for 2019

	2020 Budget (note 10)	2020 Actual	2019 Actual
Revenue:			
Ministry of Education:			
Base allocation payments	\$ 32,436,939	\$ 32,405,308	\$ 32,229,111
Other	–	522,407	1,012,197
	<u>32,436,939</u>	<u>32,927,715</u>	<u>33,241,308</u>
Expenses:			
Service and rental	18,065,394	18,043,766	17,882,491
Salaries and wages	12,157,060	12,175,693	11,815,715
Transportation and communication	1,291,683	1,138,990	1,227,020
Supplies and equipment (note 5)	922,802	630,955	1,100,351
	<u>32,436,939</u>	<u>31,989,404</u>	<u>32,025,577</u>
Annual surplus	–	938,311	1,215,731
Accumulated surplus, beginning of year	10,255,848	10,255,848	9,040,117
Accumulated surplus, end of year	<u>\$ 10,255,848</u>	<u>\$ 11,194,159</u>	<u>\$ 10,255,848</u>
Accumulated surplus comprises:			
Externally restricted		\$ 2,816,229	\$ 2,338,802
Internally restricted (note 2(b))		8,377,930	7,917,046
		<u>\$ 11,194,159</u>	<u>\$ 10,255,848</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Statement of Changes in Net Financial Assets

Year ended March 31, 2020, with comparative information for 2019

	2020 Budget (note 10)	2020 Actual	2019 Actual
Annual surplus	\$ —	\$ 938,311	\$ 1,215,731
Acquisition of tangible capital assets	—	(142,793)	(110,399)
Amortization of tangible capital assets (note 5)	450,000	255,135	414,155
	450,000	112,342	303,756
Acquisition of prepaid expenses	—	(462,990)	(516,364)
Use of prepaid expenses	—	516,364	613,190
	—	53,374	96,826
Increase in net financial assets	450,000	1,104,027	1,616,313
Net financial assets, beginning of year	9,158,780	9,158,780	7,542,467
Net financial assets, end of year	\$ 9,608,780	\$ 10,262,807	\$ 9,158,780

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Statement of Cash Flows

Year ended March 31, 2020, with comparative information for 2019

	2020	2019
Cash provided by (used in):		
Operating activities:		
Annual surplus	\$ 938,311	\$ 1,215,731
Items not involving cash:		
Amortization of tangible capital assets	255,135	414,155
Impairment of tangible capital assets (note 5)	—	250,000
	<u>1,193,446</u>	<u>1,879,886</u>
Change in non-cash operating working capital:		
Accounts receivable	(995,112)	1,673,304
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(204,570)	(955,506)
Prepaid expenses	53,374	96,826
	<u>47,138</u>	<u>2,694,510</u>
Capital activities:		
Acquisition of tangible capital assets	(142,793)	(110,399)
Investing activities:		
Change to board restricted fund	(460,884)	(947,892)
Increase (decrease) in cash	(556,539)	1,636,219
Cash, beginning of year	3,226,653	1,590,434
Cash, end of year	<u>\$ 2,670,114</u>	<u>\$ 3,226,653</u>

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

The Education Quality and Accountability Office ("The Agency") was established by the Province of Ontario by the EQAO Act, June 1996. The Agency was created to assure greater accountability and to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of education in Ontario. This is done through assessments and reviews based on objective, reliable and relevant information, and the timely public release of that information along with recommendations for system improvement.

1. Significant accounting policies:

These financial statements, which have been prepared in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, as established by the Public Sector Accounting Board of The Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada ("CPA Canada") and, where applicable, the recommendations of the Accounting Standards Board of CPA Canada, reflect the accounting policies set out below:

(a) Revenue recognition:

The Agency is funded by the Ministry of Education in accordance with established budget arrangements. The Agency receives base allocation payments in accordance with the fiscal year's approved budget. These transfer payments are recognized in the financial statements in the year in which the transfer is authorized and all eligibility criteria have been met, except when a transfer gives rise to a liability.

Other revenue is recognized at the time the service is rendered.

(b) Tangible capital assets:

Tangible capital assets are stated at cost less accumulated amortization. Tangible capital assets are amortized on a straight-line basis over their estimated useful lives as follows:

Computer equipment	4 to 10 years
Furniture and fixtures	5 years

For assets acquired or brought into use during the year, amortization is calculated from the month following that in which additions come into operation.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2020

1. Significant accounting policies (continued):

The Agency considers the carrying value of tangible capital assets when events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of an asset may not be recoverable or when a tangible capital asset no longer contributes to The Agency's ability to provide goods and services. If The Agency expects an asset to generate cash flows less than the asset's carrying value, at the lowest level of identifiable cash flows, The Agency recognizes a loss for the difference between the asset's carrying value and its fair value.

(c) Measurement uncertainty:

The preparation of financial statements requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities, disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the year. Such estimates include providing for amortization and impairment of tangible capital assets. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

2. Accumulated surplus:

(a) Externally restricted accumulated surplus:

The Agency receives base allocation payments in accordance with the year's approved budget. Actual expenses incurred in the year could differ from the budgeted amounts. The difference between base allocation payments received and actual expenses incurred are tracked separately as externally restricted accumulated surplus.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2020

2. Accumulated surplus (continued):

(b) Internally restricted accumulated surplus:

A board restricted fund was established by a Board of Directors' ("Board") resolution for the purpose of examining assessment processes and researching emerging methodologies in large scale assessment in order to maintain Ontario's high quality assessment programs as best of class. The fund is currently invested in a Royal Bank of Canada current account. The Agency has the authority to retain any revenue that is not provincial funding according to the EQAO Act, June 1996, the Agencies and Appointment Directive and the Financial Administration Act.

	2020	2019
Balance, beginning of year	\$ 7,917,046	\$ 6,969,154
Appropriation of other income	265,802	813,087
Interest income earned on funds	256,605	199,110
Cost associated with fee-based administration (note 8)	(61,523)	(64,305)
Balance, end of year	\$ 8,377,930	\$ 7,917,046

In a prior year, the Board approved a motion to fully restrict the internally restricted accumulated surplus for the Board-approved IT strategy.

3. Accounts receivable:

Included in accounts receivable is a transfer payment in the amount of \$1,136,298 (2019 - \$96,801) due from the Ministry of Education.

4. Prepaid expenses:

Prepaid expenses are paid in cash and recorded as assets before they are used or consumed. As at year end, the balance is made up of the following amounts:

	2020	2019
Prepaid expenses	\$ 111,786	\$ 256,719
Prepaid secondees	351,204	259,645
	\$ 462,990	\$ 516,364

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2020

5. Tangible capital assets:

			2020	2019
	Cost	Accumulated amortization	Net book value	Net book value
Computer equipment	\$ 1,679,620	\$ 1,250,385	\$ 429,235	\$ 509,178
Furniture and fixtures	433,759	394,632	39,127	71,526
	<u>\$ 2,113,379</u>	<u>\$ 1,645,017</u>	<u>\$ 468,362</u>	<u>\$ 580,704</u>

Amortization of tangible capital assets recorded in the current year amounts to \$255,135 (2019 - \$414,155).

During the course of 2019, The Agency was unable to sell certain tangible capital assets that were held for resale, as approved in a previous year. Accordingly, The Agency has expensed the full cost of the assets of \$250,000 in supplies and equipment in prior year.

6. Commitments:

The Agency leases premises under certain operating lease arrangements with expiry dates up to December 31, 2022. Under the terms of the leases, The Agency is required to pay an annual base rent, which is predetermined based on square footage rates plus operating and maintenance charges. Future minimum annual scheduled payments are as follows:

2021	\$ 1,390,568
2022	1,360,258
2023	770,136
	<u>\$ 3,520,962</u>

7. Financial instruments:

The Agency's financial instruments consist of cash, board restricted fund, accounts receivable and accounts payable and accrued liabilities. Financial instruments are recorded at fair value on initial recognition. The fair values of these financial instruments approximate their carrying values due to their short-term nature.

It is management's opinion that The Agency is not exposed to significant interest, currency or credit risk arising from these financial instruments.

EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Notes to Financial Statements (continued)

Year ended March 31, 2020

8. Allocation of expenses:

Incremental administration expenses are allocated to fee-based administration revenue. Expenses are allocated proportionately based on the number of individual student assessments administered.

9. Liquidity risk:

Liquidity risk is the risk that The Agency will be unable to fulfill its obligations on a timely basis or at a reasonable cost. The Agency manages its liquidity risk by monitoring its operating requirements. The Agency prepares budget and cash forecasts to ensure it has sufficient funds to fulfill its obligations.

There have been no significant changes to the liquidity risk exposure from 2019.

10. Budget:

The budget information has been derived from the budget approved by the Board on August 22, 2019.

11. Economic dependence:

The Agency derives substantially all of its income from the Ministry of Education in the form of base allocation payments. The Agency's ability to carry on operations, realize assets and discharge its liabilities depends on the continued financial support of the Ministry of Education.

12. Subsequent event:

In March 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. This pandemic has had a significant financial, market and social dislocating impact globally. At the time of approval of these financial statements, The Agency has experienced a temporary decline in other revenue in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Financial statements are required to be adjusted for events occurring between the date of the financial statements and the date of the auditors' report which provide additional evidence relating to conditions that existed as at year end. Management completed this assessment and did not identify any such adjustments. The current events and conditions are expected to be temporary, however there is uncertainty around the length of the disruption and impact on future operations. As a result, an estimate of the financial effect of these items is not practicable at this time.

Appendix A: Performance Targets, Measures and Analysis

Assessment and Evaluation			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
Conduct modern assessments with quality and integrity, and leverage technology to create, administer and score assessments.	Ensure EQAO assessments, processes and results have the highest technical quality and meet national and international standards.	Achieve high-quality large-scale assessments by ensuring that educators are involved in all assessment development and scoring processes, that all questions align to <i>The Ontario Curriculum</i> and with ministry policies and initiatives and that the assessments meet scoring validity metrics and adhere to the agency's assurance practices.	Successfully completed the administration and scoring of the assessments for the 2018-2019 school year. All assessment results were reported on schedule. Reviewed all assessments for curriculum connection and appropriateness as well as for scoring validity metrics and the agency's assurance practices. Revision of the new mathematics curriculum draft, current curriculum and impact of the change in the primary- and junior-division assessments was conducted.
		By March 2020, develop a plan for a modernized assessment program that includes assessment development, administration, scoring and reporting.	Continued to engage with educators and field experts through webinars and other channels and leverage their knowledge to inform delivery of the assessment program and the gathering of data. Acquired a vendor to assist with developing

			options for future assessment models.
		Improve educators' experience with EQAO assessments, which will be measured by a decrease in the number and type of administration issues and inquiries to the information centre during the assessment administration periods.	Noted a decrease in the number and type of administration issues and inquiries directed to the agency (approximately 9% decrease for the primary, junior and Grade 9 assessments, and approximately 6% decrease for the OSSLT, compared to the percentages in 2018).
		<p>Inform the modernization of EQAO's large-scale assessments through interdisciplinary collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct exploratory research and consult with subject-matter experts on alternative assessment and psychometric models by the end of the year. • Consult with subject-matter experts on reporting models by the end of the fiscal year. • Engage with experts from interrelated assessment fields and meet with the interdisciplinary Modernization in Measurement Advisory Panel twice during the year. 	<p>Consulted with experts on strategic thinking related to the psychometric options of modernized assessments and on interrelated assessment fields. Consulted with experts, including Measurement Evaluation Computing and Statistical Analysis (MECSA), and met with the Modernization in Measurement Advisory Panel during the fiscal year.</p>
		Continue to incorporate industry standards for data quality, analytics and data science,	Increased efficiency and confidence in data through identified requirements, and

		starting with the implementation of a renewed data quality framework during the year.	refined data quality framework to support continuous improvement and integration into the agency's work.
		Implement the Mathematics Proficiency Test (MPT) in accordance to <i>Ontario Regulation 271/19</i> and <i>Ontario Regulation 272/19</i> . Create a valid and reliable MPT and ensure technical stability of the test.	Developed test items and questionnaire for the MPT and participated in steering committee to ensure efficient communication with stakeholders. Ensured privacy and security in delivery of the test along with financial viability in conducting the MPT. Met all timelines set by the government and conducted successful field test of MPT between February 18 and March 7, 2020.
Research			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
Conduct and commission meaningful research studies.	Facilitate the linking of EQAO assessment data to data from other sources in the broader education sector.	Contribute to the body of knowledge around mathematics performance by completing EQAO's "Math Superpowers" research report and presenting findings at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting.	EQAO's "Math Superpowers" was presented at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting (report is available on EQAO's website). Also, the "Lessons from EQAO Data on Fundamental Math Skills: How Are Ontario Students Doing?" paper was accepted by the Ontario Association for Mathematics Education (OAME).
		Expand research partnerships and collaborative work with the	Continued to expand partnerships with key

		Offord Centre for Child Studies, People for Education, Datassist and the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) to maximize the use of EQAO data.	collaborators by engaging in the development of research proposals and plans, which leverage EQAO data.
Communication and Engagement			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
Report the results of EQAO's assessments, evaluations and research.	Provide user-friendly, interactive and technically supported access to EQAO results.	<p>Engage the education community in using EQAO's annual results to foster continuous improvement in the outcomes of students, schools and boards across Ontario.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide schools and school boards with access to data from the assessments and questionnaires via the EQAO reporting tool (online). • Engage with educators and parents through EQAO outreach activities (in-person and online). <p>Report assessment results and insights in traditional and social media.</p>	<p>Provided schools and school boards with access to the data from assessments and questionnaires through the online EQAO reporting tool in fall 2019.</p> <p>Engaged with the education community on the efficient use of EQAO data and reports through access to the EQAO reporting online tool.</p> <p>Facilitated greater sharing of knowledge and understanding of the education community through 64 outreach professional development sessions with educators, principals, superintendents and parents (in-person and online).</p> <p>Successfully executed an integrated communications campaign from August to October 2019, reaching 67 million people through almost 1100 media stories and more</p>

			than 18 600 impressions on social media.
		<p>Increase public awareness and the value of EQAO results and research in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement an integrated communications campaign that delivers an increase in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the reach and number of media stories; ○ balanced or positive traditional and social media coverage; ○ impressions on social media and ○ engagements with social media channels. • Use infographics posted on EQAO’s website. • Publish in peer-reviewed journals. • Create parent resources in multiple languages. • Act on the findings of the 2018 Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) survey on public attitudes toward education. 	<p>EQAO’s work generated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more than 700 000 unique views to the assessment landing page of its website; • more than 13 600 impressions (views) of the agency’s social media content; and • approximately 540 engagements (actions online). <p>The agency also</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • posted user-friendly infographics about EQAO data; • successfully submitted the “Lessons from EQAO Data on Fundamental Math Skills: How Are Ontario Students Doing?” research report for publication with the Ontario Association for Mathematics Education (OAME) and self-published on the EQAO website; • created parent resources in multiple languages; and • updated Individual Student Report (ISR) templates for every assessment.

		<p>Highlight EQAO’s role and purpose via social media:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create original content. • Monitor online discussions daily. • Respond to queries within a target time of two hours or less. <p>Engage with online communities in accordance with the latest and best practices in order to build understanding.</p>	<p>Continued to regularly inform stakeholders about EQAO’s role and purpose through the active promotion of agency engagement activities in the field and appropriate responses to online discussions. Key social media channels during the year were</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook, with a 16% increase in followers from April 2019 to March 2020, and • Twitter, with a 14% increase in followers from April 2019 to March 2020.
		<p>Implement a renewed stakeholder management process by the end of the fiscal year to ensure that key stakeholders are appropriately informed and engaged in the current and future work of EQAO.</p>	<p>Developed a renewed stakeholder-relations process to orient and track agency engagement efforts.</p>
	<p>Engage stakeholders in the appropriate use of EQAO data and research to support accountability and evidence-informed decision making.</p>	<p>Raise awareness among key audiences of research products involving EQAO data (e.g., increase reach and engagement through social media posts, articles, website content and meetings with policy-makers and educators).</p>	<p>Increased awareness about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the importance of students’ attitudes in relation to achievement by publishing “Math Superpowers” (accessed by 417 different users on EQAO’s website, while main social media content generated 17 902 views and 535 engagements)

			<p>across Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ontario students’ abilities in relation to mathematics fundamentals by publishing “Lessons from EQAO Data on Fundamental Math Skills: How Are Ontario Students Doing?” (accessed by 461 different users on EQAO’s website, while main social media content generated 21 512 views and 640 engagements across Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn).
		<p>Improve relationships with targeted stakeholders (students, educators, teacher candidates, parents and guardians):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renew the EQAO Student Advisory Committee and meet a minimum of two times during the year. • Conduct in-person and web conferencing outreach sessions with school board administrators, educators and teacher candidates. <p>Meet or exceed EQAO’s service standard to respond to all e-mail and phone inquiries within 48 hours from the time of initial contact.</p>	<p>Reinforced stakeholder participation and knowledge via enhanced understanding of school improvement, the planning cycle, data sources, data analysis, data monitoring and EQAO assessments through stakeholder engagement in more than 150 in-person and web-based sessions that reached more than 5000 stakeholders. This was also attained through a renewed EQAO Student Advisory Committee.</p> <p>Maintained service quality by responding to the majority of inquiries within the established timeframe by</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helping more than 90% of those who reached out to EQAO with questions (mostly regarding the administration of the primary, junior and Grade 9 assessments as well as scoring and reporting activities). • sending more than 40 memos and more than 750 e-mails to help coordinate logistics for scoring and reporting.
Business and Governance			
Performance Targets			
Goals	Objectives	Performance Measures	Performance Analysis
Provide effective governance for the agency.	Ensure that the internal governance and operational policy frameworks support the agency's operation.	Renew the agency's strategic direction and priorities for the next three to five years by undertaking a strategic planning process led by the board of directors.	Began the strategic planning process with a vendor after a successful procurement process.
		Improve business operations through the creation of standard operating procedures for stakeholder meetings.	Ensured efficient and consistent delivery of services and communication to the agency's major stakeholders through the documentation of standard operating procedures for stakeholder meetings (EQAO Advisory Committee, Modernization in Measurement Advisory Panel, and board of directors). Documents are

			<p>updated on an ongoing basis as required.</p> <p>Established Statement of Work process to ensure alignment between business objectives and communications efforts in the creation and promotion of products.</p> <p>Updated the agency's Children's Aid Society reporting process.</p>
		<p>Improve agency operations by aligning them with EQAO's governance and policy framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review all policies, procedures and guidelines to verify their alignment with provincial directives and legislation. • Communicate and implement measures outlined by the Secretary of the Cabinet. • Verify EQAO's compliance with the <i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)</i>. 	<p>Monitored the release of new directives such as the <i>Procurement Directive</i> and <i>Agencies and Appointments Directive</i>.</p> <p>Provided the Ministry of Education with all applicable submissions, including the business plan, risk assessment, financial reports and annual report, in accordance to established timelines.</p> <p>Commenced updating of the board governance policies and By-law #1.</p> <p>Communicated and implemented documents and resources about working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, as outlined by the Secretary of Cabinet.</p> <p>Aligned operations and approvals with the Ministry's directives, including the interim</p>

			<p>procurement and expenditure restrictions.</p> <p>Updated the agency's accessibility policy and multi-year plan, and began the revision of EQAO's website to align with the standards and requirements of the AODA and the <i>Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation</i>. Ensured goods and services to people with accessibility needs were provided with the same high quality as for those with no accessibility needs.</p>
		<p>Develop activities to ensure employees are engaged in the agency's mission and feel their needs are being met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participation in agency committees. • Develop motivational presentations for all staff. • Develop activities that engage all staff in agency-wide endeavours (e.g., all-staff day). <p>Provide professional learning opportunities as required and permitted under current expenditure restrictions.</p>	<p>Provided professional development opportunities (within expenditure restrictions), and promoted leadership learning opportunities by hosting Lunch and Learn sessions. Increased employee participation and awareness of the agency's mission via informational gatherings and recreational activities.</p> <p>Fostered diversity and inclusion among employees by providing professional learning resources offered by the Ontario Public Service (e.g., Positive Space Champion Training).</p>
		<p>Strengthen agency governance by implementing an enterprise</p>	<p>ERM was implemented and managers provided departmental risks. From the identified risks,</p>

		risk management (ERM) program across the organization.	the most pressing ones will be prioritized, and extensive prevention, monitoring and incident management plans will be created to support the work of the agency.
Ensure effective business practices.	Ensure financial and acquisition accountability and exceptional service delivery.	Maintain accurate and timely financial reports based on Public Sector Accounting Board guidelines and have them validated by an external audit process.	Followed all regulations pertaining to financial and procurement accountability, and accounting files were reviewed by auditors as part of the agency's regular practice. Quarterly financial reports were provided to the board of directors. Externally audited financial statements were approved by the board and submitted to the Ministry of Education.
		Monitor and report expenditures every month, and conduct analysis of variances, at minimum every quarter.	Tracked and reported expenditures monthly and analysis of variances quarterly. Increased visibility of financial performance by implementing a process whereby monthly financial statements require managers' and directors' revision and feedback on significant variances between actual results and budget.
		Review and renew EQAO's procurement policy and procedure to ensure that all procurement activities adhere to	Implemented new processes that raised awareness and assured compliance with the new Interim Procurement Measures outlined

		the applicable areas of the <i>Ontario Public Service (OPS) Procurement Directive</i> and the government's Interim Procurement Measures.	by the <i>OPS Procurement Directive</i> . Initiated draft of renewed policy and procedure.
		Maintain updated business architecture and ensure technological and process updates are captured in order to support program and process improvement.	<p>Created business architecture for Mathematics Proficiency Test (MPT) to assist in implementation of the field test. Improved IT-related process and operations by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adopting policies and procedures consistent with the Government of Ontario Information and Technology Standards (GO-ITS) as a minimum; • successfully completing migration to Office 365; and • designing the Guelph Data Centre (GDC) solution model that led to successful migration. <p>Launched MPT website dedicated to informing those impacted by the new government regulations. Improved the agency's operations by updating the digital workflow related to the editing and approval of documents.</p>
	Monitor and evaluate business processes to promote continuous improvement.	Strengthen the agency's I&IT infrastructure and related privacy and security posture by migrating	Mitigated critical privacy and security threats through the successful migration to the

		<p>the current data centre to the OPS IT infrastructure as per direction from the Minister of Education. Key milestones include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment of current environment/transition; • migration; • hosting; • testing (privacy, security and operations); and • compliance and reporting. 	<p>government's GDC, as per direction from the Minister of Education. Continued business architecture documentation in alignment with government standards.</p>
		<p>Identify and mitigate potential I&IT and business continuity risks by submitting a stabilization plan to the board of directors for approval by the end of Q2. The plan will contain the scope, timelines, estimated costs and risks of the mitigation projects.</p>	<p>Presented to the board of directors the stabilization plan focused on migration to the GDC and on plans to mitigate the agency's privacy and security risks.</p> <p>Started updating business continuity plan (update is underway).</p> <p>Successfully completed testing plan and actual migration to the GDC, and focused on mitigating the most critical privacy and security threats through migration to the GDC.</p> <p>Conducted privacy and safeguarding awareness session with all staff.</p>
		<p>Align IT policies, practices and processes to industry and GO-ITS to secure EQAO networks and protect privacy.</p>	<p>Created and updated internal IT security policies and advised staff of policy changes to help improve business operations. Included</p>

			compliance with GO-ITS standards on new procurements.
Foster a strong organizational culture.	Promote a motivated and engaged team environment that recognizes the unique contributions of all employees.	<p>Improve employee engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act upon outcomes of EQAO and Ontario Public Service (OPS) engagement surveys. <p>Encourage participation in EQAO and OPS events and professional learning in accordance with expenditure restrictions.</p>	Supported a positive and engaged work environment through the roll-out of different internal and external employee-engagement activities. Provided various professional learning and development opportunities, notably emphasizing equity and inclusion practices in the workplace reflective of those in the education sector.
		<p>Promote cross-agency collaboration and alignment of work to agency's strategic priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase staff knowledge of all departmental functions through all-staff meetings, Lunch and Learn sessions and feedback surveys. 	<p>Increased EQAO staff knowledge of departmental functions, use of IT resources, equity and inclusion and work-life balance via Lunch and Learn sessions, and informational and participative meetings.</p> <p>Rolled out Microsoft Office 365, which provided agency-wide use of collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams (and links to Zoom). These tools have been especially helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
		<p>Improve new staff members' engagement in EQAO's mission by revitalizing the employee orientation program and showcasing the work undertaken across all departments of the agency.</p>	<p>Revitalized the way new staff, including summer students and secondees, engage with the agency by hosting webinars (e.g., "Setting and Achieving your Goals" for summer students) and</p>

			psychometrics-related presentations for them.
		<p>Improve staff engagement by communicating important agency developments and future activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send monthly updates from CEO to all staff. • Hold office hours so that staff can access the executive team. • Make summary notes of executive operations meetings available to all staff. 	<p>Improved internal communication of important agency developments and future activities by making communications available on StaffNet, sending updates to all staff and providing communications and support to all staff (especially those with children) affected by labour action in the education sector and by the general changes linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>