

COMPLIANCE DETERMINATION

Tina Fontaine – Recommendation 1

Recommendation Summary: Review measurement of absenteeism, suspensions, expulsions and create a province-wide strategy to address issues.

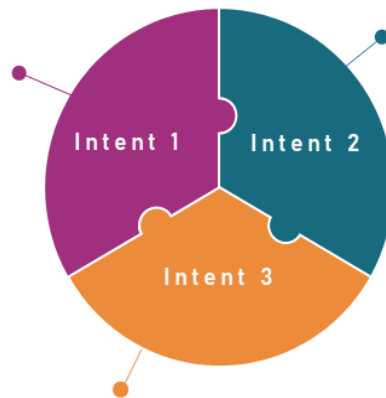
Primary Public Body: Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning

1. Manitoba Education to direct the Commission to review the measurement of and response to absenteeism across Manitoba.

Intent met as of June 2020.

2. Review the use of out of school suspensions and expulsions.

Intent met under Documenting the Decline (Circling Star) 2.



3. Use this information to develop a province-wide strategy to limit, reduce, and phase out exclusionary practices.

A policy directive specific to the issue of student attendance was drafted by Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, with the expectation of release in winter 2023. The Student Attendance Directive serves the purpose of ensuring schools have policies around meaningfully tracking and responding to the absence of students from school to limit the development of chronic absenteeism, and uphold the right of children and youth to education. Along with the release of the policy directive, the Attendance Task Force has specific goals for their attendance strategy for the 2022-2023 school year, which includes a public education campaign on student presence in schools to be launched in conjunction with the policy directive.

COMPLIANCE DETERMINATION



Recommendation Compliance Summary

In accordance with subsection 11(1) clause (d) of *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act (ACYA)*, the Advocate retains the responsibility "to monitor the implementation of recommendations included in reports made under section 27 (investigation) or special reports made under section 31."

This form details the assessment of implementation of compliance made under the referenced subsection of the ACYA. MACY assesses implementation of compliance with recommendations once a year but receives updates from public bodies every six months.

1. Recommendation Information	
Special Report Name:	A Place Where it Feels like Home: The Story of Tina Fontaine
Date Released:	3/12/2019
Full Recommendation: (including details)	<p>Recommendation One:</p> <p>The Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth recommends that Manitoba Education and Training ensure its recently established <i>Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education</i> review the measurement of and response to absenteeism across Manitoba. It is further recommended that the Commission review the use of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, with the goal of developing a province-wide strategy to limit, reduce, and phase-out exclusionary practices, except in situations of imminent safety risk to students and staff. This review and strategy should provide evidence-informed practices that are in line with the best interests of the child and respect the right to education for children and youth.</p> <p>DETAILS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commission to identify how school divisions can be resourced with the capacity to measure, assess, and respond to the underlying causes of school absenteeism. Building and sustaining relationships with students who are experiencing absenteeism and their families. • Manitoba Education and Training continue efforts to improve student attendance by increasing public awareness of the right to education, identifying improvements to communication with parents and guardians around absenteeism, and to provide transparent information to the public about suspensions and expulsions.
Intent(s) of Recommendation:	<p>The intents of the recommendation are for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manitoba Education (now Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning) to direct the Commission to review the measurement of and response to absenteeism across Manitoba. 2. Review the use of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. 3. Use this information to develop a province-wide strategy to limit, reduce, and phase out exclusionary practices.
Issue:	Chronic Absenteeism, Suspensions, and Expulsions
Primary Department:	Manitoba Education
Dates of Previous Official Updates from Public Body:	June 30, 2022
	May 26, 2021
	June 30, 2020
	December 31, 2019

	June 30, 2019
2. Compliance Determination	
Fully Compliant 1.0	Actions taken fully implement the recommendation.
Self-Assessment	Fully Compliant
Previous Compliance Determination	Largely Compliant
3. Rationale for Determination <i>(How did you reach this compliance determination)</i>	
<p>Intent 1: Manitoba Education (now Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning) to direct the Commission to review the measurement of and response to absenteeism across Manitoba. 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Minister of Education directed <i>The Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education</i> to review issues associated with this recommendation including, chronic absenteeism, suspensions, and expulsions in a letter dated April 11, 2019. This requirement of the recommendation has been completed. <p>Intent 2: Review the use of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fulfillment of this intent is found in the response to <i>Documenting the Decline</i> recommendation 2. <p>2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on the responses provided by Manitoba Education to this recommendation, and the recommendations regarding suspensions/expulsions from two other MACY reports, separate work is being completed on the issues of reviewing chronic absenteeism, suspensions, and expulsions. While acknowledging the links between all types of school absenteeism, two separate entities within Manitoba Education are working on these issues. The Student Services Inclusive Education Committee of the Inclusion Support Branch is developing a policy directive on suspensions/expulsions as discussed in the compliance summary for <i>Documenting the Decline</i> recommendation 2, and <i>the Slow Disappearance of Matthew</i> recommendation 2. On the issue of absenteeism, the Attendance Task Force of the Indigenous Inclusion Directorate is leading a review, which includes the use of a consultant group to study absenteeism both across Canada and in the Manitoba context. The Attendance Task Force is looking at an analysis of chronic absenteeism and the development of interventions. A literature review on the issue of chronic absenteeism, and various methods for addressing the issue, was provided as documentation with this recommendation response. <p>2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Response from MACY-RAP indicated a commitment to achieving the intent of the recommendation. A working group was established that received feedback from school divisions related to how the divisions are tracking suspension and chronic absenteeism. The information is intended to form the basis of a template that can be used universally across school divisions to report on suspension and chronic absenteeism rates. The data collected are intended to provide an evidence base to inform strategies to identify trends and reduce the use of suspensions. Work on this initiative will resume in the fall of 2020 with the return to in-class instruction. The review on how school divisions track suspensions and chronic absenteeism and the use of a single tracking form is a promising and necessary first step to reviewing the 	

current use of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. A review of use of suspensions and chronic absenteeism, however, is not yet completed.

Intent 3: Use this information to improve student attendance by increasing public awareness of the right to education, identifying improvements to communication with parents and guardians around absenteeism, and to provide transparent information to the public about suspensions and expulsions.

2022

- A policy directive specific to the issue of student attendance was drafted by Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning (EECL), with the expectation of release in the fall of 2022. Policy directives require the revising, updating, or writing of a policy by school divisions and schools when released by EECL so that school policies meet the requirements of the directive.
- The student attendance directive serves the purpose of ensuring schools have policies around meaningfully tracking and responding to the absence of students from school to limit the development of chronic absenteeism, and upholding the rights of children and youth to education. The directive has guidelines that individual school policies must address including: Enhancing Proactive and Preventative Practices, Definitions and Terminology, Response [to absenteeism], Reporting, Documenting and Monitoring, Ensuring Access to Appropriate Educational Programming, Roles and Responsibilities, and Re-Entry Process for Chronically Absent students.
- Some important highlights of the policy directive include policies related to attendance must eliminate punitive responses to absenteeism, such as suspension or expulsion; policies must include an immediate personal outreach to students with an unexcused absence; and schools must create and maintain a case management approach to persistent or extended absences.
- The student attendance directive is another tool to be used in conjunction with *Safe and Caring Schools*, and *Mamàhtwisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born with – An Indigenous Education Policy Framework*.
- Along with the release of the policy directive, the Attendance Task Force has specific goals for their attendance strategy for the 2022-23 school year, which include a public education campaign on student presence to be launched in Fall 2022. Examples of messaging for this campaign include, “School is my safe place with people who can help me no matter what I’m dealing with.” The campaign will also include an attendance proclamation to increase public awareness of the right to education.
- The importance of monitoring issues around attendance is reiterated with the inclusion of attendance as a key performance measure for Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning’s Balanced Scorecard.

2021

- As identified in the response provided by Manitoba Education, “The provincial Task Force on Attendance has drafted provincial policy and is working on public awareness initiatives to improve school attendance and reinforce the message of how consistent school attendance is crucial for student well-being.”

2020

- As of yet, a province-wide strategy has not been developed. Activities are focused on the development of tools to ensure the collection of reliable data on chronic absenteeism and suspensions.

Analysis Summary: Although the wording of this recommendation is similar to that of the suspensions/expulsions recommendations found in other MACY reports, the focus of this recommendation and accompanying responses pertains specifically to the issue of chronic absenteeism. It was identified in the 2021 Compliance Process that an Attendance Task Force had been established and was actively studying and developing resources for the Manitoba context of addressing absenteeism. MACY identified in 2021 that the fulfilment of this recommendation would be based on the completion of the actions of the Attendance Task Force, including a provincial strategy and/or policy directive to address absenteeism in Manitoba. A draft of the policy directive on student attendance was provided with the response to this recommendation, with commitment to the release of the directive in Fall 2022. Accompanying the policy directive is an overall attendance strategy for the 2022-23 school year, that includes public education and awareness initiatives emphasizing the right to education for Manitoba's children and youth. With the release of the student attendance policy directive, along with the finalization of the suspension and expulsion policy directive found in the *Documenting the Decline* recommendation 2 response, the actions taken fully implement the intents of this recommendation resulting in a fully compliant determination.