



PART V: Final Thoughts

Chapter 16: Summary

It was the intention of this document to highlight trends and provide a snapshot of the province's K-12 educational system. Over the past six years, several historical milestones have been reached. For example in 2007/08:

- the Department of Education's budget surpassed the \$1 billion mark
- the average K-9 class size reached its lowest point ever at 19.5 students
- the pupil-teacher ratio reached its lowest point at 12.7 or one educator for every 12.7 students.

This report presented several indicators of student performance demonstrating the progress of the province's students. The results of provincial assessments conducted in Grades 3, 6 and 9 shows an overall improvement from the previous year. In the provincial English language arts assessment, the greatest gains were seen in the performance of elementary students on the open constructed response items, where the percentage of students at or above grade level increased by between 4.1 and 18.5 percentage points. Similarly, students performed better in many areas of mathematics as assessed by the CRTs. Some of the largest gains in the mathematics assessments can be found in the performance of primary and elementary students. The percentage of students with at least an adequate understanding of the material increased by over 16 percentage points in their ability to communicate mathematical ideas, demonstrate mathematical reasoning and problem solve. On international and national assessments (i.e., PISA and PCAP), the

province's students are performing quite well, at either the same level or significantly better than the other Atlantic Canadian provinces.

At the high school level, students achieved greater success in public examination courses, as demonstrated through the increases seen in the overall success rate and average course grade since 2002/03. Along with this, the percentage of students graduating from high school and those earning an honours diploma upon graduation also increased during this time.

However, there are some concerning trends that continue to be present in the province. The most notable is the gender gap in student performance. Overall, girls clearly have an educational advantage. They continually outperform boys in public exam courses, have higher pass and graduation rates, as well as graduation status. Higher percentages of boys, on the other hand, have been identified as having special needs and in receipt of student support services. Boys also have higher drop-out rates and have a greater tendency to receive a general diploma upon graduation.

Returning to the theme of change mentioned in the opening pages of this report, the system has changed and continues to evolve. While fewer children and young people are living in the province and enrolling in the schools, they are faring much better than in previous generations. This is the good news story captured within this report.