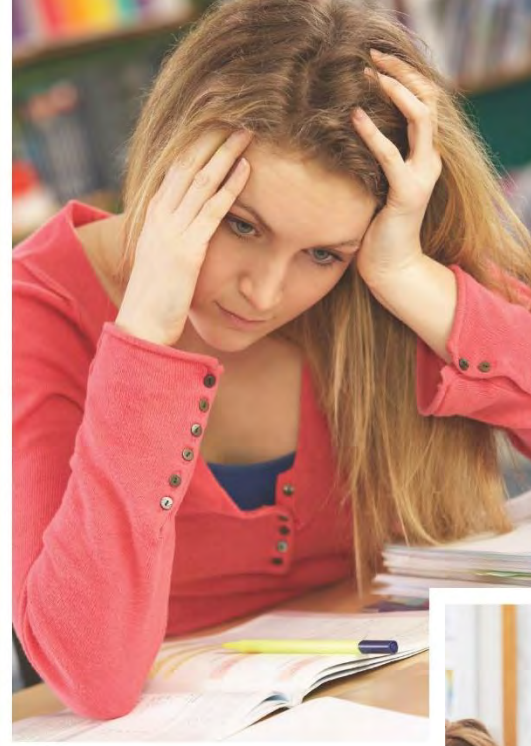




SASKATCHEWAN  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMISSION

# EQUITABLE EDUCATION

FOR STUDENTS WITH READING DISABILITIES



# **Disclaimer:**

**This presentation provides information about the *Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* and the work of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission.**

**The content does not constitute or replace legal advice.**

# AGENDA

**1** HOW IT STARTED

**2** THE CODE AND EDUCATION ACT

**3** RESEARCH AND CONSULATION

**4** FINDINGS





**HOW IT STARTED (THE COMPLAINT PROCESS)**



## IN JUNE 2020

- ❑ The Commission received a group complaint from 29 families, all with children who have been professionally diagnosed with dyslexia.
- ❑ Alleged 8 school divisions discriminated against their children on the basis of disability and a right to equitable access to education.
- ❑ Requested a systemic investigation into the identification, treatment, and accommodation of students with reading disabilities in Saskatchewan.



- ❑ The Commission determined a systemic approach was more efficient and appropriate than pursuing each complaint individually.
  
- ❑ The systemic initiative includes:
  1. review of the parent submissions;
  2. stakeholder interviews and meetings;
  3. preparation of a legal summary;
  4. capturing the comments, feedback, and input of individuals with reading disabilities, their families, and advocates, educators and other professionals.

# PARENT CONCERNS:

- Emotional and mental health of their children
- Difficulty navigating the school system;
- Screening tools
- Professional assessments
- Teacher training and knowledge of reading disabilities
- Reading instruction (pedagogies)
- Adequate access to supports in French Immersion schools
- Interventions
- Accommodations



# Tom's Story:

“The financial burden has been overwhelming for our family. We had to pay for the initial assessment because the school refused to assess my son – despite identifying him as needing formal assessment. It has cost us thousands in tutoring costs. Our son has to do hours of tutoring after school, leaving him no time to socialize or have any enjoyable extra curricular activities, in part because we cannot afford the money or time after the cost of tutoring.”

# EXPERTS/ EDUCATORS

- Adequate resources (human and material)
- Being able to recognize reading disabilities
- Screening tools:
  - Effectiveness
  - Constancy
- Competing views of effective pedagogies
- Lack of understanding of accommodations and ability to implement them consistently



# A Professional's Story:

“We have been asked to screen students for phonological awareness and alphabet, but the training and tools provided to French Immersion teachers has been completely inadequate. So, while we do assess all students, I am not at all confident that those assessments are accurate or reliable across the division. Those of us who feel competent have had to seek outside training from out-of-province and have had to create our own resources. The understanding of the science of reading by our consultants is basic, and the PD that we are provided is the same basic PD every time. Our resource teachers often are also not trained in the science of reading.”



# THE **CODE** AND THE **EDUCATION ACT**

*The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2018*

# THE CODE

- ❑ Disability is a 'prohibited ground' under the *Code*.
- ❑ **Section 13: Right to Education**

13(1) Every person and every class of persons has the right to education in any school, college, university or other institution or place of learning, vocational training or apprenticeship without discrimination on the basis of a prohibited ground other than age.

- ❑ Promote the inherent dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family
- ❑ Further public policy that every person is free and equal in dignity and rights
- ❑ Discourage and eliminate discrimination

The Saskatchewan  
Human Rights Code, 2018  
and Regulations



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# THE SASKATCHEWAN EDUCATION ACT (1995)

*The  
Education  
Act, 1995*

*being*

Chapter E-0.2\* of the Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1995 (effective January 1, 1997) as amended by the Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1996, c.45; 1997, c.35; 1998, c.21; 1999, c.2009, c.10, c.42 and c.70; 2001, c.13; 2002, c.27 and c.29; 2003, c.16 and c.67; 2005, c.10, c.11 and c.21; 2006, c.18, c.38 and c.2008, c.11; 2009, c.13, c.14 and c.15; 2010, c.10, c.22 and c.2012, c.10; 2013, c.P-38.01 and c.9; 2014, c.11 and c.28; 2015, c.3, c.6, c.15, c.18, c.22; 2017, c.8 and c.11; 2019, c.L-10.2, c.11; 2021, c.37; 2022, c.25; and 2023, c.23, c.25 and c.26.

NOTE: Pursuant to subsection 33(1) of The Interpretation Act, 1995, consequential Amendment sections, schedules and/or tables within this Act have been removed. Upon coming into force, the consequential amendments contained in those sections became part of the enactment(s) that they amend. Amendments have thereby been incorporated into the corresponding Act. Please refer to the Separate Chapter to obtain consequential amendment details.

**NOTE:**

This consolidation is not official. Amendments have been incorporated for convenience of reference and the original statutes and regulations should be consulted for all purposes of interpretation and application of the law. In order to preserve the integrity of the law.

- ❑ Every person between the ages of 6 and 22 years has the right to receive instruction appropriate to that person's age and level of educational achievement.
- ❑ An obligation to reasonably accommodate students with intensive needs in the regular program of instruction.
  - Or to provide educational services to meet the learning needs of the student through a special program.

A goal of publicly funded education is to give every child access to education without cost.

*The Education Act, 1995* states:

**“ ... services approved by a board of education or the conseil scolaire with respect to students who are eligible for the special educational services mentioned in section 178 or who are otherwise entitled to services of benefit to their general health and well-being, are to be provided without cost to those students or their parents or guardians.”**

- ❑ Boards of education are required to assess students with intensive or potentially intensive needs, which includes cognitive disabilities.
- ❑ Students have a right to reasonable accommodation.
- ❑ Boards of education must provide for appeal or review processes for families that disagree with decisions based on an assessment or requirement of an assessment.
- ❑ If a student with intensive needs requires a special program, Boards of education remain responsible for the payment of costs.



## RESEARCH AND CONSULTATION



# RESEARCH AND CONSULTATIONS

## ONLINE SURVEYS

One survey was designed for students/families.

A second survey was designed for teachers, school administrators, psychologists, speech language pathologists and other professionals who have experience with learning disabilities.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

Multiple sources reviewed to provide insight into reading disabilities and reading pedagogies.

## STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Dozens of meetings with various stakeholders have taken place over the course of our research and post-release stages.



# RESEARCH

- Existing data and information
- Current practices around reading disabilities, policy, practice and procedure
- Stakeholders were invited to review a draft of the report (pre-release), followed by a meeting
- General research into reading pedagogies and practices



**FINDINGS AND ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED**

# THE NUMBERS

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- ❑ In 2022-2023, there were **189,924** students enrolled K-12 from 770 schools in 27 provincial school divisions \*
- ❑ Additionally, the Ministry of Education supports **2,503** students in 19 qualified independent schools and 4 historical high schools \*
- ❑ Dyslexia prevalence is estimated from 3.2% to 20.0% of the population \*\*
- ❑ We expect the number of students in Saskatchewan who struggle with a reading disability to be:

**6,157 to 38,485**



# Issues to be Addressed

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1. Negative impacts of reading disabilities on students and families, emotionally, socially and financially
2. Insufficient screening for reading disabilities
3. Complicated processes and systems for parents to navigate
4. Inadequate reading instruction and specialized intervention



# Issues to be Addressed

(cont'd)

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5. Inconsistent accommodation
6. Long waits for professional assessment
7. Lack of teacher training and professional development regarding reading disabilities
8. Disproportionate reading outcomes for Indigenous students
9. Lack of supports and limited resources

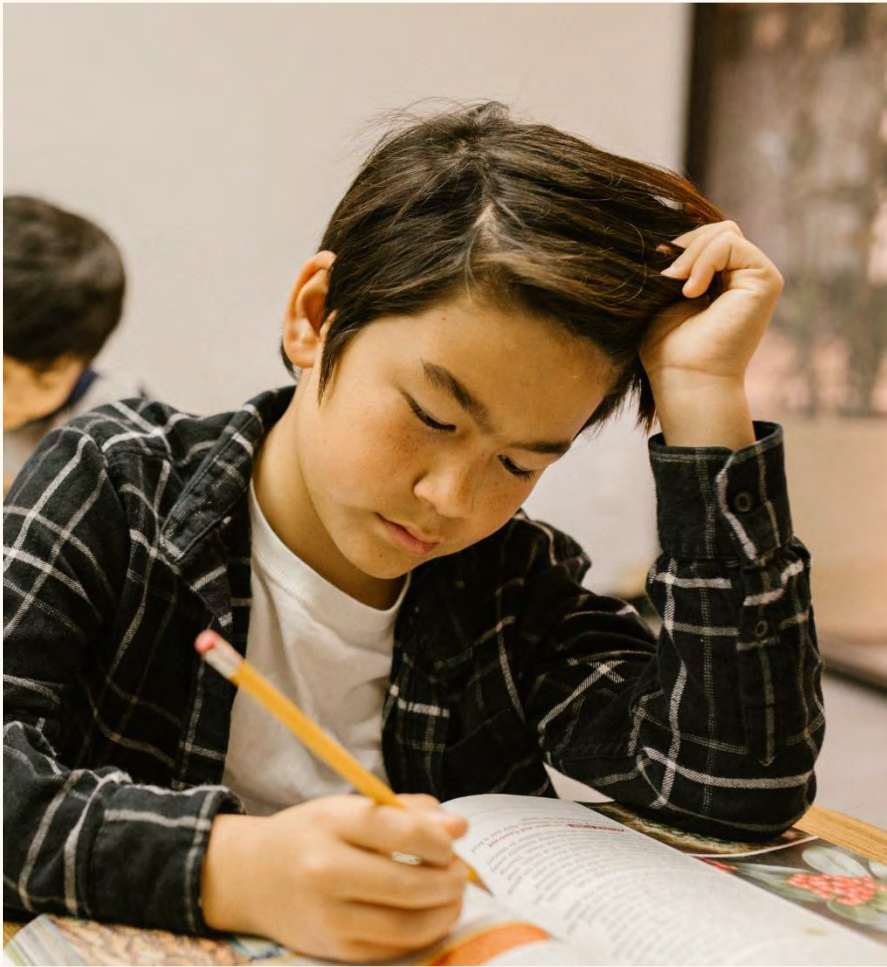


# POSSIBLE APPROACHES

- Universal Screening
- Follow-up Testing
- Curricula Update
- Engage Literacy Best Practices
- Progress Reporting & Tracking
- School-based Supports
- Supports Follow Students
- Supports for Teachers
- Correct Terminology
- Data Collection
- Review & Evaluate Assessment Practices
- Targeted Rural & Northern Supports
- Alignment with Reconciliation



# Barriers to Change



**1**

Cooperation and logistical coordination between a large number of stakeholders province-wide.

**2**

Strongly held beliefs related to pedagogies.

**3**

Maintaining momentum throughout times when stakeholders may be less available.

**4**

Making changes operationally and procedurally.



**OUTREACH: MOVING FORWARD**



# OUTREACH

- ❑ Raising awareness about the report
- ❑ Presenting on this initiative
- ❑ Digital and paper pamphlets with an executive summary
- ❑ Public events
- ❑ Stakeholder meetings



# MOVING FORWARD: COLLABORATION

- ❑ Initial meeting with all stakeholders, agenda, due dates for feedback, terms of reference
- ❑ Ideally 1-2 representatives from major stakeholders

- ❑ Ongoing process (years long/as needed)
- ❑ Establishment of initial priority:
  - Who can address and implement operational change to the existing system for each priority?

- ❑ Delegate
- ❑ Follow up
- ❑ Reporting

# IN CONCLUSION

- Focused on maintaining awareness of the report and initiative with the public and stakeholders
- Meeting with stakeholders to inform them of our next steps and request for participation
- Committee creation to take place in early 2024
- Focus will remain on establishing changes according to the reports 'Items to be Addressed'



# FULL REPORT

- [www.saskatchewanhumanrights.ca](http://www.saskatchewanhumanrights.ca)
- Education and Resources tab
- Publications
- Report available in PDF and HTML formats



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# Questions?

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission operates a Business Help Line and provides information to businesses, employers, landlords, unions, and other organizations.

Business Line: 306-933-8274

Main SHRC Line: 306-933-5952

Website: [saskatchewanhumanrights.ca](http://saskatchewanhumanrights.ca)

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