

RTAM's Position on Bill 64

As RTAM is the representative organization for over 10,000 retired teachers who have spent decades in Manitoba schools, we feel we have garnered the wisdom of elders and the dedication of parents and grandparents to be able to provide our opinions on educational reform.

We are a skilled and respected piece of the educational hierarchy and now contribute to our communities by volunteering in many ways including care giving, time sharing in civic leadership and on service club boards, reaching out to those in need, and indeed, some of us are still teaching.

Therefore, members of RTAM believe we are in a unique position to provide insight on Bill 64. These reflections will help predict the impact of the proposed changes on the education of Manitoba's children. A modern education system for tomorrow that is consistent, efficient, inclusive and ultimately focused on the success of ALL students depends on all of us.

While RTAM recognizes the Government's initiative to undertake a difficult task with many stakeholders involved, there are concerns that may prove to be counter- productive and instead lead to unfavourable outcomes.

1. The impact of child poverty on education needs further investigation, especially as it relates to student attendance, learning and achievement.
2. The role of principals and vice principals as lead teachers of a collegial team of educational professionals needs to be respected and recognized. If they are removed from the Manitoba Teachers' Society, it is difficult to imagine how the historical and current cooperative team approach to improving student achievement will be maintained.
3. Since Bill 64's core proposals originate from both the Charter School model and a similar plan previously adopted by the Nova Scotia government, it would be responsible to assess the Nova Scotia experiment's successes and failures.
4. It is hoped that all K-12 schools, regardless of the proportion of Aboriginal students, will honour Reconciliation by teaching age- appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada.
5. Experience in every jurisdiction in Canada has repeatedly taught all education stakeholders that standardized tests should never be the only or stand- alone measure of student achievement. Teachers in Manitoba use a number of assessment tools to measure the achievement of students.
6. Enhancing the parents' advisory role at both the local and regional levels must be balanced with a respectful acknowledgement that the main responsibility for educating Manitoba's children must stay with the educators who are trained and experienced in the best ways to help students learn.
7. The Remote Learning Support Centre has had a positive impact on students unable to attend a 'bricks and mortar' school in a traditional manner and virtual learning during the coronavirus pandemic. This experience should be a model for future virtual learning.