

# Chapter 2: Regional School Board Governance and Oversight



## Why we did this audit:

- Previous audit of a regional school board found problems with monitoring and oversight of student performance
- Education of our youth is a priority for Nova Scotians
- More than 120,000 students in public schools
- Over \$1.2 billion in school board budgets

## Overall conclusions:

- While all three boards have some good practices by both board management and governing boards, there are also some shortcomings
- Department is not clearly defining the role of school boards or meeting its responsibilities under the Education Act
- Department and boards agreed with all ten recommendations

## What we found in our audit:

- Good job on continuous school improvement process by all three boards
- Governing boards generally get good information from management
- Governing boards need to ask for more information in some areas, such as school progress towards goals
- Department has not clearly defined its roles, as well as those of regional school boards
- Superintendent evaluations
  - Strait does this well
  - Chignecto-Central and Halifax are doing evaluations but need improvements
- Self-evaluations of governing boards
  - Chignecto-Central and Halifax are doing these but have weaknesses
  - Strait had not completed a self-evaluation at the time of our audit
- Assessing student performance on provincial assessments
  - Chignecto-Central and Halifax governing boards receive the needed information
  - Strait receives some information but requires more
- All three governing boards need more information on how students with individual program plans are progressing
- The Department has not set clear expectations for school board performance
- Chignecto-Central and Strait management do not get enough information to fully evaluate progress towards school goals
- Additional student progress data would help give a more complete picture



## 2 Education and Early Childhood Development: Regional School Board Governance and Oversight

### Background

2.1 The Chignecto-Central, Halifax and Strait Regional School Boards are three of eight school boards in the province. In the 2014-15 school year, they combined to serve approximately 74,878 students across 231 schools. Each school board varies in size and budget. The following table includes summary information for all eight boards.

School Board	Approximate # Students Enrolled	# Schools	Budget (in \$000's)	Governing Board Members
Annapolis Valley	13,340	43	\$136,883	15
Cape Breton Victoria	13,673	52	150,754	16
Chignecto-Central*	20,000	73	201,381	17
Conseil scolaire acadien provincial	5,137	22	67,862	17
Halifax*	48,500	137	433,596	10
South Shore	6,681	27	78,597	8
Strait*	6,378	21	80,571	12
Tri-County	6,400	27	72,844	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>120,109</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>\$1,222,488</b>	<b>106</b>

All figures relate to the 2014-15 school year  
\* Included in this audit

2.2 The superintendent in each regional school board is accountable to the governing board. Responsibilities include supervising the overall operation of the board including head office, schools and employees. In each board, functions are divided into departments, each with a director who reports to the superintendent. Typical departments cover areas such as education, operational and financial services, and human resources. Operational and management decisions at the school level are the responsibility of principals and vice-principals.

2.3 Each regional school board has a governing board consisting primarily of elected members, along with some appointed individuals. Board members are responsible to both the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and the voters in their area. Governing boards function in an oversight role, part of which includes approving the strategic plan and supporting business plans.



- 2.4 In addition to oversight related to each board’s strategic plan, each governing board is responsible to fulfill its duties as outlined in the Education Act and Regulations. This includes focusing on the achievement of all students enrolled in their region’s schools and programs, and completing the annual evaluation of the superintendent.
- 2.5 Annually, students across the province write provincial assessments at various grade levels. The results from these assessments play a part in overall performance assessment of school boards. The following table shows results from the 2014-15 school year for elementary level assessments from all boards in the province:

School Board	Grade 3 Literacy	Grade 4 Math	Grade 6 Literacy	Grade 6 Math
Provincial Average	66%	74%	70%	69%
Annapolis Valley	65%	74%	70%	66%
Cape Breton Victoria	64%	71%	66%	64%
Chignecto-Central*	68%	75%	70%	69%
Conseil scolaire acadien provincial	N/A – not written	N/A – not written	57%	N/A – not written
Halifax*	66%	76%	73%	72%
South Shore	68%	70%	60%	59%
Strait*	66%	76%	74%	72%
Tri-County	54%	63%	64%	65%
* Included in this audit				

- 2.6 The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has a broad mandate that includes responsibility for early childhood development, and the education of children and youth through the public school system.

### Audit Objectives and Scope

- 2.7 In spring 2015, following the release of our audit of Tri-County Regional School Board, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development asked us to consider auditing additional regional school boards. After reviewing this request, we chose to conduct a performance audit at Chignecto-Central, Halifax, and Strait Regional School Boards, along with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. We examined activities related to certain responsibilities of the management teams and governing board members, as well as the Department’s oversight. The audit was conducted in accordance with sections 18 and 21 of the Auditor General Act and auditing standards of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada. As with all of our audits, we report directly to the Legislative Assembly.



- 2.8 The purpose of this audit was to determine whether the Department and governing boards of selected regional school boards are providing adequate oversight, and whether the management teams are providing appropriate oversight and monitoring of educational services in schools.
- 2.9 The objectives of the audit were to determine whether:
- the Department is providing adequate oversight and monitoring of educational services delivered by regional school boards;
  - management teams are monitoring the educational performance of schools and appropriately following up when performance is not satisfactory; and
  - governing school board members are providing adequate oversight of the delivery of educational services in their schools.
- 2.10 Audit criteria were developed specifically for this engagement. Criteria were discussed with, and accepted as appropriate by, management and governance representatives of the regional school boards, as well as the Department.
- 2.11 Our audit approach included interviews with management teams and school staff, governing board members, and personnel at Education and Early Childhood Development; examination of legislation, policies and other documentation; and testing compliance with legislation, policy and other processes. Our audit period covered September 1, 2013 to March 31, 2015, focusing on literacy and numeracy in grades primary through six.

## Significant Audit Observations

### Department Oversight

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#### Conclusions and summary of observations

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is not providing adequate oversight and monitoring of educational services delivered by school boards. The Department has not established education performance standards for school boards or performance targets for provincial assessments. The Education Act does not clearly define the accountability relationship between school boards and the Minister. Department staff who act as liaisons between the Minister and school boards could be better utilized. The role of the liaisons is not clear and the Department has not defined updates or reporting they are required to provide. In some instances, the Department embargoes information which means board management cannot share this with their governing boards. Education and Early



Childhood Development management need to review this practice and establish more reasonable timeframes to share information with governing boards.

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► Department has not established performance standards for school boards

2.12 *Performance standards* – The Education Act requires school boards to comply with education program, service and performance standards established by the Minister of Education. However, the Department has not developed any performance expectations for school boards. The only evaluation of student educational achievement on a province-wide basis is the provincial assessment process.

2.13 The Department is responsible for developing the education curriculum and the provincial assessment tool, as well as compiling the results. The Department has not established targets to evaluate school board performance on these assessments. Assessment targets could be used to identify areas of concern, such as school boards performing below expectations; good practices which are helping boards do well; and to encourage coordination between school boards to improve student performance. The Department is ultimately responsible for the education results of all students in the province, but it is not actively monitoring, or acting on, those results.

**Recommendation 2.1**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should establish performance standards for school boards to monitor and evaluate student educational achievement.

**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Response:** The department agrees that student achievement is a priority for Nova Scotia's public education system and is working with school boards to increase its effectiveness. Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education outlines a commitment to an improved education system with a focus on student achievement and includes specific actions to improve curriculum, expand programming, and increase support for teaching and learning.

The Action Plan includes a commitment to accountability, ensuring student achievement is monitored and evaluated. Beginning last year, school boards with the assistance of the department developed a common business planning goal to improve student achievement. Provincial assessments were identified as performance measures for this goal with targets to increase the percentage of students meeting expectations on these assessments.

The department will monitor the implementation of the Action Plan, making adjustments as necessary in the best interests of students, and reporting on progress through an annual report.



Department has not clearly defined school board responsibilities and accountabilities

- 2.14 *Education Act* – The Education Act defines the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the Minister, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and school boards, but does not clearly define the accountability relationship between school boards and the Minister. The Education Act defines school boards as accountable to both the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and the voters in that area. This dual accountability creates conflict if the expectations of the Minister differ from those of the public who elected the school board member. Department management agree that the Education Act does not adequately reflect the roles and responsibilities of the school boards or the Department, but management has not taken steps to clarify the relationship to ensure roles and responsibilities are clearly communicated.
- 2.15 *Regional education officers* – The Department employs five regional education officers to act as liaisons between the Minister and the school boards. They are intended to act as educational advisors to the school boards, and aid the Minister in keeping in touch with educational conditions throughout the province.
- 2.16 The Department has not established how often regional education officers are to report to the Department, or what information they should report. The regional education officer’s liaison role with the school boards provides an opportunity for clear, regular reporting on school board activities. This includes addressing educational priorities, clarifying and strengthening accountability between the Department and school boards, as well as identifying and communicating possible practices which could be shared between school boards to support student educational achievement. This is not happening and the Department should take steps to clarify its expectations and ensure regional education officers are used to the position’s full potential.
- 2.17 *Communicating roles and accountabilities* – Only one of the regional education officers has presented information to governing board members on their role, the Department’s role, and clarifying the accountability relationship between school boards and the Minister. We found the Department does not provide information on roles and accountabilities to newly-elected school board members. Department management told us they have worked with the Nova Scotia School Boards Association to provide this information. School boards have fixed election dates so the Department knows when there are new members. Failing to provide an orientation means new board members may not understand their role and how it fits with the role of the Department and that of the Minister.



### **Recommendation 2.2**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should clearly define and communicate responsibilities of board management, governing boards, and the Department (including regional education officers).

**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Response:** The department agrees with this recommendation and is committed to clarifying the roles and responsibilities of school boards and the department.

The Education Act outlines the legislated roles and responsibilities for bodies and/or individuals responsible for the Nova Scotia school system. Policies and by-laws developed by the department and/or the board can further describe these roles and responsibilities.

The department works with Nova Scotia School Board Association (NSSBA) to provide information to potential candidates on the roles and responsibilities of school boards and their members. Once formed, orientation presentations and seminars are provided to governing school board members.

The department will continue to work with the NSSBA on these initiatives and is committed to clarifying roles and responsibilities of school board management, governing school boards, and the Department including the role of regional education officers. If necessary, amendments to the Education Act will be considered to provide further clarification.

- 2.18 *Restrictions on information shared with board* – Board management told us the Department sometimes requests that information is embargoed and not shared with governing boards right away. For example, provincial assessment results are generally shared with board management before the results are given to governing boards. While timeframes vary, board management told us, and Department management confirmed, that information is sometimes embargoed from release to governing boards for several months.
- 2.19 Department management told us they, along with board management, may need time to fully understand information before it becomes public. They also said they realize the embargo period has been too long at times and they are working to address this.

### **Recommendation 2.3**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should establish clear direction on when school board management cannot provide information to governing boards. This should include defining the time period when information will be embargoed, ensuring that period is as short as possible, and considering whether it would be appropriate to share the information in-camera with governing boards when it is released to management.





**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Response:** The Department accepts this recommendation and has commenced action. On October 8, 2015, the EECD advised school board Superintendents that embargoed provincial assessment results may be shared with governing boards during in-camera sessions. On October 9, 2015, Superintendents were also provided with the following written clarification regarding embargoed assessment results:

The approved practice for handling embargoed provincial assessment results is as follows: *Any embargoed provincial assessment results provided to school board assessment leads must be treated as strictly confidential and may only be shared with: a) Senior School Board Administration; and b) elected school board members during an in-camera presentation.*

Further to this approved practice, the EECD is currently examining the option of a standard embargoed period for provincial assessment results in order to provide senior EECD officials, senior school board administration, and/or governing boards with adequate time to analyze the results prior to their publication.

## Board Management Oversight

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### Conclusions and summary of observations

Management at each board did a good job of implementing the continuous school improvement process, but more board-wide student progress data is needed to evaluate how students are doing. All three boards have literacy assessment data, but we found very little data collected on numeracy. The three boards have recently started collecting report card data. In regard to school staff performance, Halifax and Strait have policies and evaluate teachers and principals. Chignecto-Central has a policy for teacher evaluations, and most were completed, but its policy for principal evaluations is draft and no principals have been evaluated.

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► School board management is doing a good job implementing the continuous school improvement process

2.20 *Continuous school improvement process* – The continuous school improvement process is a framework developed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as the primary approach to monitoring student progress. Every school in the province is required to develop goals based on available assessment data and select strategies to help achieve those goals. We examined this process as part of our audit work and found that all three boards did a good job of implementing it.

2.21 We selected a sample of schools in each of the three boards and reviewed their continuous school improvement plans. All of the schools followed





the process outlined by their respective board, including setting goals and identifying strategies to help achieve them at the school level. We did not note significant issues with the processes at any board.

- ▶ Management at Chignecto-Central and Strait do not obtain sufficient data in annual reports to assess progress towards goals

2.22 *Annual reports* – Annual reporting on continuous school improvement varies between boards. We found board management at Halifax receives adequate annual reporting. Although management at Chignecto-Central and Strait received reporting, it did not include sufficient data to adequately assess results. Reporting should help management to determine if a school is progressing towards accomplishing its goals, or struggling, and in need of additional support. Without adequate reporting, including supporting data to demonstrate progress, board management may not be aware of successes or problems at schools. Data should cover multiple years of results and relate to various forms of evaluation, such as provincial assessments, report card results, and other classroom-based tools.

#### **Recommendation 2.4**

Management at Chignecto-Central and Strait Regional School Boards should require annual reporting to include data sufficient to identify how schools are progressing against goals.

**Chignecto-Central Regional School Board Response:** The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board (CCRSB) agrees to implement this recommendation. CCRSB will update our template for schools to follow when reporting on the progress of their school improvement goals. School goals will be aligned with the goals in CCRSB's strategic and business plans. Schools will collect, analyze and report on a variety of data sources at the school, board and provincial level, throughout the school improvement cycle. Each school's annual report will include a description of the progress made in achieving their goals, as well as multiple data sources over time. Management will provide the elected board with a yearly report summarizing the progress schools are making related to their goals, as well as those schools not yet demonstrating improvement and in need of additional support.

**Strait Regional School Board Response:** The Strait Regional School Board agrees with, and intends to implement, this recommendation.

Management has been requested to establish a process to ensure annual reporting includes sufficient data to identify how schools are progressing against goals and that the goals align with the Board's Educational Business Plan and Strategic Plan. Annual reports are being redesigned to include data which covers multiple years of results and will be based on various sources of data such as provincial assessments,



report card results and other classroom-based assessments. This change in reporting is expected to be implemented by the end of the current school year.

► Insufficient board-wide data on student performance

- 2.23 *Performance data* – Schools use available data to develop continuous school improvement goals. In general, boards indicated this includes annual provincial assessments in certain grades, a limited number of board-wide assessments, and recently, some report card data. We found that additional data would be helpful to provide more complete information on student progress. For literacy, data is available at the school or classroom level in the form of running records or early literacy support assessments. Collecting and analyzing this data and similar numeracy data at a board-wide level would give management more information on how students are progressing.
- 2.24 *Provincial assessments* – In grades primary through six, there are provincial literacy assessments in grades three and six; numeracy is assessed in grades four and six. All three boards are administering these assessments and performing thorough and adequate analysis of this data to identify trends in results.
- 2.25 Many staff we spoke to have concerns with putting too much focus on provincial assessment results. They indicated these are only one assessment, providing a snapshot which may not reflect the student's full abilities. While the provincial assessments are a key piece of data, other information, including report cards, other classroom-based data, or common board-wide tools, should also be used to give an accurate and complete picture of student progress.
- 2.26 All three boards are just starting to review report card data at a board-wide level, and other data is collected which could be used. Much of the literacy data appears to exist at the school or classroom level. Management at each board noted that data is collected related to literacy programs for early grades. Halifax management told us that they use data collected through annual continuous school improvement reports to provide part of the picture of overall student performance. Strait schools complete a board-wide literacy assessment three times each year and management at both Chignecto-Central and Halifax told us schools in their boards conduct similar assessments, but the data is not rolled up to the board-wide level.
- 2.27 We did not find as much numeracy data currently available.

**Recommendation 2.5**

Management at Chignecto-Central, Halifax and Strait Regional School Boards should ensure sufficient data is collected to assess student progress in both numeracy and literacy.



**Chignecto-Central Regional School Board Response:** The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board agrees to implement this recommendation. Work is already underway to implement an annual board-wide Literacy and Mathematics Assessment Schedule spanning Primary to Grade 12. Literacy data currently housed at the school level will be collated and reviewed by management, and summarized for the elected board. Additional system-wide Literacy and Mathematics assessments will be implemented. When combined, this should ensure sufficient data is collected by management to assess student performance in both numeracy and literacy.

**Halifax Regional School Board Response:** Management agrees to implement this recommendation. Management will work with elementary schools to collect and consolidate assessment data in both numeracy and literacy that schools are currently using to track student achievement.

In addition, Management has expanded the Early Literacy Support model to grade 3 and will track additional literacy data. To address the concern regarding the collection of numeracy data, HRSB schools will be participating in a planned, province-wide grade 2 common math assessment when available from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

**Strait Regional School Board Response:** The Strait Regional School Board agrees with, and intends to implement, this recommendation.

In addition to provincial assessments and the Board-wide literacy assessments currently being administered, the Strait Regional School Board will develop a board-wide common numeracy assessment to be implemented at the elementary level. This common assessment is scheduled to be implemented during the 2016-2017 school year and will be conducted on an annual basis.

2.28 *Interventions and programs* – In all three boards, we found there were fewer support programs for numeracy than for literacy. These programs are important as they identify students who struggle with the subject and provide additional support to help improve progress. Management at all three boards acknowledged more numeracy programs are needed and told us they hope to implement additional programming in the future.

► All three boards have teacher and principal evaluation policies, but Chignecto-Central's principal evaluation policy is draft

2.29 *Teacher and principal evaluations* – It is important that regional school boards have processes to determine whether performance expectations are met in the delivery of educational services in schools. All three boards have appropriate policies to guide teacher evaluations. Halifax and Strait have appropriate principal evaluation policies, but Chignecto-Central's principal evaluation policy is draft. We found board management knew that



evaluations had occurred in all boards, except for principals in Chignecto-Central. Management at that board told us there is a plan to begin evaluating principals.

- 2.30 Chignecto-Central and Strait are in the process of implementing online tools for performance management. Both focus on developing teachers to help improve student achievement results. These tools will allow tracking and reporting of results to help identify staff professional development needs. Similar programs would be a favourable practice for any school board.

## Board Governance

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### Conclusions and summary of observations

All three governing boards receive regular reporting from management which focuses on each board's strategic plan and progress towards achieving its goals. However, we noted the governing boards are not identifying areas in which they require additional information from management, particularly around student progress. We found that Chignecto-Central and Halifax governing boards receive adequate information regarding how continuous school improvement plan goals link to the board strategic plans, while Strait does not. None of the boards get enough information to monitor each school's progress towards achieving its goals. We also found that Chignecto-Central and Halifax receive adequate information to understand how students are performing on provincial assessments, but Strait needs details on how individual schools are performing. Additionally, none of the boards receive enough information on staff evaluations to know whether teachers and principals are meeting expectations. All three governing boards require improvement in completing their own self-assessment processes. Strait does a good job evaluating their superintendent, while both Chignecto-Central and Halifax need to make improvements in that area.

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- 2.31 *Strategic plans and supporting business plans* – Regional school boards have strategic plans and supporting business plans. These documents set board direction. Actions and initiatives at each board should contribute to achievement of goals documented in the planning documents. Information governing boards receive on progress toward strategic planning initiatives help them to hold management accountable.
- 2.32 In all three boards we visited, governing board members receive information from management on progress towards achieving strategic plan goals. The boards meet regularly and each has committees which also receive this information. Both Halifax and Strait use templates which clearly identify how the topics discussed relate to strategic goals. This practice helps to inform governing members of why the information is relevant. While Chignecto-



Central doesn't have a template, their approach is very similar and results in good information sharing with the governing board.

- 2.33 Despite exhibiting overall good approaches, each board has instances in which it does not have appropriate processes to adequately fulfill its governance role. For example, board members rely on management to report on the strategic plan. However, governing boards should recognize and identify to management areas in which their information needs are not met.

► Chignecto-Central and Halifax provide adequate oversight of provincial assessment results, Strait needs improvement

- 2.34 Each regional school board has a goal related to student achievement in its strategic plan. Performance measures help determine whether the goal has been met. We expected governing boards to ensure they receive sufficient information to understand progress towards achieving strategic goals. This is important as it allows board members to make informed decisions and inquire of management if expectations are not met.
- 2.35 *Information on provincial assessments* – Provincial assessments are administered in various school grades throughout the year. The Department compiles assessment results and releases them to regional school boards and the general public. At the grade levels included in our audit (primary to six), these assessments are specific to numeracy and literacy and were discussed in the Management Oversight section earlier in this chapter.
- 2.36 The Chignecto-Central and Halifax governing boards receive adequate information regarding provincial assessment results. Comprehensive presentations on numeracy and literacy assessment results are provided. These include information on trends in performance within the region, progress towards targets, comparison to provincial results, areas of concern, and other information sufficient to understand student achievement.
- 2.37 The Strait governing board receives a report comparing Strait with other boards in the province, but it does not receive the same level of information on trends at the school level within the board. Management informs the governing board that individual school data is shared and discussed with school principals. However, the governing board does not ensure it receives information to show individual school results or how schools perform relative to each other. This type of information could help identify which schools require attention. The governing board could then hold management accountable to address the needs of the students in those schools.
- 2.38 Although there are areas for improvement, each governing board reviews and discusses initiatives relating to numeracy and literacy. The frequency of information reviewed varies across the boards. However, each receives



information on programs and resources available to students (i.e., early literacy programs, math mentors for teachers). This information is valuable as it allows governing boards to understand the mechanisms in place to assist students in their performance.

► Governing boards need more information to understand how students on individual program plans are progressing

2.39 *Individual program plans* – Some students have individual program plans. These are developed specific to that student’s needs, which may be academic or general life skills. Regional school board resources are used to support these students. Data released by the Department in 2014 provides the following information regarding the numbers of students with individual program plans for the 2013-14 school year at the boards we visited.

	Chignecto-Central	Halifax	Strait
Number of individual program plans	1,095	2,521	452
Percentage of students on individual program plans	5.3%	5.2%	6.8%

2.40 Students on individual program plans generally do not write provincial assessments and therefore these assessments do not provide information on progress toward individual program plan outcomes. We expected governing board members to have information regarding the number of students on individual program plans, existing trends, issues of concern, and how these students are progressing against their individual goals. This information would allow governing boards to make informed decisions with respect to student achievement; it would also allow board members to hold management accountable.

2.41 Chignecto-Central governing board members requested additional information on student performance which included data on the number of individual program plan participants, performance by gender and minority group, supports available to these students, and actions required going forward. We also reviewed reports prepared by management at Halifax and Strait, which focused primarily on African Nova Scotian and aboriginal students with individual program plans. These reports were not finalized when we completed our audit work.

2.42 While this level of reporting provides the governing board with some information on individual program plans, it does not address student progress towards meeting plan goals. We expected governing boards to request summary information on progress towards individual plan goals so board members can better understand whether individual program plans are successful. The lack of detailed information shows none of the boards are





adequately holding management accountable to report on individual program plan students.

- 2.43 Earlier in this chapter, we noted additional student performance data was required at the management level in all three boards we visited. Understanding overall student performance, as well as how students on individual program plans are progressing, would be useful to governing boards, as well as management, in providing a full picture of student progress.

**Recommendation 2.6**

The governing boards of the Chignecto-Central, Halifax and Strait Regional School Boards should ensure they receive and review reports on student progress including reports on provincial, board or school-based assessment results, and students on individual program plans.

**Chignecto-Central Regional School Board Response:** The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board agrees to implement this recommendation. Summarized assessment data, including provincial, board, or school-based results, and student progress on individual program plans will be presented to the elected board on a regular basis. Summary data reported to the elected board will incorporate multiple sources of student achievement data over time. Management will continue to support the elected board's understanding of the purpose and context of assessments. This will allow members to determine what additional information they need to support their governance responsibilities.

**Halifax Regional School Board Response:** The Governing Board agrees to implement this recommendation. In the board's 2015-2016 General Fund Business Plan, monitoring student progress on Individual Program Plans (IPPs) is included as a priority under Goal 2: To strengthen safe and inclusive school environments. Progress on this priority will be requested and reviewed by the Governing Board during regular business plan updates.

The Governing Board will continue to ensure student assessment results are provided by Management and reviewed on a regular basis.

**Strait Regional School Board Response:** The Strait Regional School Board agrees with, and intends to implement, this recommendation.

In addition to the information already reviewed by the Strait Regional School Board, management has been requested to provide achievement data on all student performance based on provincial, board and school-based assessment results to the governing Board for review.





Subsequent to the visit by the Auditor General's staff, a report based on an audit of a random sample of all students with an individual program plan has been completed by management and presented to the Strait Regional School Board.

Both the achievement data report and the individual program plan report will be presented on an annual basis, and additionally, as requested by the Board.

► Governing boards do not know whether all schools are meeting their continuous school improvement goals

- 2.44 *Continuous school improvement plans* – Schools are required to develop goals and strategies for improvement and document these in a continuous school improvement plan. We discussed management's involvement with these plans earlier in this chapter. It is important that governing boards are aware of the status of improvement plans. They should understand whether goals align with the board's strategic plan, and if schools are making progress towards goals. This allows board members to hold management accountable.
- 2.45 Governing boards at Chignecto-Central and Halifax receive sufficient information to understand that continuous school improvement plans exist and school goals appropriately align with the boards' strategic plans. The Halifax governing board receives this information via regular business plan updates, while Chignecto-Central includes this information in their strategic planning document.
- 2.46 Strait governing board members told us they know all schools have a literacy and numeracy goal, and that those goals are generally aligned with overall board strategic plan goals. However, we found the board has not requested specific reporting on school goals to ensure they are consistent with board goals.
- 2.47 *Annual reports* – As discussed in the Management Oversight section of this chapter, management at Chignecto-Central and Strait do not ensure annual reports from schools include sufficient data. In Halifax, we found the governing board does not receive sufficient information regarding annual school reports to provide adequate oversight of school performance. It is the governing boards' responsibility to hold management accountable in such matters and this has not occurred. Governing boards have not requested summary information, such as the overall percentage of schools that met goals, or are on track to meet goals. Consequently, they are not aware how schools are performing relative to their continuous school improvement plan goals.



**Recommendation 2.7**

The governing boards of Chignecto-Central, Halifax and Strait Regional School Boards should require management to provide appropriate information to allow the boards to understand whether goals outlined in the continuous school improvement process have been achieved.

**Chignecto-Central Regional School Board Response:** The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board agrees to implement this recommendation. Management will provide the elected board with an annual report summarizing the progress schools are making related to their goals within the school improvement process. The report will reference summarized data from multiple data sources over time. This report will include a summary of additional supports directed to those schools that have either not yet demonstrated improvement, or have not achieved their goals within their identified improvement cycle.

**Halifax Regional School Board Response:** The Governing Board agrees to implement this recommendation. All HRSB schools prepare an Annual Report to the Community. These reports include the schools' improvement goals, progress toward meeting those goals and provincial assessment data where applicable. Starting in 2016, the Governing Board will require Management to provide a summary report each November outlining the progress schools are making toward their annual improvement goals.

**Strait Regional School Board Response:** The Strait Regional School Board agrees with, and intends to implement, this recommendation. The Strait Regional School Board had already recognized the need for additional focus in this area and created the new position of Coordinator of Continuous School Improvement.

Management has been requested to establish a process to inform the governing Board, annually, on how schools are progressing on their continuous school improvement goals. Management has also been requested to provide, on an annual basis, the governing Board with data to ensure that the continuous school improvement goals align with the Board's Educational Business Plan and Strategic Plan.

As their schedules permit, School Board members attend School Advisory Council meetings for schools in their local area. In addition to the information already reviewed by the School Board, these meetings enable Board Members to gain valuable information on the school's improvement goals and the work ongoing to achieve them.

► Governing boards do not provide adequate oversight of principal and teacher evaluations

2.48 *Teacher and principal evaluations* – We expected governing boards to receive summary information to understand whether teacher and principal



evaluations were complete, and whether expectations were met. We found Strait received summary information on the number of teachers subject to evaluation, but did not receive the same for principals. Chignecto-Central and Halifax did not receive this information for teachers or principals. None of the governing boards received information sufficient to understand how teachers and principals are performing. Board members have not requested this information from management. Without this, it is difficult for governing boards to ensure management is evaluating teachers and principals and providing them with necessary resources to address development needs.

**Recommendation 2.8**

The governing boards of Chignecto-Central, Halifax and Strait Regional School Boards should obtain and review information on whether teacher and principal evaluations are completed according to board policy, including summary results; and whether staff development needs are met.

**Chignecto-Central Regional School Board Response:** The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board agrees to implement this recommendation. Management have initiated full implementation of a performance, growth and appraisal process for all teachers and principals. Management will ensure that the board receives summary data annually which will include:

- Status on the completion of performance growth and appraisals for teachers and principals;
- Summary information on how teachers and principals are performing in relation to established expectations;
- Identified trends; and
- How information is used for planning and/or response.

**Halifax Regional School Board Response:** The Governing Board agrees to implement this recommendation. Starting in September 2016, the Governing Board will require Management to provide a summary report on the previous year's teacher and principal evaluations.

**Strait Regional School Board Response:** The Strait Regional School Board agrees with, and intends to implement, this recommendation.

Management will be requested to provide information on whether principal evaluations are completed according to Board policy. This information is currently being provided for teaching staff. In addition, this request for information will include a summary of results for both teachers and principals, and staff development needs required based on the results.

Management will be required to present this information on an annual basis.



► Governing boards do not sufficiently evaluate themselves; Chignecto-Central and Halifax require improvement in evaluating their superintendents

2.49 *Governing boards' self-assessment processes* – Governing boards are tasked with providing oversight in their respective regional school boards. It is important that they establish a culture of improvement and fulfill the responsibilities associated with their role, including compliance with legislation. A self-assessment process to evaluate performance could assist governing boards to be more effective in their oversight roles, and to help ensure the education needs of students are met. Infrequent, incomplete, or a lack of self-evaluations may limit a governing board's ability to be effective in its duties.

2.50 We looked at whether the governing boards we visited completed self-assessments in 2014 and 2015.

- Chignecto-Central completed an evaluation in 2015, but not in 2014.
- Halifax completed an evaluation in both years.
- Chignecto-Central's evaluation specifically considered compliance with the Education Act. Halifax's evaluation did not include this.
- Neither Chignecto-Central nor Halifax have written policies to guide the self-evaluation process.
- Strait had not completed an evaluation for either year at the time of our audit. Subsequently, management and governing board members told us that they completed a self-assessment in June 2015.

**Recommendation 2.9**

The governing boards of Chignecto-Central, Halifax and Strait Regional School Boards should complete annual self-assessments to measure performance against all key areas of responsibility, including those identified in the Education Act.

**Chignecto-Central Regional School Board Response:** The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board agrees to implement this recommendation. Work has been completed on a review of the CCRSB By-Laws, including clearer expectations regarding self-assessment and a yearly process. The board will continue to ensure that an annual self-evaluation process is conducted that includes measures of performance against all key areas of responsibility, including those identified in the Education Act.

**Halifax Regional School Board Response:** The Governing Board agrees to implement this recommendation. The Governing Board currently conducts an annual self-assessment and it is an ongoing, continuous process that expands



on previous learnings. This process will be reviewed and revised to measure performance against all key areas of responsibility, including those identified in the Education Act.

The Governing Board will strengthen their current self-evaluation process. In addition, the Governing Board is working with other school boards in Nova Scotia, through the Nova Scotia School Boards Association (NSSBA), to develop a tool aligned with Board's responsibilities, including those identified in the Education Act

**Strait Regional School Board Response:** The Strait Regional School Board agrees with, and intends to implement, this recommendation.

Subsequent to the visit by the Auditor General's staff, the Board has conducted their first ever self-assessment and will continue to do so on an annual basis. This self-assessment will measure performance against all keys areas of responsibility, including those identified in the Education Act.

2.51 *Assessment of superintendent performance* – Governing boards are responsible to ensure the superintendent's annual evaluation is completed. The superintendent, in addition to supervising the implementation of the strategic and business plans, has specific responsibilities under the Education Act.

2.52 Strait has the most complete superintendent evaluation process. It clearly considers responsibilities related to the strategic plan and the Education Act, and involves Department staff in the process. Chignecto-Central and Halifax superintendent evaluations consider each board's strategic plan. However, neither clearly considers the superintendent's responsibilities under the Education Act. It is important governing boards provide a complete evaluation so the superintendent receives feedback on each area of responsibility.

**Recommendation 2.10**

The governing boards of Chignecto-Central and Halifax Regional School Boards should ensure the superintendent evaluation process includes all key areas of responsibility, including those identified in the Education Act.

**Chignecto-Central Regional School Board Response:** The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board agrees to implement this recommendation. The elected board will review their evaluation process for the superintendent. Necessary changes will be made to ensure that all key areas of responsibility, including those identified in the Education Act, are made part of the process beginning with the 2015-2016 evaluation.



**Halifax Regional School Board Response:** The Governing Board agrees to implement this recommendation. The Governing Board will incorporate this recommendation into the superintendent's evaluation starting in 2016.



## Halifax Regional School Board: Additional Comments

The Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) would like to thank the Office of the Auditor General for conducting an audit of our operations. The last audit of the HRSB took place in 2004. The board was pleased to participate in this review to help identify what is working, as well as identifying potential gaps in our current policies and practices.

The Governing Board is pleased that the recommendations outlined in the audit support our mission of, *“Providing a high quality education for every student every day.”* The Governing Board and Management are committed to working towards implementation of these recommendations in a timely manner.

Our school systems are focused on improvement. We will use this audit and its recommendations to learn how we can improve. We look forward to a fuller relationship with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to strengthen governance, leadership and student achievement in Nova Scotia.