



In partnership with:



# 1<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL REPORT CARD ON WESTERN CANADIAN HIGH SCHOOLS: SASKATCHEWAN & MANITOBA

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Halifax, Nova Scotia  
March 2011



## ABOUT US

The Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS) is an independent, non-partisan, social and economic policy think tank based in Halifax. The Institute was founded by a group of Atlantic Canadians to broaden the debate about the realistic options available to build our economy.

AIMS was incorporated as a non-profit corporation under Part II of the *Canada Corporations Act* and was granted charitable registration by Revenue Canada as of October 3, 1994; it recently received US charitable recognition under 501(c)(3) effective the same date.

The Institute's chief objectives include:

- a) initiating and conducting research identifying current and emerging economic and public policy issues facing Atlantic Canadians and Canadians more generally, including research into the economic and social characteristics and potentials of Atlantic Canada and its four constituent provinces;
- b) investigating and analyzing the full range of options for public and private sector responses to the issues identified and acting as a catalyst for informed debate on those options, with a particular focus on strategies for overcoming Atlantic Canada's economic challenges in terms of regional disparities;
- c) communicating the conclusions of its research to a regional and national audience in a clear, non-partisan way; and
- d) sponsoring or organizing conferences, meetings, seminars, lectures, training programs, and publications, using all media of communication (including, without restriction, the electronic media) for the purpose of achieving these objectives.

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The **Frontier Centre for Public Policy (FCPP)** is an independent think tank whose mission is to explore options for the future by undertaking research and education that supports economic growth and opportunity.

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## WHY A REPORT CARD FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

What do you want from your high school? Do you want to advance your ability to read, write and do math? How about other important skills, like teamwork and using technology? Maybe you want your school to keep you consistently engaged in learning. Or, to enable success in post-secondary education and your prospective career. High schools are not perfect. They vary in their strengths and weaknesses. You have the right to know about these strengths and weaknesses to demand better or choose otherwise. Many governments collect this information but do not make it publicly available or do not present it in a manner that is easily understood. The *1<sup>st</sup> Annual Report Card on Western Canadian High Schools* compiles this information and presents it for students, parents and anyone interested, to encourage school improvement.<sup>1</sup>

AIMS has evaluated High Schools in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI, and Newfoundland and Labrador for the past nine years. These evaluations have prompted improvements in education. When people take interest in their school's performance and voice their concern to administrators, we see the greatest improvements in schools. It forces school management to pay attention and address the real issues. We've made significant gains in achieving greater accountability and transparency from ministries or departments of education, school districts and schools themselves. We have also made strides toward our greatest goal: engaging parents, students and other interested people in making their schools better.

AIMS, in partnership with the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, have taken our project west to grade high schools in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The data for the 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08 school years have been collected and summarized to calculate three year averages to produce stable results. The result is a detailed assessment and ranking of the quality of education delivered from participating Manitoban and Saskatchewanian high schools – excluding independent non-funded schools.

## WHAT IS IN THIS REPORT

The *1<sup>st</sup> Annual Western Report Card for High Schools* is based on the AIMS' *Report Card on Atlantic Canadian High Schools* methodology. We compile data from ministries or departments of education, school boards, schools and any other publicly-available sources. Our indicators are educational characteristics that provide insight into the performance of high schools considering their common objectives. All indicators represent the entire school's performance or characteristic. Once the data has been compiled we grade and rank each outcome indicator.

### Ranks and Grades

Ranks indicate the performance of schools relative to other schools. The top ranked school (e.g. number one) is the top performing school. Input indicator rankings do not consider value, they merely rank schools from highest to lowest. Grades indicate the performance of schools relative to other

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<sup>1</sup> The Manitoba report cards have no Final grades and ranks because of the limited outcomes data made available.



schools, but also consider the distance between schools' performance. For instance, the top ranked school may only receive a grade of B+ because they are only slightly better than the other schools.

### **In-Context Ranks and Grades**

Our methodology is designed to recognize that educational outcomes can be affected by various factors outside the control of schools themselves. We use a number of external factors proven to impact school performance including:

- the size of the high school, the amount of students per teacher, level of teacher training, student performance prior to entering high school, and the demographic characteristics of the surrounding community.

Inputs are used to derive In-Context ranks and grades. In-Context ranks and grades consider how the school should perform against how they actually perform. In other words, it levels the playing field so disadvantaged schools can better compete with advantaged schools. Many disadvantaged schools are putting significant effort into overcoming their disproportionate challenges. In-context scores test their level of success.

### **Absolute Ranks and Grades**

The other set of ranks and grades are Absolute. These are unadjusted using only the actual scores on our outcome indicators to rank and grade schools. Our outcome indicators fall into two categories: Academic Achievement and Academic Engagement.

- Academic Achievement - indicators representing a school's academic achievement including: average school marks in math, science, language arts, and humanities courses; average provincial exam marks in math, science, language arts, and humanities subjects; and achievement in post-secondary studies or training.
- Academic Engagement – indicators representing the level of interest in high school and future interest in college or university including: high school attendance rates, grade to grade graduation rates, enrolment in high school math and language arts courses that enable enrolment in post-secondary education, and participation in post-secondary education.

### **Overall and Final Ranks and Grades**

The grades and ranks for each indicator are used to calculate average grades for the Academic Achievement and Academic Engagement indicator categories. These average grades are then used to calculate an overall Absolute and In-Context grade. The Final Grade for each school is calculated by averaging the Overall Absolute and the Overall In-Context score.

## **WHAT SHOULD YOU DO NOW**

It is our intention to present accurate information that is easily interpreted about your schools' performance. It is your choice how to use it. This information can be used to fuel discussion about why schools are performing poorly or quite well. It can be used to demand improvement and inform approaches to improvement by identifying practices and policies of schools that perform well. It can allow for informed choice of where to enrol. Demand good schools! They are crucial to success throughout your life or your child's – and you pay for them!



## RESOURCES

Below are links to resources explaining important aspects of the Report Cards. Please read all of this documentation to better understand your school's rank and grade.

[Click here](#) to better understand the indicators and why they are included.

[Click here](#) to better understand how Overall and Final scores are calculated using the Indicator Pyramids.

[Click here](#) to better understand why provincial Report Cards differ and how you can help improve government transparency and accountability.

## REPORT CARDS

### **Manitoba:**

[Click here](#) for access to Manitoba's Summary Report Card including only Overall and Final ranks and grades.

[Click here](#) for access to Manitoba's complete Report Card.

- **NOTE:** This document is designed to be viewed in Adobe Acrobat as you would view a booklet (two pages across). If the document does not automatically appear this way on your screen select the 'View' option in the tool bar, scroll to 'Page Display' and select 'Two-Up' or 'Two-Up Continuous' and also select the 'Show Cover Page During Two-Up' option.

### **Saskatchewan:**

[Click here](#) for access to Saskatchewan's Summary Report Card including only Overall and Final ranks and grades.

[Click here](#) for access to Saskatchewan's complete Report Card.

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