

ADDRESSING FAIRNESS IN ASSESSMENTS:

How EQAO Ensures Assessments are Fair,
Equitable and Inclusive for All Students



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Introduction

Established in 1996, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) is a crown agency of the Ontario Government that has distinguished itself as a world-class large-scale assessment organization that provides valuable services to the people of Ontario, with a focus on supporting the improvement of student learning. It accomplishes this important role by providing credible information about the quality of the province's publicly funded elementary and secondary education system, derived from designing, administering, scoring and reporting on province-wide tests of elementary- and secondary-school students. The assessments include Primary Division (Grade 3) and Junior Division (Grade 6) assessments of reading, writing and mathematics; a Grade 9 mathematics; and a Grade 10 reading and writing assessment called the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). All assessments are conducted annually in both of Canada's official languages (English and French) and are administered online.

The development of assessments that address student diversity, in all of its forms, is fundamentally important. For example, an article by Huseyn (2025) identifies the need for culturally responsive assessments, which reflect the diverse experiences of test takers:

“...policymakers have a responsibility to make sure that assessments are not only scientifically valid and reliable but also equitable for all learners.”¹

Most jurisdictions that administer large-scale student assessments are conscious of and make efforts to develop tests that are suitable for all students. Some jurisdictions, however, (like the EQAO) have developed comprehensive, long-term plans that provide for clear, intentional processes and practices to address equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in large-scale student assessments. This article will highlight the agency's related strategies and initiatives under the following headings:

- Philosophy and Strategic Direction

- Creating Fair and Inclusive Assessments
- Student and Community Engagement
- Conducting Research and Psychometric Analysis
- Initiatives Impacting Assessments and Work Environment

Philosophy and Strategic Direction

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) have always been an important part of EQAO's values. One of the most significant drivers for EDI at the agency is the recognition that the student population in Ontario is not a monolith, and that student achievement is impacted by EQAO policies and practices. Statistics Canada demographic data clearly indicates an extremely diverse student population in Ontario, especially in the Windsor-Ottawa corridor, and most prominently in the Greater Toronto Area. In addition, one of the mandates of the agency is to analyze and report on student achievement data. EQAO collects data on sex or gender identity, as well as several groups of interest, including students with special education needs, students who are language learners, and students who self-identify as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (the agency does not collect any other demographic data, such as race, ethnicity, family income, etc.). For many years, the data has shown disparities and disproportionalities in these groups of interest, which has compelled the agency to implement tools and processes that ensure accessibility to its assessments, especially for students with special education needs and English Language Learners.

In 2017, the Ontario government passed the Anti-Racism Act, a bill mandating that an anti-racism strategy must be maintained that aims to eliminate systemic racism and advance racial equity. The strategy includes initiatives to eliminate systemic racism, such as identifying and removing systemic barriers that contribute to inequitable racial outcomes, advancing racial equity, and creating targets and indicators to measure the strategy's effectiveness. The initiatives must assist racialized

¹ Huseyn, V. (2025, February 28). Do Culturally Responsive Assessments Matter? *Vretta Buzz*. Retrieved March 14, 2025 from: <https://www.vretta.com/buzz/culturallyresponsive>.

groups that are most adversely impacted by systemic racism, including Indigenous and Black communities, and must include initiatives to address the adverse impact of different forms of racism, including anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, antisemitism and Islamophobia. In the same year, the workforce of public service in Ontario, known as the Ontario Public Service (OPS), issued an Inclusion and Diversity Blueprint, a roadmap for addressing systemic barriers and building diverse and inclusive workplaces with equitable outcomes for all.

In 2020, the world was faced with two historic events – the COVID-19 pandemic and the death of George Floyd. The pandemic provided a clear indication of the disproportionate impacts that face marginalized communities around the world, while the circumstances surrounding George Floyd and many other similar incidents in Canada, the US, and abroad have provided evidence that the harmful effects of discrimination have continued to permeate throughout society. While the fight against racism has been occurring for decades, these two events acted as a global wake-up call.

Similar to many other organizations, EQAO felt the need to take further action, so that equity, diversity, and inclusion could be explicitly acknowledged and grounded in its operations. In 2022, a decision was made to modify the role of Chief Assessment Officer (CAO) to Chief Equity and Assessment Officer (CEAO), with a responsibility to focus on embedding EDI into all facets of the organization, including the assessments. Once a CEOA was hired, an Equity team was put into place to support the strategy.

Concurrent to the recruitment of the CEOA, the executive team approved a proposal to contract Toronto Metropolitan University's Diversity Institute (DI), run out of the Ted Rogers School of Management, to conduct an equity audit of the agency and to create an Equity Multi-Year Plan (MYP) based on the findings of the audit. The CEOA, Equity team, the agency's Senior Policy Analyst, and a small team of staff worked closely with DI to facilitate the audit and to collaborate on the creation

of the Equity MYP. To ensure that all voices were heard, surveys were distributed to the entire agency, and focus groups were conducted with many staff and external partners. The development of the plan required numerous meetings and drafts, with the entire process taking over a year to complete. With the CEOA, an Equity team, an Equity MYP, and a leadership team supportive of EDI, EQAO has been able to effect authentic change, positively affecting agency staff, the students it serves, and educational partners as a whole.

Creating Fair and Inclusive Assessments

Universal Design

Central to ensuring that large-scale student assessments are constructed to be as fair as possible for students of varying backgrounds and special education needs is the concept of universal design. Thompson, Johnstone and Thurlow (2002) describe the purpose of universal design as follows:

“Universally designed assessments are designed and developed from the beginning to allow participation of the widest possible range of students, and to result in valid inferences about performance for all students who participate in the assessment. Universally designed assessments add a dimension of fairness to the testing process.”²

The authors go on to explain that underlying this principle is the premise that each child in school is a part of the population to be tested, and that testing results should not be affected by disability, gender, race or language of the test:

“This does not mean that standards should be relaxed or that constructs to be measured should be changed (such changes would constitute test modifications). Items on a universally-designed standards-based assessment must be aligned to the content and achievement standards with the same depth and breadth of coverage, and the same

² Thompson, S.J., Johnstone, C.J., & Thurlow, M.I. (2002). *Universal Design Applied to Large Scale Assessments*. NCEO Synthesis Report 44. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational outcomes, p.5. Retrieved March 4, 2025 from: <https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/onlinepubs/synth44.pdf>.

cognitive complexity as the standards specify. The emphasis can be on accessibility using different formats, technologies, and designs to include all students.”³

Thompson et al. identify the following elements of universal design that should be addressed during test item development:

- Instructions and procedures should be simple and clear.
- Readability and comprehensibility should be maximized.
- Test items should be accessible and non-biased.
- Test items should be amenable to accommodations.

Information regarding how these elements of universal design is addressed in EQAO assessments is presented under the headings: “Content Development and Review,” “Accommodations” and “Accessibility Tools”.

Content Development and Review

A key component of the EQAO’s first-rate provincial student assessment program is an exemplary content development process, which includes extensive reviews to ensure the assessments are fair and accessible to all students. In addition to “internal” reviews of all assessment materials, which are conducted at various stages of test development by the Assessment and Reporting Branch’s professional assessment staff, the agency recruits and trains experienced English- and French-language elementary and secondary reading, writing and mathematics educators to participate in committees, such as the Content Development Committee (CDC) and the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Assessment Development Committee (EDI ADC), which are responsible for both item-writing and reviews of cultural representation and appropriateness. These educators, who represent the province’s cultural diversity, are selected based on their:

- expert knowledge and recent classroom experience in the relevant discipline,
- familiarity with the related elementary or secondary school curriculum (or cross-curricular literacy requirements, especially for the OSSLT),
- expertise/experience with equity and accessibility issues in education and assessment, and
- excellent written communication skills, with a focus on the use of clear language.

Members of the committees, which are responsible for both test material development (items/tasks/reading selections) and review, work collaboratively online under the guidance of the EQAO education officers to ensure all materials for a given assessment are fair and appropriate for:

- the ages and grades of the students,
- the wide-ranging diversity of the province’s student population (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, religion, etc.), and
- students with special education needs and English-language learners.

The objective is to ensure that no group of students is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged on any aspect of an assessment. EQAO’s three guiding principles for test content, as it relates to supporting equity, diversity and inclusion, are as follows:

- Assessment content should represent the diverse population of Ontario students, with emphasis on First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, and equity-deserving groups.
- Assessment content should celebrate a variety of races, cultures and marginalized communities with intentionality to normalize diversity and avoid privileging the dominant cultural narrative.
- Assessment content should in no way prevent a student from demonstrating the knowledge

³ Thompson, S.J., Johnstone, C.J., & Thurlow, M.I. (2002). *Universal Design Applied to Large Scale Assessments*. NCEO Synthesis Report 44. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational outcomes, pp.6-7. Retrieved March 4, 2025 from: <https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/onlinepubs/synth44.pdf>.

and skills assessed (for example, the content should not upset or distract a student or make them feel marginalized).⁴

Accommodations

Students with special education needs or

require special considerations are eligible for accommodations, which should be listed in their Individual Education Plan (IEP), as appropriate, and used for regular classroom activities, including assessments.⁵ The following table identifies permitted accommodations for EQAO assessments.⁶

Permitted Accommodations for EQAO Assessments		
Permitted for All Students	Available for Students with IEPs or Special Considerations	
	Presentation Format	Response Format
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of headphones• White noise or calming music as required• Prompts to return attention back to the task• Quiet setting• Preferential seating• Supervised breaks• Alternative setting• Additional time• Flexible scheduling by the school within the assessment window• Use of built-in text to speech in the e-assessment platform• Built-in accessibility tools and features in the e-assessment platform (e.g. zoom, text to speech, high contrast)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alternative Version formats (single-selection questions only)*:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Braille○ e-Braille○ Printable PDF large-print○ Printable PDF regular-print○ Online with or without full descriptions of all mathematics graphics**• Interpreter/sign language• Audio MP3s with or without full descriptions of all mathematics graphics**• Assistive Technology (e.g. Google Read&Write, Kurzweil, NVDA, VoiceOver, Read Aloud, JAWS, Natural Reader) <p>**May be used with PDF or Braille formats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistive technology (voice to text)• Verbatim scribing (all student responses must be recorded in the e-assessment platform or scanned)

* Assessment content for all formats of the Alternative Version is identical. The construct being measured is the same, but technology enhanced items (TEI) have been converted to single-select questions.

⁴ Education Quality and Accountability Office. (2025). *Sample Slides for Equity, Diversity & Inclusion and Assessment Development Content*. Information provided by EQAO via electronic mail, March 4, 2025.

⁵ “Accommodations” refer to adjustments made to the assessment environment or format that allow students with special education needs to demonstrate their learning without changing the content or expectations of the assessment. This differs from “modifications,” which involve altering the assessment (e.g., changing the content or reducing the difficulty level of the assessment) to suit a student’s needs.

⁶ User guides for the Primary and Junior and Grade 9 assessments, as well as the OSSLT include information regarding accommodations. Information provided here was accessed from the following user guide as follows: Education Quality and Accountability Office. (2024, November 29). *Permitted accommodations for the Grade 9 Assessment of Mathematics*. Retrieved March 7, 2025 from: <https://eqao-kb-g9.lswp.vretta.com/knowledge-base/accommodations/>

NOTE:

The mathematics components of the assessments have an audio format available that has full descriptions of all mathematics graphics. This format is suggested for students with visual impairments.

Accessibility Tools

In collaboration with its technology partner, Vretta, the EQAO e-assessment platform includes a set of built-in accessibility features and tools, which are available to support all students as they complete their assessments. The following resources are included⁷:

- Help menu
- Text-to-speech reader
- Zoom-in and zoom-out function
- Line reader
- Drawing tools (highlighter, line tool, eraser)
- High-contrast view
- Calculator
- EQAO glossaries
- EQAO formula sheet (as appropriate)
- Virtual relaxation exercises and reminders of test-taking strategies

Sample/practice tests, which demonstrate the accessibility tools, as well as the assessments' engaging, interactive, fair and inclusive items/tasks can be accessed on the EQAO website.⁸

Student and Community Engagement

The School Support and Outreach team, created several years ago, actively engages with schools, school boards, private schools, and federally-funded First Nations schools. Through its numerous visits,

the team has built very strong relationships with these partners, engendering much trust and changing perceptions of the agency. This has been especially notable at First Nations schools, where participation in EQAO assessments is voluntary and inconsistent, particularly after the COVID pandemic.

The prominence of culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy in education has given rise to the significance of student voice. EQAO recognizes the power of students' perspectives, leading it to establish an EQAO Student Engagement Committee (ESEC) a number of years ago. Under the guidance and leadership of the School Support and Outreach team, ESEC meets approximately three times a year. Through the committee, EQAO gathers student feedback on their experiences with the assessment, works together to explore and interpret Student Survey Results, and explores ways to support students. Whenever possible, responses are incorporated into aspects of the assessments, and students play an influential role in the direction of the tests.

With regard to students with special education needs, EQAO is invited to attend and present at regular Minister's Advisory Committee on Special Education (MACSE) meetings. Members are provided with updates on EQAO's enhancements to accessibility tools, resources that have been developed to support schools and school boards, as well as data that pertains to the achievement of students with special education needs.

Guided by the motto "nothing about us without us", the Equity team felt the importance of reaching out to additional communities that have been or are significantly impacted and challenged by the assessments. As a result, the idea to form a council composed of Indigenous representatives was proposed.

In the process of setting up the committee appropriately, consultation with the Chiefs of Ontario was conducted. The message that clearly resonated was to refrain from taking a pan-Indigenous

⁷ Education Quality and Accountability Office. (2025). *Resources for All Students*. Retrieved March 7, 2025 from: <https://www.eqao.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/resources-for-all-students.pdf>.

⁸ Primary Division (Grade 3): <https://d3d9vqrpii4nuo.cloudfront.net/#/en/student/primary-assessment>.
Junior Division (Grade 6): <https://d3d9vqrpii4nuo.cloudfront.net/#/en/student/junior-assessment>.
Grade 9: <https://www.eqao.com/the-assessments/grade-9-math/>.
OSSLT: <https://d1c1qqn86e6v14.cloudfront.net/#/en/student/osslt-assessment/sample/573>.

approach; that is, to establish separate committees for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. With this, the Equity team made a decision to create a First Nations Collaborative Council (FNCC), and networks for the Métis and Inuit. The work of the council and networks would support the strategic direction, mandate and values of EQAO, including committing to take action on all applicable Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC); to enhance partnerships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders; to develop strategies to help schools and school boards to meet and exceed the commitments of Truth and Reconciliation with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples to improve attainment levels and success rates of Indigenous students; to work with First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners to explore the implication of data and its significance in relation to current practices; and to report and recommend strategies to improve First Nations, Inuit and Métis student achievement and well-being.

Based on Ontario's Anti-Black Racism Strategy, student achievement data and reports from public school boards across Ontario, and growing concerns about the prevalence of anti-Black racism in education ([Professional Advisory on Anti-Black Racism | Ontario College of Teachers](#)), it was felt that EQAO should also engage more closely with the Black community to ensure that voices would be heard and that the agency was doing its part in celebrating Black achievements and stories. Similar to the FNCC, a Black Communities Collaborative Council (BCCC) was formed with a mandate to listen to Black community members' perspectives on large-scale assessments, student achievement data, and student questionnaire results; to explore barriers that might exist; to ensure representation on the assessments is culturally appropriate and responsive; and to provide guidance regarding support for Black students. The BCCC will also be used for supporting professional learning for the staff and providing a network of Black educators with whom to collaborate.

In 2020, Ontario's Education Equity and Governance Secretariat mandated schools to collect student demographic data as outlined in the 2017 Anti-

Racism Act. As school boards have begun to collect and analyze their student census data sets, EQAO initiated a project to collaborate with select boards willing to share their experience and findings with disaggregated, identity-based student data connected with EQAO achievement data. The objectives of the project are to uncover and examine any trends, disparities, and disproportionalities in achievement results, and to discover and discuss strategies on how to address the findings. Participating school board teams have been given an opportunity to meet and discuss their research methodologies, analyses, and findings. The project will culminate in a symposium where each board will present their work to date as a case study to be examined and discussed by symposium attendees.

Conducting Research and Psychometric Analysis

Research

EQAO's Data and Reporting Branch plays an important role in ensuring that the agency generates objective and reliable achievement data to support student learning and contribute to the creation of fair and inclusive assessments. EQAO has a robust research program (using student achievement, as well as student, teacher and school administrator questionnaire data), which involves original, in-house projects, collaborations/partnering with outside organizations (e.g., Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Offord Centre for Child Studies, Hospital for Sick Children, Unity Health Toronto), and those conducted externally via a research proposal process.

Foundational to the agency's research program is its research framework⁹, which includes information on the following topics:

- An overview of educational research history
- EQAO research priorities and objectives
- Approaches to realizing these priorities and objectives
- Ethical considerations

⁹ Education Quality and Accountability Office. *Data in Action: The Research Framework at EQAO*. Retrieved March 13, 2025 from: <https://www.eqao.com/wp-content/uploads/DataInAction-eqao-research-framework.pdf>.

Regarding research priorities, the framework document identifies three main objectives and related considerations:

- To deeply understand mathematics achievement
- To understand factors that influence student learning and well-being
- To increase the likelihood of student success in all its forms, including learning attitudes, awareness, behaviours and achievement.

“Achieving these objectives in Ontario requires that EQAO’s research undertakings consider diversity, inclusion and equity, and student learning from multiple perspectives, including unique consideration of Ontario’s Indigenous communities, equity-seeking groups, students with special needs and English- and French-language learners.

Achieving these objectives also requires consideration of the contexts in which learning occurs, including socio-economic influences, student factors (e.g., health, growth mindset) and the overall health of support systems (e.g., education, health and community-based interventions).” (p.2)

Data/information obtained through the EQAO research program can be used to support student learning at all levels of the education system and can be informative to assessment content writers and test developers as they prepare the provincial student assessments. Research briefs prepared from EQAO research can be accessed here:¹⁰

Psychometric Analysis

All data analyses performed by the agency comply with the rules, standards, principles and expectations presented in the EQAO’s Data Quality Framework.¹¹

“EQAO’s data quality processes use clearly defined guidelines, business rules, methodologies and protocols to ensure that data quality is maintained at all stages, including the collection, processing, and analyzing of educational data and the reporting and sharing of data and results. These processes are essential for transparency and evidence-informed decision-making to support the quality and accountability of publicly funded education in Ontario.”

EQAO’s assessment materials, including reading selections and items/tasks/questions are field-tested to ensure they are appropriate for all students. Following field-testing, the agency’s cadre of professional psychometricians conduct Differential Item Functioning (DIF) analysis on every item. (DIF occurs when groups of students [e.g., gender, ethnic, education, special education needs] with the same ability levels have different probabilities of answering an item correctly. “DIF” items, therefore, may advantage or disadvantage certain groups.) Although DIF analyses differ slightly depending on the EQAO assessment, generally they are conducted by language (English and French), gender, as well as English language learners (ELL) and students enrolled in ALF (Actualisation linguistique en français) or PANA (Programme d’appui aux nouveaux arrivants) programs. (These programs support students in French-language schools who have limited knowledge of French or are newly arrived students, respectively.)

DIF analysis results are provided to the Assessment and Reporting Branch’s education officers for their use in selecting items and reading selections and revising test material to ensure they are fair and appropriate for all students. Not only is this data critically important for current item/test development, but also it can be used to provide insights for future item writing and development.

¹⁰ Education Quality and Accountability Office. (2024). *Research Program*. Retrieved March 10, 2025 from: <https://www.eqao.com/research/research-program/>.

¹¹ Education Quality and Accountability Office. (2020, November). *EQAO’s Data Quality Framework*. Retrieved March 10, 2025 from: <https://www.eqao.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/eqao-data-quality-framework.pdf>.

Initiatives Impacting Assessments and Work Environment

At EQAO, much work had already been done prior to the arrival of the CEO. As mentioned previously, a major focus was on the accessibility features of the tests and the appropriate provision of accommodations. With the recruitment of the CEO, an overall equity, diversity, and inclusion strategy was created to ensure the needs of additional marginalized communities would also be considered. Given the sensitive nature of the work, and to follow best practice in change management, it was felt that professional learning sessions should be facilitated in order to educate staff on the meaning of EDI, break down myths, increase awareness of staff members' own thoughts and feelings about the topic, and aim to appeal to staff's sense of humanity and justice.

Professional learning sessions have focused on themes, launching with a keynote speaker at all-staff meetings followed by more intimate sessions with departments in groupings. This format allows staff to become familiar with a topic at the large meeting, and then to delve deeper into the subject at the unit sessions. The small groupings encourage staff to be more comfortable to participate and ask questions. An integral component of the sessions has been the sharing circles, which consist of two or three staff members sharing their own personal experiences with the topic. The stories shared have been moving and powerful, providing a very human perspective on the topic and inevitably increasing empathy among staff.

Once professional learning sessions began to roll out, optional learning opportunities were offered to staff, such as an Equity book club, an Equity film club, programs produced by Nelson Education on Indigenous matters and the Black Canadian Experience, excursions to speaking engagements and other events, and participation at conferences and workshops.

More targeted learning sessions have been offered to the Assessment teams focused on culturally relevant and responsive assessments (CRRRA) in line with the Ontario Ministry of Education's direction on culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, as well as the latest research on CRRRA. Guest speakers have been invited to discuss the topic with the teams and to provide support with respect to the challenges of designing items on large-scale assessments that are culturally relevant and responsive.

As mentioned in the Content Development and Review section, EQAO hires content developers and EDI ADC members to create or review items for its assessments. The agency is intentional about the inclusion of CRRRA, while also balancing the competing interests of the diverse population of Ontario. As well, considerations are made given the differences between large-scale assessments and classroom assessments. Item developers, therefore, are asked to proceed with care. In order to provide support, a document outlining EDI Guiding Principles for content developers and the EDI ADC was created. These guidelines ensure members are mindful of the above-mentioned challenges, while also encouraging the use of CRRRA and underlining the importance of culture represented through joyful experiences, celebration, and excellence.

In order to measure the number of items in the bank that are reflective of CRRRA, the Equity team is collaborating with the Assessment teams to catalogue the items with various EDI categories. This inventory will provide information as to how many items have some amount of representation and what areas the agency could enhance.

With regard to Indigenous matters, especially as it pertains to data, it is the agency's intention to honour the TRC's Calls to Action and to move toward authentic reconciliation. In line with this, several staff received training on the principles of OCAP – Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession of Indigenous data, which also served

as a reminder of the importance of Indigenous self-governance, self-determination, and data sovereignty. The challenge for the agency arises when the principles of OCAP are not aligned with legislation and policies in Ontario that govern student data. In order to effectively navigate this sensitive and challenging topic, the agency formed a First Nations Data Stewardship committee with the intention of working closely with representatives of First Nations communities and to consider and appropriately apply the principles of OCAP.

In order to ensure that the MYP was being actioned and understood to be a responsibility of the entire agency, a committee was formed to oversee and monitor its implementation. Volunteer representatives from across the organization formed the EQAO Employee Experience and Equity Committee (shortened to “E4C”).

One extremely important aspect of any EDI program is to measure the effectiveness of the initiatives. At the end of the year, the Equity team issues an

Equity Annual Survey to gauge the impact and reception of the program. The survey results are compiled and analyzed, and are subsequently put into a report that is presented to the staff. In the two years since implementing the equity strategy, results have been very promising, with awareness, understanding, and sense of empathy reported to have increased, along with a positive impact on work.

Conclusion

EQAO has distinguished itself as a world-class large-scale student assessment organization, whose testing program effectively addresses a fundamentally important issue — student diversity — and the need to ensure its assessments are fair, equitable, inclusive and accessible for all students. Over the years, the agency’s EDI strategy has evolved to become multifaceted and comprehensive, characterized by intentionally established effective processes and practices.

About the Authors

Richard Jones has extensive experience in the fields of large-scale educational assessment and program evaluation. He has worked in the assessment and evaluation field for more than 35 years. Prior to founding RMJ Assessment, he held senior leadership positions with the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) in Ontario, as well as the Saskatchewan and British Columbia Ministries of Education. In these roles, he was responsible for initiatives related to student, program and curriculum evaluation; education quality indicators; school and school board improvement planning; school accreditation; and provincial, national and international testing.

Dr. Jones began his career as an educator at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels. Subsequently, he was a researcher and senior manager for a multi-national corporation delivering consulting services in the Middle East.

Feel free to reach out to Richard “Rick” at richard.jones@rmjassessment.com (or on [LinkedIn](#)) to inquire about best practices in large-scale assessment and program evaluation.

Derek Chen is the Chief Equity and Assessment Officer at the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), on secondment from the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB), where he served as Superintendent of Equity, Diversity, Indigenous Education, and Community Relations. With both organizations, Derek has been responsible for setting the strategic direction for equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

At the TCDSB, Derek co-created the first TCDSB Equity Action Plan and oversaw a number of historic initiatives for the board, including the creation of a 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee, the proclamation of Pride Month, and the creation of the Black Voices Project – an initiative aimed at dismantling anti-Black racism.

At EQAO, Derek leads the Equity team, oversees the Equity Multi-Year Plan, and co-chairs the EQAO Experience and Equity Committee. He supports the enhancement of EDI on EQAO’s large-scale assessments and provides professional learning for staff. In addition, Derek and the Equity team have established a First Nations Collaborative Council, a Black Communities Collaborative Council, networks for Métis and Inuit communities, and a First Nations Data Stewardship Committee. Derek also oversees the recently re-launched Mathematics Proficiency Test for teacher certification in Ontario.

Derek can be reached at derek.chen@eqao.com for further information about EDI in organizations and on assessments.

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