
“A Successful Pathway for All Students”

Final Report of the At-risk Working Group

January 2003

Submitted to:

**Honourable Elizabeth Witmer
Deputy Premier
Minister of Education**

Prepared by:

**Barry C. O'Connor, Chair
At-Risk Working Group**

Final Report of the At-risk Working Group - January 2003

CONFIDENTIAL

Contents	Pages
Preface	3
History and Background	4
Link with the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Report	5 to 7
Link with the Education Equality Task Force	8
Guiding Principles	9
At-Risk Working Group Specific Recommendations Part A to Part I	10 to 26
Other Issues Discussed without Recommendations Part J	27 to 28
Committee Membership	29

CONFIDENTIAL

AT-RISK WORKING GROUP

January 22, 2003

The Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
Mowat Block, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Witmer:

It is with great pride that I submit to you the Final Report of the At-risk Working Group. This marvelous group of committed individuals has worked very hard over a six week period to bring to you a Final Report that, when implemented, will make an enormous difference for the significant number of at-risk students in our school system.

I have appreciated the opportunity to chair this important working group and I commend you for your personal interest and your desire to move forward with improvements as quickly as possible. I have also appreciated the professionalism of the Ministry staff who have worked with me on this project.

Thomas Fuller wrote "great hopes make great people". We all know how critically important it is for our young people to have "hope" for a future. For our students, hope should include a pathway to a post-secondary destination. Very clearly, some students can see and achieve a pathway to college and/or university. However, we need to help a significant number of students be able to both see a pathway and move successfully through that pathway to the world of work. While some will not be able to achieve all the requirements of a secondary school diploma, most should be able to aspire to, and achieve, this goal.

Our working group's goal is in fact "a successful pathway for all students".

Minister Witmer, when I first was asked to take on this significant task, I could not have believed that this committee could move forward so passionately and with such success. This Final Report is presented to you, representing both our best ideas and with our collective desire to be "Agents of Hope" for our students.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the students of Ontario.

Yours in education

Original signed by:

Barry C. O'Connor
Chair, At-risk Working Group

CONFIDENTIAL

HISTORY:

In mid-November 2002, the Minister of Education Elizabeth Witmer requested an action report on at-risk students. The Minister had received several previous reports illustrating the issues and concerns of at-risk students and now wanted specific recommendations of what should be done to mitigate this risk. The decision was made to bring together a broad based working group with an external chair person to produce an action report. An interim report was given to the Minister in December 2002 and a final report in January 2003. A window of opportunity existed to align this very important work with the recommendations of the Education Equality Task Force Report released in December 2002. All people involved in this report agreed that the timing of this report was critical as many of our students will require support in 2003 and beyond.

BACKGROUND:

- The At-risk Working Group was formed to develop action plans based on the work of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee, the Curriculum Implementation Partnership and from their own experience and background.
- The At-risk Working Group, at its first meeting, quickly agreed to leave individual politics and personal desires aside and to work together with extremely short timelines to build quality recommendations for students at-risk. Due to these timelines committee members did not attempt to fully discuss the recommendations with their constituent groups.

We believe that our educational system should be about “hope” for a future for every student.

We believe that every student deserves an opportunity to achieve success by having a post secondary destination.

We believe that there is dignity and quality in school-to-work programs.

Our recommendations therefore come from the collective wisdom of a diverse group, using both “*our heads and our hearts*” (quote from a committee member).

- The At-risk Working Group believes that significant work needs to begin immediately or we will have a large number of students who will not graduate and who will become disenfranchised young adults, without hope for their future.
- The At-risk Working Group has used the deliberations of the Curriculum Implementation Partnership, the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee, the Alan King studies, and work completed at many district school boards in this province.
- The At-risk Working Group Chair has also used an elementary/secondary principals’ reference group to validate possible recommendations. This process is ongoing.
- The At-risk Working Group recognized the work of existing Ministry initiatives and aligned them, where applicable (e.g., Early Reading and Early Math)

LINK WITH THE AD HOC ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

CONFIDENTIAL

A) Context from the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Report:

The Ministry's vision statement below from the OSS policy was endorsed by the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee and was considered supportive of the necessity to address the learning needs of at-risk students in both French-language and English-language systems for all grades.

*"...Ontario's schools should offer an education program that promotes a high standard of achievement, that **provides all students with the learning opportunities and support they need**, and that is relevant to society's needs and expectations." (OSS, page 6)*

The At-risk Working Group supports the context statements. In fact, the concept of **success for all students** was a theme used throughout the deliberations.

B) Committee Deliberations:

1. *At-risk students include the following types of students, for which different support strategies may be necessary:*
 - *elementary students who are performing at level one, or below grade expectations;*
 - *secondary students who would previously have studied at the modified or basic level;*
 - *secondary students who are performing significantly below the provincial standard, earning marks in the 50's and low 60's and who do not have the foundations to be successful in the new curriculum.*

The definitions listed above were supported. In addition, the category of disengaged with very poor attendance was added.

2. *A focus on the solid acquisition of literacy and numeracy for all students will prevent disengagement at an early stage.*

The whole concept of early acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills for all students was supported and endorsed. Additional funding to support the early years programs is seen as a strategy that will eventually eliminate the need for many of the immediate actions recommended in this report.

3. *Interventions will require a variety of preventive and remediation strategies.*

This statement was also supported and our recommendations fall in both the categories of preventive and remediation strategies.

4. *Preventive strategies should be the emphasis in the Early Years/Primary Division and in the Junior division and "gap-closing strategies" should be the emphasis in the Intermediate-Senior division.*

The increased emphasis of early years programming in reading, writing, and mathematics will act as a preventive long-term strategy. The At-risk Working Group did not have time to investigate and recommend further early years strategies but expect that both the Education Equality Task Force and other provincial committees will continue to make recommendations for improvements in the area of both preventive and remedial strategies for both the primary and junior divisions.

Gap closing strategies are reflected in the immediate and short-term recommendations of the At-risk Working Group.

5. *Remediation needs to be provided for individual students and involve a cycle of diagnostic assessment, targeted instruction and assessment geared to closing gaps. We must ensure that remediation does not become a one size fits all approach.*

The At-risk Working Group supports this concept. In addition, the Working Group makes a clear statement that a variety of models, strategies and plans for remediation need to be in place to serve the diverse needs and requirements of district school boards and individual schools. In particular, public and catholic francophone boards, Northern Ontario district school boards and district school boards with small, remote or rural schools will require a variety of strategies from which to choose.

In addition, the At-risk Working Group recommends that part of the prevention and remediation strategies must include some local decision making to build on many successful practices in place and to ensure that there is local support and enthusiasm.

6. *Teachers need opportunities to develop skills and expertise in teaching literacy, numeracy and remediation.*

The At-risk Working Group supports this concept and has recommendations in this area.

C) Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee:

1. *The Ministry state that supporting at-risk students is an important priority within the education system.*

The At-risk Working Group requests that the Ministry of Education move forward as quickly as possible with some of the recommendations listed in this report. The educational partners, parents, and most importantly students need to see action or we will end up with a large group of disengaged students believing that they have no hope to ever receive a graduation diploma. Support for at-risk students must be a priority for all educational partners but must begin with the Ministry of Education.

2. *Supports for at-risk students focus on literacy and numeracy.*

This recommendation was supported, however the Interim Report of the At-risk Working Group focuses mainly on the area of literacy, in both the prevention and remediation areas.

3. *Intervention strategies be developed and put in place to identify and track at-risk students in the Early Years, in the Junior Division and in the Intermediate-Senior division. Each set of intervention strategies should include:*
- *application of diagnostic assessment instruments to identify and track students who are at-risk regarding the acquisition of literacy and numeracy;*
 - *application of interventions that have a basis in research and/or may become the subject of action-research and teacher training*
 - *use of learning resources that are selected as most supportive of students and teachers*
 - *teacher training that is ongoing and includes structured conversation among teachers about their teaching and assessment methodologies;*
 - *researcher contracted to identify successful practices.*

This recommendation was supported and is reflected in the At-risk Working Group's recommendations.

4. *The Ministry of Education support the following initiatives:*
- *research how to best support at-risk students with a focus on literacy and numeracy;*
 - *identification and sharing of successful practices;*
 - *identification, evaluation, and system-wide sharing of available tools, strategies, resources and training materials and models*
 - *development of additional web-enabled (where applicable) tools, strategies, resources and training materials and models as required.*

This recommendation was viewed as one that could be implemented immediately as it will be essential for success in both the prevention and remediation areas. Recommendations are included in this report.

5. *Study of the following aspects of OSS policy that are not effectively supporting the new at-risk students in the Intermediate-Senior division:*
- *limited access to locally developed courses;*
 - *limited flexibility in course substitution;*
 - *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test unique format;*
 - *limited access to workplace or school-to-work transition programs for students wanting to earn a diploma before entering the work place.*

The At-risk Working Group supports this statement and recommends policy changes in many of the areas listed. Recommendations with policy implications are coded with a "P" at the end of the statement.

6. *A component of the intervention strategy should be the provision of remedial programs within the regular school day. It doesn't make sense to make a student sit through class being unsuccessful, in order to then stay after school to obtain help he or she needs.*

The At-risk Working Group supports this statement and makes recommendations in this area.

LINK TO THE REPORT OF THE EDUCATION EQUALITY TASK FORCE REPORT 2002

The following references to the Education Equality Task Force (EETF) Report supports the final Report of the At-risk Working Group:

Recommendation # 4:

the Ministry of Education, in consultation with the school boards, other members of the education community, and other appropriate stakeholders, review and consider grouping all of the Special Purpose Grants in the funding formula that have a focus on readiness to learn for preschool children, in-school students, and youth making the transition from school to work/postsecondary education, with the goal of ensuring that these Special Purpose Grants are designed to meet the needs of at-risk children and youth effectively. See Page 26/27 of the EETF Report

Recommendation # 5:

the Ministry of Education determine the appropriate funding magnitude of the Demographic Component of the Learning Opportunities Grant by collecting and analysing data on programs and services for students at risk from a representative sample of school boards that offer effective programs and services of this nature. See Page 27/28 of the EETF Report

Recommendation # 6:

as an interim measure, pending the collection and analysis of the data on programs and services for students at risk described in recommendation 5, the Ministry of Education invest an additional \$50 million in the Demographic Component of the Learning Opportunities Grant, using the current allocation model based on the 1996 census. See Page 28 of the EETF Report

Recommendation # 7:

the Ministry of Education review the current allocation models for the Demographic Component of the Learning Opportunities Grant to ensure that the distribution of funds to school boards under this grant is fair and equitable, and further, that the ministry update the socio-economic factors in the formula using 2001 census data. See Page 28/29 of the EETF Report

Recommendation # 8:

beginning in 2003-04, the Ministry of Education reallocate the unused portion of the Grades 7 to 10 Component of the Learning Opportunities Grant (LOG) to the LOG for programs and services for students who need remedial literacy and math programs, further, that the ministry require school boards, as part of their accountability, to report on how the funds have been used for this purpose. See Page 29 of the EETF Report

Recommendation # 9:

the Ministry of Education require school boards that receive funds through the Learning Opportunities Grant to report publicly on how the expenditure of these funds is contributing to continuous improvement in student achievement and to the reduction of the performance gap between high and low achievers in their schools while maintaining high standards. See Page 29/30 of the EETF Report

Recommendation #13:

the government establish a Cabinet-level advisory council on integrated services for children and families, composed of representatives from the Ministry of Community, Family, and Children's Services, Education, Health and Long-Term Care, Public Safety and Security, and Tourism and Recreation, to meet on a regular basis to align the work and the funding mechanisms of the ministries that serve families, children, and youth. See Page 32/33 of the EETF Report

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE AT-RISK WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Support for at-risk students must be a priority for all educational partners.**
- 2. Ontario schools should offer an education program that promotes a high standard of achievement, that provides all students with the learning opportunities and support they need, and that is relevant to society's needs and expectations.**
- 3. There must be equitable access and ongoing funding to support at-risk students in all schools.**
- 4. Communities must be encouraged and challenged to take the actions that are necessary to support the efforts of all educational partners in support of our at-risk students.**
- 5. Leadership at all levels is key to the successful implementation of initiatives that support at-risk students.**
- 6. An accountability framework is necessary to ensure the appropriate allocation of resources to support at-risk students.**
- 7. Supports for at-risk students are a K-12 whole school responsibility. A focus on the solid acquisition of literacy and numeracy for all students will prevent disengagement at an early stage. Interventions will require a variety of preventative and remediation strategies. Preventative strategies should be the emphasis in the Early Years and in the Junior division. "Gap-closing strategies" should be the emphasis in the Intermediate-senior division.**
- 8. Funding for at-risk students should be over and above funding for special education.**
- 9. Implementation including funding must be flexible to take into account the unique characteristics of both the English and French language systems.**
- 10. Effective communication is key to successful implementation with all educational partners.**
- 11. Effective teacher training is fundamental to the successful implementation of strategies for at-risk students.**

AT-RISK WORKING GROUP CATEGORIES OF RECOMMENDATIONS

CONFIDENTIAL

Note: **P** symbol indicates recommendations that will require policy changes.

“The future never just happens, it is created. Creating a future for our students.”

Part A: Development of Specific Actions for:

- Students in grade 11 who have passed one part of the Literacy Test
- Students in grade 11 who have failed the test twice
- Students in grade 10 who have passed one part of the Literacy Test
- Students in grade 10 who have been deferred or who have failed the Literacy Test.

It is recommended that:	Action:
A1. The results of the Education Quality and Accountability (EQAO) Grade 10 Literacy Test be available to district school boards. Semester Two remediation will not be possible without accurate information that will encourage students at-risk to select appropriate remediation programs	By January 31, 2003
A2. a) The Ministry of Education Learning Opportunities Grant for Literacy and Math be adjusted to include grade 11 and 12 students. b) Present and future grants allow flexibility for use both during the day and after school.	By January 31, 2003
A3. a) The Ministry of Education review all present funding available to support literacy and numeracy remediation and prevention programs, and communicate to all district school boards present available sources of funding. b) Present and future grants allow flexibility for use both during the day and after school.	By January 15, 2003
A4. The present grant regulations and possible additional funding be aligned with the most immediate At-risk Working Group recommendations, i.e. a) Availability for at-risk students in grades 6 to 12; b) Support for actions in the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 school years c) Present and future grants allow flexibility for use both during the day and after school.	Align with the Education Equality Task Force recommendations and additional funding as necessary.
A5. The grade 11 literacy course (ELS30/FCF30) could be delivered in two modules, e.g. half credit in writing, half credit in reading.	Target date for clarification January 15, 2003

CONFIDENTIAL

It is recommended that:	Action:
<p>A6. The Ministry of Education, with the support of the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), prepare an inventory of successful practices in the areas of literacy and numeracy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Preparation for the Literacy Test; b) Writing of the Literacy Test c) Remediation for students who have failed the Literacy Test d) After school literacy and numeracy programs e) Summer literacy and numeracy programs f) Successful practices in accommodating at-risk students g) Successful practices in using senior students to support school wide literacy initiatives (possible use of the community service requirement) h) Successful practices to allow for every Ontario elementary and secondary school to have a team of trained students as literacy tutors/mentors/coaches i) Successful classroom assessment practices associated with teaching of reading and writing j) Successful practices in addressing the needs of ESL/ALF/PDF students j) Other innovative ideas involving effective community partnerships. 	<p>Target date February 28, 2003</p>

It is recommended that:	Action:
<p>A7. The Ministry of Education bring together a provincial Expert Panel on literacy and use this panel to perform the following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Collate the successful practices inventory and prioritize for distribution to all district school boards; b) Recommend appropriate funding for the resources viewed as successful; c) Develop a variety of methods to offer the grade 11 literacy course (ELS30/FCF30), i.e. small classroom, video conferencing, tutoring, continuing education, etc. to meet the needs of various district school boards and individual schools; d) Recommend to the Ministry of Education a selection of resources to support and encourage community involvement and parental involvement with their children in the area of literacy and numeracy; e) Investigate, for the purpose of implementation, the following recommendations from the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) application of diagnostic assessment instruments to identify and track students who are at-risk regarding the acquisition of literacy and numeracy; ii) application of interventions that have a basis in research and/or may become the subject of action-research and teacher training; iii) use of learning resources that are selected as most supportive of students and teachers; iv) teacher training that is ongoing and includes structured conversation among teachers about their teaching and assessment methodologies. (Please note that teacher training recommendations will follow.) 	<p>The Expert Panel be selected to begin work on January 31, 2003.</p>
<p>A8. The compulsory credit requirement in English/Français be extended to include the Grade 11 Literacy course (ELS30/FCF30)</p>	<p>For the 2003-2004 school year P</p>
<p>A9. A grade 12 university course in Peer Tutoring be developed and offered to university/college bound students.</p>	<p>For the 2003-2004 school year P</p>

Part B: Development of Specific Actions for:

- Development of alternatives to the present once a year Literacy Test
- A Transitional Plan (one to two years) to help students who have failed the Literacy Test graduate with an alternative to the Literacy Test
- Development and sharing of successful practices in preparing for the Literacy Test.

It is recommended that:	Action:
B1. An online, on demand literacy test be implemented to serve the vast diversity of student needs in our province.	Long-term
B2. The Expert Panel referred to in <u>Part A: A7</u> , include the following in their mandate: a) With support from EQAO, Ministry of Education and CODE, collate and share a variety of supports for students preparing to write the Literacy Test. These should include excellent websites, CD-ROMs, and print materials. b) Funding be provided to share the resources listed above with all district school boards.	See Part A: A7 a) The three partners can immediately begin to collect the data requested above. b) Ministry of Education provide funding for the 2002-2003 school year.
B3. The Ministry of Education provide funding for technological supports for special education students at-risk including teacher and other human resources training in the use of technology.	Spring, 2003
B4. EQAO investigate the use of accommodations for specific students requiring supports to understand the questions being asked on the OSSLT.	Spring, 2003 P

It is recommended that:	Action:
<p>B5. The Ministry of Education investigate, with the purpose of having a transitional alternative to the Literacy Test in place for students who have failed the test.</p> <p>Possibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Literacy Portfolio (Please note that the Principals' Focus Group made a strong recommendation that the portfolio be part of a credit course. A structured course will assist in the administration of the portfolio). b) A grade 11 Literacy Course (possible update of the present model) be developed in the spring/summer of 2003 for use in the 2003-2004 school year (could be included as a compulsory credit course). This credit course would include the Literacy Portfolio as a major component. Students failing the Literacy Test will be mandated to take the grade 11 course. Students successful in both the Credit Course and the Literacy Portfolio will graduate. The student transcript will clearly indicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) success or failure of the Literacy Test ii) success or failure of the Literacy Course iii) success or failure of the Literacy Portfolio. Students failing one or both components of the course will not meet the transitional graduation requirements. The transitional period be for the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years. c) A set of provincial developed, teacher administered in-class assignments, with a marking key and a consistency check. 	<p>For use in the Fall of 2003 or Semester 2 of the 2003-2004 school year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Planning to begin immediately. P b) Planning to begin immediately. P c) Medium to long term P
<p>B6. EQAO and the Ministry of Education review the purpose of the Literacy Test to reaffirm that the test is meeting its original intention.</p>	<p>Spring, 2003</p>

Part C: Development of Specific Actions for:

- The administration of provincial assessments
- Ensuring that appropriate accommodations are in place for all students
- Tracking students who write the OSSLT and other high stakes provincial assessments

Provincial tests have become a major responsibility for principals and schools across this province. Accommodations for the Literacy Test have become quite a challenge and will continue with up to three grades writing the Literacy Test in 2003-2004. Tracking of students who must pass the Grade 10 Literacy Test in order to graduate from high school is a complex process in an education system where many students change schools one or more times before graduation.

It is recommended that:	Action:
C1. a) The Ministry of Education provide funding for all provincial assessments to ensure that accommodations and appropriate resources (including technological) are in place for all students. b) Specific funding be provided for the management and administration of the grade 10 Literacy Test and other provincial assessments, including Grades 3, 6, and 9. c) To ensure equity across the province, provide funding to support a baseline of resources that are accessible for use by all schools.	a) For the 2003-2004 school year. b) For the 2002-2003 school year. c) For the 2002-2003 school year.
C2. a) The Ministry of Education provide funding to ensure that all students receive appropriate accommodations to be successful on the Literacy Test. b) Similar funding for accommodation for the grades 3, 6, and 9 provincial assessments must also be part of the plan. c) The Ministry of Education ensure that teachers and students receive appropriate training to enable them to successfully implement provincial assessment accommodations (example: IT supports)	a) For the 2003-2004 school year. b) For the 2002-2003 school year. c) To the Expert Panel

Part D: Development of Specific Actions for:

- Provincial, board and school leadership in the Area of Literacy/Numeracy and At-risk Students. The report makes a series of recommendations that will require significant leadership at all levels. Successful implementation will require long-term leadership provincially, locally and in each school.

It is recommended that:	Action:
D1. All district school boards be requested to have a district-wide Literacy Committee (Regional Committees for large or geographically diverse district school boards) to provide leadership and make decisions on the implementation of successful practices. The successful practices be informed by concrete research and a variety of quantitative data including large scale assessments, classroom based and school based.	By January 31, 2003
D2. The Ministry of Education provide funding for district school boards to support a district-wide Literacy/Numeracy At-risk Student Consultant. (A formula be developed to support medium and large district school boards requiring more than one consultant.) Flexibility be given to francophone and remote and rural district school boards to use the funding in a manner that will allow for successful district-wide leadership.	Funding for a March 1, 2003 start-up
D3. The Ministry of Education provide funding for district school boards to support school-based leadership in Literacy/Numeracy and At-risk students.	Funding be announced to support the Spring, 2003
D4. The Ministry of Education provide a senior staff person in both languages at the ministry with responsibility for Literacy/Numeracy and At-risk students.	By January 31, 2003
D5. The district school boards support families of schools' literacy leadership meetings to share successful practices and learn together.	By Spring, 2003

Part E: Development of Specific Actions for:

- The solid acquisition of literacy and numeracy in the early years.
- Both preventative and remediation strategies to support students at risk be in place for the early years.
- Intervention strategies be developed and put in place to identify and track at-risk students in the Early Years and the Junior Division.
-

It is recommended that:**Action:**

E1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Supports for at-risk students in the Early Years should focus on literacy and numeracy. b) Intervention strategies be developed and put in place to identify and track at-risk students. c) A component of the intervention strategy should be the provision of remedial programs within the regular school day. 	<p>To the Expert Panel on Early Reading and Early Math</p> <p>To the Ministry of Education and to the Expert Panel on Early Literacy and Early Math</p>
E2.	<p>For at-risk students in the Early Years/Primary Division and in the Junior Division. Each set of intervention strategies should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Application of diagnostic assessments to identify and track students who are at risk regarding the acquisition of literacy and numeracy. b) In particular, the development of diagnostic assessment tools for French-Language boards is a priority. c) Application of interventions that have a basis in research and/or may become the subject of action-research and teacher training. d) Use of learning resources that are selected as most supportive of students and teachers. e) Teacher training that is ongoing and includes structured conversation among teachers about their teaching and assessment methodologies. 	

Part F: Development of Specific Actions for:

- Students in grades 6, 7, 8 and 9 who will need remediation and support in order to pass the Literacy Test
- Students in Grade 6,7,8 and 9 can be documented or identified as at risk through the examination of data such as, but not limited to, Grade 3 and 6 EQAO achievement results.

It is recommended that:	Action:
F1. EQAO complete their Curriculum Connections initiative to link literacy to all context areas in grade 7 to 9.	As soon as possible
F2. EQAO, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and CODE, identify schools with successful practices and share the information with all district school boards.	As soon as possible
F3. The Expert Panel listed in <u>Part A: A7</u> , be requested to do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review the present curriculum for grades 6 to 8 with the purpose of identifying the essential components and linking literacy initiatives to the core subjects (issue is time for literacy); b) The Ministry of Education identify foundational expectations for students in all subjects and grades to enable teachers to use classroom time to develop most important skills. c) Work with the Ministry of Education and CODE to identify and share successful practices that support literacy improvements for boys; d) Work with the Ministry of Education and CODE to identify and share successful practices that allow teachers to spend time together to learn together. e) Identify effective and successful community partnerships. 	See Part A: A7
F4. The Ministry of Education support a funding allocation for resources, including reading resources at varied and appropriate levels of difficulty in the Grades 7 to 12 area.	By February, 2003
F5. Significant teacher training initiatives be organized with funding provided for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Teacher training that is ongoing and includes structured conversation among teachers about their teaching and assessment methodologies to support at-risk students; b) The development of reading strategies across all content areas to support at-risk students; c) The development of frequent structured writing strategies across all content areas to support at-risk students; d) Targeted provincial implementation funding be provided to support teacher training in methodology for improving the achievement of at-risk students. 	To Expert Panel for validation and development. To Ministry of Education for funding in 2003.
F6. Faculties of education develop literacy programs and support research into early and late literacy that bridges to practice.	To Faculties of Education

CONFIDENTIAL

It is recommended that:	Action:
<p>F7. A provincial conference be offered as a major launch of the initiatives listed in this report. This should be a dual track plan to ensure that the needs of both the English and Francophone school boards are met. The conference for teachers and administrators in grades 6 to 10 would have a major focus on teaching reading and a priority on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Teaching writing; b) Appropriate classroom assessment practices c) Increasing the awareness of school-to-work initiatives; d) Creating appropriate pathways in grades 9 and beyond for students at risk; e) Sharing best practices and strategies; f) Identifying "Curriculum Connections" with EQAO test materials. 	<p>A Provincial Conference Committee be established in January 2003 to begin planning a conference for Spring/Fall, 2003.</p>

Part G: Development of Specific Actions for:

- Pathways for students in grade 9 and 10 in locally developed and applied courses
- Pathways for students in grade 9 and 10 with a school to work focus
- Redesign or development of possibilities and opportunities for students in grade 9 and 10 who will not move on to college or university
- Promoting the school to work pathway as a legitimate first choice option for students

Provincial and local programs and models need to promote and validate the importance of school to work programs and recognize the self esteem issues of the students.

It is recommended that:	Action:
G1. Immediately the Ministry of Education will work with district school boards to create a report outlining present successful practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) for pathways for students at risk b) for remediation programs for at-risk students c) for use of ministry funding for at-risk students d) for creative timetabling for at-risk students 	As soon as possible
G2. Immediately the Ministry of Education fund a researcher to study present and past practices in the area of at-risk students to build an accountability framework for programs that have a proven track record of success.	As soon as possible
G3. For any new funding in the area of at-risk students, district school boards will be required to demonstrate both use for at-risk students and a district school board improvement plan.	Consistent with new funding announcement.
G4. The Ministry of Education provide pathways for at-risk students that include a combination of credit and non-credit programs funded by the per pupil allocation.	Spring, 2003

It is recommended that:	Action:
<p>G5. That a broad-based Pathways Work Team be constituted with the following responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Share the results of G1 and G2 b) New pathway models be created using existing models as a base. For each new pathway the appropriate funding that is required needs to be identified. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) the models need to reflect the diversity of the province and some need to be available for small, rural or remote schools. ii) models could be built on the successful OYAP program. iii) models need to be supported as part of the funding formula's credit accumulation. iv) examine the impacts of making the school to work pathway as an explicitly desirable option. c) The Ministry of Education provide funding for system leadership for developing and maintaining school to work programs. d) A review of the Continuing Education programs for Literacy with an attempt to move them to day school to increase availability. e) A plan be developed to provide support and remediation beginning in grade 6. The plan would provide linkage support in grades 7 through 10 leading to successful completion of the literacy test and/or a pathway to a school to work program. f) A communication plan to be developed for district school boards, schools, students and parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The plan will include an overview of the pathways concept; ii) Ongoing updated Questions and Answers; iii) A fact sheet on what is possible; iv) Background with a possible case study for each pathway; v) Enhanced communication between all partners including the use of all forms of media for communication purposes (ie, videos, CD's etc.). g) Access to Learning Strategies courses be available in both semesters as part of the student support plan (see funding request A3 and A4. h) Creative timetabling models be encouraged and validated as appropriate to support the diversity of student needs, geography and school size. 	Begin in February, 2003.
<p>G6. Review of Applied Math in grades 9 and 10: That a Mathematics Provincial Work Team be given the responsibility to review the expectations of grades 9 and 10 Applied Math (the failure rate in 2002 is unacceptable).</p>	Spring, 2003

CONFIDENTIAL

It is recommended that:	Action:
<p>G7. Locally developed courses (LDC):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A plan be in place to review the course profiles for LDC's to ensure that they provide both a link and relevance to the workplace courses. b) The number of LDC's be increased from the present 3 to 5 and count as part of the current 18 compulsory courses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The fourth LDC be grade 10 English/Français LDC and be included in the prerequisite for grade 11 Workplace English. ii) The fifth LDC be at the discretion of each district school board to help them meet their local needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Spring, 2003 b) Spring, 2003 P
<p>G8. Independent Learning Courses (ILC's): A plan be in place to produce Independent Learning Courses (ILC's) to support students at risk with poor attendance or who need a course not available at their school. Emphasis needs to be on the development of grade 9 and 10 ILC courses in both English and French (TVO/TFO). These courses could be based on locally developed courses that accommodate students' literacy, numeracy and other academic needs (eg: multi-media interactive opportunities for frequent and immediate feedback, etc.)</p>	For 2003-2004
<p>G9. Because not every school can offer a full range of work preparation courses to meet the program needs of every student it is recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The transportation funding be available to support pathways programs. b) The transportation funding be available to support full day magnet/focus programs where students move to a central site to take advantage of up to date equipment. 	For 2003-2004
<p>G10. Often at-risk students have a history of poor/erratic attendance patterns. As a result, for students with a history of poor attendance: A meeting be convened with a group of attendance counsellors, community members and board personnel to collate successful practices in retaining and supporting students with poor attendance patterns.</p>	Spring, 2003

It is recommended that:	Action:
<p>G11. Technological Education Renewal: The At-Risk Working Group supports technological education renewal funding to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Facilities and program renewal; b) The creation of OYAP technological education credits for students; [P] c) Funding to support smaller class size that are appropriate both for technological education programs (safety) and at-risk students; d) Teacher training both for programs and new models; e) Technological teacher recruitment; f) The costs that are incurred due to regular health and safety inspections of technological facilities. 	<p>Referred to Ministry of Education Technological Studies renewal team</p>

Part H: Development of Specific Actions for:

- Teacher training in the areas of literacy and numeracy for teachers in grades 6 to 8, with an emphasis on the linkage of content areas
- Teacher training in the area of literacy for teachers in grades 9 to 12, with an emphasis on the linkage of the subject specific areas
- Cross panel teacher training in the areas of teaching reading and writing, as well as the associated classroom assessment practices

<p style="text-align: center;">Guiding Principles for Teacher Training</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All teachers have an important role to play in promoting the success of at-risk students. 2. Teacher training at both the pre-service level and the in-service level is key to the success of the implementation of initiatives that support at-risk students. 3. Teacher training must reflect a rich mix of delivery models. 4. Time needs to be made available for teachers to engage in ongoing training and sustained reflective practice for supporting at-risk students.

It is recommended that:**Action:**

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| H1. | In the area of Pre-service training:
a) that a foundation course include up-to-date training models in the areas of literacy and numeracy, and classroom assessment for all teacher candidates | For 2003-2004
Forward to the Ontario College of Teachers |
| H2. | In the area of Additional Qualification courses:
a) that the integration of literacy and numeracy and classroom assessment modules be included in all Additional Qualification courses to ensure the link of literacy and numeracy to every subject area. | For 2003-2004
Forward to the Ontario College of Teachers |
| H3. | Expert Panel for Teacher Training:
The Expert Panel recommended in <u>Part A: A7.</u> be given the following responsibilities
a) Immediately an expert panel be brought together to identify successful practices and available resources to support teacher training. The expert panel on at-risk students would build on the resources already developed by the existing expert panels on early reading and early Math.
b) Immediately a review of successful practices in French-language boards, northern boards and consortiums be collated and shared. | For January, 2003 |

It is recommended that:**Action:**

-
- c) The expert panel will be asked to identify and recommend successful instruction strategies and methods to support improved literacy achievement across all subjects that can be used by classroom teachers (one size model will not work).
 - d) The expert panel will be asked to produce a compendium of appropriate and varied diagnostic, formative and summative classroom assessment strategies and practices.
 - e) A teacher training program be developed for teachers in grades 7 to 12 to support school to work initiatives and to validate these programs for at-risk students.
 - f) Teacher training programs must provide for a rich mix of programs to be developed and offered by sector partners, i.e. programs from boards, Ministry of Education, affiliates, faculties of education, agencies, literacy centres. Programs must demonstrate sustainability over time.
 - g) Teacher training programs must include sufficient resources to support:
 - i) learning resources for the programs and to be used with students;
 - ii) a variety of design opportunities, i.e. ½ day workshops to ongoing opportunities;
 - iii) time be made available for teacher training initiatives (ongoing support).
 - h) Teacher training include:
 - i) teachers in all subject areas with a linkage to content in their subjects;
 - ii) principals and vice principals as instructional leaders.
 - i) The teacher training expert panel will use appropriate research (i.e. Fullan's work) to build plans and modules that have sustainability.
 - j) Math teacher training to build the confidence level of teachers in grades 6 to 8 to support at-risk students.
 - k) The teacher training programs are built around the concept that:
"All teachers can make a difference for at-risk students with an emphasis on the moral purpose of educating our students"

Note: It is recommended that the expert panel begin with a concept that at least 3 sub-groups will need to be formed to handle the large volume of work required. These sub-groups will need to work closely together.

CONFIDENTIAL

Part I: Development of Specific Actions for:

- A communication plan to support all actions accepted in the final report.
- A communication plan that will help parents, students and communities appreciate and support school to work programs

It is recommended that:	Action:
11. A comprehensive Communication Plan be developed to ensure that all stakeholders (parents, students, district school boards, schools, staff, School Advisory Councils, Special Education Advisory Committees, and community members) are aware of the importance of this major At-risk Student Initiative.	As soon as possible
12. The plan be in place for a multi-year period to assist the reculturing necessary to bring about long-term change in this area.	Multi-year plan supported by all stakeholders
13. This communication plan would incorporate pathways, resources and supports for all at-risk students including those students who will likely never graduate but can become effective and contributing citizens.	
14. The communication plan recommended in Section G regarding appropriate pathways be developed immediately. This plan will help to bring about the attitudinal changes necessary to encourage and motivate students, parents and communities to support school to work pathways.	To the Ministry of Education and the Pathways Work Team
15. A communication strategy be developed that accurately describes the level of literacy expected by the Grade 10 Literacy Test.	
16. The comprehensive communication plan encourage and challenge communities to take actions that are necessary to support initiatives for at-risk students.	
17. EQAO, in cooperation with boards, enhance communication to schools, parents and students regarding: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What the literacy test is designed to measure; How the provincial assessment connects to the Ontario curriculum; What resources are available from EQAO to support preparation of all students for the OSSLT; How feedback to individual students can be used in planning for remediation for unsuccessful students; What accommodations are available to both at-risk and special education students; How parents can support their children in developing literacy skills. 	To EQAO

Part J: Other Issues Discussed

During the At-risk Working Group and Principals' Focus Group deliberations, a variety of topics were discussed without the creation of specific recommendations.

-
- J1. This entire report could be viewed as an opportunity to mitigate risk or as a risk mitigation exercise.
 - J2. Although a previous recommendation discusses elementary diagnostic assessment tools or literacy and numeracy, secondary tools are also needed.
 - J3. The appropriate collection of data to analyse the number of students at risk due to the lack of the completion of the 40 hours of community service.
 - J4. Concept of short-term vs. long-term remediation and a definition of remediation was discussed.
 - J5. A solution for students from out of province high schools in semester two of Grade 12 without an opportunity to write the Literacy Test.
 - J6. More work needs to be done regarding increased supports for elementary students working at level one.
 - J7. Training for education support staff (i.e. EA's) to ensure successful implementation of accommodations on provincial assessments, and intervention/remediation strategies for at-risk students.
 - J8. The concept of in-school suspensions was discussed.
 - J9. Supports and resources for multi-grade or multi-subject classrooms.

-
- J10. The Principals' Focus Group suggested the following:
- a) The timing of a once a year literacy assessment, with a possibility of a late Spring date to maximize student readiness was discussed.
 - b) Consider development of early-entry programs to technical and school to work secondary school programs that begin in grade 7. Educational, as well as, social and emotional issues would be integral to the program.
 - c) Development of community programs that educate parents on the development of literacy skills in pre-school children. In particular, these program would target parents in need of literacy remediation.
 - d) Funding to provide alternate education facilities and programs for 14 and 15 year old at-risk students. These are students that have poor attendance, do not accumulate credits, and are often in violation of the schools code of conduct, and are frequently suspended. These students often have difficulty both socially and academically. An alternate educational facility with smaller classes, highly trained teaching and support staff, along with community and social agency support would greatly benefit these students.
 - e) Support for programs for students at-risk because of mental illness was discussed.

At-Risk Working Group

Educators Involved in the Development of this Report

The Chair of the At-risk Working Group and Principals' Focus Group acknowledges the outstanding work of the following educators:

Committee Members

Barry O'Connor (Chair)
Ruth Baumann
Bev Freedman
Trudy Griffiths
Louise Lauzon
Gillda Leitenberg
David Lewis
Robert Millaire
Jan Muir

John O'Leary
Royal Piché
Louise Pinet
Clara Pitoscia
Carlos Sousa
Ardeth Staz
Kerry Stewart
Heather Weber
Lynn Ziraldo

Ministry of Education Representatives:

Louise Bourgeois, French Language Education Policy and Programs Branch
Grant Clarke, Secondary School Policy and Programs Branch
Ginette Plourde, French Language Education Policy and Programs Branch
Kit Rankin, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch

Principals' Focus Group:

Barry O'Connor, Chair
Nicole Bradley
John Crocco
Rick Cunningham
Lou Friscolanti
Laszlo Galambos
Frank Iannantuono
Marianne Mazzorato

Jan Muir
Clara Pitoscia
Serge Plouffe
Michel St. Amant
Christine Shain
Heather Weber
Mary Jo Dick-Westerby
Caroline Worthy

Ministry of Education Representatives:

Grant Clarke, Secondary School Policy and Programs Branch
Linda Heaver, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch
Gérard Proulx, French Language Education Policy and Programs Branch

Special thanks to Debbie Barran, Jody Hendry and Toni Mancini of the Ministry of Education and Mary Waller of the Limestone District School Board for their help in the preparation of the report.