EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Board Profile
The Keewatin-Patricia District School Board (KPDSB) is located in the Thunder Bay region of Ontario and is one of the most geographically dispersed school boards in the province. The school board’s population is highly diverse, with a large and growing Aboriginal population. KPDSB has a student population of 6300 in 24 schools (18 elementary schools and 5 secondary schools). In 2004–05, there were 410 students in Grade 3 and 425 students in Grade 6.

Data Collection
Data collection included: interviews with the senior leadership team, five school principals, school and classroom observations in five schools, a review of board documents, and EQAO data.

Key Features of the School Board’s Overall Approach for Improvement
The school board’s focus is on:

• promoting literacy and learning for all children

• providing support for the “critical window” of opportunity from ages four to seven

• closing the gap in achievement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students

• basing achievement decisions on research and best practices

• building capacity throughout the system for instructional change/improvement in order to initiate and sustain change

• providing teachers with ongoing support and training in order to effectively change instructional strategies rather than one-time events delivered intermittently

• using “at the elbow,” job-embedded professional development
- clearly identifying learning expectations, resources, instructional strategies, and assessment/evaluation practices that are critical for system change and for improvement to be initiated and sustained

- ensuring that implementation is carefully planned and staged one year at a time in order to ensure resources and professional development for staff; “think big, start small”

- ensuring that incremental capacity building will be sustainable

- recognizing that principals play a critical role in sustaining change and improvement

- including lead principals in the senior administration team

- ensuring that the superintendent of curriculum is pivotal in overseeing the literacy and numeracy initiatives with appropriate strategic planning

- ensuring the superintendent of special education and the special education resource teacher involved integrate special education and curriculum planning

- providing mentorship in order to have a highly trained teaching force

- believing that system leadership is a shared responsibility

- finding the necessary financial resources to support the literacy and numeracy focus

- using assessment and data that validate effectiveness

- creating a strong shared vision accompanied by a solid plan of action, along with consistent messaging

- including everybody involved in the system to move an initiative forward

- ensuring lateral capacity building (partnering with neighbouring district school boards and school authorities)