

particular subjects a student takes and their level. For example, a student registered in Grade 10 may be taking mostly Grade 10 subjects, but also some courses at the Grade 11 or 12 level, and some at the Grade 9 level. Furthermore, the student may concentrate high school studies, especially in the final years, in a particular field such as the physical and natural sciences, to the almost total exclusion of others such as the humanities and social sciences.

Most provinces have abolished graduation examinations administered by their departments of education, leaving schools to set, conduct and mark their own exams. However, high school graduation certificates are still issued by provinces on the recommendation of individual schools.

Types of school

One major difference between provincial education systems is in the provision for tax-supported "separate schools". Legislation in some provinces permits religious groups to establish and operate schools under the Public Schools Act and to have tax support directed by ratepayers to these schools. The separate schools operate under boards of elected trustees, as do the regular public schools, and conform to provincial regulation on the school year, curriculum, textbooks, etc. Separate schools also receive government grants, but not always at the same level as the non-denominational public system.

The overwhelming majority of separate schools in Canada are Roman Catholic, but Protestant separate schools exist in some provinces. Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba and British Columbia make no provisions in legislation for tax-supported denominational schools.

In all but one province there exist schools which operate outside the public tax-supported systems. These private or independent schools have been established as alternatives to the public system—alternatives based on religion, language, or social or academic status.

Provincial policies on private schools vary considerably — from the provision of direct grants per pupil to minimum provincial involvement in financing and inspection.

Nearly 5 per cent of all elementary-secondary students in Canada attend private schools.

A number of strategies have been developed to provide for the education of children with special needs.

For academically-gifted students enriched or accelerated programs are generally available within the regular elementary-secondary system.