

Continuous Progress

In the western provinces (and to a significant degree in all of Canada) elementary and secondary schools are structured to emphasize "continuous progress."

Pupils are not graded and promoted (or held back) each year, and instruction is not confined to rigid schedules and regular and routine classrooms.

Saskatchewan was the first to merge grades into divisions. Division I includes all children who otherwise would be in grades one through three. Each child moves at his own best pace. At a given moment he might be ahead of the group in math or a bit behind in literature, without attracting uncomfortable attention in either case.

Textbooks

The first official textbooks in Canada, **The Irish Readers**, were introduced in Ontario in 1896.

Designed in London for use in Ireland, they were intended to reduce rebellion by stressing Old Testament virtues and British unity.

The texts were often admonitory:

*Then let me always watch my lips,
Lest I be struck to death and hell,
Since God a book of reckoning keeps
For every lie that children tell.*

In 1909 these were replaced by **The Ontario Readers**, which emphasized Canadian ties to England.

J.C. Middleton's poem "The Canadian" was included:

*I never saw the cliffs of snow,
The Channel billows tipped with cream,
The restless, eddying tides that flow
About the Island of my dream.*

*I never saw the English downs,
Upon an April Day.
The quiet, old Cathedral towns,
The hedgerows white with May.*

*And still the name of England,
Which tyrants laugh to scorn
Can thrill my soul. It is to me
A very bugle-horn.*

The Ontario Readers were dropped in 1937, and school authorities began selecting books from the general lists of North American publishers. This system led to the use of many books emphasizing United States history and frames of reference.

In recent years Canadian publishers have introduced competitive texts with a distinct, though often subtle, Canadian flavour.



Today education involves more than the 3 R's. These cooks are in school in Ottawa.