New
Brunswick
Newfoundland
and Labrador

The Atlantic Canada Framework for Essential Graduation Learnings in Schools

Nova Scotia
Prince Edward
Island

ATLANTIC
PROVINCES

EDUCATION
FOUNDATION

Contents

Purpose

This document provides information on the issues and implications of implementing a common core curriculum in Atlantic Canada.

It provides a rationale for the outcomes framework that is being used to anchor curriculum development. The framework provides a clear statement of what is expected of students at graduation and at key stages of their education.

It outlines the rationale and process for the development of an Atlantic common core curriculum. Regional curriculum development is a collaborative process designed with key consensus points to ensure decisions are made only with the agreement of each province. The process is flexible and accommodates differences in program offerings in each of the provinces.

It explains some implications for student assessment. The development of student achievement standards is directly linked to the development of the common core curriculum. The relationship between student achievement standards and outcomes is explored.

A French version is also available from the Atlantic departments of education.

Mission Statements

The mission of public education is:

New Brunswick

…to have each student develop the attributes needed to be a lifelong learner, to achieve personal fulfillment and to contribute to a productive, just and democratic society.

Newfoundland & Labrador

…to enable and encourage every individual to acquire, through lifelong learning, the knowledge, skills and values necessary for personal growth and the development of society.

Nova Scotia

…to provide all students with a broad-based, high-quality education. This education will help students to develop the knowledge, abilities, attitudes and skills that they need to become responsible and caring educated persons who are competent, confident, lifelong thinkers and learners, and valued, contributing members of society.

Prince Edward Island

…to provide for the development of children so that each may take a meaningful place in society.

The Call for Change

The information explosion, technological developments, new research on learning styles, the recognition of the need for lifelong learners, changes in the patterns and character of the school population, increased emphasis on accountability, and globalization are some of the dramatic societal changes that point to the need to rethink the education our children receive.

The Atlantic provinces' departments of education agree that the challenges facing their public school systems are strikingly similar. They agree that students' needs can be well met if there are clearly articulated statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time they graduate from high school, if the curriculum reflects these expectations, and if the provinces can accurately assess students' achievement of them.

Recognition of these similarities, based in part on the results of reports or royal commissions in each of the Atlantic provinces, led to the recommendation in 1993 by the ministers of edu
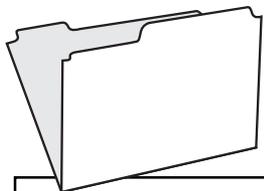
The Maritime Provinces Education Foundation (MPEF) was established in 1982 for the purpose of enhancing regional content in school materials and to provide a structure for inter-provincial cooperation. Over the years, that cooperation has allowed the Maritime (or Atlantic) provinces to develop, purchase or participate in a wide variety of activities that an individual province could not afford or support on its own.

In September 1995, Newfoundland and Labrador became full partners in the Foundation, thus inaugurating the new Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF).

cation to develop a common core curriculum and common assessment strategies for Atlantic Canada. This was endorsed by the premiers in April 1994. The common core curriculum was conceived as a way to improve the quality, relevance and effectiveness of curriculum in each province by combining expertise and input.

Students require a balanced curriculum. Public school curriculum in Atlantic Canada will consist of two components (1) the common core curriculum which is developed regionally, and (2) the remainder which continues to be developed provincially. The common core curriculum for the Atlantic region includes programs in mathematics, science and language arts, grades 1-12.

The process for developing a common core curriculum for Atlantic Canada has involved regional consultation with the public and with education professionals. This process for developing common core curriculum recognizes the distinct needs of each linguistic community.

The common core curriculum will be designed for all students; that is, programs will attempt to reflect the abilities, needs, interests and learning styles of students of both genders, and of ethnocultural groups. Students will be challenged to obtain the expected outcomes.

The Atlantic Canada Framework for

ESSENTIAL GRADUATION LEARNINGS

Essential Graduation Learnings provide a consistent vision for the development of a coherent and relevant core curriculum. The Essential Graduation Learnings statements offer students clear goals and a powerful rationale for school work. They help ensure that provincial education systems' missions are met by design and intention. The Essential Graduation Learnings statements are supported by curriculum outcomes. Both are described below.

Essential Graduation Learnings are statements describing the knowledge, skills and attitudes expected of all students who graduate high school. Achievement of the Essential Graduation Learnings will prepare students to continue to learn throughout their lives. These Learnings describe expectations not in terms of individual school subjects but in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes developed throughout the curriculum. They confirm that students need to make connections and develop abilities across subject boundaries if they are to be ready to meet the shifting and ongoing demands of life, work and study today and
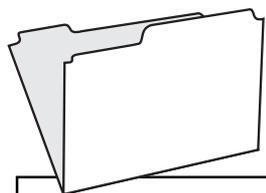
The articulation of Essential Graduation Learnings is part of the provinces' response toward clarifying the expectations of education systems.

Essential Graduation Learnings provide an anchor for curriculum.

in the future. Essential Graduation Learnings serve as a framework for the curriculum development process.

Curriculum outcomes statements articulate what students are expected to know and be able to do in particular subject areas. These outcomes statements also describe the expectations at a particular grade level. Through the achievement of curriculum outcomes, students demonstrate the Essential Graduation Learnings.

In 1994, the Atlantic provinces invited the public to contribute, through various provincial consultative processes, to the selection of the abilities and areas of knowledge that they considered essential for students graduating from high school. Following consultation, Essential Graduation Learnings were identified for all students in the Atlantic provinces. It is recognized that provinces may add additional Essential Graduation Learnings as appropriate.

Essential Graduation Learnings

DEMONSTRATE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ATTITUDES IN THE FOLLOWING LEARNINGS:

Aesthetic Expression

Graduates will be able to respond with critical awareness to various forms of the arts and be able to express themselves through the arts.

Graduates will be able, for example, to:

- use various art forms as a means of formulating and expressing ideas, perceptions and feelings;
- demonstrate understanding of the contribution of the arts to daily life, cultural identity and diversity, and the economy;
- demonstrate understanding of the ideas, perceptions and feelings of others as expressed in various art forms;
- demonstrate understanding of the significance of cultural resources such as theatres, museums and galleries.

Citizenship

Graduates will be able to assess social, cultural, economic and environmental interdependence in a local and global context.

Graduates will be able, for example, to:

- demonstrate understanding of sustainable development and its implications for the environment;
- demonstrate understanding of Canada's political, social and economic systems in a global context;
- explain the significance of the global economy on economic renewal and the development of society;

- demonstrate understanding of the social, political and economic forces that have shaped the past and present, and apply those understandings in planning for the future;
- examine human rights issues and recognize forms of discrimination;
- determine the principles and actions of just, pluralistic and democratic societies;
- demonstrate understanding of their own and others' cultural heritage, cultural identity and the contribution of multiculturalism to society.

Communication

Graduates will be able to use the listening, viewing, speaking, reading and writing modes of language(s), and mathematical and scientific concepts and symbols, to think, learn and communicate effectively.

Graduates will be able, for example, to:

- explore, reflect on, and express their own ideas, learnings, perceptions and feelings;
- demonstrate understanding of facts and relationships presented through words, numbers, symbols, graphs and charts;
- present information and instructions clearly, logically, concisely and accurately for a variety of audiences;
- demonstrate a knowledge of the second official language;
- access, process, evaluate and share information;
- interpret, evaluate and express data in everyday language;
- critically reflect on and interpret ideas presented through a variety of media.

Personal Development

Graduates will be able to continue to learn and to pursue an active, healthy lifestyle.

Graduates will be able, for example, to:

- demonstrate preparedness for the transition to work and further learning;
- make appropriate decisions and take responsibility for those decisions;
- work and study purposefully both independently and in groups;
- demonstrate understanding of the relationship between health and lifestyle;
- discriminate among a wide variety of career opportunities;
- demonstrate coping, management and interpersonal skills;
- demonstrate intellectual curiosity, an entrepreneurial spirit and initiative;
- reflect critically on ethical issues.

Problem Solving

Graduates will be able to use the strategies and processes needed to solve a wide variety of problems, including those requiring language, and mathematical and scientific concepts.

Graduates will be able, for example, to:

- acquire, process and interpret information critically to make informed decisions;
- use a variety of strategies and perspectives with flexibility and creativity for solving problems;
- formulate tentative ideas, and question their own assumptions and those of others;
- solve problems individually and collaboratively;
- identify, describe, formulate and reformulate problems;

- frame and test hypotheses;
- ask questions, observe relationships, make inferences and draw conclusions;
- identify, describe and interpret different points of view and distinguish fact from opinion.

Technological Competence

Graduates will be able to use a variety of technologies, demonstrate an understanding of technological applications, and apply appropriate technologies for solving problems.

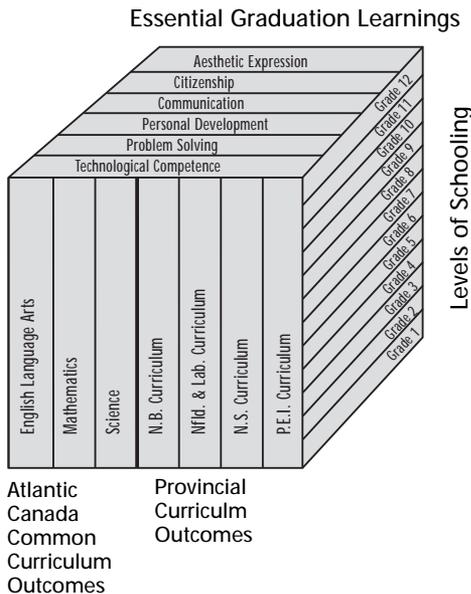Graduates will be able, for example, to:

- locate, evaluate, adapt, create and share information using a variety of sources and technologies;
- demonstrate understanding of and use existing and developing technologies;
- demonstrate understanding of the impact of technology on society;
- demonstrate understanding of ethical issues related to the use of technology in a local and global context.

Relationship Between

ESSENTIAL GRADUATION LEARNINGS AND CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

E ssential Graduation Learnings describe what students need to know and be able to do in order to meet the changing demands of the next century. They describe student learning in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes developed throughout the curriculum. They are cross-curricular, and curriculum in all subject areas is focused to enable students to achieve these Learnings.

Relationship between Essential graduation Learnings, Curriculum Outcomes & Provincial/Atlantic Curriculum

Essential Graduation Learnings

Aesthetic Expression
Citizenship
Communication
Personal Development
Problem Solving
Technological Competence

Grade 12
Grade 11
Grade 10
Grade 9
Grade 8
Grade 7
Grade 6
Grade 5
Grade 4
Grade 3
Grade 2
Grade 1

Levels of Schooling

English Language Arts
Mathematics
Science
N.B. Curriculum
Nfld. & Lab. Curriculum
N.S. Curriculum
P.E.I. Curriculum

Atlantic Canada Common Curriculum Outcomes

Provincial Curriculm Outcomes

## A Curriculum Designed within an Outcomes Framework

Essential Graduation Learnings provide the framework for the development of curriculum outcomes. Curriculum outcomes respect the content and structures of individual subject areas. They are also aligned to the Essential Graduation Learnings. Each Essential Graduation Learning will influence each subject area to a different degree.

The ability of students to write, talk and read effectively is generally considered one of the most important foundations of education. When articulated as an Essential Graduation Learning, Communication acts as a focus for the structure of all curriculum areas, thus causing students to be provided expanded opportunities to develop the important skills, knowledge and attitudes related to communication. The Essential Graduation Learnings also make the statement that helping students think, learn and communicate effectively using language(s) is the responsibility of all teachers, not just of the language arts teacher.

In mathematics, for instance, students will be required to use language for learning and communicating. The draft Atlantic mathematics program has an outcome that students "will be able to read, write and discuss mathematics in order to clarify, refine and consolidate their thinking and understanding." In the new physics program, outcomes related to communication will require students to write about physics concepts and their application in a variety of forms and for a variety of audiences.

The following example illustrates how curriculum outcomes contribute to the development of this Essential Graduation Learning.

Essential Graduation Learning
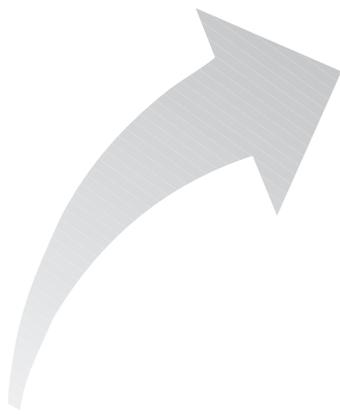
Atlantic Canada Common Curriculum Outcomes

Mathematics
Students will demonstrate understanding that graphs are one method of representing a quantitative relationship and realize that a relationship may also be shown with a verbal description, a formula, a table of values and/or a set of ordered pairs.

English Language Arts
Students will speak and listen to explore, extend, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.

Science
Students will communicate an understanding of the major concepts and principles of science and technology.

Communication
Graduates will be able to use the listening, viewing, speaking, reading and writing modes of language(s), and mathematical and scientific concepts and symbols, to think, learn and communicate effectively.

Provincial Curriculum Outcomes

Social Studies
Students will be able to organize information garnered from various sources, including maps, charts, graphs, globes, print and media texts, and the arts.

Music
Students will demonstrate understanding of the use of language as lyrics for songwriting.

The Atlantic Common Curriculum Development Process

The process for developing common curriculum is based on consensus among the provinces. The process clearly indicates decision points which require consensus by a regional development committee.

Each province has in place procedures and mechanisms for communicating and consulting with its education partners and is responsible for the coordination of this input. Time is allocated at each stage of curriculum development to allow for the collection and organization of these results.

The key features of the common curriculum development process are:

- interprovincial project committees composed of provincial representatives (consultants and teachers) who provide input, reaction and approval;
- a lead province for each project responsible for drafting and revising specified curriculum elements in accordance with the direction and decisions of the project committee;
- continued provincial responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the new curriculum, including the pilot/field test phases, inservicing and ongoing support;
- ongoing communication and consultation with appropriate stakeholders according to provincial practices.

Development of the Atlantic Common Core Curriculum for math, science and language arts follows a consistent format. Teachers in each of these subject areas will receive a Foundation document and a series of support docu

ments, or guides, for different levels of schooling. The Foundation document contains the Essential Graduation Learnings, curriculum outcomes for that subject area and the corresponding outcomes at key stages (grades 3, 6, 9 and 12). The support documents or guides contain details for teachers at the different levels of schooling. Program design at each of these levels will be anchored in the Essential Graduation Learnings and curriculum outcomes. Curriculum outcomes statements will reflect the characteristics of the learner as well as the nature of the subject area. These statements are designed to ensure a smooth transition for students between grades.

The following example illustrates the relationship between an Atlantic Canada Essential Graduation Learning and curriculum outcomes at different levels of schooling.

Essential Graduation Learnings: An example

English Language Arts Curriculum Outcome

Students will use language to enhance the precision and clarity of their own and others' writing.

by the end of grade 12:

Students will, independently and collaboratively, revise selected texts of their own and others for cohesion and clarity, demonstrating control of a range of appropriate stylistic features.

by the end of grade 9:

Students will, independently and collaboratively, use a range of strategies and techniques to revise selected drafts for cohesion, clarity and impact.

by the end of grade 6:

Students will, independently and collaboratively, use a range of strategies and techniques to extend and clarify selected drafts.

by the end of grade 3:

Students will, independently and collaboratively, make revisions to selected drafts for meaning and clarity of expression.

Implications for Student Assessment

I n practice, the achievement of the Essential Graduation Learnings will be assessed indirectly, through the assessment of the curriculum outcomes developed for individual courses.

Achievement Standards

Curriculum outcomes statements make clear the achievements students are expected to demonstrate at key stages in their schooling; they do not, however, describe the range of levels of these achievements. For teachers, students and parents to assess the level at which work is done, either during the course of a year or at the end of a year, or both, standards are needed.

In Atlantic Canada, the term "standards" is used to describe different levels of student achievement. Standards help teachers assess
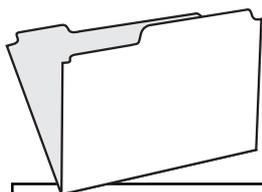
The Atlantic provinces are collaborating on the development of provincial assessments and/or examinations for grades 3, 6, 9 and 12. These assessments may or may not be used by individual provinces, depending on their own assessment policies.

The policies and processes for both the Atlantic common curriculum and regional assessment initiatives are detailed in the Common Curriculum and Assessment Workplans, available from the departments of education or the APEF office:
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phone: (902) 424-5352   fax: (902) 424-8976
e-mail: premiers@fox.nstn.ns.ca

an individual student's achievement of curriculum outcomes. This does not imply that all assessment performed in the classroom must make direct reference to a standard or that teachers will use only one form of assessment.

Key Features

Student work is assessed on whether it meets pre-stated criteria rather than on the basis of rank or relative standing.

The criteria for determining the different levels of achievement reflect the experiences of practising teachers and curriculum/evaluation specialists, ensuring i) a close relationship between what is taught and what is assessed, and ii) a direct link to the curriculum development process.

Developing Standards

Many jurisdictions in Canada have begun to identify student achievement standards. For curriculum outcomes, a range of levels of achievement is agreed on (between three and six levels is usual); verbal descriptions of these levels are produced; and samples of student work are selected to illustrate these levels. Working together and using a range of student work for reference, teachers and curriculum/evaluation specialists agree on descriptions of the characteristics of each of the levels and provide examples of actual work done at each level, called "anchor" pieces.

The development of achievement standards will be coordinated by regional committees comprising teachers and other curriculum and assessment specialists from each province. The use of student achievement standards will be determined in each province according to cur

rent department and board policies and class-room practices.

Classroom Assessment Strategies

For assessment within the classroom, teachers play a central and crucial role in designing, observing and interpreting the work of their students. For all subject areas, the range of assessment strategies should include portfolios, performances, essays and projects, as well as the more traditional multiple-choice and short-answer questions. A judicious combination of these types of questions, combined with careful review to ensure the instruments are free of racial, ethnic, cultural, gender and socio-economic bias will give students fair and equitable opportunities to demonstrate what they know and are able to do.

The common core curriculum guides being developed include suggestions for classroom assessment strategies.

The diversity of the student population and the inclusive nature of schooling require a variety of tools and methods to be used in the assessment of curriculum outcomes. Such help as large print or braille, flexible timing, tape recorders or scribes, for example, will allow students the same assistance they have in the classroom.

Questions & Answers

ON ISSUES AND IMPLEMENTATION

How were the Essential Graduation Learnings developed?

Draft Essential Graduation Learnings were derived from the mission statements published by each department of education in the Atlantic provinces. Proposed statements were developed by an APEF committee. Education stakeholders across the Atlantic provinces were consulted and the statements were revised based on the comments received during the consultation.

What mechanism will be used to ensure the relevancy of the Essential Graduation Learnings?

Each province will continue to determine the expectations of its public. These concerns will be considered when curriculum reviews are conducted.

How will the common core curriculum projects relate to the Essential Graduation Learnings?

Mathematics, language arts and science represent the common core curriculum for the Atlantic provinces. A Foundation document for each identifies curriculum outcomes and their relationship to the Essential Graduation Learnings. It gives direction to curriculum developers working on projects at the four levels of schooling; entry-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12. In this way, all the common core curriculum projects

are aligned with the Essential Graduation Learnings.

How will curriculum in other subject areas contribute to Essential Graduation Learnings?

A wide array of curriculum exists in the Atlantic provinces. Each province engages in a cyclical process of revising its curriculum. Future revisions and the subsequent development of curriculum will have outcomes derived from the Essential Graduation Learnings.

Do all subject areas and courses contribute to each Essential Graduation Learning?

The degree of cross-curricular relationship will vary from one subject area to another. Subject areas make varying degrees of contributions to the Essential Graduation Learnings. Nevertheless, all subject areas will have curriculum outcomes derived from the Essential Graduation Learnings. For example, science and mathematics will include outcomes which contribute to the Essential Graduation Learning concerning Citizenship, and social studies curricula will include outcomes which contribute to knowledge regarding Problem Solving. A number of curricular areas including languages, mathematics, music, and the arts will contribute to the Essential Graduation Learnings that encompass Communication. All subjects should contribute to the Essential Graduation Learnings and be consistent with them.

How is student achievement related to the Essential Graduation Learnings?

Assessment of student achievement will occur within each subject area or course. The Essential Graduation Learnings will not be directly measured. The measurement of curriculum outcomes will provide a proxy for the achievement of expectations contained in the Essential Graduation Learning and will relate directly to curriculum outcomes.

What impact will the adoption of Essential Graduation Learnings have on student assessment strategies used by teachers?

Teachers will continue to assess the achievement of students within their classrooms by using a variety of assessments. These strategies will relate to the curriculum outcomes identified in the particular curriculum. A variety of assessment strategies will be described in curriculum documents. Practices concerning the reporting of student progress to parents will be a provincial, school board and school responsibility.

What about students with exceptionalities?

The Essential Graduation Learnings are for all students. Students with exceptionalities can achieve the Essential Graduation Learnings using a wide variety of strategies and resources, including adaptations to teaching strategies and/or the development and implementation of individual program plans.