


NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia Provincial
**Literacy
Strategy**

January 2017



Literacy Strategy P-12

What is Literacy?

Literacy is the foundation for all learning. When we are literate, we can acquire new knowledge, connect it to our world, and use it. For Nova Scotia students, literacy learning is about acquiring, creating, connecting, and communicating meaning in a wide variety of contexts through listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Why Does Nova Scotia Need a Literacy Strategy?

Over the past two decades, technology has dramatically changed the way we acquire, use, and share information. It has changed our economy and how we work, both here in Nova Scotia and around the world. Technology and social media now play central roles in our students' lives. Nova Scotia students must have strong multimedia literacy skills to keep pace with these changes and meet the demands of employers, society, and the economy, both now and in the future.

In Nova Scotia's public education system, we have talented students and skilled teachers who are committed to student success. However, keeping up with shifts in technology and the rapid growth of information has been challenging for everyone. Student outcomes in literacy achievement show that our entire education system needs to do more to support our students and their teachers. This literacy strategy identifies how we will do that, and how we will measure our success.

Our Vision for Literacy in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia students will excel in literacy and graduate with the literacy skills they need to succeed in school, the workplace, and their communities.

Our Goal for All Children and Youth

Nova Scotia students will achieve a high level of literacy so that they can thrive in school and beyond.

Literacy in Every Grade, Every Day, as per the Action Plan

In Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education, we detailed how and why we are placing a greater emphasis on literacy learning.

We will focus on reading fluency and comprehension, and on writing skills in all grades. Those skills develop over time and become more complex. To support the development of these skills, we will focus on different priorities as students progress in their learning. All teachers, in all subject areas and at all grade levels, will support student learning through classroom data and assessment to drive decision making about literacy instruction. The following represents areas for growth and success.



Phonological awareness is the ability to hear sounds that make up words in spoken language. This includes recognizing words that rhyme, deciding whether words begin or end with the same sound, understanding that sounds can be manipulated to create new words, and separating words into their individual sounds. Linking letters with sounds and understanding how those letters and sounds make up words are very important steps in understanding what is read.



Grades Primary–3: Strong Foundations

Changes in these early grades will stress the basics of literacy. This is a non-exclusive list. Students will learn:

- ▶ phonological awareness
- ▶ oral language development
- ▶ how to sequence words in a sentence
- ▶ different types of sentences
- ▶ how to follow directions
- ▶ an expanded vocabulary
- ▶ how to use prefixes and suffixes
- ▶ how to use reading, writing, and oral language strategies
- ▶ how to form questions and make comments

Grades 4–8: Innovation and Exploration

At this level, students will increase their skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. They will have opportunities to develop their creativity and problem-solving skills, and to be innovative. Students will learn:

- ▶ literacy across subject areas, such as science and social studies, so that they will learn how to use reading, writing, and speaking skills in different settings and deepen their understanding
- ▶ writing rules that will make their writing clear, accurate, sequential, and easy to understand
- ▶ to effectively communicate using a range of methods, such as printing, cursive writing, and multimedia
- ▶ enhanced content-area-specific vocabulary
- ▶ writing conventions, including spelling, sentence formation, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and usage

Grades 9–12: Ready to Launch

In high school, students are getting ready to move on to post-secondary learning or to join the workforce. Strong literacy skills will better enable them to engage in and deepen their understanding of the world. Instruction in these grades will help students improve and sharpen the specific literacy skills they need for success after they graduate from the public school system. Students will learn and practice:

- ▶ research skills
- ▶ reading skills to support successful transition to post-secondary studies and the workplace
- ▶ reading and writing skills across subject areas
- ▶ writing for different purposes, e.g., lab reports, English essays, journals
- ▶ oral and written presentation skills

How We Will Measure Success

By 2020, Reading and Writing

The target goal for reading and writing will be an increase of 8 per cent in the number of students who perform at or above expectations, as measured by the following provincial assessments:

- ▶ Reading and Writing in Grade 3 (RW3)
- ▶ Reading, Writing, and Mathematics in Grade 6 (RWM6)
- ▶ Reading, Writing, and Mathematics in Grade 8 (RWM8)
- ▶ the Nova Scotia Examination (NSE), English 10

Literacy achievement will be maintained or increased as students progress through the grades.

There will be consistent monitoring of specific measures through the Literacy Steering Committee and the Literacy Working Group. This will include reviewing results from Reading Recovery, early literacy instruction, mentors, and achievement data. This information will inform provincial intervention, support, and the implementation strategies.

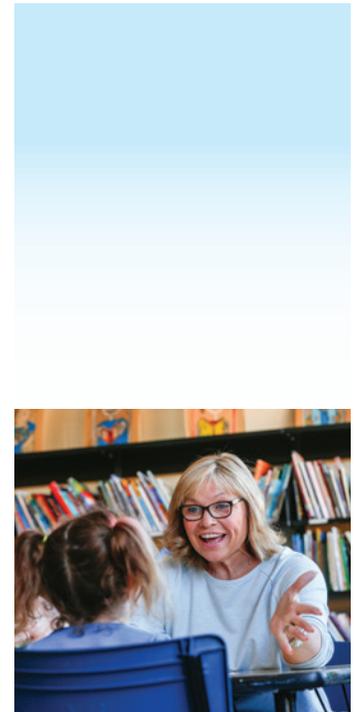
Why 2020?

We are making changes now in the way we will teach and focus on literacy. However, it will take time to see the effects of these changes. We believe assessments in 2020 will show measurable success with students performing at or above the expectations in reading and writing.

Supporting All Students

Essential Graduation Competencies

These are attitudes, skills, and knowledge that prepare students to successfully participate in lifelong learning and in life and work-related transitions. They include citizenship, communication, creativity and innovation, critical thinking, personal-career development, and technological fluency. These competencies were introduced in 2015, and as curriculum is renewed they will be connected to outcomes in all courses, for all grades. Empowering students to incorporate the French language and Acadian/francophone culture is required so they can contribute positively to their community. This is another essential graduation competency required for French first language students. Our vision for Nova Scotia students in literacy will be strengthened through explicit connections to these competencies in our classrooms.



Individual Program Plans (IPPs) are developed for students for whom the curriculum outcomes are not applicable or attainable. Program Planning Teams (PPTs), which include parents or guardians, track and monitor student progress on adaptations and individualized outcomes at the school, school board, and provincial levels. This informs the development of ongoing programming to meet the student's individual learning needs. Student progress in meeting literacy outcomes is reported at the standard reporting periods, and parents have the opportunity to meet with PPTs as necessary.

An adaptation is a documented strategy or resource that accommodates the learning needs of an individual student. An adaptation is planned, implemented, monitored, and evaluated to enable a student to achieve the public school curriculum outcomes.



Cultural Diversity

Our schools are made up of diverse and vibrant groups of students. Our students come from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and they have different levels of ability. Further, our province has both English and French-language school boards, each with unique aspects. In Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education, we committed to implementing a province-wide Achievement Gap Initiative to address the differences in results that identified groups have with respect to literacy. We are committed to raising the achievement of students of African descent and of Aboriginal heritage. We are also committed to narrowing the gap between their literacy achievement and that of their peers by 5 per cent by 2020. Specific literacy intervention strategies will be implemented as part of the Achievement Gap Initiative.

Student Services

We will monitor students with Individual Program Plans (IPPs) and students who require adaptations to meet the expected outcomes to support them in achieving their highest level of literacy.

How We Will Reach Our Goals

Our students will achieve a higher level of literacy, and this will require a team effort. We all share responsibility for literacy learning. Our collective efforts to improve literacy among our students will be guided by the following principles:

- ▶ Every student has the right to learn in an equitable learning environment and to engage with an innovative, culturally responsive curriculum that honours and builds on their lived experiences.
- ▶ Every francophone student has the right to instruction that respects the principles of minority-language pedagogy, in order to strengthen their cultural identity.
- ▶ Literacy is the foundation for all learning.
- ▶ Literacy instruction is rigorous and supports high expectations for all students.
- ▶ Literacy learning is a collaborative responsibility.
- ▶ Purposeful assessment drives instruction and positively affects learning.
- ▶ Professional learning in literacy is continuous and responsive to student needs.
- ▶ School administrators, as instructional leaders, have the knowledge and skills to evaluate and support literacy instruction.

In order to support increased literacy in our schools, research has shown that we require:

- ▶ High quality teaching, strong leadership, and positive learning environments
- ▶ Strong partnerships

High Quality Teaching, Strong Leadership, and Positive Learning Environments

As outlined in Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education, teachers require support, time, and structure to allow them to focus on student learning and student achievement. We will develop performance standards for teachers and administrators to support opportunities for their professional learning. We will also work with teachers to clearly define literacy learning expectations and promote positive learning environments. We will:

Provide students with a full range of literacy instruction and assessment in grades P–12

- ▶ provide clear expectations for speaking and listening, reading and writing, or other ways of communicating at each grade level
- ▶ literacy instruction at all grade levels will include explicit teaching of targeted skills, starting with oral language and phonological awareness in P–2
- ▶ literacy instruction will be tailored to meet students' needs
- ▶ students will be taught and their work assessed in a manner that respects how they learn and that is appropriate for them
- ▶ schools will provide a wide range of programming and services to assist literacy learners

Support literacy leadership

- ▶ provide support to school boards for literacy leadership

Implement a culturally responsive pedagogy

- ▶ provide all teachers with professional learning opportunities so that they have a common understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy and its importance
- ▶ develop curriculum and resources so that each student can relate their learning to their life experiences and cultural backgrounds
- ▶ provide students with instruction and assessment based on a culturally responsive pedagogy
- ▶ promote common instructional strategies in minority-language pedagogy and support research in the area of minority-language pedagogy and literacy learning and achievement

Monitor and track the literacy development of all students in P–12 and provide timely support as needed

- ▶ encourage a “whole school approach” in which teachers, resource teachers, principals, and other related experts and literacy specialists work together to continuously monitor student progress, and respond as necessary
- ▶ provide a range of literacy supports for students in P–12, including student resources, Reading Recovery, early literacy teachers, and literacy mentors/coaches



Culturally responsive pedagogy is teaching that connects a student's social, cultural, family, or language background to what the student is learning; nurtures that cultural uniqueness; and responds by creating conditions in which the student's learning is enhanced.



Incorporate literacy instruction in all subjects in P–12

- ▶ define the literacy expectations in each subject
- ▶ embed literacy skills and strategies in all subjects across the curriculum in P–12

Use technologies, as appropriate, to help with literacy learning in all grade levels

- ▶ identify technologies that support student learning
- ▶ facilitate student access to a wide range of educational technology

Build capacity for high quality teaching in literacy through professional learning

- ▶ promote varied opportunities for professional learning in literacy for teachers in all subjects and all grades

Strong Partnerships

Literacy learning does not just happen in schools, and it does not just begin in primary and end at Grade 12. Literacy learning happens in many ways in our communities. We all have a responsibility to support literacy learning for children in this province. We will:

Build partnerships with community groups, parents, and guardians to support student literacy

- ▶ support the Early Years Branch at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to
 - ▶ develop a collaborative plan on how children transition into primary with key partners, such as Nova Scotia Hearing and Speech and Early Childhood Development Intervention Services
 - ▶ include a focus on oral language development in the Early Years Curriculum
 - ▶ include literacy development as a core competency in the Standards of Practice for Early Childhood Educators
- ▶ identify what literacy tools and supports are currently available in our communities for parents, guardians, and caregivers, and develop an online resource where these tools and supports can be found

Provide opportunities for collaborative practices within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), across government departments, school boards, and Nova Scotia universities

- ▶ work collaboratively to monitor implementation of the literacy strategy and achievement of the goals
- ▶ develop a communication plan for the literacy strategy
- ▶ identify and meet with key partners to inform them about the strategy and determine how they can support it in their work

Next Steps

This strategy is designed to strengthen the public school system by advancing the literacy achievement of our students. Long-term change and success will be achieved through a series of policies and actions that support each other, as identified in Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education, such as the Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting Policy, the Homework Policy, Teaching and Leadership Standards, and the Achievement Gap Initiative.

Some of the actions outlined in this strategy are already underway. Others will need time to be developed and put in place. All of the actions in this strategy target increased student success.

Implementation

The strategy will be implemented by a Literacy Steering Committee and a Literacy Working Group (consisting of Board Literacy Leads, with representation from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) using a research-based approach to implementation.

This strategy represents a multi-year commitment to increase the literacy of Nova Scotia students. Through implementation, we will work with teachers to determine their professional learning needs. Our literacy strategy will be responsive to identified needs, and it will be monitored and adjusted based on student progress.

