

Provincial Advisory Council on Education (PACE)

April 12 & 13, 2019

2021 Brunswick Street (Department of Education and Early Childhood Education)

DRAFT Minutes (Subject to approval of Council Chair)

Mi'kmaq Acknowledgement

The meeting began by acknowledging that it is taking place in M'kma'ki traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq people.

Affirmation

The acknowledgement was followed by an affirmation.

Approval of the Agenda

Council approved the agenda (see <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/PACE/documents>)

Report on Adhoc Sub-committees

Prior to this meeting, Department staff met with the PACE sub-committee formed to provide advice to the existing EAL (English as an additional language) and FAL (French as an additional language) strategy work group. Department staff provided the sub-committee questions used with community focus groups during the consultation process. The sub-committee appreciates that a provincial strategy is being developed, and looks forward to reviewing and advising on the draft when it is developed.

Early Development Instrument (EDI) Results

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) measures five core areas of early child development that are known to be good predictors of adult health, education and social outcomes: physical health and well-being, language and cognitive development, social competence, emotional maturity and communication skills and general knowledge. The EDI instrument is completed by grade primary teachers in the spring of the school year and the results are used as a population-level research tool.

EDI results allow community organizations and government to see variations in children's vulnerability over time and make informed decisions about delivery, investments and broad policy development.

Nova Scotia now has three cycles of EDI data, so can now begin looking at population trends. The data is used across government, municipalities, community organizations and for academic research.

PACE discussed the continuing rollout of the Pre-Primary Program in Nova Scotia with full implementation planned for 2020 – 2021.

Action

- Ask the Department to provide a high-level report in the fall of each year on the impact of provincial early years programs.

Inclusion

PACE members discussed the current program planning process and the options presented in Students First. Department staff discussed the previous IPP review completed in Nova Scotia and the current model of grouping students in program adaptations and individual program plans versus a new framework of how the system responds when a student does not learn. An inclusive education system provides a continuum of supports for all students who requires it. Teachers are also supported in providing the necessary instructional and assessment processes for each student.

The disproportionality of some students being placed on an individual program plan was discussed by PACE members. Department staff are assessing the data that describes the disproportionality, particularity for African Canadian students and Mi'kmaq students. The key next step is determining the factors that drive the decision to place a student on an IPP in the first place. For example, the number of students placed on an IPP increases at Grade 3 and goes down at high school. As a system, system barriers that causes this disproportionality must be identified and eliminated.

PACE and Regional Voice

PACE members discussed ways that they can provide regional voice on issues before them, recognizing that different regions may approach this in different ways. Some representatives are interested in receiving more information from the regional centres of education, and some may attend the regional school advisory councils.

Inclusive Education Policy Consultation

Department staff provided information to PACE on the provincial Inclusive Education Policy development process indicating that there has been wide consultation with eleven other advisory groups and that the policy continues to evolve. PACE advised on the need to:

- implement the policy in a way that does not overwhelm teachers
- keep the language as accessible and clear as possible
- recognize the diversity of all learners
- build relationships with education partners in implementing the policy
- consider the importance of culture and heritage in policy development.

Deputy Minister Montreuil said the Inclusion Policy will be an umbrella policy with other strategies following its principles, for example an autism and mental health strategies. Future work in education will be influenced by this foundational work.

MTSS Consultation

PACE discussed the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) as described in Students First. The provincial MTSS team of educators will be meeting at the end of the month to continue the development of MTSS.

PACE discussed the importance of early intervention for students and identified that MTSS is a concept whereby supports are on a continuum rather than a progression. The importance of attending to student well-being was highlighted as a priority as seen as in concert with academic learning. PACE again advised to keep the technical language of MTSS as clear as possible for as many audiences as possible.

The concept of relying on practices based on evidence-based research is important, but those practices that are validated through custom and time must also be considered.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for June 14 and 15, 2019.