

Provincial Advisory Council on Education (PACE)
December 8 - 9, 2018
2021 Brunswick Street (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development)

Mi'kmaq Acknowledgement

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

Affirmation

The acknowledgment was followed by an affirmation.

Approval of the Agenda

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

Student Achievement Results

Nova Scotia assessments and exams are developed with teachers using processes that comply with the principles for fair student assessment practices.

An overview of all student assessments was presented: classroom assessments, provincial assessments, provincial examinations and national and international assessments. Discussions also focused on how results are and can be used to inform instruction and educational decisions that support higher student achievement and well-being.

A sample of assessment results were also reviewed (see www.plans.ednet.ns.ca). Disaggregated data was also reviewed and discussed, demonstrating the achievement gap that exists in reading, writing and mathematics between African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq students, and other students. PACE emphasized that closing the achievement gap is an immediate priority. PACE asked that the department provide additional data that could help inform recommendations that support this priority.

PACE members also discussed the challenge of meeting the needs of immigrant children and the importance of using data to support their instruction and achievement.

Student Assessment Policy Consultation

Action: Council asked that the department share information with members about guiding principles for the new student assessment policy, as well as information about the consultation process. This information should be shared in December so PACE members have ample time to review it prior to the next meeting.

Bussing Consultation

An overview of bussing in Nova Scotia was presented. The goal is to create a policy that supports a bussing system that: gets students safely to and from school on time; is reliable; has fair, consistent, easily understood rules; and has clear, timely, accurate information.

Currently, more than 77,000 students are bussed in the province at a cost of more than \$75.5 million.

PACE members were asked to focus on two discussion questions, the same questions that other groups have also been asked to consider:

- From your perspective, what do you think is working well around school bus transportation?
- Does something need to change? If so, what?

PACE members did not comment on the operational aspects of busing, but discussed policy issues related to the PACE mandate around student achievement and well being. Those issues included safety, bussing for students with special needs, and how being late for school can affect student achievement.

Feedback will be incorporated with advice from other groups that are being consulted, as well as results of the online survey. Other groups and individuals who are also being consulted include: SACs, parents, bus drivers, principals, the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions, the Minister's Advisory Council on Student Issues, and Special Education Programs and Services Committee.

Consultation is expected to be complete in early winter so the new policy can be shared in the spring, and in effect for September.

Update on Regional School Advisory Councils (SACs)

All regional school advisory council meetings have been held except for the Valley. The meetings were positive and focused on three main changes:

- **Funding** for SACs. SAC members brainstormed and shared ideas on how new funding can be used in ways that benefit students in their schools, within the funding guidelines provided by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
- Ways to increase **diversity of membership**. SAC regulations have changed to allow membership to change over the course of the school year if there is the opportunity to increase diversity.
- Their **enhanced role** in providing advice on regional and provincial education policy development.

PACE members agree that the composition of SACs should reflect the diversity of the school community.

SACs are also being consulted on a draft handbook that further defines how they are formed and how they operate. The draft handbook was also shared with PACE members for information purposes only.

Term of Reference and Code of Conduct

Based on discussions at the previous meeting, a draft terms of reference was developed and reviewed. Work also got under way around a code of conduct, beginning with what the PACE code of conduct should describe:

- the behavior expected from council members
- fundamental principles and practices for avoiding conflicts of interest, upholding ethical conduct, and maintaining integrity
- guidelines for making ethical choices and accountability for these choices

As PACE began working through the code of conduct, they agreed that the code of conduct and terms of reference should be presented in one document. A draft based on their work is being prepared for circulation to PACE members in early January

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for January 25 – 26, 2019.

In discussing agenda items, PACE agreed that the department's work on inclusive education is the foundation for all other work in education. However, they also want to understand how other reports and recommendations are intertwined with this work (e.g., BLAC Report, Reality Check, Raise the Bar, etc.). PACE also wants to understand how its work complements the work of other advisory bodies. Information will be shared in advance of the next meeting.