

Student Success Planning Framework

SEPTEMBER 2016

Context

The *Student Success Planning Framework* is intended to be a guide for schools, school boards, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, as all partners work together to create a learning team culture throughout the public education system in Nova Scotia.

Full implementation of the professional practices described in this document will bring schools to a higher level of effectiveness in Student Success Planning. The successful and purposeful integration of Student Success Planning, work of learning teams, and focused assessment and instructional practices will lead to increased growth in student learning and achievement.

Student Success Planning



Foundational Elements

The following foundational elements of the Student Success Planning Process need to guide Nova Scotian educators and other leaders. It is important that we:

1. Maintain a focus on equitable student learning and achievement for each student, and improved assessment and instructional practices.
2. Deepen and expand ongoing teacher collaboration.
3. Build upon the knowledge, skills, and experiences of educators as integral to the school improvement process.
4. Ensure actions are evidence-/data-based and are supported by effective strategies grounded in current educational research.
5. Continue to foster a climate of trust and innovation across and within learning teams.
6. Through collaboration, align educational priorities across provincial, board, and school levels.
7. Continue to build professional learning capacity within the system.
8. Support and respect school administrators as effective instructional leaders committed to excellence and equity.

Student Success Planning

Under the leadership of the principal, the school community is responsible for developing the school's improvement plan. The principal will lead and be accountable for the implementation of this plan. Student Success Planning will continue to rely on effective distributed leadership between and among teachers, and shared commitment of support staff, school advisory councils, parents/guardians, students, and community members.

Student Success Planning begins with a review of data/evidence to help determine where the school appears to be effective and where improvements are needed. This evidence is used to determine student achievement goals. Goals outline what will be measured to demonstrate improvement in student achievement. They need to be specific enough to be measurable, while broad enough to be inclusive of all students.

All schools using an evidence-/data-based approach will develop student achievement goals in literacy and mathematics. Literacy and mathematics goals are supported by teachers who are engaged in continuous learning aligned with the strategies in the school's improvement plan. Schools will use evidence/data and where necessary also develop and implement a Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment goal. High schools will also develop goals related to student achievement, focusing on improvement in specific curriculum areas. All schools in CSAP will have a community goal.

In the Student Success Planning Framework, learning teams (horizontal and vertical) work together to identify how they can contribute to the overall success of school improvement by focusing on improving student achievement in their classrooms.

Student Success Planning includes identifying ways to support implementation of the plan and how to evaluate growth. This involves gathering formative feedback during implementation, with an emphasis on classroom assessment data, to determine progress and make adjustments in teaching, as necessary. It also means gathering data over time to enable comparisons to the baseline or starting point and conclusions about the school's growth.

Student Success Planning engages teachers in an ongoing cycle of reflection and action, within a learning team culture. The core work of student success is clearly focused in the classroom with ongoing implications for assessment and instructional improvement. These school-based learning teams engage in learning community practices (described later in this document) to help achieve school improvement goals. This is a time for classroom teachers to examine their classroom assessment results and to decide what strategies they will use to ensure students are achieving the outcomes.

Schools will use provincial templates to support the Student Success Planning process. It is also expected that a short annual report will be written and circulated to update the school community on the progress of the school's Student Success Plan process.

Learning Teams

Also referred to as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Collaborative Learning Teams (CLTs)

The following definition of a learning team clearly establishes beliefs about the purpose and outcomes of effective teams:

“ A Learning Team is a group of professional educators working together to enhance their practices in support of success for each student in achieving excellence and equity through a culture of collaboration, trust, reflective practices, and evidence-based decision making. ”

– CSI Framework

The four critical components comprising the Nova Scotia approach to learning teams include:

Learning Teams			
1. Focus on Improvement and Equitable Student Learning	2. Collaborative Learning and Shared Leadership	3. Continuous Inquiry and Changing Practice	4. Shared Purpose, Vision, Values, and Goals

Focus on Improvement and Equitable Student Learning

The work within a learning team must have a direct impact on increasing student learning and achievement. This means continually asking and answering four critical questions:

1. What do we expect students to learn?
2. How do we know they learned it?
3. What do we do when they have not learned the curriculum outcomes?
4. What do we do when students have learned the curriculum outcomes?

Within a learning team there is a clear focus on results where teachers and administrators engage in ongoing conversations about the individual and collective progress of students. Teachers and school leaders understand the curriculum outcomes, and assessments are developed in alignment with these outcomes. Appropriate interventions are applied in a timely and systematic manner for students to achieve equitable results. Effective practices in assessment and instruction can be observed in every classroom.

Collaborative Learning and Shared Leadership

Shared leadership is a collective responsibility with a focused commitment to working together for the success of each student in a school. Within a learning team, teachers have opportunities for individual and group learning, as well as shared leadership. Collaborative learning includes learning about practices in curriculum implementation, assessment for learning, and instruction that are appropriate for their students. Teacher teams use a wide range of student work, school artifacts, action research, and professional literature to inform their response to student needs. Shared leadership means people are engaged in practices that help shape decision making within the school community.

Continuous Inquiry and Changing Practices

In a learning team, teachers and administrators collectively examine balanced student achievement data (conversations, observations, and products), within the context of the students' culture, to develop strategies that respond to evolving student needs. It also means asking hard questions and having professional discussions about why results are or are not being achieved. Teachers question their assumptions about how their teaching practices impact student learning, and together they examine school and student data to generate new ideas and hypotheses about student learning. The learning team also has clear expectations about how they will work together to achieve better results. Ultimately, learning teams are intended to support teachers as they work together to strengthen their assessment and instructional practices.

Shared Purpose, Vision, Values, and Goals

A learning team creates a shared purpose as members are guided by a focus on improved student achievement that is rooted in common beliefs and principles about academic excellence and educational equity. In a learning team, members are committed to achieving learning goals for every student. They also focus on creating a safe and inclusive learning environment in the school for both students and adults. Each team member has a responsibility to encourage and support others.

Although the focus and methods will vary, at the highest level, learning teams in schools always share the goal of enhancing equitable student learning and building a collaborative learning culture in a school. The fundamental goals are to facilitate improvement or changes in professional practices, to achieve excellence and equity in student achievement, and to expand students' life opportunities.

Not One Single Model for Effective Learning Communities

Learning teams are small groups within a school that work together and create a sense of community across the school. The concept of a learning community is built on collaboration within and across these teams. In some school boards learning teams are referred to as professional learning communities (PLCs) or as collaborative learning teams (CLTs).

The core structure of a learning team is a collaborative group that is responsible for the planning and implementation of ways to improve teaching and learning throughout the school. These teams work with a shared purpose and common goals in an environment of continuous inquiry and reflection intended to improve equitable assessment and instructional practices that will increase student learning.

It takes time for members to build an effective learning community. Over time, many communities that support teacher learning develop their own ways of structuring conversations, discussing, debating, and thinking about teaching and learning. These ongoing conversations help to create and sustain the interpersonal relationships that are necessary to achieve the higher collective purpose of their learning team.

Teams can be organized in different ways depending on the configuration of the school and particular strengths and needs. For example, a team can be organized horizontally with teachers at the same grade level or subject working together. They can also be organized vertically where teachers collaborate across grade levels and subject areas to align curriculum, assessment, and instructional practices. There might also be networked learning teams or virtual teams where teachers work with their colleagues from other schools. Networked teams are particularly helpful for specialist teachers, of subjects such as music and physical education, who might be the only one teaching this content in their school building.

The primary focus of the learning team is to help teachers reflect on content, ideas, and strategies that will increase their effectiveness in the classroom. It is a meeting place where student needs are highlighted and decisions are made together about how to best address learning needs. The intent is that teacher learning in a learning team leads to changes in instructional practices in the classroom that increase student achievement.

Teams learn and improve practices together by

- investigating practices in instruction that are supported by research to increase their knowledge base about what works
- examining and analyzing a variety of external and classroom-based student achievement data
- identifying an area of student need and applying changes in practice to meet the need(s)

- developing cultural proficiency and being culturally responsive
- reflecting on and assessing the effectiveness of the changes in their practice
- implementing professional practices and expertise from their classroom experiences
- collecting assessment for and of learning data from classrooms to continue to guide instructional decision making
- increasing their effectiveness as a team

There should be a clear connection between the goals and activities of a learning team and the overall direction of the School Student Success Plan. Teacher professional learning within the Student Success Planning process should align with these goals and strategies. There needs to be a balance between the autonomy of learning teams and the collective effort of a school to work together for excellence and equity for each student.

Role of the Principal in the Learning Team Environment

The principal plays a critical role in building a learning team culture characterized by caring, trust, and respectful relationships, leading to collaborative inquiry for improvement in instruction and assessment. The principal's role involves supporting the development of understanding around the underlying beliefs and assumptions that affect teaching and learning. The principal also needs to create learning opportunities for teachers to serve as instructional leaders in the school, and to model how to work collaboratively with staff.

A critical responsibility for the principal is to ensure there is productive dialogue in relation to student learning and achievement during team meetings that helps to create and sustain an emerging culture of collaboration. These conversations need to engage educators in discussion about their critical role in excellence and equity in student learning and achievement. In this process, the principal hears and values the voices of all teams in the school. Therefore, it is important for the school administrators to ensure that they spend time with teams, actively involved in this process.

