

Nova Scotia's  
Action Plan  
for Education  
2015

# The 3 Rs: Renew Refocus Rebuild



**The 3 Rs:**  
Renew  
Refocus  
Rebuild

Nova Scotia's  
Action Plan  
for Education



The 3Rs: Renew, Refocus, Rebuild—Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education

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# Minister's Message

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It is time. Time for action to build a better school system and a brighter future for Nova Scotia's students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

For months now, we have had tremendous input and insight from thousands of Nova Scotians to help create this Action Plan. This is the product of dedication, passion, debate, research, expertise, experience, and opinion.

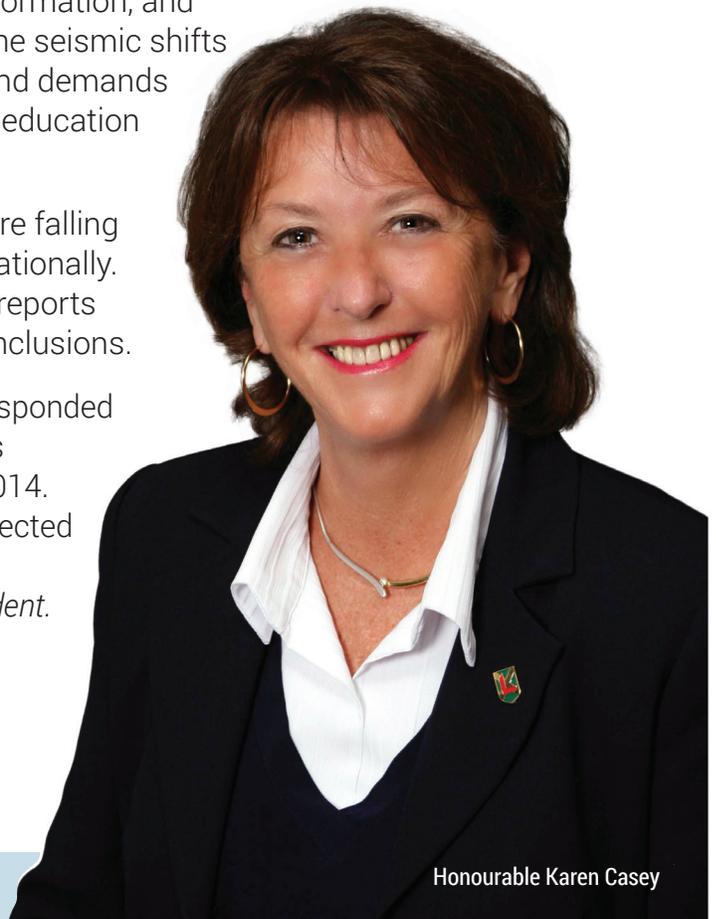
We have done the studying; now it is time to do the work.

It has been a generation since the last major education review in the province. Consider how society has changed since then, in particular when it comes to technology and information, and our ability to identify student needs. Along with the seismic shifts in society, consider the increased expectations and demands placed on our schools. Simply put, Nova Scotia's education system has not kept pace with these changes.

Time and again, test results show our students are falling behind in math and literacy, nationally and internationally. Over the years, there have been several different reports and public consultations that reached similar conclusions.

Most recently, more than 19,000 Nova Scotians responded to the Minister's Panel on Education, which filed its comprehensive review of our system in October 2014. The title of the report got right to the point and reflected what the panel heard: *Disrupting the Status Quo: Nova Scotians Demand a Better Future for Every Student*.

We agree. Nova Scotians' message has been received and understood: we must improve and modernize our school system and that change must begin now.



Honourable Karen Casey

The details of the Action Plan come in the pages ahead of you. In the simplest terms, we want to ensure that our students do better, especially in math and literacy, and that they are better prepared to lead productive lives in our changing world. The readiness of students to enter school and their readiness to graduate into a world of employment or post-secondary education are critical.

**We will be making fundamental changes in four key areas. We will**

- 1. Build a modern education system**
- 2. Create an innovative curriculum**
- 3. Promote inclusive school environments**
- 4. Advance excellence in teaching and leadership**

In reality, our public education system has lost credibility in the eyes of many Nova Scotians over the past couple of decades. We have not done enough for our students, teachers, or parents to deliver a modern education system that puts us at the top of the class. As Minister of Education, I am dedicated to re-establishing public confidence in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and regaining the credibility of our public education system in the eyes of Nova Scotians.

We need to be held accountable and we need to see real, tangible results. As part of that effort, we will be producing an annual report on the Action Plan, highlighting what has been achieved, what needs more work, and future improvements. At the same time, this Action Plan will naturally evolve, based on experience, study, and evaluation: if there is a good idea, we will consider it; if something is not working, we will change it.

At every step of the Action Plan, we have one guiding question: Is this decision in the best interest of students? It is that motivation that will move the Plan forward.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to making this a roadmap that will put us on the right path.

A special tribute must go to the members of the Minister's Panel on Education: Chair, The Honourable Myra Freeman; Tina Dixon; Mike Henderson; Kyle Hill; Gordon MacInnis; and Donna O'Connell.

This Plan is fuelled by the ideas and insights of thousands of Nova Scotians and strengthened by experience and research, both provincially and beyond. It is also supported by evidence of student achievement and driven by best practices in various schools across the province.

Nova Scotia is a small province filled with enormous potential. At one time, our province had a reputation of innovation in the classroom and for leading the way in education. We can be leaders again by building upon the tremendous potential that we have right here at home. We have talented students, supportive parents, and skilled teachers who are all committed to student success. The cooperation of everyone involved will be fundamental to the successful implementation of the Action Plan. Starting now, we will renew, refocus, and rebuild. Thank you for your anticipated support.

Sincerely,



Honourable Karen Casey  
Minister of Education and  
Early Childhood Development



# The 3Rs: **Renew, Refocus, Rebuild**

## Nova Scotia's Action Plan for **Education**

### The Need for Change – Transforming Nova Scotia's Public Education System

It is an unfortunate, accepted truth that we have fallen behind in educating our children in Nova Scotia. And they, in turn, have fallen behind their peers, nationally and internationally.

Our preschoolers lag below the national average on some indicators of developmental growth and school readiness.<sup>1</sup>

On national and international tests of achievement in literacy, math, and science, Nova Scotia students generally perform lower than their peers in other Canadian provinces.<sup>2</sup>

On recent provincial assessments of literacy and math, student performance is generally declining.<sup>3</sup>

Adding to these disturbing trends, teachers and administrators are facing increasing demands and expectations—taking on responsibilities well beyond traditional education, particularly when it comes to the mental and physical well-being of students. Schools today are delivering an array of programs and services in cooperation with a variety of agencies and departments.

This is in addition to their traditional role of teaching the Public School Program.

Over the past two decades, the way we consume, process, and share information has changed. Our education system has not kept pace. Mobile phones, social media, tweets, texts, and YouTube are now very much a part of the social culture of our students.

At the same time, technology has changed our economy, locally and globally. Our resource-based economy of the past is shrinking. Traditional jobs have been eclipsed by jobs and industries that were unheard of a generation ago.

Everyone agrees our school system needs to modernize, prepare for the future, and change for the better; the question is: how do we do that?

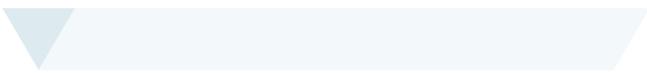


Thankfully, we have benefited from multiple sources of inspiration and information, including

- Feedback from over 19,000 Nova Scotians
- The best and promising practices from here and around the world
- Educational research on a range of topics
- Previous reports like One Nova Scotia, Reality Check, and the BLAC Report<sup>4</sup>
- The findings of public consultations regarding report cards, the school review process, and early intervention
- Recent data on the Early Developmental Index (EDI) and Individual Program Plans (IPP)
- Student assessment results from provincial, national, and international tests

Many different sources of information have contributed to the actions in this Plan, including the report of the Minister's Panel on Education. The report's recommendations were rooted in the experience of its panel members, complemented by perhaps the most successful public consultation in the province's history. Nova Scotians from all walks of life responded, and 50 per cent of respondents were not satisfied with the current system.

The report also spurred more interest, discussion, and ideas, both formal and informal. Since the report's release, the department, including the Minister, has participated in meetings with teachers, education leaders, school board officials, parents, teachers' union members, and students. Those conversations and ideas have contributed to this document.



*“In education,  
we have just about reached  
the end of squeezing good out  
of an outdated system.  
The current system is  
too costly,  
too ineffective,  
and as any kid will tell you,  
deadly boring.”*

Fullan, 2013





## Our **Commitment** to Nova Scotians – A Real Action Plan

We are committed to

- Increased student achievement in math and literacy
- Improved career readiness for students
- Expanded programs and services for pre-schoolers
- Reduced disruptive student behaviour
- Enhanced inclusive education
- Expanded focus on immigration and multiculturalism
- Improved curriculum to better reflect Acadian, African Nova Scotian, Gaelic, and Mi'kmaq cultures and history
- Increased support for teaching and learning

Reports, white papers, and blue ribbon panels that were designed to bring about change often over-promised and under-delivered on public policy issues because they were never implemented. That will not happen with this Action Plan. The stakes are too high for the future of our students and our province.

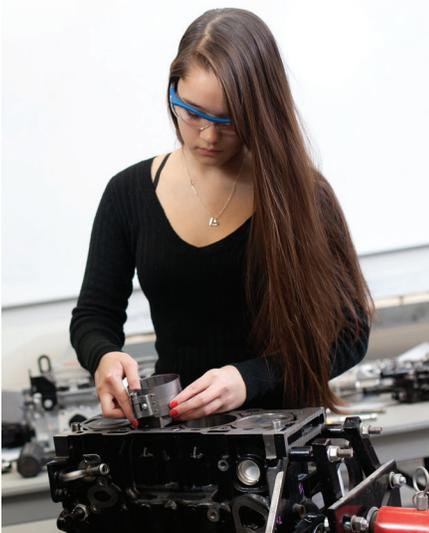
The department is putting this Plan into action—and we must be held accountable and judged by its results. As a department, we are committed to reviewing the Plan as it takes shape. Each year, we will keep Nova Scotians informed by producing and publishing an annual report on our progress. As a starting point, we are highlighting the actions that will be ready for September 2015.





## Coming in September 2015

- Create a streamlined, coordinated, and innovative curriculum for grades primary to 3
- Integrate educational technology and student assessment in the new curriculum
- Create and distribute a growth and development guide for four year olds
- Address the wait list for Early Intervention Programs across the province (as announced January 2015)
- Administer *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*® to all students at the start of grade 1
- Provide students with hands-on learning activities for developing their technology skills
- Discontinue the use of existing homework guides from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Establish new homework standards through a Ministerial Policy
- Add more Discovering Opportunities 9 programs in schools across the province
- Direct targeted funding for math mentors to grades primary–3
- Offer Early Intervention Support in math for students in grades primary–3
- Review the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development



- Establish a Centre for Excellence within the department, dedicated to advancing student achievement, Nova Scotia-specific school research, high-quality teaching, and strong leadership
- Establish a Minister's Forum for Teaching Excellence to provide teachers with support, opportunities for networking, and teacher requested professional development
- Create an Inter-University Chair in Research for the Achievement Gap
- Establish a Business-Education Council
- Establish a Transition Task-Force of Public School Educators, Universities, and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) to make recommendations to the Minister by March 2016
- Develop and implement a new School Code of Conduct with clear and concise standards for behaviour
- Monitor student progress on Individual Program Plans (IPPs) at the school, school board, and provincial levels through the Technology for Improving Education Network (TIENET)
- Develop provincial criteria for placing a student on an IPP
- Complete comprehensive assessment of individual student learning needs in order to identify the most appropriate programming options



## Working Together for Student Success

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development cannot do this alone. Together, we are accountable for our children's future.

That means we need students, parents and guardians, teachers and education leaders, and our communities to do their parts. Success in education does not happen just during school hours. Success has to be nurtured at home and in our communities, where our children spend most of their time, do their socializing and learn their values, play sports and participate in extracurricular activities.

Students need to work to reach their full potential, to embrace new learning opportunities, to bring their passion and knowledge to class with them, to become leaders in their schools and communities, and to learn and to challenge.

Parents need to continue to support their sons and daughters, to make sure the system is working for them, to be their advocates as well as their parents, to continue to push for improvements where they are needed, and to be positive forces in the lives of our schools. Parents also need to support teachers in their efforts to improve the learning environment in the classroom.

Teachers need to continue providing the excellent leadership and instruction that makes lasting, positive impacts on students' lives. These outcomes can be achieved in classrooms that are positive learning environments where teachers can teach and students can learn. They can also be supported by curriculum that is relevant, engaging,

meaningful, and challenging, setting high standards for student performance.

We need communities to do their part too. We need them to continue to find innovative ways to work together with our schools, to infuse the best of our neighbourhoods into our schools and the best of our schools into our neighbourhoods.

We need our business leaders to come forward with their knowledge, skills, technologies, and, most of all, their willingness to support and assist young Nova Scotians.

*“Improvement  
will only happen if everyone  
at all levels of the system  
takes ownership for  
the strategy  
and strives valiantly  
to raise the bar  
for all students to  
close achievement gaps.”*

Glaze, 2013



## THE FOUR PILLARS

### A Strong Foundation to Renew, Refocus, and Rebuild

The actions in this Plan comprise four pillars, each one essential to a strong foundation for public education. The pillars are interconnected and intertwined to reinforce our focus on student success:

- 1. A modern education system**
- 2. An innovative curriculum**
- 3. Inclusive school environments**
- 4. Excellence in teaching and leadership**

## PILLAR ONE

### A Modern Education System

In order to transform the entire education system, the basic structure must be revamped to create a firm foundation for change. Specifically, the structure will be reconstructed to become more student-centered, efficient, flexible, sustainable, and integrated with other government departments and agencies that serve children and youth. To achieve this goal, the school boards and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will be renewed and refocused. Changes will be enacted at each level of the public education system.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will

- Create a student-centred education system focused on increased student achievement and success
- Restructure divisions within the department to more closely align with the direction of the Action Plan on Education
- Review the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in providing public education to Nova Scotians
- Establish a Centre for Excellence within the department, dedicated to advancing student achievement, Nova Scotia-specific school research, high-quality teaching, and strong leadership. The Centre will focus on innovations, success stories, and pilot programs from around the province and beyond
- Establish a Minister's Forum for Teaching Excellence to provide teachers with support, opportunities for networking, and teacher-requested professional development
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all partners in education for the implementation of the Action Plan
- Report annually to the public on the progress of the Action Plan



School boards will

- Participate in an audit carried out by the Auditor General, that will examine
  - The results of our current governance model, including committee structure of elected school boards
  - The effectiveness and results of management structure of senior staff (above school principals, up to and including superintendents) within individual boards and across boards
  - How efficient operations of key management functions (purchasing, payroll, finance, and transportation services) are being delivered
  - How effective school boards are in delivering results for key department initiatives

## **PATHWAYS SPRYFIELD**

**In May 2010, Pathways Spryfield was launched in partnership with Chebucto Connections. It was in response to students and families wanting to see greater success in education. The program benefits students in the Halifax Regional School Board in the J.L. Ilsley family of schools between grades 9 and 12. Students attend at least two after-school tutoring sessions each week.**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, school boards, and schools will

- Continue to partner with other government departments, community agencies and businesses. They will work together to develop partnerships that serve students better, including
  - Cross-government partnerships
  - Community partnerships
  - Partnerships with the business community

Education cannot do it alone. Health, Justice, Community Services, and other departments and agencies contribute to the provision of school-based services and programs. Students and families benefit from being able to access these many different government services at their local school. We will work together to better coordinate these services and programs, in order to serve students better.



## Cross-Government Partnerships

Many of society's most complex issues require the attention and dedication of government as a whole. This is especially true of the provision of programs and services for children and youth. While schools are the responsibility of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, many other departments play a role in service delivery for our students.

The education challenges that Nova Scotia faces today provide numerous opportunities for government departments to work together. The government recognizes the need to deal with complex issues regardless of departmental responsibilities or jurisdictional boundaries. This kind of partnership, collaboration, and overlap amongst government departments can lead to strong partnerships and efficient use of resources. However, it can also lead to inefficiencies and bureaucratic challenges when departments work in isolation. Working across departments, through horizontal initiatives, we will achieve the results we have promised Nova Scotians. With this Action Plan, government departments are committed to working together to help our students succeed now and for years to come. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will work across departments to better coordinate services for children in Early Years Centres and SchoolsPlus sites.



## Community Partnerships

### COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOLS

**Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial (CSAP) works very hard to open their schools for community use. School and Community Development Officers at the high schools work closely with the schools and the community to coordinate activities. Cultural events, concerts, the Arts Smarts program, Youth Health Centres, SchoolsPlus programs, and agreements with Acadian associations are all examples of how CSAP opens their doors to the community.**

Government and school boards are not the only partners with a role in Nova Scotia's education system. Education is a learning partnership between the student, the family, and teachers—one that is supported by a network of partners, including community groups, service organizations, public libraries, and many others. Each of these partners has an important role to play while working collaboratively to support a high quality education system. Collectively, we need to look at our community resources, ensure that they are being used effectively, and provide opportunities for innovation. By sharing information, expertise, and resources and by working together, we will better support families and children.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will

- Partner with other government departments, health professionals, community agencies, the business community, post-secondary institutions, and other organizations to
  - Map support networks in each school board
  - Streamline intake and referral processes
  - Identify gaps with the goal of ensuring students have timely access to a wide range of services that support mental and physical well-being
  - Encourage participation in sports, recreation, and youth leadership programs
- Create clear and uniform mechanisms for information sharing and communication across agencies, including web-based information and use of accessible language that reflects cultural competence
- Work with school boards to increase community access to schools
- Design a new provincial policy for school boards for the delivery of programs and services to students by outside organizations and community groups



## Partnerships with the Business Community

Businesses and educators are key stakeholders in ensuring that our students are well prepared to embrace the challenges of a complex global economy. In Nova Scotia, business leaders have expressed a keen interest in working with the public school system to ensure our children have the skills they need to be successful in the workforce. Business can play an important role by expanding students' awareness of the wide range of career choices available today. This happens when students and employers are connected through work experience opportunities, increased career planning, and more mentorship opportunities.

A recent survey tells us that only 12 per cent of Nova Scotia's students envision themselves as future entrepreneurs. We need to encourage more students to consider entrepreneurship as an attractive career choice. In order to foster this shift in thinking, business and education must work together to provide students with more opportunities to learn about the world of business. By enabling our students to gain access to the experience and expertise of local business operators, we can encourage the development of the attributes of successful entrepreneurs, such as innovation, creativity, problem-solving skills, personal initiative, and teamwork. Our students can apply what they learn in school to business settings and gain firsthand experience of what it takes to start and operate a business.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is committed to developing the future workforce and the entrepreneurial skills and attributes of our students through increased partnership with the business community.

The department will

- Establish a Business-Education Council that will
  - Explore and create positive and productive career exploration opportunities and experiences for our children
  - Provide a forum where business can identify the skills and attributes students need to be successful in the workforce
  - Create a database of local entrepreneurs to serve as business mentors to students
  - Support teacher awareness of economic growth sectors in Nova Scotia and the importance of developing entrepreneurial skills and attributes across the curriculum
  - Increase the number of work experience and co-op opportunities available for students
- Expand the delivery of Junior Achievement in all school boards
- Embed entrepreneurship in the high school curriculum as courses are developed
- Update the Entrepreneurship 12 course
- Align the new Business and Entrepreneurship courses with post-secondary programs
- Raise the profile of local businesses through success stories
- Add Entrepreneurship to the eligible courses for Challenge for Credit and/or Independent Study in the Public School Program, to encourage entrepreneurship among students
- Create a Minister's Entrepreneurship Award of Excellence for students who have successfully launched their own business



### Cooperation or Negotiation with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union

Coming out of the Minister's Panel on Education are issues that relate to legislation and collective agreements. The following issues will need to be resolved through cooperation or negotiation with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU):

- Changes to the school year, including the scheduling of teacher professional development
- Allocation of professional development funding
- Improved program delivery in the Nova Scotia Virtual School to provide students with more flexible options and teaching support
- Removal of principals and school board administrators from the NSTU
- Creation of a robust system for teacher performance management
- Generation of new requirements for teacher certification
- Linking of teacher assignment directly to credentials and experience
- Strengthening of the process for addressing poor teaching performance

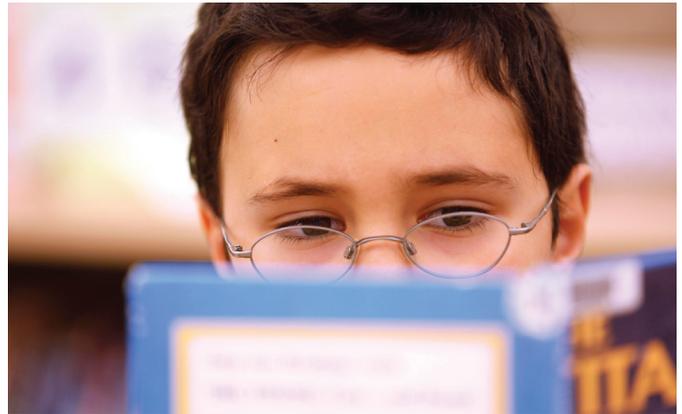
## PILLAR TWO

### An Innovative Curriculum

All of the structural changes that we make and partnerships that we strengthen set the stage for the major changes that are required in our curriculum. The curriculum is the cornerstone of an education. It sets the standards for what teachers teach and what students learn. With an improved, streamlined curriculum, we are taking steps to ensure our students will be prepared for life, regardless of the fields they choose. This Action Plan is laser-focused on improving the two most important fundamentals in education: math and literacy.

To make the curriculum more streamlined, coordinated, and innovative, we will

- Provide more time for teaching both math and literacy in the early years
  - Identify the essential learning outcomes of all subjects in all grades
  - Provide professional development for teachers of multi-grade classes
  - Adjust the Time to Learn guidelines to reflect the revised curriculum
  - Engage student interests through more hands-on learning activities
  - Design the curriculum to address the full range of students' learning strengths and needs, including opportunities for enrichment
  - Provide access to modern technology to support classroom teaching and learning
- Include the language, history, and culture of Acadians, African Nova Scotians, Gaels and Mi'kmaq, including Treaty Education, in the grade primary to 12 curriculum
  - Include the history of immigration in Nova Scotia in the grade primary to 12 curriculum



*“Quality student assessment policies and practices constitute a significant factor in the construction of a strong education system.”*

Webber & Scott, 2012

## Student Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting

### COMMON ASSESSMENTS IN MATH

**The Strait Regional School Board has periodically completed common assessments in math at different grade levels. The assessments provide teachers with helpful information for student programming. The common assessments also identify areas of math that may require attention as students transition from one grade level to the next.**

Just as we are revising our curriculum in grades primary to 12, we are updating student assessments, including our Program of Learning Assessment for Nova Scotia (PLANS). Ongoing improvements to student assessment and evaluation will be a priority, including the use of results from teacher-prepared assessments. Both classroom “assessment for learning” activities and large-scale assessments will contribute to the measurement and monitoring of student progress. For example, at the grade primary to 3 level, student assessments will include

- Teacher-prepared pretests and post-tests of student progress
- Administration of *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*® to all students at the start of grade 1
- Administration of a common Mathematics Assessment to all students at the start of grade 2

At the grade 3 and grade 8 levels, the current provincial assessments in literacy and mathematics will be replaced by teacher-

generated, common assessment tools. In grade 6 and grade 10, students will continue to participate in provincial assessments of math and literacy. On the national and international levels, Nova Scotia students will no longer participate in PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) but will continue to complete the P-CAP (Pan Canadian Assessment Program) and PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) assessments. To support student assessment, evaluation and reporting, we will

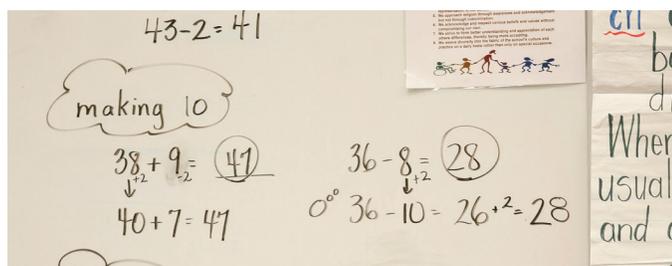
- Develop and implement a policy and supporting procedures for student assessment, evaluation and reporting to provide direction and support to students, parents, teachers, and administrators in this essential area of education
- Refocus on “assessment for learning” in all subjects
- Integrate student assessment into all revised curriculum
- Provide teachers and school administrators with ongoing professional development in the use of assessment for student programming and intervention



## Building Success in Math: Strengthening Nova Scotia's Math Strategy

The process of curriculum design must begin with the end in mind: curriculum must be revised and rebuilt to ensure that students have the skills that they require upon graduation to pursue a wide range of options. It is essential that students acquire automaticity in fundamental literacy and math skills in the early grades to support their learning later on. In math, our strategy is to systematically build student math skills, from early elementary grades to high school, through a series of actions. We will

- Direct targeted funding for math mentors to grades primary–3
- Extend grade 11 Academic Math to a full year, 2-credit course
- Cap class enrolment at 24 in Academic Math 10 and Academic Math 11
- Create a plain language resource for parents to explain the math curriculum at each grade level and key math concepts so that parents can help their children with homework
- Offer Early Intervention Support in math for students in grades P–3
- Require students to complete three high school math courses, as a graduation requirement starting in 2020



## Curriculum Changes – By Age Group

Beyond the broader changes to the curriculum, there will be many changes that target specific ages and grades. An overview of those more targeted changes include

### BIRTH TO PRE-SCHOOL – READY TO LEARN

#### EARLY YEARS CENTRES

**Jubilee Elementary School in Sydney Mines hosts an Early Years Centre in the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board. Although the board primarily oversees the centre, there is a strong partnership with community agencies, specifically the Cape Breton Family Resource Centre. The board also has a Memorandum of Understanding with Family Place.**



We know from research that the first few years of a child's development are the most critical. The brain develops faster here than at any other point in life. The department recognizes the importance of a strong foundation in the

early years. That is why there are a number of actions outlined in this Action Plan to support preschool children and their families in meeting key developmental milestones and preparing for school. We will

- Register all children in an electronic school file at birth. Parents will use this file to keep track of their child's growth and development. The education system may use the file to help plan services like preschool screenings and transition plans for starting school.
- Arrange preschool screenings, in cooperation with healthcare professionals, for children at 18 and 36 months of age, and six months before starting school. The screenings will provide parents with regular updates on their child's growth and development. Based on the screening results, parents will be directed to information and appropriate support services, as necessary.
- Open four new Early Years Centres (as announced January 2015) so that every school board has at least one. We will continue to expand this network of Early Years Centres across the province. Staff at Early Years Centres will use a variety of programs to teach positive relationships to four year olds.
- Create and distribute a growth and development guide for four year olds to parents, daycare centers, and preschools. Parents and preschool agencies will have access to the same information to support the learning of four year olds.
- Address the wait list for Early Intervention programs across the province (announced January 2015).



## **GRADE PRIMARY TO 3 – STRONG FOUNDATIONS**

### **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

**Over the past few years, the Tri-County Regional School Board has seen a growing need to support the healthy social and emotional development of its students, which is critical for their overall success at school. The board introduced new programs for their Healthy Living teachers to deliver to students in grades primary to 6 and in grades 7 to 9. They will evaluate the impact of the new programs this year to ensure their efforts are helping more students to lead happy and healthy productive lives.**

Fully revising and refocusing the curriculum will take several years to complete. This process will begin immediately at the Early Elementary level.

The first years of formal schooling can be a time of excitement and enthusiasm, but also of challenges and unease. Early learning can sometimes perfectly complement the natural,

irresistible energy and curiosity of children. And other times, self-discipline and concentration can seem entirely unnatural and entirely resistible to a young mind. Welcome to the challenges and opportunities of grades primary to 3.

At this stage, the Action Plan stresses the importance of teaching and learning the basics, engaging in daily physical activity, and ensuring student progress is closely monitored to make sure proper support and attention can be provided. As some of the key actions for this group, we will

- Identify essential learning outcomes
- Increase emphasis on literacy and math. These subjects will be reinforced in other areas like science and social studies to provide students with extra practice in basic skills
- Provide more time for teaching literacy and math through revisions to the Public School Program. Teachers will have extra time to cover the material in depth, and students will have more time to learn it thoroughly before moving on
- Enhance assessment and intervention for literacy and math in grades primary to 3
- Monitor students' progress in literacy and math at set intervals to identify need for early intervention
- Encourage more daily physical activity
- Provide professional development for teachers of multi-grade classes
- Update the program of courses available to Nova Scotia's students in the Public School Program
- Integrate educational technology and student assessment in the new curriculum



## **GRADES 4 TO 8 – INNOVATION AND EXPLORATION**

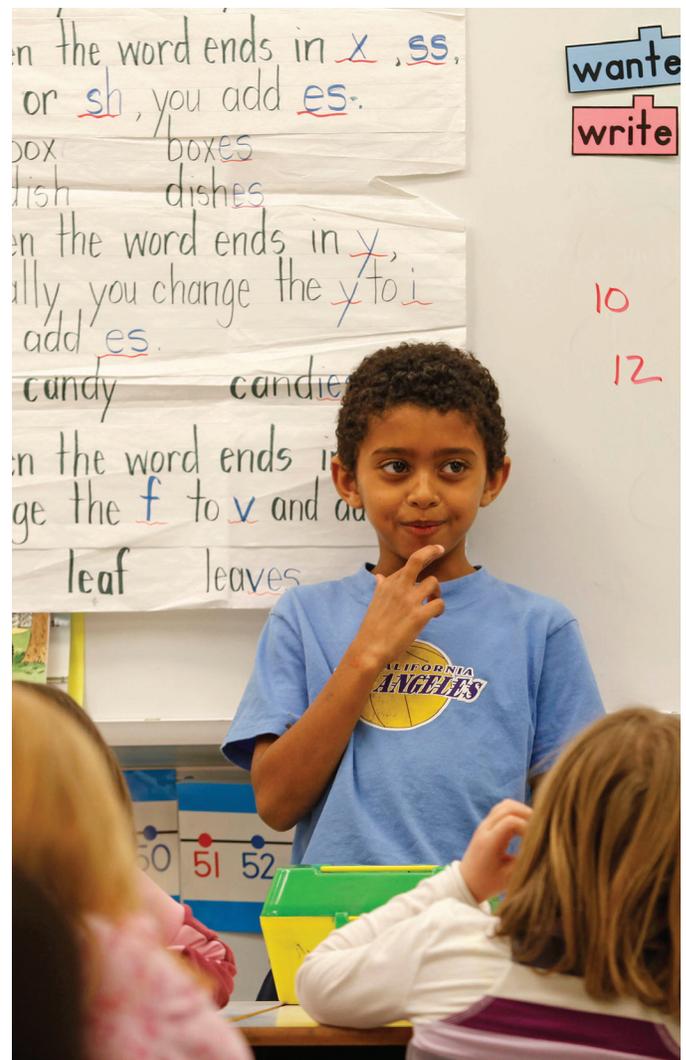
### **SOUTH QUEENS MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**South Queens Middle School in South Shore Regional School Board was designed to accommodate a variety of learning styles. The curriculum has a strong emphasis on inquiry, or encouraging students to ask questions about issues they care about, with teachers guiding and mentoring them through the process of finding answers. It is one of the first schools in the province with a layout and technology specifically designed to support this type of learning. There is a strong focus on collaborative work in project-based scenarios. The focal point of the school is its library, with classrooms built around it, so students can work collaboratively on projects near the resources they need to do their work. In fact, you could say the school is “in the library,” as opposed to the other way around. The school also features a wireless network so students can use their school-provided mobile devices for their studies.**

At this stage of education, students begin the transition from child to young adult, leaving elementary grades for middle school. The curriculum will, again, focus on math and literacy, practising and refining those skills to prepare for the complexities of all subjects. In addition, there will be more technological and scientific learning, combined with a larger focus on becoming a successful, respectful member of society. Among the key initiatives, we will

- Teach reading, writing, and speaking skills across subject areas so that students may develop stronger communication skills. For example, in writing, students will have increased instruction and time for learning spelling, punctuation, and the formation of sentences and paragraphs.
- Provide more hands-on learning activities for students in computer programming, creative arts, science labs, and collective impact projects. Students will have opportunities to develop their creativity, innovation, and problem-solving skills.
- Incorporate personal development education into subjects such as health, social studies, and family studies, in order to teach students about citizenship, service learning, leadership, volunteering, and personal financial management.
- Incorporate character development into subjects such as health, social studies, and family studies in order to teach students about important personal qualities such as honesty, empathy, respect, responsibility, and consideration for others.
- Implement Core French programs that use interactive and conversational teaching methods.

- Add more Intensive Core French programs in schools at the grade 6 level.
- Offer online learning opportunities to middle school students to prepare them for online courses in high school.
- Provide all students with an introduction to the basics of coding, technology, and design.
- Provide students with hands-on learning activities for developing their technology skills.
- Introduce a Career Education Framework for students from grades 4 to 12.



## GRADES 9 TO 12 – READY TO LAUNCH

### EXPERIENTIAL HIGH SCHOOLS

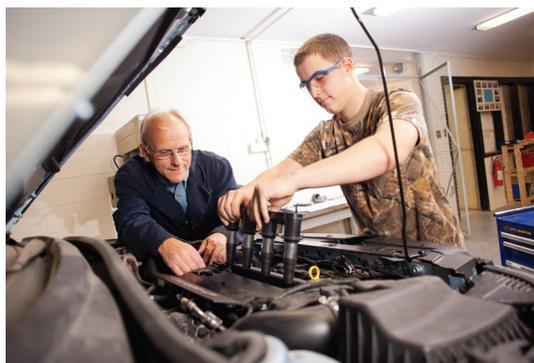
**The Experiential High School Program is a relatively new program for students in the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board. It helps students who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to succeed in a traditional school setting. Students participate in educational programs and learning experiences to develop the necessary skills, strategies, and self-confidence so they can make successful transitions back to their home school, to other educational opportunities, or possibly to the workplace.**

Nova Scotia's students have told us that many of our students are not ready for post-secondary learning and/or the workforce. We want our Nova Scotia students to be competitive on the international stage, and we have a responsibility to improve their readiness for that important step as they graduate.

We recognize that career readiness does not start in grade 12. The Action Plan has laid out actions that will ensure our students are ready to succeed in whatever they chose to do after graduation. We will

- Add more Discovering Opportunities 9 programs in schools across the province to familiarize grade 9 students with careers and education programs linked to trades, technology, and apprenticeship.
- Create a mandatory course in 21st century citizenship at the grade 10 level. Topics will include civics, Canadian government, citizenship, personal financial management, volunteerism, media and digital literacy, and service learning.

- Provide additional opportunities for grade 12 students to graduate with DELF (Diplôme d'études de la langue française) certification, an important recognition of skills in French as a second language.
- Add Entrepreneurship to the eligible courses for Challenge for Credit and/or Independent Study in the Public School Program, to encourage entrepreneurship among students.
- Create a Minister's Award of Excellence for Entrepreneurship to encourage entrepreneurship among high school students and to recognize them for successfully starting their own businesses.
- Expand community-based learning programs for high school students, including Discovering Opportunities 9, Co-Op Education, Entrepreneurship, O2, Skilled Trades.



- Require all high school students to develop Individual Career Plans for graduation. Students will receive information on opportunities for the exploration of STEAM careers (science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics).
- Require students to complete three high school math courses as a graduation requirement, starting in 2020

## Requirements to Graduate

In Nova Scotia, students must currently complete a minimum of 18 prescribed courses in grades 10, 11, and 12 to graduate with a high school diploma. The number of mandatory courses to graduate will increase. The gradual implementation of class caps for grade 10 Academic Math and grade 11 Academic Math, and the extension of Grade 11 Academic Math to a full-year course will be new priorities.

High schools must fulfill these priorities while continuing to provide the prescribed courses for graduation. Consequently, school boards and high schools will have to adjust their course offerings, class sizes, staffing, and hiring practices.

## Homework

The department recognizes that homework plays an important role in students' education. Teachers are encouraged and supported in assigning appropriate homework activities to students in grades primary to 12. These activities should be tailored to an individual student's age, grade, and learning needs. Homework reinforces the importance of students taking personal responsibility for their schoolwork. Through homework, students may learn about the satisfaction of a job well done or the consequences of late and/or incomplete assignments.

To assist students, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will

- Recognize the importance of homework in learning outside of school and work with school boards to establish consistency in homework practices across the province
- Work with school boards to identify ways to provide school-based homework support for both students and parents
- Discontinue the use of existing homework guides from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Establish new homework standards through a Ministerial Policy



## PILLAR THREE

### Inclusive School Environments

#### Positive Classrooms and Learning Environments

We are committed to making every classroom a positive learning environment where teachers can teach and students can learn together. To make that happen, we will develop and implement a new School Code of Conduct with clear and concise standards for behaviour that include

- Programs of prevention and intervention to support and promote positive student behaviour
- Standards of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (students, school staff, parents, community members) for Nova Scotia schools
- Roles and responsibilities of partners in education
- Identified consequences for unacceptable behaviour
- Procedures for reporting, recording, and tracking incidents of unacceptable behaviour
- Requirements for monitoring incidents of unacceptable behaviour at the school, board, and provincial levels to identify areas needing more support

To have the kind of future we want for Nova Scotians, our schools have to be models of the kind of society we want to be. In addition to academic and teaching excellence, our schools need to lead the way as places of tolerance, respect, and personal responsibility. We need to accommodate differences, celebrate diversity, and show respect for all students and adults.

Classrooms are the centres of learning in our schools. The following actions are central to ensuring we can create the kinds of caring, respectful, and safe schools that students, parents, and teachers deserve. This Action Plan will

- Strengthen support for classrooms
- Introduce a new model of service delivery for inclusive education
- Introduce a new Code of Conduct to support positive student behaviour
- Streamline the curriculum to identify essential learning outcomes



## **AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) INTERVENTION: AN INTRODUCTION FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL**

Through the APSEA Autism and education partnership, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador are working with New Brunswick to develop a regional training program on autism. Level one is a 10 module on-line course for school personnel including teachers, teacher assistants, and core professionals such as psychologists, speech language pathologists, and ASD specialists. Currently 10 participants from Nova Scotia are enrolled in the level one training pilot. The pilot will be evaluated in March 2015. It is expected that the course will be available to a larger school-based audience in April 2015.

## **Inclusive Education**

We have heard clearly from parents and teachers that our current model of inclusion needs improvement. We agree and will develop a needs-based model of service delivery that will

- Support the success of all Nova Scotia's students
- Focus on individual student needs
- Include parent participation and input in student programming
- Provide flexible programming choices and options
- Include opportunities for academic enrichment

- Monitor student progress at school, school board, and provincial levels
- Promote high expectations for student academic achievement

This needs-based model of service delivery supports teaching and learning for all students. While most students' learning needs can be met through large group instruction within the classroom, some students may periodically require small group instruction and/or intensive individualized programming outside the classroom.

In order to implement the new model, we will

- Create a Continuum of Support to provide a broad range of programming options for students with special needs
- Complete comprehensive assessment of individual student learning needs in order to identify the most appropriate programming options
- Develop provincial criteria for placing a student on an IPP
- Monitor student progress on IPPs at the school, school board, and provincial levels through the Technology for Improving Education Network (TIENET), the electronic information system for student services
- Revamp the IPP process to increase parent participation and reduce paperwork for parents and teachers
- Share responsibility for the development and implementation of IPPs with classroom teachers, and Resource/Student Services teachers, and other professionals

- Increase co-teaching between classroom teachers and Resource/Student Services teachers to provide more teaching support for students with special needs in the classroom
- Create and facilitate professional development modules for teachers and teacher assistants regarding different learning styles

## Transition Matters

For our students to lead successful, fulfilling lives, they need support as they move through the education system. Change is never easy. With this Action Plan, transition support will be available to all parents and teachers to ensure a smooth and successful transition for every student in our school system. We will

- Develop and implement a new provincial transition planning guide to support consistent transition planning for students across the province
- Establish new standards regarding student promotion, retention, and acceleration through a Ministerial Policy
- Incorporate student orientation activities, school tours, parent information sessions, and other activities as part of the guide
- Offer one School to Community Transition Program per school board for graduating high school students with special needs, through partnership agreements
- Establish a Transition Task-Force of Public School Educators, Universities, and the NSCC to make recommendations to the Minister by March 2016 regarding
  - successful transition to post-secondary education including academic and social readiness
  - career choices and pathways



## Cultural Awareness and Equity

### **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM**

More than 2500 students have participated in the Nova Scotia International Student Program in the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board. The initiative is bringing the global studies curriculum to life for Canadian students. It is allowing the students to connect with one another and learn first-hand about cultural differences and similarities. The program helps to create global citizens by promoting the growth of intercultural understanding and increased international educational opportunities for Nova Scotia's students and students from around the world.

The diversity of cultures in our schools should be a source of unity and common understanding. Students and staff need to be able to share freely their cultural background, heritage and beliefs—and to have those differences taught and celebrated in our schools. Students also need to be free to be themselves, to feel secure in expressing that individuality. In order to help make that happen, we will

- Include the language, history, and culture of Acadians, African Nova Scotians, Gaels and Mi'kmaq, including Treaty Education, in the grade primary to 12 curriculum
- Include the history of immigration in Nova Scotia in the grade primary to 12 curriculum  
Include the history of immigration and cultural diversity in Nova Scotia to students across the province

*“Schools that do not have an effective strategy for convincing students to become invested in their education—to work hard, study, arrive at school on time and prepared, and generally care about learning—are unlikely to reduce disparities in academic outcomes and raise student achievement.”*

Boykin & Noguera, 2011

- Implement a teacher recruitment campaign to attract new members to the teaching profession, including Acadian, African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq teachers
- Develop equity education programs that highlight Acadian, African Nova Scotian, and Mi'kmaq cultures, and provide them to students and staff
- Utilize more conversational teaching methods in Core French programs
- Increase the number of Intensive Core French programs at the grade 6 level
- Provide additional opportunities for grade 12 students to graduate with international certification in French language skills (DELF – Diplôme d'études de la langue française)
- Create an Inter-University Chair in Research for the Achievement Gap
- Implement a province-wide Achievement Gap Initiative to address persistent differences between groups of students in results in math and literacy
- Create clear and uniform mechanisms for information sharing and communication across agencies, including web-based information and use of accessible language that reflects cultural competence
- Promote cultural awareness and equity through curriculum, learning resources, and direct teaching
- Support self-identification for all students

## Achievement Gap Initiative

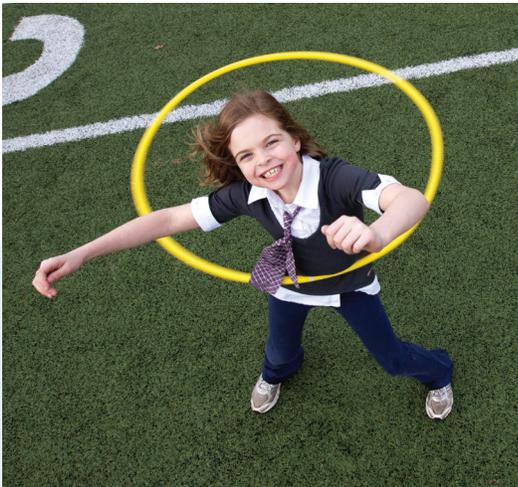
In Nova Scotia, as in many parts of the world, there are ongoing disparities in student achievement between groups of students. Nova Scotia research has confirmed that this is the case among our own students. We are committed to improving student achievement in math and literacy for all students. We will

- Implement a province-wide Achievement Gap Initiative to address persistent differences between groups of students in results in math and literacy
- Create an Inter-University Chair in Research for the Achievement Gap
- Create a team of representatives from the department, school boards, and post-secondary institutions to support research into student achievement in math and literacy

## Student Health and Wellness

As society has changed over the past generation, so has our understanding of the complexities of being a healthy person. Physical activity and nutrition have always been cornerstones of good health and now we also understand more about the critical importance of nourishing mental health—being strong enough to talk about it, to identify and address mental health challenges early, and to do more to remove the stigma attached to it. To support student health and wellness, we will

- Create a framework to increase opportunities for physical activity throughout the school day
- Design and implement curriculum components that address social and emotional learning across grade levels
- Develop and implement a new School Code of Conduct with clear and concise standards for behaviour



- Implement interagency programs and services for mental health, addiction prevention (including prescription drug abuse), and physical wellness in partnership with outside agencies
- Expand SchoolsPlus sites based on identified community needs
- Partner with other government departments, health professionals, community agencies, the business community, post-secondary institutions, and other organizations to map support networks in each school board, streamline intake and referral processes, and identify gaps with the goal of ensuring students have timely access to a wide range of services that support mental and physical well-being, and encourage participation in sports, recreation, and youth leadership programs
- Arrange Preschool Screening, in cooperation with health care professionals, for children at 18 and 36 months of age, and six months before starting school and use this information to direct parents to information and appropriate support services, as necessary



## PILLAR FOUR

### Excellence in Teaching and Leadership

#### NOVA SCOTIA INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Introduced in September 2010, the Nova Scotia Instructional Leadership Program is a three-year diploma program that provides principals and other instructional leaders with the skills and knowledge they need to improve their instruction and leadership abilities. The program helps students by providing the leaders in their school with best practices and proven methods to achieve a higher level of student achievement, and encourages them to work with staff to support those practices in every classroom.

This one-of-a-kind program was designed with principals, school boards, the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, Nova Scotia School Boards Association, universities, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in response to principals requesting more instructional leadership support.

*“There are examples of educational excellence without accountability, or common standards, or digital technology. But there are no instances of educational excellence without high-quality teachers and teaching.”*

Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012



The rebuilding of our education system is designed to create outstanding students and successful graduates. This will require support for teachers and administrators. As professionals, they have enormous responsibilities and face increasing demands.

Teachers need support, time, and structure that will allow them to focus on student learning and student achievement.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will

- Create a framework of teaching standards for Nova Scotia
- Build a new model of teacher education based on those standards
- Work with universities to redesign the Bachelor of Education programs based on the standards, including teaching competencies in literacy instruction, math instruction, student assessment inclusive education, equity education, and behaviour management
- Introduce new graduate-level teaching specialties in response to student needs, including Behaviour Intervention Teachers, and Early Elementary Literacy and Math specialists
- Develop standards for the accreditation of University Schools of Education in Nova Scotia
- Accredite University Schools of Education

Teacher Certification

- Generate new requirements for teacher certification that are aligned with the new teaching standards and certify teachers based on those standards



Teacher Performance Management and Professional Development

- Design a Performance Management System based on the teaching standards
- Design and implement a new provincial template for teacher performance appraisal
- Provide all school administrators with training in teacher performance appraisal using the provincial template
- Designate common requirements in credentials, professional experience and/or leadership training for hiring principals in Nova Scotia schools—for example, training in teacher performance appraisal will be mandatory
- Create new programs and professional development opportunities to provide additional support to new, practicing, and substitute teachers
- Encourage school boards to provide more opportunities for recent graduates to gain full-time and substitute teaching experience
- Implement a teacher recruitment campaign to attract new members to the teaching profession, including Acadian, African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq teachers

*“A major overhaul of teacher education is well overdue ... one way forward is to ask each teacher education program to articulate a set of graduating standards, and then evaluate how appropriate these standards are, and evaluate the nature and quality of the evidence that all students meet these standards.”*

Hattie, 2009



## Conclusion

We are building upon the 3Rs of reading, writing, and arithmetic that have stood the test of time and continue to be the foundation of excellence in education. From this solid foundation, we will move forward to Renew, Refocus, and Rebuild our education system. This will create a brighter future for our students and our province. We will renew the teaching and leadership of our schools by revamping teacher education and providing more professional development opportunities and classroom support. We will refocus the curriculum by identifying the essential learning outcomes and concentrating on improved math and literacy. We will rebuild our education system by creating more efficient structures and inclusive schools that better serve all of our students.

This Action Plan is our map for creating a modern and student-centered education system for Nova Scotians. It is a living document that will be implemented and updated over time as ideas are tested and new breakthroughs in research guide us. As the Action Plan unfolds, we are committed to building the kind of education system that we all want for our children—one that gives all students the chance to reach their full potential and enjoy success in their chosen careers. We need your ongoing assistance and support to move forward in the best interest of students.

There is not a moment to lose: our students are in school now, awaiting better learning opportunities to prepare them for the challenges that lie ahead. Their future depends on having the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a quickly changing economy. Nova Scotia's future depends on healthy, well-educated and socially responsible citizens to build the economy.

Education is the key to the future prosperity of our children and our province. I hope that you will join us in working together to unlock the potential of our public school system—to rebuild education for a generation and chart a path for future success.



*“Transforming education isn’t about the ‘latest great idea.’ It is about imagining the best possible future for our students and putting our hearts into our work, so we can take the next steps on the path. It is about building on the research and finding ways to make the ‘seemingly impossible’ both possible and practical.”*

Davies, Herbst, & Reynolds, 2008

## MODERN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Restructured Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

New Centre for Excellence

Address achievement gap

Minister's Forum for Teaching

Business-Education Council

Entrepreneurship Education

Expand preschool services and programs

## INNOVATIVE CURRICULUM

Focus on math and literacy

New curriculum Primary-3

Technology-based learning resources

More support for high school math

Career Education Framework for grades 4-12

Early intervention programs in literacy and math

Focus on communication skills in middle school

New citizenship course in grade 10

# STUDENT SUCCESS

## EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP

Teaching standards for Nova Scotia

Revamped teacher education

Induction program for new teachers

Teacher recruitment campaign

Teaching specializations in literacy and math

Performance Management System for teachers

## INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Transition planning guide

Continuum of support for inclusive education

New School Code of Conduct

Treaty Education

African Nova Scotian history

Promote French language and culture

Equity education

Character development

## Appendix

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This appendix includes the time line for the implementation of Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education. It includes the actions for September 2015 as outlined on page 10.

## Endnotes

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## References

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## Pillar One

### Modern Education System

**2015–2016: Nova Scotia’s school boards will participate in an audit carried out by the Auditor General. The audit will examine**

- The results of the current governance model, including committee structure of elected school boards
- The effectiveness and results of management structure of senior staff (above school principals, up to and including superintendents) within individual boards and across boards
- How efficient operations of key management functions (purchasing, payroll, finance, and transportation services) are being delivered
- How effective school boards are in delivering results for key department initiatives

**2015–2016: Restructure divisions within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to more closely align with the direction of the Action Plan on Education.**

**2015–2016: Review the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in providing public education to Nova Scotians.**

**2015–2016: Establish a Centre for Excellence within the department, dedicated to advancing student achievement, Nova Scotia-specific school research, high-quality teaching, and strong leadership. The centre will focus**

on innovations, success stories, and pilot programs from around the province and beyond.

**2015–2016: Establish a Minister’s Forum for Teaching Excellence to provide teachers with support, opportunities for networking, and teacher-requested professional development.**

**2015–2020: Create a student-centred education system focused on increased student achievement and success.**

**2015–2016: Implement a province-wide Achievement Gap Initiative to address persistent differences between groups of students in results in math and literacy.**

**2015–2016: Provide teachers and school administrators with ongoing professional development in the use of assessment.**

**2015–2016: Create an Inter-University Chair in Research for the Achievement Gap.**

**2015–2016: Create a team of representatives from the department, school boards, and post-secondary institutions to support research into student achievement in math and literacy.**

**2015–2016: Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all partners in education for the implementation of the Action Plan.**

**2015–2020: Report annually to the public on the progress of the Action Plan.**

**2015–2019: Mandate that all provincial policies and procedures will be implemented consistently across all school boards.**

**2015–2019: Continue to work across departments to better coordinate services for children in Early Years Centres and SchoolsPlus sites.**

**2015–2017: The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will**

- Partner with other government departments, health professionals, community agencies, the business community, post-secondary institutions, and other organizations to map support networks in each school board.
- Streamline intake and referral processes.
- Identify gaps with the goal of ensuring students have timely access to a wide range of services that support mental and physical well-being.
- Encourage participation in sports, recreation, and youth leadership programs.
- Create clear and uniform mechanisms for information sharing and communication across agencies, including web-based information and use of accessible language that reflects cultural competence.
- Work with school boards to increase community access to schools.
- Design a new provincial policy for school boards for the delivery of programs and services to students by outside organizations and community groups.

**2015–2016: Establish a Business-Education Council that will**

- Explore and create positive and productive career exploration opportunities and experiences for our children.

- Provide a forum where business can identify the skills and attributes students need to be successful in the workforce
- Create a database of local entrepreneurs to serve as business mentors to students
- Support teacher awareness of economic growth sectors in Nova Scotia and the importance of developing entrepreneurial skills and attributes across the curriculum
- Increase the number of work experience and co-op opportunities available for students

**2015–2016: Expand the delivery of Junior Achievement in all school boards.**

**2015–2016: Embed entrepreneurship in the high school curriculum as courses are developed.**

**2015–2016: Update Entrepreneurship 12.**

**2015–2016: Align the new business and entrepreneurship courses with post-secondary programs.**

**2015–2016: Raise the profile of local businesses through success stories.**

## Pillar Two

### An Innovative Curriculum

#### **2015–2019: Create a streamlined, coordinated, and innovative curriculum to**

- Increase the emphasis on literacy and math by providing students with extra practice in basic skills in other subject areas such as science and social studies
- Provide more time for teaching both math and literacy in the early years
- Identify essential learning outcomes of all subjects in all grades
- Provide professional development for teachers of multi-grade classes
- Engage student interests through more hands-on learning activities
- Design the curriculum to address the full range of student learning strengths and needs, including opportunities for enrichment
- Provide access to modern technology to support classroom teaching and learning
- Include the language, history, and culture of Acadians, African Nova Scotians, Gaels and Mi'kmaq, including Treaty Education, in the grade primary to 12 curriculum
- Include the history of immigration in Nova Scotia in the grade primary to 12 curriculum

#### **2015–2017: Update the program of courses available to Nova Scotia's students in the Public School Program.**

**2015–2016:** Integrate educational technology and student assessment in the new primary to grade 3 curriculum.

**2015–2017:** Register all children in an electronic school file at birth that parents will use to keep track of their child's growth and development. The education system may use the file to help plan services like preschool screenings and transition plans for starting school.

**2015–2019:** Arrange preschool screening, in cooperation with health care professionals, for children at 18 and 36 months of age, and six months before starting school and use this information to direct parents to information and appropriate support services, as necessary.

**2015–2016:** Open four new Early Years Centers so that every school board has at least one center. Continue to expand this network of Early Years Centres across the province. Early Years Centre staff will use a variety of programs to teach positive relationships to four year olds (announced January 2015).

**2015–2016:** Create and distribute a growth and development guide for four year olds and make it available to parents, daycare centers, and preschools.

**2015–2016:** Address the wait list for Early Intervention Programs across the province (announced January 2015).

**2015–2017:** Provide more time in grades primary to 3 for teaching literacy and math through revisions to the Public School Program.

**2015–2017:** Enhance assessment and intervention for literacy and math in grades primary to 3.

**2015–2017:** Monitor students' progress in literacy and math at set intervals to identify need for early intervention.

**2015–2017:** Establish new homework standards through a Ministerial Policy.

**2015–2017:** Work with school boards to identify ways to provide school-based homework support for both students and parents.

**2015–2017:** Discontinue the use of existing homework guides from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

**2015–2017:** Recognize the importance of homework in learning outside of school, and work with school boards to establish standards that bring consistency across the province.

**2015–2017:** Create a framework to increase opportunities for physical activity throughout the day.

**2015–2017:** Adjust the Time to Learn guidelines to reflect revised curriculum

**2015–2019:** Design and implement curriculum components that address social and emotional learning across grade levels.

**2015–2019:** Implement improvements to student assessment and evaluation, including

- Teacher-prepared pretests and post-tests of student progress at the primary to grade 3 level
- Administration of *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*® to all students at the start of grade 1
- Administration of a common Mathematics Assessment to all students at the start of grade 2
- Replacement of grade 3 and grade 8 provincial assessments in literacy and math with teacher-generated, common assessment tools
- Development and implementation of a policy and supporting procedures for student assessment, evaluation and reporting

**2016–2017:** Teach reading, writing, and speaking skills across subject areas so that students may develop stronger communication skills. For example, in writing, students will have increased instruction and time for learning spelling, punctuation, and the formation of sentences and paragraphs.

**2015–2016:** Implement Core French programs that use interactive and conversational teaching methods.

**2015–2016:** Increase the number of Intensive Core French programs at the grade 6 level.

**2015–2019:** Introduce Character Development starting in elementary school to teach personal qualities such as empathy, honesty, respect, accountability, and responsibility.

**2015–2019:** Offer online learning opportunities to middle school students to prepare them for online courses in high school.

**2015–2016:** Introduce a new career education framework for students in grades 4 to 12.

**2015–2019:** Provide grade 4 students with Interest Inventories to learn about their interests, strengths, and learning styles.

**2015–2019:** Provide students with hands-on learning activities for developing their technology skills.

**2015–2019:** Incorporate personal development education into subjects such as health, social studies, and family studies, in order to teach students about citizenship, service learning, leadership, volunteering, and personal financial management.

**2016–2019:** Provide middle school students with access to a range of innovative, experiential, and entrepreneurial learning opportunities.

**2016–2019:** Provide more hands-on learning activities for students in grades 4 to 8 through computer programming, creative arts, science labs, and collective impact projects.

**2016–2019:** Provide all students with an introduction to the basics of coding, technology, and design.

**2015–2016:** Add more Discovering Opportunities 9 programs to familiarize grade 9 students with modern careers, including trades, technology, and apprenticeship.

**2016–2017:** Add Entrepreneurship to the eligible courses for Challenge for Credit and/ or Independent Study in the Public School Program, to encourage entrepreneurship among students.

**2016–2017:** Create a Minister’s Award of Excellence for Entrepreneurship to encourage entrepreneurship among high school students and to recognize them for successfully starting their own businesses.

**2016–2017:** Provide additional opportunities for grade 12 students to graduate with DELF— (Diplôme d’études de la langue française certification), an important recognition of skills in French as a second language.

**2016–2017:** Create a 21st Century Citizenship course at the grade 10 level—and make it mandatory for graduation—that includes civics, Canadian government, citizenship, personal financial management, volunteerism, media and digital literacy, and service learning.

**2015–2016:** Direct targeted funding for Math Mentors to grades primary to 3.

**2016–2017:** Extend grade 11 Academic Math to a full-year, two-credit course.

**2016–2020:** Increase the number of mandatory courses to graduate.

**2017–2018:** Cap class enrollment at 24 in Academic Math 10 and Academic Math 11.

**2015–2016:** Create a plain language resource for parents to explain the math curriculum at each grade level and key math concepts so that parents can help their children with homework.

**2020:** Require students to complete three high school math courses in order to graduate.

**2015–2016:** Offer Early Intervention Support in math for students in grades P–3.

**2016–2017:** Require all school boards to follow a new Ministerial Policy regarding student promotion, retention, and acceleration.

**2015–2019:** Provide students with varied learning opportunities with school technology, including the use of digital learning resources, completion of on-line courses offered by the Nova Scotia Virtual School, participation in bring-your-own-device learning activities, and completion of blended learning projects.

**2015–2019:** Require all high school students to develop Individual Career Plans as part of a new, mandatory course. Students will receive information on opportunities for the exploration of STEAM careers.

**2015–2019:** Expand community-based learning programs for high school students, including Discovering Opportunities 9, Co-Op Education, Entrepreneurship, O2, and Skilled Trades.

**2015–2016:** Offer workplace training to graduating students entering the workforce,

such as WHMIS, First Aid, CPR, labour relations.

**2017–2018:** Provide students with hands on learning activities for developing their technology skills.

**2016–2017:** Promote cultural awareness and equity through curriculum, learning resources, and direct teaching.

**2016–2017:** Develop equity education programs that highlight Acadian, African Nova Scotian, and Mi'kmaq cultures, and provide them to students and staff.

**2016–2017:** Support self-identification for all students.

## Pillar Three

### Inclusive School Environments

**2015–2017:** Develop and implement a new provincial transition planning guide to support consistent transition planning for students across the province. Incorporate student orientation activities, school tours, parent information sessions, and other activities as part of the guide.

**2015–2017:** Offer one School to Community Transition Program per school board for graduating high school students with special needs, through partnership agreements.

**2015–2016:** Establish a Transition Task-Force of public school educators, universities, and the NSCC to make recommendations to the Minister by March 2016 regarding

- Successful transition to post-secondary education including academic and social readiness
- Career choices and pathways

**2015–2017:** Develop and implement a new needs-based model of service delivery for inclusive education.

**2015–2019:** Create a continuum of support to provide a broad range of programming options for students with special needs.

**2015–2019:** Complete comprehensive assessment of individual student learning needs in order to identify the most appropriate programming options.

**2015–2017:** Develop provincial criteria for placing a student on an IPP.

**2015–2019:** Monitor student progress on IPPs at the school, school board, and provincial levels through the Technology for Improving Education Network (TIENET).

**2015–2017:** Revamp the IPP process to increase parent participation and reduce paperwork for parents and teachers.

**2015–2017:** Share the responsibility for the development and implementation of IPPs with classroom teachers, Resource/Student Services teachers, and other professionals.

**2015–2019:** Increase co-teaching between classroom teachers and Resource/Student Services teachers to provide more teaching support for students with special needs in the classroom.

**2015–2019:** Create and facilitate professional development modules for teachers and teacher assistants regarding different learning styles.

**2015–2016:** Implement interagency programs and services for mental health, addiction prevention (including prescription drug abuse), and physical wellness in partnership with outside agencies.

**2015–2016:** Implement provincial guidelines for supporting transgender and gender-nonconforming students.

**2015–2016:** Expand SchoolsPlus sites based on identified community needs.

**2015–2016: Develop and implement a new School Code of Conduct with clear and concise standards for behaviour that include**

- Programs of prevention and intervention to support and promote positive student behaviour
- Standards of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (students, school staff, parents, community members) for Nova Scotia Schools
- Roles and responsibilities of partners in education
- Identified consequences for unacceptable behaviour
- Procedures for reporting, recording, and tracking incidents of unacceptable behaviour
- Requirements for monitoring incidents of unacceptable behaviour at the school, board, and provincial levels to identify areas needing more supports

## Pillar Four

### Excellence in Teaching and Leadership

**2015–2016:** Create a framework of teaching standards for Nova Scotia.

**2018–2019:** Build a new model of teacher education based on these standards.

**2015–2018:** Work with universities to redesign bachelor of education programs based on the standards and include compulsory course work in inclusive education, equity education, behaviour management, literacy instruction, math instruction, and student assessment.

**2017–2018:** Introduce new graduate level teaching specialties in response to student needs, including Behavior Intervention Teachers and Early Elementary Literacy and Math specialists.

**2017–2018:** Accredite university schools of education.

**2015–2017:** Generate new requirements for teacher certification that are aligned with the new teaching standards and certify teachers based on those standards.

**2015–2017:** Design a performance management system based on the teaching standards.

**2015–2017:** Design and implement a new provincial template for teacher performance appraisal.

**2015–2017:** Provide all school administrators with training in teacher performance appraisal using the provincial template.

**2015–2017:** Designate common requirements in credentials, professional experience and/or leadership training for hiring Principals in Nova Scotia schools. For example, training in teacher performance appraisal will be mandatory.

**2015–2017:** Create new programs and professional development opportunities to provide additional support to new, practicing, and substitute teachers.

**2015–2017:** Encourage school boards to provide more opportunities for new teachers to gain full-time and substitute teaching experience.

**2015–2017:** Implement a teacher recruitment campaign to attract new members to the teaching profession, including Acadian, African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq teachers.

# Endnotes

1. Offord Centre for Child Studies, McMaster University (2013). *Early Childhood Development Instrument Results Provincial Summary Reports Primary Students in Nova Scotia 2012/2013 School year*.

2. PISA 2012: [http://cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/318/PISA2012\\_CanadianReport\\_EN\\_Web.pdf](http://cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/318/PISA2012_CanadianReport_EN_Web.pdf)

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3. Nova Scotia Assessments: <http://plans.ednet.ns.ca/results>, Program of Learning Assessment for Nova Scotia (PLANS), Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

4. Full titles of those reports are *Now or Never: An Urgent Call to Action for Nova Scotians* available at <http://onens.ca/report/>; *Reality Check: A Review of key program areas in the BLAC Report for their effectiveness in enhancing the educational opportunities and achievement of African Nova Scotian learners* available at [http://acs.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/REALITY\\_CHECK\\_FINAL\\_REPORT\\_FOR\\_WEB.pdf](http://acs.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/REALITY_CHECK_FINAL_REPORT_FOR_WEB.pdf); *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners* available at <http://acs.ednet.ns.ca/sites/default/files/BLAC%20Report%20on%20Education%20Vol%201-3.pdf>.

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