

Improving Anglophone Education for our Children

2026 Education Plan



August 2025

Message from the Minister

It is with optimism that I introduce this discussion paper to support the development of New Brunswick's new education plan for the anglophone sector. Through our engagements to date, I am pleased to see a strong commitment to high expectations for every child and to advancing the improvement initiatives in the Early Childhood Action Plan and the long-term projects outlined in Building a Better Education System. Achieving excellence means setting clear goals, using meaningful data to guide our decisions, and being open to making adjustments as we learn and grow. This focus on results will help us ensure that all learners — including those facing challenges— are supported in a way so they can reach their full potential.

I am especially proud of the ongoing efforts within our early learning and childcare facilities and schools to create welcoming and supportive environments. Our education system works hard to provide proper support for those who experience challenges along the way. High expectations must be paired with compassion, resources, and individualized strategies to ensure the needs of children and youth are considered.

To the educators, owners/operators, administrators, support staff, and education leaders across our province — your work is deeply valued, and your commitment has not gone unnoticed. I see your dedication, and I look forward to working alongside you as we build a future where a love of learning is fostered from early childhood to graduation. Our goal is for all children and youth to be active citizens in their early learning and childcare facilities, schools and beyond.

With your support and feedback, let's move forward together in supporting our learners to achieve their full potential with confidence and purpose.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Claire Johnson" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Claire Johnson

Introduction

Purpose

This document outlines what was heard through internal engagements regarding the current 10-year Education Plan, *Everyone at their best*. It also provides potential actions and questions to reflect on as we set a collective vision for the next education plan. The feedback for this discussion paper clearly prioritized a focus on the basics: high expectations for learning, supports for learning environments and well-being, and qualified educators and support staff.

Looking ahead, there is a clear desire for the next Education Plan to strengthen and build upon ongoing efforts to create a cohesive continuum of learning. This includes bridging the differing operational structures and educational philosophies of the Early Learning and K-12 sectors—drawing on the unique strengths of each to support a more unified and effective learning journey for all students.

An Overview of the Anglophone System

The anglophone education system in New Brunswick includes space for over 12,000 preschool children in licensed childcare facilities offering early learning programs; and 207 schools, with approximately 56,000 students enrolled in the English-speaking (English Prime) program; and over 20,000 enrolled in the French Immersion program. Since 2016, enrollment has increased in K-12 by 12.5%, including a growing number of learners for whom neither English nor French is a working language when they enter the system.



Note for the Reader: The term educator is used to refer to early childhood educators, while the term teacher applies to those working in K-12. The term learner is often used in place of student to be inclusive of early learning to high school graduation.

In 2019, the K-12 anglophone Sector released the [*Portrait of a Learner*](#), an exit profile with a vision for learning, including active participation and development of required skills. A new [*Holistic Curriculum Framework*](#), sets a standard for shared principles and learning goals and provides a continuum of learning to support the vision in the *Portrait of a Learner*.

Results and Key Data Points

The current education plan, which includes early childhood and K-12 public education, included 52 measures, with 55 data points. Results show:

- **24** have shown improvement, including **4 measures** that met their targets.
- **23** have declined.
- **8 measures** have no data or were not tracked.

In terms of learning, achievement results have persistently fallen short of targets. However, recent provincial assessments show some improvement in 11 out of 16 areas. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), provides an international benchmark of student achievement. The OECD average refers to the mean performance of students across participating member countries. In New Brunswick (NB), 1,653 learners participated in the most recent 2021-22 assessment, with the following results:

- **Mathematics:** Canadian and NB scores significantly decreased from 2012-2022. NB students scored at the OECD average, but below the Canadian average, comparable to other Atlantic provinces, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.
- **Reading:** Canadian and NB scores declined from 2000-2022; including a significant drop between 2018 and 2022. NB students scored at the OECD average, along with all other provinces.
- **Science:** Canadian and NB scores declined from 2015-2022. NB students scored above the OECD average. All provinces except Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia experienced declines over this period.

Details about achievement data can be found at [Reports on Achievement - Education](#).

Feedback clearly indicates fewer measures should be selected and monitored in the next education plan. There was an emphasis on the need to prioritize literacy, numeracy, and well-being with reasonable, yet ambitious, targets for improvement. The emphasis needs to be accountability rather than aspirational goals.

Recent Efforts

- Common areas of priority have been established across the districts' improvement plans and the existing provincial education plan:
 - **Literacy:** Learners meet reading, writing and oral outcomes at grade level
 - **Numeracy:** Learners meet number outcomes at grade level
 - **Well-being:** Learners report improved mental health and have a strong sense of school connectedness.
- The [Early Childhood Action Plan](#), part of a Canada-wide initiative co-created with the federal government in 2021 to improve early learning and childcare for Canadian children and families, is underway. This cross-sector plan is strengthening services in the areas of inclusion and diversity, quality learning environments, access and affordability, and workforce development. In New Brunswick, there are 36 projects, with nine completed, and 27 underway to be completed by March 2026.

- With the guidance and support of Elders and First Nation communities, significant efforts have been made in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action. These efforts continue to address the legacy of residential schools and advance reconciliation. While meaningful progress has been achieved, it is clear more work remains. A central focus has been the integration of Indigenous perspectives into education, with initiatives designed to foster respect and honour treaties with the First Peoples of New Brunswick—from early learning through to graduation. The implementation of the Wabanaki Framework has strengthened these efforts. Although this work is well underway and having a positive impact, it is not yet fully embedded in every educational setting. Elders refer to ReconciliACTION, emphasizing that sustained commitment and collaboration are essential to ensure these principles reach every classroom and learning environment.

Engagement and Actions

From October 2022 to March 2023, more than 13000 people provided feedback about improvements needed in K – 12 education. In 2023 a [“What We Heard Report”](#) was published, outlining the next steps for strengthening English Prime and French Immersion programs. Further consultations with more than 1000 people from key groups led to the release of [Building a Better Education System](#), (Nov 2023) and the [Action Plan for Long-Term Recommendations](#) (April 2024).

During the winter of 2025, engagement sessions and surveys were conducted to capture the voices of over 700 teachers and experts from diverse groups. These sessions aimed to gather feedback on the current education plan and determine the best path forward. Discussions leveraged the expertise of participants, addressing various topics such as desired long-term outcomes for education, successful implementation strategies for the upcoming education plan, and identifying barriers to success and potential solutions.

The feedback highlights the importance of continuing and enhancing the recent early learning and K-12 education initiatives in the upcoming education plan.

Timeline for Development of the Next Education Plan





Refocusing on Learning

In recent years, our K-12 education system has faced numerous challenges. Leadership changes, rising mental health concerns, pandemic disruptions, attendance problems, and staffing issues have diverted attention from the core mission: student learning. The decline in reading and mathematics performance indicates a need to reestablish priorities.

Why Foundational Skills Matter

Every educator can contribute to building reading, writing, and mathematical skills. These are not merely academic subjects but essential life skills. They enable individuals to comprehend information, manage finances, solve problems, and make informed decisions. By focusing on these foundational skills, we equip learners with the tools necessary for success in real-world contexts.

Gaps in Foundational Skills

Promoting students without addressing major learning gaps does not set them up for success. While learners should remain with their age group as much as possible, it's essential that we ensure all students—regardless of their learning profile—receive the targeted help they need to build strong reading, math, and thinking skills. Every child deserves the time, support, and responsibility to succeed before moving on.

Evidence-Based Approaches

Research demonstrates that early intervention in foundational skills and implementation of evidence-based instructional practices leads to improved outcomes. All learning activities should include clear objectives that build vocabulary, learn how to engage with diverse texts, and foster critical thinking. When we utilize instructional time to strengthen reading, writing, and mathematical skills, students perform better across all subject areas.

Resource Optimization

Experienced teachers and educators should contribute to developing materials applicable across all learning environments—classrooms, online platforms, and outdoor settings. Technology can personalize learning for diverse student needs and increase engagement. Artificial Intelligence tools are starting to be implemented by some teachers and by combining their expertise with appropriate technology, we can ensure resources are effective and accessible to all learners.

Collaborative Practice

When teachers function as a collaborative team and support each other's professional growth, student learning improves. Effective use of student data is also essential for guiding instruction. By analyzing learning outcomes and identifying trends and gaps, teachers can make informed decisions about making helpful interventions for striving learners.

Structural Reconsideration

It may be time to reconsider how our schools are organized to prioritize student needs. While early childhood education effectively implements this approach, the K-12 system often adheres to rigid grade levels, subject divisions, and time requirements. This traditional structure may limit our ability to achieve optimal results.

Potential Actions to Refocus on Learning

Improving Literacy and Numeracy

- Develop teacher and educator expertise in early literacy instruction
- Continue implementation of the Building Blocks of Reading program in K-5
- Review curriculum and instructional practices to address gaps in K-12 mathematics
- Continue to foster literacy in early childcare through talking, singing, reading and playing using multi-modal approaches
- Provide professional learning on integrating literacy and numeracy across all subject areas, including approaches to support English Language Learners

Data-Informed Decision Making

- Support teachers in analyzing student data to inform instructional planning
- Enable teams at all levels to utilize data for identifying trends and areas for improvement
- Create mechanisms for teachers to discuss and problem-solve challenges related to maintaining a focus on learning
- Encourage school teams to use data to design and organize learning that best supports individual learner needs

Enhancing Instructional Practice

- Strengthen learning through inclusive practices that benefit all learners
- Build robust collaborative school teams focused on improving educational outcomes
- Schedule dedicated time for planning and sharing effective practices in K-12
- Ensure K-12 learning plans incorporate evidence-based methods aligned with curriculum outcomes

Resource Management

- Strengthen the sharing of resources from experienced teachers and educators across the province to enhance teaching and learning for all
- Ensure all school classrooms have sufficient technology to support personalized learning
- Provide professional learning on effective technology integration
- Implement tools that support personalized learning experiences



Questions

Multiple challenges have diverted attention from student learning. How might schools maintain their focus on core academic outcomes while still addressing important issues like mental health and attendance?

The traditional structure of K-12 education (with rigid grade levels, subject divisions, and time requirements) may limit achievement. What specific aspects of this structure could be redesigned to better support student learning while maintaining necessary accountability?

Teacher collaboration and data-informed instruction are essential. What practical systems or structures could be implemented to ensure teachers have both the time and skills needed to effectively analyze student data and adjust their instructional approaches accordingly?



Enhancing Learning Environments

A quality learning environment that feels safe and secure provides the conditions required for learning. In our desired education system:

- Trust and respect are evident, and a positive attitude about learning is present
- All learners value education and believe, with the help of their teachers, they will succeed
- Teachers and educators feel they have the resources, knowledge, skills, and support to address learners' needs
- Everyone understands their roles and responsibilities to themselves and each other

Key Challenges

Over the past decade, there has been a focus on building relationships and creating welcoming learning environments. These efforts must continue to be strengthened; however, teachers indicate growing challenges with class composition and the need for supports to ensure environments are positive and conducive to learning. Increasingly complex needs, negativity and disinformation spread through social media, disruptive behaviours, gaps in learning, and inconsistent attendance are making it harder to establish a positive learning environment and maintain high learning standards.

Growing Population

There has been a rapid increase of new languages and cultures in our schools that offer opportunities and enrichment for our system. The growing population is welcome and brings diversity to our classrooms and communities. It also means we need more infrastructure, and the right supports for these new learners, to ensure they succeed in our schools and early learning childcare facilities.

Collaborative Efforts

Creating an environment of respect, positive behaviour, and learning that is inclusive and values diversity requires everyone's participation. Collaboration is essential to ensure early learning and childcare facilities and schools are places where children and youth can think, learn, grow, and thrive. Improvements to learning environments will impact educational outcomes, enhance the well-being and creativity of learners, teachers, and staff, and help retain a dedicated workforce.



Potential Actions for Enhancing Learning Environments

Strengthening Effective Practices

- Continue implementing data-informed staffing approaches and applying best practices and innovative solutions to help schools effectively respond to classroom composition needs
- Expand [Positive Behaviour Intervention Supports \(PBIS\)](#) across K-12 schools
- Continue efforts to support cultural and linguistic diversity in schools and early learning and childcare facilities
- Develop stronger educational transitions for continuity of learning from early childhood through to high school graduation
- Emphasize to students, families, and the community the importance of punctuality and regular attendance to prevent falling behind

Addressing Challenges

- Develop a mechanism to monitor the health of learning environments and direct resources to address class composition issues
- Ensure school leaders and operators have the resources to effectively address and resolve issues impacting the learning environment, including flexibility to address the immediate needs of learners
- Improve the availability and use of technology to personalize and offer continuity in learning
- Prioritize foundational skills across all levels and curriculum, so learning gaps do not go unresolved and grow over time
- Involve learners in addressing important issues, providing them a platform to contribute to a positive learning environment
- Consider actions informed by how other education systems resolve issues related to maintaining environments conducive to learning
- Offer expanded options in creative and practical skills before Grade 10
- Provide technology and training for career exploration in Grades 6-12



Questions

We want a quality learning environment that is safe and positive for everyone. How can we consistently foster trust, respect, and a positive attitude about education in our learning environments?

The education system must ensure each student meets high educational standards. What strategies or measures should be considered to create and preserve optimal conditions for learning? Are there practices that could be adopted from other jurisdictions or fields?

To monitor and respond to challenges when supports are needed, we must have good information. What would it look like for the education system to better monitor and respond to the health of learning environments? How could the system collect more accurate and timely data?

Addressing Well-Being

Many learners experience mental health challenges. These issues negatively impact their learning and can affect their future prospects. We need families and government departments to collaborate in supporting young people from early childhood through graduation. This may require new funding and service delivery models.

Children and youth learn more effectively when their well-being is supported. In early education, children learn through play, exploration, and investigation. This approach should be extended to subsequent grade levels. Currently, students have limited course selection options until Grade 10, which may diminish their engagement with school.

Enhancing Learner Engagement

When children and youth exercise greater control over their learning, motivation increases. Starting career planning earlier and expanding options that develop creativity, practical skills, and areas of personal interest can make education more relevant.

Physical Activity and Outdoor Learning

Physical activity and outdoor experiences improve both physical and mental health. Outdoor and land-based learning activities help learners develop calmness and connection to nature. These experiences reduce anxiety, improve concentration, and enhance learning.



Potential Actions to Address Well-Being

Expand Choice

- Restructure the school day to include both required curriculum and student-selected options
- Provide students with increased choices in what and how they learn
- Offer expanded options in creative and practical skills before Grade 10
- Provide technology and training for career exploration in Grades 6-12

Improve Middle and High School Programs

- Establish a middle school model (Grades 6-8) focusing on core skills and student choice
- Incorporate supports for mental health, attendance, and engagement in the middle school model
- Increase course selection options in secondary school, particularly in Grade 9
- Introduce specialized mini-courses relevant to students' future aspirations

Enhance Learning Opportunities

- Ensure materials and expertise are available to support learning in high demand fields such as science and technology, skilled trades, and the creative arts
- Expand course options through online learning, dual credits, and apprenticeships; exploring the potential to offer options earlier in certain areas for students who excel
- Emphasize physical education and outdoor learning to support student well-being
- Include learners in decision-making processes about their education



Questions

How might we effectively balance increased student choice in K-12 learning and also ensure all learners still develop essential core competencies and skills?

Research suggests a connection between physical education, outdoor learning, and improved mental health outcomes. What practical steps could schools take to integrate more outdoor and physical education without sacrificing academic instruction time?

Currently, students have limited course selection until Grade 10. What potential benefits and challenges might arise from introducing more student choice in earlier grades, particularly in the proposed middle school model for Grades 6-8?



Enhancing Workforce Stability

Our province faces a serious challenge with workforce stability. We need more education professionals to serve our growing and diverse population of learners. Teachers' associations have noted a declining interest in a career in education related to increased pressures, public criticism, and diminished professional respect. Many qualified educators are leaving for alternative careers or retiring early.

The shortage extends beyond classroom teachers and educators. Our province also struggles to recruit and retain essential support staff, including bus drivers, educational assistants, substitute teachers, school psychologists and social workers, speech-language pathologists, and occupational therapists. When these positions remain unfilled, it creates additional strain and disrupts the learning environment.

These workforce challenges are also reflected in the early childhood education sector. Early childhood educators play a critical role in supporting children's development; however, the sector continues to experience staffing shortages and high turnover, making it difficult to maintain consistent, high-quality programming. Supporting and valuing early childhood educators is critical to ensuring that every child has access to developmentally rich environments in their earliest years. A stable and supported early childhood workforce is essential to nurturing children's growth and ensuring they transition smoothly into the K-12 system.

Establishing a stable, qualified workforce must be our top priority. Educators are co-constructors and collaborators of children's learning. Without qualified teachers, education quality suffers, affecting student achievement and development. The recruitment and retention of qualified staff will significantly impact educational outcomes.

Today's teachers and educators face high expectations. They must build meaningful relationships with diverse learners, create accessible learning experiences, manage behaviour challenges, and maintain open communication with families. In the K-12 system, they must also evaluate fairly and provide timely assistance when needed. More learners now present with learning gaps, anxiety, and behavioural issues. The pandemic and social media have exacerbated these problems, increasing mental health concerns, absenteeism, and classroom distractions.



Teachers and educators are requesting:

- Recognition of the complexity of their professional responsibilities
- Dedicated time for collaboration and preparation
- Resources for teaching the curriculum in K-12
- Additional specialized support to enhance learning experiences

Early-learning

If we acknowledge that a quality workforce is crucial for success in early learning facilities and schools, we must place greater emphasis on leadership at each site. We should clarify administrative responsibilities, define roles precisely, and provide training support for administrative roles. The focus should be on improving learning environments and accountability for quality. Leaders need the skills, tools, and resources to build strong, positive teams that create supportive working and learning environments that nurture growth and development.

Early learning and childhood is vital because initial experiences significantly influence future learning. To attract and retain early childhood educators, we must recognize the important work they do, and address training opportunities and working conditions. The education plan must emphasize developing and supporting a highly qualified, stable early learning workforce.

K-12

We must also prevent new teachers from leaving the profession within their first five years. Their enthusiasm should be nurtured, not extinguished. By providing appropriate support, mentorship, and professional learning, we can help new teachers overcome initial challenges and build a lasting commitment to the teaching profession.

In addition, we need to address inconsistent hiring practices and negative messaging. Examining staff allocation models and certification processes could lead to meaningful improvements. A plan is underway to set a clear path forward for Retention and Recruitment Strategies.



Potential Actions to Enhance Workforce Stability

Improving Retention

- Address opportunities for professional learning for early childhood educators
- Recognize the demands on teachers and provide time for collaboration, preparation, and resource-sharing
- Support new teachers with mentorship and resources to prevent early-career attrition
- Implement systems to promote and monitor well-being and respond to challenges proactively

Strengthening Recruitment

- Intensify efforts to recruit qualified staff, including early childhood educators, teachers and support personnel
- Work with districts to establish consistent hiring practices for K-12
- Review staff allocation and direct expertise where it most directly impacts learners for K-12
- Study certification practices in other jurisdictions to identify potential improvements

Enhancing Professional Capacity

- Offer opportunities for high-quality targeted professional learning to support career aspirations
- Enable teachers and support staff to collaborate, plan, and proactively address the complex needs of their classrooms
- Allow instructional flexibility while maintaining a focus on desired educational outcomes and accountability
- Develop strong leadership at each school and early learning and childcare facility by reviewing administrative roles and prioritizing leadership skills



Questions

Various factors contribute to educator shortages, including high pressure, public criticism, and diminished professional respect. What specific strategies could be implemented to change public perception of education careers and elevate the status of teachers and educators in our communities?

How might we establish accountability for creating a supportive environment where teachers and educators feel valued and empowered, rather than overwhelmed by expectations and scrutiny?

Early childhood education is vital because initial experiences set the foundation for lifelong love of learning. What specific investments in early childhood educators would yield the greatest long-term benefits for both workforce stability and learner outcomes?

Transforming the Education System

Feedback from the internal engagements highlighted efforts needing long-term planning to ensure our education system evolves to meet the demands of our rapidly changing world. Over the next decade, the system must continue to improve and adapt, and the following points represent potential transformative initiatives, some of which are already underway. Since we cannot implement everything simultaneously, careful planning and realistic timelines are essential. We must involve learners, teachers and educators, as well as rights and stakeholders in decision-making, as any of these areas could either support or impede our focus on outcomes.

Implementation Underway

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Leverage AI to personalize learning and improve administrative efficiency. Embed appropriate age-level learning about AI in curriculum, promote educational and ethical uses of AI, and ensure equitable access to its benefits. This rapidly evolving field presents unique opportunities and challenges.

Teacher preparation: Enhance teacher certification with improved onboarding, mentoring, and recruitment initiatives beginning as early as high school. Provide authentic learning experiences and co-teaching with master teachers to better prepare new teachers.

Planning Stage

French language programming: Enhance the quality and accessibility of French language education by implementing key actions developed in partnership with districts and key stakeholders. Support schools offering French programs to ensure high-quality instruction and to promote bilingualism and cultural appreciation.

Mathematics improvement strategy: Focus on early mathematical skills, mastery learning, statistics, authentic learning contexts, and financial literacy. This strategy should use assessment results and research to make mathematics engaging and relevant, supporting student success. Many life skills require mathematical proficiency. Math competence builds confidence.

Concept Stage

Level-based learning: Replace traditional grade divisions (K-8) with flexible developmental groupings (primary, elementary, middle). Enable students to progress when they're ready, not based solely on their age. Review reporting practices for a more personalized educational experience.



Potential Actions

Impact Assessment

- Establish a team of internal and external rights holders and stakeholders to prioritize systemwide initiatives and resource allocation, ensuring decisions reflect community needs and values at the K-12 level.
- Promote design thinking and research-based approaches to drive improvement, with appropriate metrics to monitor progress and ensure new initiatives benefit student learning.

Communication Strategy

- Articulate clear rationales for selected priorities, with detailed explanations of the evaluation and selection process.
- Develop implementation timelines indicating when various changes will occur.



Questions

How might we balance the implementation of new educational initiatives like AI and level-based learning while ensuring we maintain focus on foundational priorities such as mathematics improvements and language programming?

What specific measures would best determine the success of these proposed transformations, particularly in areas like mathematics improvement and teacher preparation where outcomes may take years to fully manifest?

Stakeholder involvement is crucial to the decision-making process. What rights holder and stakeholder groups might be underrepresented in current educational planning, and how could their meaningful participation be better facilitated?

Have Your Say

New Brunswickers and education partners are invited to participate in shaping the upcoming education plan. Over the course of the next few months, there will be multiple ways to share your thoughts.

- An **anonymous survey** is now accessible at [Government of New Brunswick website](#) to gather your opinions on the topics outlined in this document.
- **In-person and virtual public consultation sessions** will be held in the fall. When finalized, dates and locations will be posted on the [Government of New Brunswick website](#).
- A **dedicated virtual inbox** is available for any additional questions and feedback: engage.EECD-EDPE@gnb.ca.

Education partners, including teachers and educators, will play a crucial role in this process. Their insights and expertise are especially important in ensuring the next education plan supports learners to achieve their full potential. Consultation sessions for education partners will be scheduled within regular meetings until November. Education partners are also encouraged to participate in the survey and public consultation sessions, which are open to all.

This diverse approach will ensure that the voices and ideas of both education partners and New Brunswickers are heard.

