

District Education Council – Anglophone West School District

Comments/Questions on Draft Policy 322 – Inclusive and Equitable Education

General:

Terminology throughout the policy should reflect the idea that education will be provided in the best ‘learning environment’ that will allow the student to attain a successful outcome. Words that seem to restrict or confine that environment to a specific location i.e. classroom, should be amended to reflect the fact that there may be a wide variety of settings available to facilitate academic success.

1.0 Purpose:

The previous policy identified that the policy applied to NB public schools. The new draft indicates that district and schools will set the minimum requirements. Rather than directing district and schools, we suggest a broader and more inclusive language be used as follows:

This policy sets out the foundational requirements to ensure all publicly funded educational sites in New Brunswick create an inclusive learning environment for all learners.

2.0 Application:

As per comments under Purpose, we suggest the following language:

This policy applies to all publicly funded learning sites / environments within New Brunswick.

3.0 Definitions:

Accommodation – The language should not be specific on location i.e. *succeed in the classroom*. We suggest using language such as “*achieve success in learning*”.

Alternative education – We agree with the removal of High School which would restrict the scope of this endeavor. New language broadens the application.

Barrier to learning – The definition seems to focus on the individual. Should there not also be some acknowledgement of the impact on the learning ability of the larger number of students? Are the needs of visual or hearing-impaired students covered under this definition?

District education support services (DESS) – The emphasis here should be on noting that the Director ESS and their staff support the **school-based ESS team** consisting of the principal and at least educational support teacher (EST) (resource, counsellor, child & youth).

Segregated program / class – This definition item from the current policy has been removed from the draft new policy. The observation, based upon the experiences of a Council member as a Guidance Counsellor / Teacher for 13 years as well as that of a parent is that the segregated learning environment is there for the extreme cases and serves all students. This environment is important for safety for both the individual and the collective. This opinion may sound counter to

an inclusion policy, and it is somewhat covered in the personal learning environment definition, but we believe retention of the definition merits reconsideration.

4.0 Legal:

While we are pleased with the inclusion of language relating to our First Nations culture and languages, we believe that given the significant diversification of our district through immigration (83 countries; 58 languages; 890 new students in 2022-23) that we should include language that reflects ‘our new cultural norm’.

5.0 Goals / Principles:

As per comments in the General section above, words such as ‘physical’ and ‘school’ that denote a specific location should be reconsidered and perhaps replaced with a ‘learning environment’ which could be physical or, as we have experienced throughout the period of COVID restrictions, it could be virtual.

6.0 Requirements / Standards:

6.1.1 and 6.1.2 include parents in the group that are involved in creating an inclusive learning environment, they are absent in 6.1.4 when discussing PLPs. An oversight?

6.2.1 (g) & (h) – Should reporting by schools be through the Director of School or Director ESS and not directly to the Superintendent ... or are you leaving this for district ‘s to create a sub-policy? Is there a requirement for DEC’s to create a monitoring policy to track progress / compliance?

6.4.2 Superintendent - This may require a review of DEC monitoring policies to record progress / compliance. While there is specific direction regarding the role of the District ESS team, we suggest that there should be recognition/language that all Directors must play an active role in the implementation of the inclusive education policy.

6.4.5 School Based ESS – Noted ... see comments under 3.0 Definitions.

8.0 District Education Council (DEC) Policy Making:

We have commented in two areas of Section 6.0 where we believe DEC policies may need to be created / amended. We currently have two ASD-W DEC policies ER 2.1 Academic Excellence and ER 2.2 School Culture which will be reviewed in the coming year to reflect the new Policy 322.