

engage NB

LITERACY

A public discussion about improving literacy in New Brunswick

**We want your input about how to implement
a literacy strategy that fosters a culture of lifelong learning.**

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Province of New Brunswick
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Message from the Literacy co-chairs

We want New Brunswick to be a place where lifelong learning is embraced and people have an opportunity to develop the skills they need to reach their potential in the workforce and thrive in their communities.

Literacy is at the heart of this goal. However, much needs to be done to improve literacy skills among residents of New Brunswick of all ages. Too many of our children, youth and adults are not reaching their full potential in life and in school.

We are proud to work together with groups to help improve literacy in our province. A few of the organizations doing great work are:

- the Elementary Literacy Friends of New Brunswick;
- Born to Read/Le gout de lire;
- the Community Adult Learning Network;
- Laubach Literacy New Brunswick;
- the Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick;
- la Conseil pour le développement de l'alphabétisme et des compétences des adultes Nouveau-Brunswick inc.; and
- the New Brunswick Public Library Service.

We are pleased to begin the development of a progressive, inclusive literacy strategy that will address the challenges we face in the short- and long-term.

We encourage you to become a part of the solution. Please share your ideas with us about how we can improve literacy skills in New Brunswick.

Marilyn Trenholme Counsell
Liane Roy
Literacy co-chairs

Overview

The provincial government established the New Brunswick Literacy Secretariat in the spring of 2015.

The Secretariat is leading the development of a comprehensive literacy strategy that will ensure all of the people of New Brunswick are able to participate fully in school, at work, at home and in their communities.

It is being led by two people who have been interested in literacy for a long time:

- **Marilyn Trenholme Counsell** is a former-lieutenant governor, MLA, cabinet minister in New Brunswick and senator. During her long career as a family physician, she advocated for literacy. She was named to the Order of New Brunswick and is an officer of the Order of Canada. She received the Champion of Public Education from the Learning Partnership and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick.
- **Liane Roy** is the president and chief executive officer of the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick, having held the position since 2010. Before that, she held a senior position (assistant deputy minister) with the provincial Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour.

The New Brunswick Literacy Secretariat would like to hear from you. How can we implement a literacy strategy that fosters a culture of lifelong learning? How can we help those who have challenges with literacy?

The deadline is August 7, 2015. You can give us your ideas by email, through our website or by regular mail.

Why is literacy important?

The first steps in creating jobs that women and men in New Brunswick want and need is to ensure that the workforce has a strong foundation in essential skills such as reading, writing, and working with digital technologies. Learning begins in the home. Parents and families are a child's first and most important teacher.

Literacy is one of the most important skills when it comes to our personal growth, culture and development. It is even more important today because of how our economy and society are changing. Around the world, governments, businesses and people are becoming more and more connected by digital technologies.

Challenges with literacy affect all of the people of New Brunswick. These challenges have negative impacts on our workforce, the well-being of our communities, our economy and our day-to-day lives in our province.

New Brunswick is dealing with a weak economy and rising unemployment. At the same time, we are having a hard time finding workers with the right skills to fill the new jobs that are becoming available. We are also not hearing about or celebrating our successes.

The only way to get those jobs is to be able to read, write and use digital technologies. By addressing these issues now and learning throughout life, we will have a stronger New Brunswick for us, our children and our communities.

New Brunswick's literacy rates

Too many youths and adults cannot read and write well enough. They do not do as well in school as they should. They have a hard time getting a job.

Several studies show that New Brunswick is not making enough headway to improve literacy. New Brunswick continues to do worse than the national average.

The Early Years Evaluation – Direct Assessment reveals that up to 30 per cent of young children are having difficulty when assessed in some areas important to reading and writing skills.

Provincial reading assessments show that although there have been significant improvements since the government's early literacy initiative began in 2003, a recent trend shows decreases in overall provincial reading results at the end of Grade 2.

Canada-wide assessments show that with the exception of Manitoba, New Brunswick Grade 8 students lag behind their Canadian counterparts in reading.

The average adult literacy score in Canada and New Brunswick is at level two. One in five New Brunswickers (18.5 per cent) have literacy levels that are below the average. Most individuals among this group do not have a high school diploma.

What are we doing now?

The people of New Brunswick deserve an education that gives them the skills they need to succeed in work and in life.

We know that starting early is important to achieving good outcomes.

Schools focus on literacy across many subjects. Teaching reading and writing is not done only in language class. Social studies, health and even science and math address reading and writing, too. New Brunswick spends about \$1.1 billion on public education each year. Of this, \$76 million is spent on early childhood programs and services and more than \$4.2 million is for the sole purpose of helping children and youth read and write better. Another \$11 million is used to help adults for the same reason.

Early childhood literacy depends on the engagement of families and care providers. Approximately \$9 million is provided annually to community-based organizations working directly with families. This includes early intervention programs and assessments, family resource centres, Moncton Headstart, the Born to Read/Gout de lire program and the Learning Partnership-Welcome to Kindergarten. In addition, government supports early language acquisition through the Talk With Me/Parle-moi program, recognizing that oral language development is also important for later reading and writing.

In recent years, New Brunswick has developed a curriculum for licensed daycares that provides building blocks for literacy and has invested more than \$3 million in its implementation. These two distinct curriculum frameworks are known as the Early Learning and Childcare Curriculum Framework (English) and le Curriculum éducatif (French).

With the strategy, the Government of New Brunswick will continue to work with families, public schools, community organizations and employers to improve literacy.

We value your input

We are seeking comments about what to include in a comprehensive literacy strategy.

Think about your experiences and those of your organization. You are asked to answer the following questions in fewer than 1,500 words total.

- What are the three most important things that could be done to improve literacy in the province?
- What might you be prepared to do to put these ideas into action?

You can submit your ideas in three ways:

- Online: www.gnb.ca/engageNB
- Email: literacy.alphabetisme@gnb.ca
- Regular mail:
Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
New Brunswick Literacy Secretariat
PO 6000, Fredericton NB E3B 5H1
Canada

The deadline for submissions is August 7, 2015

Privacy notice:

- *The provincial government will consider your submissions as part of its public consultation process.*
- *Your submission may be made public as part of reports developed in the review. Your personal information, such as your name and address, will **NOT** be released.*