
Building a better education system:

NEAR-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
NEW BRUNSWICK'S ENGLISH PRIME AND
FRENCH LANGUAGE LEARNING PROGRAMS

JULY 2023

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Message from the co-chairs

As co-chairs of the Executive Steering Committee, we are pleased to present this report, which puts forward several near-term recommendations for enhancing the English Prime and French language learning programs in New Brunswick's anglophone schools.

This report and its recommendations would not have been possible without the many individuals who contributed their perspectives and expertise.

We would like to thank those involved in the two working groups, who engaged with many passionate partners in education to hear suggestions for enhancing these two program areas. These groups were established to maximize opportunities for input and their work formulated several recommendations which were shared with the executive steering committee for consideration.

The feedback from these groups was invaluable in helping the executive steering committee develop the recommendations contained in this report and we are proud to share the initial actions identified during this process. The recommendations in this report point to a clear path toward the best first steps to address the gaps identified.

We look forward to ongoing dialogue and continued efforts to work together in strengthening public education in New Brunswick. Thanks to the guidance and engagement of these individuals and organizations, we have a clear direction set.

Ardith Shirley,
Executive Director, New Brunswick Teachers' Association

Dr. Tiffany Bastin,
Assistant Deputy Minister, Educational Services – Anglophone Sector, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Introduction

In April 2023, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) announced a steering committee would be created to lead the next steps for improvements in the anglophone sector, both in English Prime classrooms and French language learning, including the French immersion program. This followed the Evolving French Language Learning consultations sessions that were completed in February 2023.

The executive steering committee was co-chaired by the assistant deputy minister of the educational services division (anglophone) and the executive director of the New Brunswick Teachers Association (NBTA). The committee was composed of people representing educators, students, parents, school districts, district education councils, and other key rights and stakeholder groups.

The committee established two working groups that had two unique areas of focus. One was focused on improvements to the English Prime program, and the other focused on improvements to French language learning. Each working group was tasked with undertaking a broad engagement to gather input and submit recommendations to the steering committee.











Additionally, an online questionnaire was launched in June 2023 to further inform EECD and the executive steering committee.

The focus of the engagement sessions was to identify changes that could be implemented by September 2023 to improve the teaching and learning experience in anglophone schools.

A number of near-term recommendations were identified, and these are shared on the pages that follow. There were also additional recommendations that would improve the system, but it was acknowledged they would require more time and/or resources for implementation.

ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

The following figures include Menti results from the Educational Services Division team at EECD and NBTA Annual General Meeting sessions.

 EN	ENGLISH PRIME CLASSROOMS:	=	69 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS WITH MORE THAN 350 PARTICIPANTS
 FR	FRENCH LANGUAGE LEARNING:	=	43 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS WITH MORE THAN 490 PARTICIPANTS
	CORRESPONDENCE (EMAIL INBOX):	=	MORE THAN 90 EMAILS
	PARENTS:	=	57 (62%)
	TEACHERS: (INCLUDING ADMINISTRATORS)	=	27 (29%)
	PUBLIC:	=	7 (8%)
	SURVEY (ENGLISH AND FRENCH)	=	more than 3,000 responses
	PARENTS	=	84%
	TEACHERS	=	8%
	OTHERS (STUDENTS, SCHOOL/DISTRICT ADMIN, SIG, DEC, OTHER)	=	8%

1. IMPROVING THE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE IN THE ANGLOPHONE SCHOOL SECTOR

A number of recommendations on how to improve the classroom experience were made. Not surprising, many dealt with increasing the number of resources available in all classrooms (English Prime and French Immersion).

1.1 Priority Recommendation: Contract supply teachers for each district according to historical data, making them part of the staff and supporting other teaching and learning efforts when they are not filling absences.

RATIONALE: Many respondents, including students, indicated a need for well-trained and available supply teachers.

Staffing shortages have increased over the past few years with a number of teachers choosing to leave the profession. An idea that resonated with working groups and the executive steering committee was to find ways to dedicate and embed floating teachers at a particular school or group of schools. These floating teachers would become part of the staff and support planning and peer coaching when not filling absences. This would help administration with respect to succession planning and would help supply teachers as they would become more involved with staff planning and training. It would also support teacher development and retention by ensuring these teachers are in a school consistently.

1.2 Priority Recommendation: Embed academic support teachers in select schools to support literacy and numeracy development in K-5.

RATIONALE: We continue to see a variety of learning gaps throughout the system, and many experts, families, and students indicated more in-class and in-school support is required. Ideas about where to designate this support varied, but most agreed earlier (K-5) is best given current realities, though there are indicators this kind of direct support is also needed in the middle level, especially in large classes with many diverse learning needs.

An academic support teacher is a curriculum expert that exhibits solid instructional practices and has demonstrated capacity to implement the Building Blocks of Reading. These experienced teachers work directly with students to help ensure they are able to acquire the foundational skills needed for academic success.

1.3 Priority Recommendation: Strengthen and expand access to Behaviour Intervention Mentor(s).

RATIONALE: Behaviour Intervention Mentor(s) (BIMs) assist school personnel in the provision of direct services to students through evidence-based interventions and strategies to encourage a positive learning environment. These strategies lead to the development of social skills, communication skills, self-esteem and resilience of students involved.

Since 2021-2022, there have been 75 BIMs added to the anglophone system, bringing the total current number of BIMs to 101 over 97 schools. In those schools with dedicated BIMs, there has been on average a 40 per cent decrease in misconduct behaviours. It is recommended each school have a minimum of 1.0 Behaviour Intervention Mentor(s).

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

There were other recommendations on improving the classroom experience identified during the engagement sessions that were more long-term in nature. These dealt with other areas in need of more support resources, more ways to encourage movement and outdoor activity, and finding additional ways to minimize class size discrepancies.

2. STRENGTHENING FRENCH LANGUAGE LEARNING

Finding ways to improve French language learning was the primary focus of one of the working groups.

One of the recurring themes from the numerous engagement sessions was a need for the identification of more culturally authentic language learning resources, the creation of a living and regularly refreshed virtual hub of resources for language learning, and a resourced model to support opportunities for cultural connections between learners and peers, mentors, and/or community and industry partners.

A model for this type of hub already exists within EECD. A Centre of Excellence is a partnership between the education system, community and industry partners. Centres connect students to expert knowledge through virtual and experiential learning.

2.1 Priority Recommendation: Establish a Centre of Excellence for Language Learning as a hub for exemplary resources and for identifying and connecting learners and educators to authentic cultural opportunities.

RATIONALE: A Centre of Excellence for Language Learning would address many of the key areas of need identified in engagement sessions including:

- Connecting learners to one-on-one peer/mentoring opportunities.
- Further developing, increasing, and marketing culturally authentic French language learning opportunities, such as summer camps and exchange programs.
- Celebrating French language educators and successes in French language programming.
- Developing a hub for exemplary language learning resources.
- Shifting the narrative from French second language learning to all language learning, understanding some students speak several different languages.
- Accessing the human-centred designed process, used with the language learning opportunities (LLO) prototypes over the past two years.

A Centre of Excellence could also be the catalyst for moving forward with other recommendations on French language learning that came out of the engagement sessions. These recommendations include:

- Providing expert-developed professional learning for educators in resources, strategies, and interventions to best support the inclusion of each learner in French language classrooms.
- Increasing opportunities for professional learning, training, and development of a plan to support the implementation of the French Language Opportunities for Rural Access (FLORA) resource.
- Engaging language learning experts and advocates - including post-secondary researchers and experienced educators, coordinators, and specialists - to identify and create a plan to assist families with supporting language learning at home.
- Communicating ways to continue or become involved in human-centred design through language learning opportunities prototype projects.
- Developing an action plan for rural French language learning to ensure learners and educators in all regions of New Brunswick have access to culturally authentic French language resources and opportunities.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

There were other recommendations on strengthening French language learning identified during the engagement sessions that were more long-term in nature. Some of these concerned adjustments to curriculum, adopting new assessment tools, and ensuring alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

3. ENHANCING THE SYSTEM THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS

The functioning of schools in New Brunswick revolves around strong leadership and a culture that supports continuous learning.

One area often overlooked is supporting new school leaders as they move from the classroom to an administrative function. New principals, just like new teachers, need extra support.

***3.1 Priority Recommendation:** Provide leadership development support to principals and vice principals to ensure they will be successful in their roles, with a particular focus on those that are new to their positions.*

RATIONALE: NB Lead, a leadership strategy developed as a collaboration between the NBTA, school districts, the University of New Brunswick and EECD, will be launched the fall of 2023 in support of school leaders.

Those engaged indicated a variety of training needs for supporting diverse learners and building a positive learning environment. They discussed techniques and strategies that should be offered to all educators and others that need to be available on-demand so it is meaningful within certain contexts.

***3.2 Priority Recommendation:** Provide additional professional learning opportunities that support a positive learning environment and the foundational elements of a holistic curriculum.*

RATIONALE: These personal learning opportunities will support a positive learning environment and training modules will be developed for de-escalation, co- and self-regulation, culturally responsive classrooms, understanding the brain and neurodiversity, using second language scaffolds, supporting diverse families, trauma-invested classrooms, and teaming.

It should be noted that dedicated days for curriculum professional learning are included within the school year. However, a day dedicated to positive learning environments, intended to be targeted for all staff, will be required as part of those days for the 2023-24 school year.

Also, an online Professional Learning Hub, including content from school districts, NBTA, EECD and Atlantic Education International, has been created to enable a one-stop shop for educators to access learning opportunities.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

There were other recommendations on enhancing the system through professional learning supports identified during the engagement sessions that were more long-term in nature. These concerned new policy development to support foundational year teachers to develop new practices that support reading and ways to support team teaching in schools of all sizes.

4. BUILDING A BETTER LEARNING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Priority Recommendation: Provide provincial guidelines for the development of student profiles and designate all staff to support teachers to develop these profiles for the students in their team during the first weeks of school each year.

RATIONALE: Almost all feedback cited the importance of teachers knowing their students from the start. This includes their interests (learning in life and in school), their goals, as well as their academic skills that are leveraged across subjects (such as literacy and numeracy).

It is challenging for teachers to transition learners into school after a break, and depending on the circumstances, it is difficult for them to teach and build a solid understanding of their students' strengths, needs, and interests.

A variety of ideas came from students, teachers, and the community, but the common thread was that everyone needs to be available to support classroom teachers in those first few weeks of school to get to know their learners.

4.2 Priority Recommendation: Undertake a review of administrative processes with a view of streamlining the amount of paperwork that principals and resource teachers are required to complete, allowing them to devote their time to supporting learners.

RATIONALE: With any bureaucratic system, it is important to have documentation to support decisions and actions that are taken at various points through the year. However, over time, a system can become overburdened with paperwork which takes time away from supporting other teachers and learners. If required, additional resources will be considered.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

There were other recommendations on building a better learning and working environment identified during the engagement sessions that were more long-term in nature. These concerned new approaches to support educational assistants, ideas on how to improve student attendance and better manage chronic absenteeism, and other ways to elevate the teaching profession.

Next Steps

EECD has begun work on the priority recommendations identified on the preceding pages and is working out how to operationalize them for fall 2023. A set of longer-term recommendations will be made by the executive steering committee.