

# Focus on Education: Learners for Life

*Recommendations for a 10-year education plan  
(Francophone sector)  
Executive Summary  
June 2016*



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# Executive summary

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## ***Background and mandate***

New Brunswick's public education system consists of two parallel but separate systems: a Francophone sector and an Anglophone sector. Under the auspices of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, each sector manages its own system, developing its own plans, programs, services, targets and performance indicators. The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for developing an education plan for each linguistic sector. The purpose of the plan is to set objectives and priorities for public education and early childhood services in New Brunswick and to provide general directions that guide the actions of those working in the education system to ensure that children and students succeed. Typically, the education plan results from consultations between the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the school districts and district education councils, and it generally covers a period of three to five years. However, about a year ago, the Government of New Brunswick made a commitment to develop an education plan for a longer period – 10 years – through a comprehensive public engagement process. The government gave the two co-chairs, Gino LeBlanc for the Francophone sector and Karen Power for the Anglophone sector, a mandate to mobilize key stakeholders and partners in the education system with a view to developing an education plan that is sustainable, achievable and full of opportunities for students. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will prepare a separate 10-year plan for each sector on

the basis of the recommendations made by the two co-chairs following the engagement process.

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## ***Public engagement process***

This report provides the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development with a series of recommendations to guide the content of the next plan for the Acadian and Francophone education system. As co-chairs, we had the privilege of working closely with a number of actors and stakeholders in the field of education and early childhood development. Our recommendations are the result of an engagement process that lasted several months and involved community leaders, officials, educators, school staff, parents and guardians, youth, community representatives and other education system partners. Through various engagement strategies, including written briefs and comments, a survey, open-door sessions, individual meetings, group discussions, workshops and forums, members of the Acadian and Francophone community throughout New Brunswick shared their vision of the future of their education system and, more specifically, their expectations concerning the content of the next provincial education plan.

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## ***Characteristics of the Acadian and Francophone education system***

There is no question that universal themes relating to the education system and early childhood services are shared by the two linguistic sectors. The education plan will therefore have to set common goals for all students in New Brunswick while meeting the various needs of the two linguistic groups.

Indeed, a number of our recommendations pertain to issues or systemic needs that have an impact on student learning and success regardless of mother tongue, such as inclusive education, professional development opportunities for teachers and school staff, managerial leadership, behavioural and mental health disorders among young people, and acquisition of skills for the 21st Century. However, some of our recommendations apply only to the French-language education system and are essential for fulfilling the dual mission of Acadian and Francophone schools, namely, educational success and identity-building. That said, it is critical that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development realize that, even if the use of a linguistic or cultural lens is not always explicitly noted, all of the recommendations and measures proposed in this report must result in the best possible system for students, but just as important, they must support the linguistic and cultural vitality of the Acadian and Francophone community.

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### **Summary of recommendations**

Our work, and the recommendations arising from it, revolves around six broad themes to which the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have to devote its immediate and long-term attention:

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### **Fundamental elements**

This chapter presents and highlights the fundamental elements underpinning the success of the 10-year education plan for the Acadian and Francophone education system. Owing to the rigorous and mobilizing work already done in the field of education and early childhood development by the Acadian and Francophone community of New Brunswick and its partners, we were able to

base our report on an essential and indispensable development tool: *The Linguistic and Cultural Development Policy* (LCDP). Our report is also based on a holistic, integrated representation of public education in New Brunswick, where life-long learning, from early childhood until the transition to post-secondary education and the labour market, is recognized as a fundamental value. This chapter outlines the principles, processes, structures, practices and support measures upon which any reform of the Acadian and Francophone education system must be based to promote educational success and identity building among students.

In summary, we make the following recommendations with a view to the development of the 10-year education plan for the Acadian and Francophone system:

- 1 The school-family-community partnership must form an integral part of the 10-year education plan. The plan must therefore incorporate into its own content the contents of the LCDP action plans of the partners of the Acadian and Francophone education system. Also, it must emphasize the importance of implementing these plans in the field.
- 2 The foundations of the 10-year education plan must be aligned with those of the LCDP (vision, mission, guiding principles, strategic goals and strategies). The content of the plan must establish links between the ideas expressed during our consultations and the strategies and courses of action set out in the LCDP. The plan and the LCDP must complement each other and form a whole. The plan must promote the implementation of the 48 strategies in the LCDP. The Government of New Brunswick

must recognize and support the considerable amount of rigorous work done on the LCDP. The plan must therefore provide for the investment of considerably more financial resources to achieve the target identified in the consultants' work.

- 3 The 10-year education plan must propose options for the positioning of the LCDP and its implementation within the priority units recently introduced by the provincial government.
- 4 The 10-year education plan must express a vision that values life-long learning and encourage the Government of New Brunswick as a whole, civil society, and the private sector to make education a priority for everyone.
- 5 The 10-year education plan must be based on an overall approach to Change Management that promotes the full participation of key players in the education system, particularly district and school representatives.
- 6 To ensure its long-term viability and full implementation, the 10-year education plan must focus on students, be supported by evidence-based data and be developed in close cooperation with the District Education Councils (DECs), the schools, and the partners of the New Brunswick education system.
- 7 The 10-year education plan must provide for the establishment of a solid collaborative support system for all educators, school leaders and learners in the province that meets needs in terms of training, professional development and learning. Our education system needs teachers and school leaders who are highly

qualified and familiar with best practices in education and management. The implementation of a support system is essential to achieving the goals of the education plan.

- 8 The 10-year education plan must ensure that elementary classes (from kindergarten to Grade 2) are structured in a way that provides learners with as many opportunities to succeed as possible (particularly with respect to learning to read and write) and that upper elementary classes (Grade 3 to Grade 5) continue to build on these achievements. To do this, the plan must provide for human resources, professional training opportunities, and support measures that meet the learning needs of students in all elementary grades.
- 9 The 10-year education plan must put special emphasis on middle school instruction throughout the province to ensure that adolescent learners acquire all the aptitudes and skills identified in the student exit profile; and that this be done by means of practical, innovative, motivating lessons designed using a collaborative approach.
- 10 The 10-year education plan must continue to implement a Formal Management system across the school system. Supported by greater research capacity, Formal Management will enable management teams to make informed choices and to concentrate on key priorities and will enable individuals and teams to make decisions supported by evidence-based data and devote time to problem statements before focusing on solutions.

11 The 10-year education plan provides a unique opportunity to implement the exit profile for students leaving New Brunswick's Acadian and Francophone school system. This profile must serve as a springboard for the plan, because it guides, in an innovative way, a skills-based approach and thus makes it possible to question traditional approaches to curriculum development, instruction, learning and assessment. The exit profile provides an opportunity to rethink, re-examine and reform the province's education system.

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### **Early childhood**

If there was one topic that was a concern to all of the groups, at all levels, and in all sectors during the engagement process and our consultations, it was the importance of intervening, supporting and investing in early childhood education. Although we do not want to interfere in matters that fall within the purview of New Brunswick's Child Care Sector Task Force, whose work was going on at the same time as ours, the 10-year education plan must continue to make early childhood one of its priorities, and that is why we devote an entire chapter to it. The research supported by evidence-based data confirms the paramount importance of the early childhood years in academic success, the general well-being of youth and the economic and social prosperity of our province. In addition, academic success and identity building among Acadians and Francophones of preschool age require the guidance of their parents and families and the support of educators and early childhood stakeholders. The LCDP accurately reflects the issues and challenges related to early childhood education expressed by the Acadian and Francophone community during our engagement process. Indeed, the strategies proposed in the Early Childhood Focus Areas of

the LCDP are an excellent springboard for the plan. For that reason, a good portion of this chapter is based on the considerable work done by those responsible for the LCDP just a few years ago.

In summary, we make the following recommendations with a view to the development of the 10-year education plan for the Acadian and Francophone system:

- 1 The 10-year education plan must be based on the comments, thoughts, and recommendations resulting from our consultation, as well as on the more detailed and comprehensive work of the Child Care Sector Task Force. All of the recommendations concerning early childhood must receive immediate attention, and the key partners in early childhood education must be invited to contribute to the development of the plan.
- 2 The 10-year education plan must ensure that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development continues its efforts toward achieving full linguistic duality in early childhood education and that the deputy minister responsible for each linguistic sector has the necessary resources to carry out those efforts.
- 3 The 10-year education plan must develop and adopt a comprehensive, integrated, equitable vision of the delivery of early childhood education programs and services.
- 4 The 10-year education plan must ensure that children aged zero to eight and their parents have access to quality services in French that meet all of their needs and are based on the overall development of the child, as well as



access to effective, continuous services starting in the perinatal period, delivered within an integrated network.

- 5 In accordance with the LCDP, the 10-year education plan must establish and maintain collaboration and partnerships among public and private institutions, parents and the community that ensure a) the interdependence and complementarity of early childhood services accessible from a single entry point in both urban and rural areas; b) the coordination of an early screening system; c) information-sharing and the creation of a single file for each child, whatever the number and type of services received; and d) smooth transitions as a result of continuity in the delivery of quality French-language services at all stages of the education of children zero to eight years of age.
- 6 The 10-year education plan must encourage parents to enrol their children, at birth, in the school district of their choice, thus enabling the family and the child to receive the services provided during the various stages of the education continuum.
- 7 In accordance with the LCDP, the 10-year education plan must support the parents of children zero to eight years of age, as first educators of their child, to ensure that they receive support, guidance, quality resources and information about their rights, enabling them to a) choose care, services and education in the perinatal period; b) participate fully in their child's education; c) contribute to the overall development of their child; d) fully play their role as conveyors of culture; and e) strengthen their feeling of

attachment to the Acadian and Francophone community.

- 8 In accordance with the LCDP, the 10-year education plan must set up structures and develop welcoming and support tools for parents so they can fully assume their role as first educators of their children, including the role of conveyors of culture.
- 9 In accordance with the LCDP, the 10-year education plan must take measures that value the early childhood education and intervention professions and support the recruitment and retention of professional staff capable of working in French with children zero to eight years of age.
- 10 The 10-year education plan must target immediate collaboration with the Government of Canada, which is showing signs of wanting to become involved in the development of the early childhood sector. Since New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province, the Government of New Brunswick must propose the development of early childhood pilot projects that focus on service accessibility, human resources training, and program quality.
- 11 The 10-year education plan must encourage the Government of New Brunswick to enter into a partnership with the federal government and the Department of Canadian Heritage to ensure that early childhood is included in the next roadmap for official languages, to be developed in 2017.

- 12 The 10-year education plan must build an economic argument in favour of a return on investment in the early childhood education sector; it must be innovative and invest significantly in this sector to maximize the long-term economic and social benefits associated with such an investment.

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### ***Meeting the needs of our children and youth***

When children start school, they arrive with their own personal knowledge and experience. They therefore have different needs of varying degrees of complexity. Our public education system aspires to meet the needs of all learners, regardless of their grade level, geographic location, language, ethnic origin, physical ability or sexual orientation. New Brunswick takes pride in the fact that it has one of the most inclusive public education systems in the world, Policy 322, Inclusive Education. Yet inclusive education comes with its share of difficulties and presents some degree of complexity in the classroom. Generally, the individuals and groups we met with said that the 10-year education plan must support inclusive education through policies, guidelines, services, support measures and the allocation of resources. Schools and early learning centres face a variety of specific circumstances and problems, such as students who live in abusive or dysfunctional environments, who live in poverty, who are victims of bullying, harassment, or other forms of abuse, or who have mental health problems, including anxiety and depression. These and many other factors interfere with learning and have a negative effect on teaching environments. It is very important that the plan address the underlying causes of these behaviours so that we may build the best education system possible, where adults and learners have all the means



necessary to learn together. Schools and early learning centres must continue to welcome and make room for diversity and differences.

In summary, we make the following recommendations with a view to the development of the 10-year education plan for the Acadian and Francophone system:

- 1 The 10-year education plan must, in the immediate future, eliminate obstacles and reduce disparities in terms of access to mental and physical health support services in early learning centres, schools and communities. The early screening of mental and physical health difficulties among all learners is essential to ensure that they receive immediate, timely interventions. Also, students must have access to competent human resources in the school environment that will support them throughout their time at school.
- 2 The 10-year education plan must ensure that the various needs of all students can be met through a culture of student-focused services, where flexibility is expected and supported by appropriate human resources and systematic continuing education in accordance with the implementation of Policy 322.
- 3 The 10-year education plan must make parents and guardians and students more aware of, and more responsible for, their respective roles in terms of personal well-being, access to support and resources, compliance with school requirements and behaviour issues.
- 4 The 10-year education plan must support a culture of acceptance and learning for all children

and youth in New Brunswick by paying more attention to the different and diverse needs of students, whether related to a physical disability, sexual orientation or their status as newcomers to New Brunswick.

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### ***Respect for the culture of our First Nations***

The First Nations are part of the social and cultural fabric of New Brunswick. Their population is young and growing, in comparison with that of the rest of the province. Elders and leaders in First Nations communities took part in our engagement and consultation process to clarify our thinking and our recommendations on the future of the provincial public education system. In general, the First Nations aspire to a public education system that meets the particular learning needs of students, supports their success, strengthens the capacities of teachers and school staff from First Nations, and promotes their history and traditions. For the past few years, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada travelled the country, collecting testimonies about the abuses suffered by the former students of residential schools and the legacy of those abuses. Its final report presents nearly 100 calls to action, many of which concern educational reforms. The incorporation of these calls to action into the 10-year education plan is of critical importance for the development of a culture founded on mutual understanding and respect in New Brunswick. Aspirations of recognition and the desire to expand the influence of their language and culture are collective projects with which the Acadian and Francophone community can fully identify. We therefore invite the leaders of the Acadian and Francophone community to learn about the calls to action issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and to identify collaborative initiatives that could be carried out

with First Nations communities in order to bring everyone closer together.

In summary, we make the following recommendations with a view to the development of the 10-year education plan for the Acadian and Francophone system:

- 1 The 10-year education plan must ensure that the policies, guidelines and decisions made by the government, school districts and schools reflect an understanding of First Nations culture and the distinctive characteristics of New Brunswick's First Nations communities and encourage the development of a shared understanding of First Nations by all New Brunswickers. This could be accomplished through shared responsibility and leadership between the First Nations and the government with a view to promoting, broadening and honouring the wealth and diversity of First Nations culture and history. The plan must also ensure that the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission apply to decisions affecting First Nations in New Brunswick, including the following:
  - 62)i. Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for kindergarten to Grade 12 students;
  - 63)ii. Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history;
  - 63)iii. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect.

- 2 The 10-year education plan must ensure that the needs of all First Nations students in the public schools are identified in a timely fashion and that these students receive the identified supports, resources, and interventions to close the gap between the results achieved by First Nations students and those achieved by other students in the province.
- 3 The 10-year education plan must create expectations for the teaching profession that indicate an understanding of the needs of First Nations students. Specifically, it must be ensured that call to action 63)iv. of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is implemented during initial training at the university level, as well as during continuing professional development for certified teachers and teacher assistants.
- 4 The 10-year education plan must promote the development of First Nations leadership in teaching and learning.

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***Prioritizing the knowledge to be acquired and the tasks to be performed***

Basically, schools and early learning centres must be able to provide Acadian and Francophone students with the skills they will need to be successful and to realize their potential throughout their lives. Our education system must not only engage students in, and make them responsible for, their learning, but it must also raise and clearly define learning expectations. These expectations must be fully understood by students and teachers as well as by school staff and parents and guardians. In addition to basic skills in writing, reading and mathematics, students must acquire high-level skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, citizenship and

entrepreneurship. Furthermore, our system must be able to stimulate them and challenge them through the use of innovative teaching practices and relevant, applied learning experiences. This assumes some degree of flexibility, which will ensure that the districts and the schools can teach skills that meet the needs of communities. To adjust to the requirements of the modern world in terms of skills and expectations, the education system will have to be able to fully define the skills that students must develop at all grade levels, particularly when they leave high school. This shift will have to be accompanied by the implementation of measures to support teachers and principals.

In summary, we make the following recommendations with a view to the development of the 10-year education plan for the Acadian and Francophone system:

- 1 The 10-year education plan must, in the immediate term, update expectations in terms of the aptitudes and skills necessary to engage New Brunswick learners and make them responsible for their learning and provide rigorous, relevant daily lessons that enable them to achieve the targeted results. Also, the plan must include measures to support teachers and provide them with the means to meet the needs of students effectively.
- 2 The 10-year education plan must provide for the review of all outdated curriculums by drawing on the expertise of school districts and schools to offer a curriculum that is sustainable, viable, coherent and up-to-date.
- 3 The 10-year education plan must immediately provide targeted support measures and

resources with a view to developing solid literacy skills among all New Brunswickers, from birth. Specifically, strategies will have to provide specialized support measures for students and continuing education for teachers.

- 4 The 10-year education plan must give priority to the development of the skills and aptitudes associated with the STEM fields for all students in New Brunswick. More particularly, it must promote the development of critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, learning through questioning, and advanced reasoning, as well as support teachers in the application and evaluation of innovative practices in this regard.

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***Learning – School culture, leadership and teachers***

The quality of student learning is closely related to the level of quality offered by teachers and school leaders and by schools and districts. Aside from the family, schools have the closest relationship with learners. All schools in New Brunswick, regardless of their location, must develop and promote a learning culture that focuses on student success. For the 10-year education plan to produce effects that meet learners' needs, school leaders and all teaching and school staff must understand the impact that their beliefs, attitudes and actions have on student success. Furthermore, school districts and District Education Councils (DECs) play an essential role in that the decisions and measures adopted at the district level have direct repercussions on school culture. In concrete terms, New Brunswick's schools and school districts must be able to create the conditions necessary for optimizing learning and collaboration. The education plan must therefore increase opportunities and provide greater access to various resources

with a view to supporting the development of dynamic leaders, competent teachers and effective support teams to meet the increasingly complex needs of students.

In summary, we make the following recommendations with a view to the development of the 10-year education plan for the Acadian and Francophone sector:

- 1 The 10-year education plan must continue to create very effective learning cultures in all New Brunswick schools. It is essential that the plans, decisions, measures and policies across the province and the districts be aligned with the education plan. Using evidence-based data, the plan must support collaboration within the province, the districts and the schools for the purpose of identifying promising avenues for better supporting our learners. Also, the districts and schools must be allowed some flexibility when it comes to using funds and allocating resources to meet the needs of students. The plan must also introduce accountability mechanisms in the districts and schools to ensure that decisions contribute measurably to student learning. Last of all, it is recommended that a monitoring plan be developed to track government decisions and measures associated with the plan.
- 2 The 10-year education plan must state very clearly that school leadership is a priority. It must identify the aptitudes and skills of school leaders and what is expected of them. The plan must increase professional training opportunities and make it easier for school leaders to network so they can develop the aptitudes, skills, and expertise they need to run their

schools effectively, make decisions supported by evidence-based data and meet the needs of students. This includes, but is not limited to, the establishment of a self-regulated professional organization and opportunities for mentoring and supervision.

- 3 The 10-year education plan must ensure that New Brunswick educators are highly qualified and valued as full-fledged professionals and that they provide our learners with effective learning experiences that enable them to acquire the skills identified in the student exit profile. Professional training throughout the school year is essential, and the time allotted for these activities must be structured more effectively, in accordance with a more collaborative format. Furthermore, standardized expectations with respect to educators must be developed, and these must be reflected in hiring practices, observations, feedback and evaluations. Last of all, internal and external communications practices must be strengthened to convey a positive message concerning the fundamental role played by our teachers.

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### ***Next steps***

We encourage the Government of New Brunswick and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to take these recommendations into account during the development of the plan that will guide our Acadian and Francophone education system for the next 10 years. The exercise that concludes with the tabling of this report is just the beginning of a long road to be travelled together. The successful implementation of the 10-year education plan to be developed following our engagement process will be based on the support and collaboration of all

the education system's partners. The educational success of Acadian and Francophone youth will depend to a very large extent on our collective engagement and our concerted actions. Lastly, ongoing improvement of the provincial education plan will require thoughtful planning for the next 10 years and the ability to adjust to the changing needs of students and the education community.

