



Accountability Report 2022–23

Education & Early
Childhood Development



Education and Early Childhood Development

2022-23 Priority Results in Support of Government’s Accountability Report

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development ("EECD", "the Department") for the year ended March 31, 2023, is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. The reporting of the EECD outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by EECD management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of EECD management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the EECD 2022-23 Business Plan.

Originally Signed by

Hon. Becky Druhan
Minister

Originally Signed by

Elwin LeRoux
Deputy Minister

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Introduction

This document reports on the departmental activities as outlined in EECD's 2022-23 Business Plan.

Measuring our Performance

EECD's 2022-23 Business Plan identified several priority initiatives to advance improvements to the early years and public education systems in Nova Scotia.

Outcome: Improve Early Childhood and Pre-primary to grade 12 Education

Inclusive Education

Government is committed to helping every student reach their full potential through continuing to invest in the Nova Scotia public education system and focusing on educational outcomes related to both well-being and achievement for every student in our province.

Since the release of *Students First: Education that Supports Teaching, Learning, and the Success of all Nova Scotia Students* ("Students First") in 2018, EECD has introduced a number of transformative changes to the Nova Scotia public education system, including the implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy. Through continued implementation, EECD continues to work with school administrators, teachers, specialists, education support workers, parents, government, and community partners to put students first and ensure that every student is engaged and safe at school.

In 2022-23, EECD supported the ongoing implementation of inclusive education through:

- Continuing to focus on the recommendations outlined in *Students First*. A report on the progress of the recommendations is underway and expected to be released in 2023.
- Continuing to support a provincial network of inclusive education leaders overseeing the implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy in the Regional Centres for Education (RCEs)/Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports.
- Working with the University of Ottawa as they conduct the second independent developmental evaluation on the implementation of Nova Scotia's Inclusive Education Policy and inclusive education supports. The report of the second evaluation is scheduled for release in summer 2023. The third and final report is scheduled for release in 2024.

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- Continuing to add new positions to support students and teachers (e.g., student support workers, guidance counsellors, teaching assistants, English as an Additional Language/French as an Additional Language (EAL/FAL) teachers, school psychologists, speech language pathologists). An additional \$15M was included in the 2022-23 budget, completing the 5-year funding commitment of \$75M as recommended in *Students First*. To-date, the province has added and/or created over 1000 new positions.
- Committing to the development and implementation of a comprehensive Assistive Technology (AT) Plan, which included training assistive technology support workers (30 in 2022-23) and determining operational funding needs.
- Working with the Educational Leadership Consortium of Nova Scotia to complete and pilot the Anti-Racism Anti-Discrimination Leadership Module.
- Providing ongoing professional learning and training opportunities/resources for all school staff, including new professional learning opportunities in areas of mental health and Mi'kmaw Ways of Being and Knowing.
- Developing a standard curriculum for teaching assistants (TAs), pre-service training, and reviewing and updating the guidelines for TAs.
- Continuing to work on provincial policies using the lens of *Students First* and the Inclusive Education Policy.

Student Well-Being and Achievement

In 2022-23, EECD improved school programs, services, and policies to support student well-being and academic achievement through:

- Developing the Physical Activity Framework (PAF) which will provide guidance on increasing opportunities for students to be physically active and reduce sedentary behavior. The PAF is being developed with the support of key partners including the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, the Departments of Health and Wellness and Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, Public Health, and the RCEs/CSAP.
- Continuing to provide Healthy School Grants to all public schools. These funds were made part of EECD's annual budget in 2022-23.
- Ongoing school and system improvement planning in collaboration with RCEs/CSAP. Every school and RCE/CSAP is required to establish goals and actions and monitor progress in the areas of mathematics, literacy, and well-being.
- Continuing administration of provincial assessments and exams in literacy and mathematics in grades 3, 6, 8 and 10.

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- Administering the 2021-22 Student Success Survey in May 2022. The results were shared with RCEs/CSAP to help inform regional and school improvement plans, identify areas of need, and provide direction for improvement in student well-being and achievement.
- Engaging with School Advisory Councils (SACs)/comités d'école consultatifs (CEC) in spring 2022 and launching a broad public consultation in fall 2022 to obtain a better understanding of how local voice can be enhanced in the public education system. This included a survey, a virtual town hall, and several focus groups with key partners including administrators, teachers, other school staff, and several Ministerial advisory bodies.
- Providing supports to students to ensure they have timely access to a wide range of services, including mental health and physical well-being. Priorities included:
 - Enhancing SchoolsPlus services through collaboration with our partners, including working with Public Health and the Department of Community Services to distribute food security resources and Hurricane Relief funds to those most impacted in all school communities.
 - Continuing to promote and offer the ACHIEVE program, a one-year post-secondary inclusive and accessible transition year for graduating high school students with disabilities and other transition needs. ACHIEVE is offered in collaboration with the Nova Scotia Community College and government/community partners and is available in nine sites across the province.
 - Supporting children through key transition phases, including working with Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Intervention Services, to provide specialized services and inclusion support to help children successfully transition and integrate into regulated child care, pre-primary, and school.
 - Working to increase the equity and diversity of staff within RCEs/CSAP to grow system leadership and accountability. RCEs/CSAP are developing a self-identification process for staff to monitor progress.
 - Networking and strengthening relationships with community based educational partners, First Voice, and knowledge holders.
 - Growing the understanding and enhancement of schools as culturally safe spaces through initiatives such as the African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw Student Support Worker Programs and professional development with schools on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.
 - Facilitating cultural leadership and mentorship opportunities for students through initiatives such as Black Excellence Day and the Grow Where You're Planted Partnership.

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Public School Program

In 2022-23, EECD focused on renewing and updating curriculum through:

- Creating new resources to support financial literacy, environmental stewardship, and diversity, including education about residential schools. This included a financial literacy resource for Mathematics 9/Mathématiques 9e année, financial literacy and environmental stewardship resources for Citizenship 9/Éducation civique 9e année, and resources to support diversity for Social Studies 7&8/Sciences humaines 7e & 8e année.
- Supporting learning on environmental stewardship at the Summer Learning Academy through sharing new materials created to support Science 10/Sciences 10, distributing materials on climate change, biodiversity and environmental sustainability to schools, and making additional resources available on a new Environmental Connections portal in spring 2022.
- Developing three new high-school courses:
 - **Contemporary Canadian Studies 11** provides opportunities for students to engage in learning about civics and diversity, including residential schools, and is currently being piloted at select schools. Once fully implemented, it will replace Canadian History 11.
 - **Netukulimk and Environment 12** is an Indigenous-focused and Wskitqamu connected land-based environmental studies course that will be piloted in the 2023-24 school year. The course will provide learning opportunities for environmental stewardship and climate change.
 - **Life 11** is a new career exploration and health education course for high school that is still in development and will be piloted in the 2023-24 school year. This course provides opportunities for students to engage in learning regarding physical activity, healthy living, healthy eating/cooking, and career exploration.
- Finalizing the implementation of the African Nova Scotian Education Framework, which will be complete by the end of the 2023-24 school year.
- Developing and implementing the Treaty Education Framework, in partnership with Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey and St. Francis Xavier University, and in consultation with elders, knowledge holders, teachers, and stakeholders. The Framework provides direction for the meaningful integration of Treaty Education into Nova Scotia curricula.
- Identifying opportunities to increase healthy eating and cooking knowledge as part of a larger curriculum review, including reviewing the School Food and Nutrition policy and continuing discussions with the federal government on a universal school lunch program.

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Skilled Trades and Experiential Learning

In 2022-23, EECD increased uptake of existing skilled trades programming and established a broader skilled trades program that includes options beyond the traditional trades through:

- Working with myBlueprint, an online platform to support experiential learning for students in grades 4-12, to create modules for students to learn more about careers in skilled trades.
- Developing a resource/marketing campaign for grade 7 and 8 students and their families which includes information on skilled trades options and associated labour market and income opportunities. A marketing media plan was implemented in March 2023.
- Providing Skilled Trades experiential learning opportunities to junior high students through expanded grants with Skills Canada Nova Scotia, Techsploration, Junior Achievement Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Construction Sector Council, and the PREP Academy.

Early Years

In 2022-23, EECD made early learning and child care more accessible, affordable, and inclusive for all families through:

- Reducing parent fees by an average of 50 percent as of December 31, 2022. Plans are on track to reach \$10/day, on average, by 2026.
- Creating more than 1700 new early learning and child care spaces as of March 31, 2023, including in centre-based, family home, and before and after school settings.
- Supporting and advancing quality in early learning and child care programs through the Quality Matters program, a provincially funded quality assessment initiative that serves as the overarching approach to quality for all early learning and child care programs.
- Continuing to invest in a highly skilled and trained workforce including:
 - Developing and implementing a compensation framework to improve pay and benefits for Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) working in regulated child care settings. Ninety-five percent of trained and classified ECEs received wage increases between 14-43 percent retroactive to July 4, 2022. Planning for benefits, including retirement savings benefits, is well underway for 2023-24.
 - Continuing work to develop a regulated certification system for ECEs in Nova Scotia with implementation planning to get underway with sector partners in 2023-24.
 - Increasing the number of staff in licensed child care and early learning programs who have a diploma level of education or higher (currently at 66 percent). During the 2022-23 academic year (September 1, 2022 – August 31, 2023), approximately 500 students graduated, including 300 ECEs new to the sector.
- Establishing professional learning and ongoing development opportunities for ECEs through the Canada-Nova Scotia Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. In 2022-23 this included

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professional development modules to support the implementation of Nova Scotia's updated Early Learning Curriculum Framework, and online learning modules to support culturally responsive practice, equity and inclusion in early learning and child care programs, and outdoor play for regulated and school-based early learning programs.

Financial Summary and Variance Explanation

Departmental Expenses Summary			
(\$ thousands)			
	2022-2023	2022-2023	2022-2023
Programs and Services	Estimate	Actuals	Variance
Senior Management	\$1,121	\$1,503	\$382
Strategic Policy, RCE Liaison and Research	\$4,303	\$4,308	\$5
Early Learning	\$178,527	\$156,762	(\$21,765)
Child Care and Licensing	\$74,338	\$68,128	(\$6,210)

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Centre for Equity in Achievement and Well-Being	\$3,719	\$3,550	(\$169)
Education Innovation Programs and Services	\$15,670	\$20,238	\$4,568
Student Services and Equity	\$2,223	\$2,122	(\$101)
African Canadian Services	\$6,246	\$6,325	\$79
Mi'kmaq Services	\$1,369	\$1,323	(\$46)
French Programs and Services	\$10,844	\$19,479	\$8,635
Corporate Services	\$4,734	\$4,208	(\$526)
Public Education Funding	\$1,270,014	\$1,282,441	\$12,427
Teachers' Pension	\$98,063	\$103,301	\$5,238
School Capital - Amortization	\$80,109	\$76,618	(\$3,491)
Total - Departmental Expenses	\$1,751,280	\$1,750,306	(\$974)
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenues	(\$2,100)	(\$9,825)	(\$7,725)
Fees and Other Charges	(\$2,406)	(\$1,040)	\$1,366
Ordinary Recoveries	(\$137,929)	(\$122,507)	\$15,422
Total – Revenues, Fees, and Recoveries	(\$142,435)	(\$133,372)	\$9,063
TCA Purchase Requirements	\$181,256	\$187,161	\$5,905
Funded Staff (# of FTEs)			
Department Funded Staff	212.8	193.2	(19.6)
Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:			
EECD expenses were \$974K lower than estimate in 2022-23. Variances throughout the year include a reduction in spending under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement; decreases in the utilization of the child care subsidy program and a decrease in amortization expense. These decreases are partially offset by investments in additional Chromebooks to support technology in classrooms; increased federal funding in French Programs; inflationary pressures incurred by the Regional Centres for Education and CSAP; an increase in Teachers' Pension due to higher usage and salary base, and other operational pressures.			
Revenue, Fees and Recoveries Variance Explanation:			
EECD revenue, fees and recoveries were \$9.1M lower than estimate, primarily due to cash flow changes in federal funding received from the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, as various			

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program initiatives were delayed. Unspent federal funding will be carried into 2023/24. This decrease is partially offset by increased funding received through the Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP), which were carried into this fiscal from the prior year.

TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

EECD TCA purchases were \$5.9M higher than estimate, primarily due to additional approvals for modulars, school buses, and capital repair projects. These additional approvals were partially offset by underspends in new school projects and additions and alterations (A&As) because of project delays.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

FTE variance due to staff turnover and delays in refilling vacancies throughout the year.

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Appendix: Disclosures of Wrongdoing received by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for the fiscal year 2022-23

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development under section 18 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*:

Information Required under Section 18 of the Act	Fiscal Year 2022-2023
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing.	N/A