



Business Plan

2021–22

*Education and
Early Childhood Development*

**NOVA SCOTIA**

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Departmental Business Plans
Finance and Treasury Board
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Message from the Minister

I am pleased to present the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Business Plan for 2021-22.

In 2021-22, the department will continue to invest in the Nova Scotia public education system so that students, families, and educators get the resources and support they need to succeed. Our priority for 2021-22 will be inclusive education, particularly on improving learning and wellbeing outcomes for all students. This priority continues directly from the *Inclusive Education Policy*, which was introduced in 2019, and came into full effect in September 2020.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic required the educational system to react swiftly to alter learning systems and classrooms to respond to keep our school community safe and to continue providing necessary support to our students, such as introducing a secure and confidential online platform for ongoing virtual mental health counselling and other specialized interventions. While this unprecedented situation has created challenges and caused significant disruptions, it also showed the resilience of our teachers, principals, early childhood educators, school staff, and especially the children, students, and families of Nova Scotia. It also allowed us to focus on student equity, by supporting those students and families that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

In 2021-22, the department continues to follow Nova Scotia's *Back to School Plan*, which was released in July 2020. In December 2020, \$14.3 million in new investments were announced to support the safe return to school. This funding was in addition to the \$21.5 million previously announced to purchase 32,000 new Chromebooks and enhance WIFI servers and routers across the education system. Students who lacked access to a device at home have been given priority for access to new devices should they need them to support their learning. The new funding also includes \$1.5 million to help schools to support the School Healthy Eating Program, which is helping address issues of food insecurity by providing healthy food options to students, \$4.1 million to pilot new math and literacy programs, and \$3.8 million to purchase and install touchless water stations which will reduce high touch surfaces in school. The funding also includes \$1.5 million to purchase additional personal protective equipment (PPE) for students and staff such as masks, hand sanitizer, and other supplies.

In addition to the recent investments to support the system as it responds to the challenges related to COVID-19, Government had already invested over \$300 million in the education system to ensure students have access to the best education possible. This includes an investment of \$45 million over the past three years to support inclusive education. These investments helped create over 1,300 additional teaching and student support positions, including over 450 inclusive education support staff. New supports, such as autism specialists and child and youth practitioners, are helping our students succeed every day. We have also hired more English Additional Language and French Additional Language staff, more African Nova Scotia and

Mi'kmaq support workers, more SchoolsPlus facilitators and community outreach workers, and we are providing more funding for professional development for teachers.

In September 2020, the department achieved its goal of implementing the play-based Pre-Primary Program in all school communities across Nova Scotia. This means that all four years olds in our province have access to a high quality early childhood education experience that fosters the educational, social, and emotional development of young children and supports their learning and growth as they move into Grade Primary. Recognizing the importance of the Pre-Primary Program, government supported participation in the program by providing access to bussing across the province for all eligible pre-primary children starting in September 2020. Over 14,000 children have participated in pre-primary since its implementation.

In 2021-22, we will continue to support access and participation in the Pre-Primary Program through the Nova Scotia Before and After Program and bussing for eligible pre-primary children. A priority for the department in 2021-22 will be to work with the federal government to negotiate a new long-term Early Learning Child Care Agreement to continue to support the access to high quality child care options for Nova Scotian families.

Skilled Trades Centres continue to be a priority. We have met our goal of expanding Skilled Trades Centres to a total of 25 school sites, a further 5 new Skilled Trades Centres have been announced and 2 additional schools will receive centres by nature of being new builds. This brings the total number of schools with Skilled Trades Centres to 32 by 2022,. Moving forward, we will expand and modernize work integrated learning and career education in schools through programs like discovering opportunities, Options and Opportunities (O2), and the Skilled Trades. A major focus of this work will be on future development in areas such as green energy, biodiversity, and to provide programing that encourages greater participation from African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaq learners.

In 2018 Government made a commitment to inclusive education and the changes needed to implement it. In 2021-22, we remain committed to working with our partners and enhancing the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE) and the Council on Mi'kmaq Education (CME) to create a re-invigorated, coherent, and responsive education system for the benefit of all Nova Scotian students, with a focus on inclusive education and strategic excellence in teaching and leadership. There have been a number of challenges over the past year, but the focus on student wellbeing and achievement continues to guide the department and its partners as we work collaboratively to serve children, students, and their families.

Honourable Derek Mombourquette
Minister, Education and Early Childhood Development

Improving Early Childhood and P-12 Education

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Government continues to invest in the Nova Scotia public education system so that students, families, and educators have the resources and support they need to succeed. The work of the department in 2021-22 will focus on supporting and improving outcomes for all students related to their wellbeing, learning, and achievement.

To help achieve this, the department introduced the *Inclusive Education Policy* in 2019, which came into effect in September 2020. The policy establishes guiding principles and directives to ensure a high-quality, culturally and linguistically responsive, equitable education is available for all students. To further support this work, EECD will be working with staff at the Accessibility Directorate to advance work related to the Accessibility Act and Education Standards.

The new model of inclusive education is delivered through a Multi-Tiered System of Support or MTSS. It provides students with three levels or tiers of support at school for academics, behaviour, and social-emotional development: classroom, small group and individual.

Since 2018-19, over 450 new staff have been added to the education system to support inclusive education, including teachers, specialists such as teachers for students with autism, and non-teaching staff like school psychologists, speech language pathologists, and child and youth care practitioners. Programming, learning, and development opportunities have been established for staff working in the education system.

The department has hired a third party to conduct a developmental evaluation of the ongoing work to support inclusive education in Nova Scotia. As part of their work, the evaluation team will provide direction throughout implementation of the new policy and supports. An interim report has been submitted to the department for review.

A key focus for Education and Early Childhood Development is creating a more culturally responsive and inclusive education system. Some specific programs and initiatives aimed at supporting the implementation of inclusive education include:

[Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\)](#) – The department is continuing to develop and implement MTSS, through support of regional/board teams. MTSS is an integrated school-wide approach, which provides a structure for effective instruction, assessment, intervention, and support for all learners with a focus on well-being and achievement. It requires the collaboration, and coordinated efforts, of learners, teachers, families, parents/guardians, and community partners in providing the appropriate programs, settings, supports, and services. MTSS recognizes the inherent worth of all learners and strengthens the importance of well-being and achievement, inclusive of all students in our classrooms, schools, and communities.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) – CRP is a research-based pedagogy that enhances the learning environment and the educational outcomes for all students. CRP results in teaching that connects a student’s social, cultural, family, or language background to what the student is learning; it nurtures that cultural uniqueness and responds by creating conditions in which the student’s learning is enhanced. The department, the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), and the regional centres for education (RCEs) have been working together to support and implement training in Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP). This work will continue in 2021-22.

African Nova Scotian Education Framework (ANSED) – The department will continue to work on the Inclusive Education Policy through the African Nova Scotian Education Framework. ANSED supports raising the bar and closing the gap of African Nova Scotian students. It further reflects Nova Scotia’s commitment to inclusive education and equity and. ANSED recognizes that the success of African Nova Scotian learners is central to a successful education model and supports this by identifying the knowledges, practices, and processes that ensure Black learners feel accepted, safe, and valued so they can best learn and succeed.

The Framework will outline key pillars that are grounded upon historical documents, evidence-based practice and embedded within an Inclusive Education Policy Framework. The goal of this framework, is to provide system leadership to support the positive wellbeing and academic success of African Nova Scotian/Black learners, remove barriers to learning and address the systemic factors which foster disproportionality of outcomes for African Nova Scotian/Black students. ANSED promotes the development of schools and educational spaces that nurture Black learners to fulfill their promise and potential:

Anti-Racism Anti-Discrimination Leadership Module – In the 2020-21 school year, the department plans to introduce a new mandatory leadership model that will be focus on ensuring that education leaders, including principals and vice-principals, as well as leaders in EECD are empowered with the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to take up their professional responsibility and appropriately identify, respond to, and eliminate racism and discrimination. This includes not only responding to incidents that occur within a school, but also to examining issues of systemic racism and discrimination, which have affected, and continue to affect, students, particularly Black students/African Nova Scotian and Mi’kmaw students, as well as those students that have been traditionally targeted by racism and discrimination such as newcomers, individuals with special needs, and the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. This module design has been built on first voice consultation with over 500 students, parents, and education professionals.

Treaty Education – With a goal of growing an understanding among all students of Mi’kmaw teachings and culture, the department will increase access to Treaty Education resources. This will help Mi’kmaw and Indigenous students gain a strong

sense of identity, pride, and belonging through their participation in the public education system, while allowing all students to continue developing an appreciation and respect for the diverse, rich cultures in Nova Scotia.

[The Mi'kmaw Education Model](#) – The goal of this recently developed and evolving model is to move the system forward and address the systemic power structures and inequities that create barriers for Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous students. The strategies that will be developed will provide system leadership to support the well-being and academic success of Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous learners.

[Prioritizing the success of Mi'kmaw and Indigenous students](#) – Mi'kmaw Education Coordinators have been hired in all 8 RCEs/CSAP to lead discussions and decision-making on all matters including achievement, well-being and parent/guardian empowerment and community engagement to name a few.

[Etuaptmuk /Two-Eyed Seeing \(E/TES\)](#) – This foundational, guiding principle supports the learning spirit of children and youth today. E/TES encourages both students and educators to learn from the strengths of both Indigenous and mainstream or Western perspectives. By acknowledging multiple worldviews in problem solving, we honour the strength and wisdom of our ancestors, both Mi'kmaw and non-Mi'kmaw.

[Increasing authentic learning resources](#) – This includes authentic learning resources that include the Mi'kmaw knowledge system which weaves Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous experiences into the fabric of learning. This approach helps students and teachers understand the importance of relationships (historical and contemporary) and why Nova Scotia has evolved into the prosperous province we are today where we celebrate “We are all Treaty people.”

[Physically Active Framework](#) – Physical activity and nutrition have always been cornerstones of good physical and mental health. The department is developing a Physical Activity Framework to provide guidance on increasing opportunities for students to be physically active and reduce sedentary behavior.

In 2021-22, the department will work with Nourish Nova Scotia to expand access to healthy food choices and locally sourced food in Nova Scotia's schools.

[Partnership with Youth Project](#) – Government entered into a new funding agreement with The Youth Project to partner with Education and Early Childhood Development to create more inclusive schools for 2SLGBTQIA+ students in Nova Scotia. The three-year, \$750,000 investment will support the delivery of programs, training and workshops for youth, teachers, and staff.

[Pyramid Model Implementation](#) – The Pyramid Model is a research-based framework that uses sound early childhood practices promoting healthy social emotional development for educators, children, and families. It uses a systems approach

(professional development and administrative support) to ensure that children and families benefit daily from evidence-based practices. In collaboration with many Nova Scotia partners, the approach improves educators' skills through training, technical assistance and coaching in early learning and care centres and pre-primary programs. It provides the tools to support children's healthy social emotional development; friendship skills; emotional literacy; self-regulation; and problem solving to foster inclusion, future success in school and life.

STUDENT WELL-BEING AND ACHIEVEMENT

Education and Early Childhood Development is committed to improving school programs, services, and policies to support students' achievement and well-being. This work has been supported by the excellent working relationship between the department and the regional centres for education (RCEs) and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP). Some specific projects underway are listed below.

[Student Success Survey](#) – A student survey was administered in April and May 2019. 54,000 students from grades 4-12 participated. The survey focused on students' experiences in Nova Scotia schools from both a well-being and academic perspective. The information from the survey is helping to inform Student Success Planning. Another administration of the survey is planned for spring 2021.

[Student Success Planning and Regional Improvement Plans](#) – All schools are required to set targets for improvement and to submit annual reports on their progress towards the goal areas. Schools are required to have a: mathematics goal, literacy goal, and a well-being goal. Schools can choose to have other curriculum area goals at the secondary level. Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) schools also have a school community goal. Through this process, schools and regions also work to support equity and inclusive education by examining student data to identify and address issues where the data shows disproportionality between groups of students (e.g., historically marginalized and/or racialized students).

[Student Supports and Transitions](#) – Education and Early Childhood Development works closely with other departments, agencies, and organizations to provide supports to students, to ensure they have timely access to a wide range of services, including mental health and physical well-being.

Priorities related to student supports and transitions include:

- Enhancing SchoolsPlus services through collaboration with our partners.
- Continue to operate ACHIEVE sites (post-secondary transition year programs for graduating high school students with special needs).
- Supporting children through key transition phases, for example using Early Intervention Behavioural Intervention data to help children transition into primary.
- Enhanced staffing to support students from traditionally underrepresented groups, for example through the student support worker program.

- Networking and strengthening relationships with community based educational partners and stakeholders.
- Growing the understanding of schools as culturally safe spaces.

As of the 2019-20 school year, there is SchoolsPlus coverage in all schools. This meets the department's goal of expanding access to these services to all schools. In 2021-22, work related to SchoolsPlus will continue to focus on strengthening and enhancing services.

EARLY YEARS

[Pre-Primary Program](#) – Government committed to implementing a free, universal pre-primary early childhood education program for four-year-olds that will set them on the road to success by helping them be confident learners as they transition into the school system. Full implementation of the Pre-primary Program took place in September 2020, meeting government's commitment. 253 school communities now have access to the Pre-Primary Program, serving almost 6,000 children in 2020-21. To date, over 14,000 children have participated in the pre-primary program since its implementation.

Government will continue to support access to the Pre-Primary Program transportation for eligible pre-primary children.

[Early Learning Child Care Agreement](#) – In January 2018, Nova Scotia signed a three-year, \$35 million child care funding agreement with the federal government to strengthen the early learning and care sector across the province. The agreement focused on providing families more affordable, accessible, quality, and inclusive regulated child care through such programs as child care subsidy, while supporting early childhood educators to participate in training and professional development opportunities. A priority for the department in 2021-22 will be to work with the federal government to negotiate a new agreement that will stabilize and build on the work to date.

[Early-Learning Curriculum Framework](#) – The Nova Scotia Early Learning Curriculum Framework has been developed and was piloted in regulated child care centres and pre-primary classes across Nova Scotia.

With a focus on children from birth to 8 years of age, the framework provides a consistent approach for all early childhood education programs including a common language for communicating with parents and other educators, and a system to examine and reflect on their philosophical approaches to early childhood education.

The framework also allows for early childhood and care programs to implement the goals and strategies outlined in the framework in ways that are unique, integrating influences from their communities, skills and interests of educators and children, and cultures and traditions of the families and children in their programs.

This framework is another example of how Nova Scotia is working to strengthen the early learning and child care sector to ensure it meets the needs of children and families. In addition, grant funding is provided to regulated child care centres to support the provision of high-quality programs.

Nova Scotia is committed to making early learning and care accessible, affordable, and inclusive for all families because high-quality early learning programs are the foundation for lifelong learning and development. When government, educators, parents, families, communities, and children work together it enhances early childhood education programs and ensures that the youngest generation of Nova Scotians have opportunities for future success.

Over the next 2 years, the department will build on current successes and continue to focus on strengthening and enhancing professional development opportunities for the early learning and care workforce. The Province's objective is to have a highly skilled and quality trained workforce that will foster positive relationships with children and families, and who create safe, responsive and nurturing environments to support the learning and development of children.

PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAM

The department continues to review the Public School program and is focused on providing relevant and renewed curriculum and programs in the public education system. A review of the Public School Program (PSP) for high school students will continue in 2021-22. The department is looking at adding more work integrated learning and skilled trades programming, as well as curriculum revisions to include green energy, biodiversity, and the unique experiences of African Nova Scotians and the Mi'kmaq.

Literacy Strategy and Reading Recovery

Student outcomes in literacy achievement show that our entire education system needs to do more to support our students and their teachers. The goal of the Nova Scotia Provincial Literacy Strategy is for students to achieve a high level of literacy so that they can thrive in school and beyond.

As part of the literacy strategy Education and Early Childhood Development reinstated Reading Recovery for all grade one students having challenges with early reading and writing, meeting its mandate commitment.

Mathematics

The department continues to review supports for mathematics and to consult with experts in this area. A new online program will be introduced to support mathematics at home and school. Students and families will continue to have access to the Nova Scotia Homework Hub that provides free online tutoring in the evenings and resources anytime. Mathematics pathways in high school will be reviewed as part of the updating of the PSP for grades 9-12.

Math and Literacy e-Learning Programs

Both literacy and mathematics education are being supported by new pilot programs for online math and literacy supports. The programs will be accessible in class or at home. The new programs include:

- Online Mathematics resource for grades 3-10, which will be used as an additional tool to increase time and practice by strategically focusing on specific areas in math that an individual student requires
- Online Literacy resource for grades Primary-3 to help focus on certain aspects of learning to read based on the areas the individual student requires
- Online Writing resource for grades 4-6 to provide another way to support students in writing, including prompting and encouraging reluctant writers, enhancing skills of all student writers, and helping to support them through the writing process

Professional learning for teachers will be part of the implementation of these programs.

Skilled Trades and Experiential Learning

Skilled Trades Education supports an approach that provides exposure to a wide range of careers, engages students in authentic learning in the community and immerses students in the realities of skilled trades work. In 2017, Government committed to adding 7 new Skilled Trades Centres to the 18 that already existed.

In 2019-20, government achieved that goal, and a further 5 new Skilled Trades Centres were announced, and 2 additional schools will receive centres by nature of being new builds. This brings the total number of schools with Skilled Trades Centres to 32 by 2022, 7 more than the initial Mandate Letter commitment. The department will continue to work in 2021-22 to:

- Increase the number of students participating in skilled trades learning
- Increase the number of schools offering skilled trades courses
- Expand offerings in the suite of skilled trades courses
- Establish a skilled trades career pathway in partnership with Labour and Advanced Education and the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency

Responding to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a number of challenges for the early learning and care and the public education system. In response to these challenges, the system acted quickly to pivot to a learning at-home model and to prepare to welcome students back to in-person learning in September 2021. Resources and supports were made available to families throughout the interruption to in-person learning. Staff also worked closely with teachers and other school staff to ensure they had the supports needed to deliver services and lessons in a new on-line environment. This was done in collaboration with unions, regional centres for education, and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial. To support this work, Government has made investments to support

the ongoing learning and wellbeing of students, while also ensuring that schools remain safe places for students and staff alike.

During the at-home learning period in Spring 2020, it became evident that many students and families across the province did not have access to adequate technology to support their at-home learning. The province initially procured 14,000 new devices to help close the technology gap at the higher-grade levels. An additional 32,000 devices were purchased in fall 2020 using federal funding support in order to expand access to technology to more students. EECD continues to work to increase access to curriculum, programs, and services through more accessible and assistive technologies and applications, in collaboration with partners such as the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority, the regional centers for education, and the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial.

In order to support the ongoing wellbeing of students, the province invested in a secure virtual platform for counselling services. Zoom Tele-Education allows secure and confidential connections between student services personnel and students. Services include school counselling, SchoolsPlus, social work, mental health supports, school psychology, speech language pathology and other individualized supports for students with additional needs. EECD worked closely with the Nova Scotia Health Authority who also procured licenses for healthcare practitioners across the province.

To ensure schools have increased server and Wi-Fi coverage, the department is allocating approximately \$10 million to enhance WIFI and servers through the addition of added access points, data drops, wiring, and switches in schools. These investments will help respond to the challenges associated with COVID-19 but will also continue to support 21st century learning going forward, by increasing student access to technology.

To ensure the ongoing safety of students and staff it is important to keep schools and buses clean. With that in mind, the department is investing approximately \$5.5 million for additional costs associated with cleaning/sanitization. This will include the purchase of new cleaning supplies and the additional work time required for cleaning of schools and for bus drivers to clean their buses. The department has included budget flexibility to allow for additional spending on school cleaning as RCEs/CSAP better understand potential needs within their schools.

In addition to cleaning and sanitizing, personal protective equipment (PPE) helps to keep students and staff safe. The initial estimate to provide PPE to schools for the fiscal year was \$5.25 million. Based on the demand and utilization of masks and hand sanitizer reported during the first two weeks of school, the department has allocated an additional \$1.5 million in federal funding to increase the availability of PPE and other related supplies. This will ensure that students and staff have access to the supplies they need.

In advance of the start of school in Fall 2020, RCEs/CSAP assessed the ventilation system in every school to ensure it was working properly and routine maintenance was

performed. Three additional assessments are being undertaken this school year to ensure systems are performing at optimal capacity.

COVID-19 has not only impacted the learning environment, but it has also had an effect on student learning. To help students that may need additional supports, the department is allocating \$4.08 million to pilot three programs for the next 3 years that have a proven track record of assisting students with both math and literacy, including:

- \$2.1 million for math programing for grades 3 to 10
- \$1.02 million for literacy programing for grades primary to 3
- \$960,000 for a writing program for grades 4 to 6

These programs are delivered using technology, which will make them especially useful and effective if the province moves to either a blended or at-home learning model. Further, these programs will help focus on areas where students may need to catch up on any unfinished learning outcomes as a result of the disruption to the system in spring 2020 and any future disruptions, if they occur.

During the Spring 2020 at-home learning period, access to food was a significant issue for some students and families. Early feedback from schools suggests increased demand for food programs and increased food insecurity.

The department has added \$500,000 to the School Healthy Eating Program (SHEP) to stock school food pantries, provide additional school lunches and increase food offerings. To be ready for another at-home learning scenario, the department has created an Emergency Food Response Fund by investing \$1 million in a partnership with a provincial non-profit organization. The funds would be available to quickly respond to the food needs of students with schools closed.

The department also worked with the regulated child care sector to ensure that provision of services can continue safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the closure of regulated child care and approved family child care homes in Spring 2020, the province spent \$30 million on wages and operational expenses in addition to regular grant funding to ensure these programs were ready to re-open for families when and where needed. The province is also providing all regulated child care centres and Family Home Child Care Agencies with COVID-19 specific supplies such as hand sanitizer, masks, and gloves, until at least June 31, 2021, at no cost to the providers.

Together, these steps to address the impact of COVID-19 are aimed at supporting students and staff and ensuring their ongoing safety and wellbeing.

Departmental Financial Summary

Departmental Expenses Summary (\$ thousands)			
<u>Programs and Services</u>	<u>2020-2021</u> <u>Estimate</u>	<u>2020-2021</u> <u>Forecast</u>	<u>2021-2022</u> <u>Estimate</u>
Senior Management	1,194	1,050	1,052
Strategic Policy, RCE Liaison and Research	3,815	3,731	4,133
Early Learning	53,225	58,735	62,900
Childcare and Licensing	78,244	90,286	69,708
Centre for Equity in Achievement and Well-Being	3,834	2,335	3,596
Education Innovation Programs and Services	15,569	15,020	15,528
Student Services and Equity	2,220	2,063	2,152
African Canadian Services	5,981	5,865	5,981
Mi'kmaq Services	1,093	1,021	1,093
French Programs and Services	10,187	12,306	10,774
Corporate Services	4,531	4,955	4,533
Public Education Funding	1,133,483	1,173,942	1,239,554
Teachers' Pension	92,063	90,063	96,063
School Capital - Amortization	73,863	74,852	74,327
Total Departmental Expenses	1,479,302	1,536,224	1,591,394
Ordinary Recoveries	24,514	31,560	24,571
<u>Funded Staff (# of FTEs)</u>			
Department Funded Staff	207.8	189.8	207.8
Note: For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2 For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1			