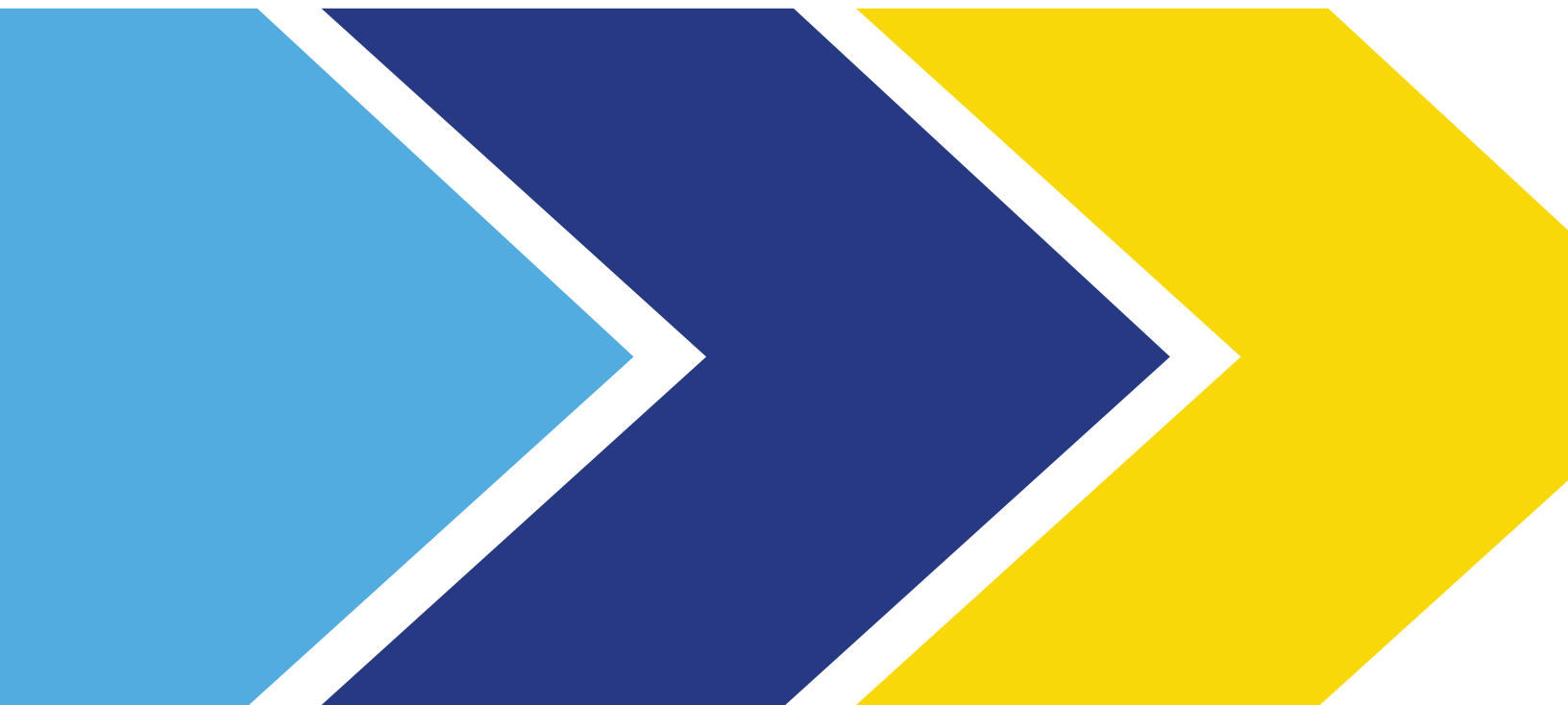


BUSINESS PLAN

2022-23



Education & Early Childhood
Development



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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 2022-23.

This year, we will continue to implement policies and administer programs that benefit all Nova Scotians.

We recognize the important role of child care and early learning to the success of our province, so we will continue to take steps to implement the Nova Scotia-Canada Canada-wide Early Learning Child Care Agreement. The agreement focuses on affordability, accessibility, inclusion, and quality and reduces child care fees to \$10 a day on average by 2026.

We 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 with a priority on achievement and well-being of all students.

Beginning this school year, the department is focusing on renewing and updating curriculum. The goal is to work with teachers/administrators to examine the current curriculum and identify opportunities that promote student success inside and outside the classroom and later in life.

We continue to prioritize inclusive education, and our government is committed to ensuring students have access to the best education possible. This includes an additional investment of \$15 million in addition to the \$60 million over the past four years to support inclusive education. These investments helped create 890 additional teaching and student support positions.

As part of the work on inclusive education, 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.

For over two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has required the education system to react swiftly. We have taken the steps needed to keep our school communities safe and provide the necessary supports to our students. We have shifted to at-home learning as needed, and we have provided the necessary tools for our staff and students to engage in meaningful ways both inside and outside the classroom. We have continued to focus on student equity and supported students and families disproportionately impacted by the pandemic through food, technology, and other supports.

We have promoted new ways of learning and embraced the concept of outdoor learning and all of the ways that teachers and students can use nature and the outdoor world to advance their learning.

Working with health professionals, we have enabled a secure and confidential online platform for ongoing virtual mental health counselling and other specialized interventions.

Moving forward this year, we are committed to continuing engagement with key stakeholders and partners. Our goal is to receive more local voice in our school system. As we advance the deliverables in my mandate letter, I will ensure that teachers, school staff, students and families are engaged in meaningful ways.

Our government has created and will continue to provide a Healthy Schools Grant for all public schools. A \$2 million Healthy Schools Fund has been created to support efforts to strengthen student well-being. The Healthy Schools Grant provides \$5,000 plus \$1 per student to each school; it creates more opportunities for physical activity and assists with building school connectedness, community, and sense of safety/belonging while supporting academic achievement and student success.

Skilled Trades Centres continue to be a priority. In 2022-23 the department will increase and diversify enrollment in skilled trades programming. The department is establishing a broader skilled trades program that includes options beyond the traditional trades.

In closing, I want to thank all those who are involved and engaged in helping Nova Scotians succeed and thrive in our education system and in early learning.

Honourable Becky Druhan
Minister, Education and Early Childhood Development

Improving Early Childhood and P-12 Education

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The work of the department in 2022-23 will focus on supporting and improving outcomes for all students related to their well-being, learning, and achievement and creating a more culturally responsive and inclusive education system. In particular, there will be a focus on the impacts of the pandemic and continued support for students.

Implementation of the *Inclusive Education Policy* and recommendations from the *Students First Report* are a key focus of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Funding continues to be used to support staff already in the system and to ensure the system is making the best use of the 890 new FTEs that have been introduced to support inclusive education. Enhanced access to collaborative and professional learning opportunities are also available for staff working in the education system.

Some specific programs and initiatives aimed at supporting the implementation of inclusive education in 2022-23 include:

- Developing a full report on the implementation of recommendations from the *Students First Report* for public release in early 2022;
- Ongoing work of the developmental evaluation of the *Inclusive Education Policy* and implementation of the recommendations based on the evaluation;
- Continuing to invest in classroom supports, including meeting staff-student ratios and adding to newly created positions that have shown to be beneficial;
- Continuing to work with the system to ensure that new resources and technologies are successfully used to support inclusive learning environments;
- Developing and implementing an Anti-Racism Anti-Discrimination leadership module;
- Ongoing professional development and training opportunities/resources for all school staff, including specific options for mental health literacy training;
- Outlining a continued plan for the implementation of inclusive education through the recommendations of *Students First* and the *Inclusive Education Policy*;
- Reviewing provincial policies using the lens of the *Students First Report* and the *Inclusive Education Policy*; and

- Reviewing the outcomes of the equity assessment of Individual Program Plans, which is currently underway and being led by the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives.

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. There is an additional investment of \$15 million in the budget for 2022-23 to support inclusive education and meeting the recommendations in the *Students First Report*. An additional \$100,000 has also been approved to provide Mental Health Toolkits for schools in Spring 2022.

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.

STUDENT WELL-BEING AND ACHIEVEMENT

Education and Early Childhood Development is committed to improving school programs, services, and policies to support students' well-being and academic achievement. 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). It will be important to continue to closely monitor the impacts the pandemic has had on students' and continue to adapt to the needs of students. Some specific projects underway are listed below.

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

The framework will include guidance on how to incorporate opportunities for physical activity and movement across the curriculum into other subject areas besides just Physical Education.

[Healthy Schools Grants](#) – Healthy Schools Grants have been established and provided to all public schools. The grant provides \$5,000 plus \$1 per student to each school and will assist with building school connectedness and community and a sense of safety and belonging that is fundamental to inclusive education, while supporting academic achievement and student success. Increasing fitness and physical activity opportunities and reducing sedentary behaviour also supports student mental health and wellness.

[Student Success Survey](#) – The student survey was administered students from grades 4-12 participating in 2019 and 2021. Survey administration in 2021 was interrupted due to COVID-19 and the response rate was not high enough to publish provincial results. The survey was not administered in 2020 due to COVID-19. The survey focuses on

students' experiences in Nova Scotia schools from both a well-being and academic perspective and includes opportunities for students to provide first-voice experiences with racism and discrimination. The information from the survey is helping to inform Student Success Planning. A third administration of the survey is planned for 2022.

Student Success Planning and Regional Improvement Plans – All schools are required to set targets for improvement and to submit annual reports to their RCE/CSAP 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.

The RCEs/CSAP are also required to develop regional improvement plans to support further alignment around access to services and quality learning provincially while developing more focused and practical plans that directly support school improvement and daily work in our schools.

Through this process, schools and regions 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 who have been historically marginalized and racialized.

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;
- Continuing to operate and explore with partners expansion of 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;
- Increasing the equity and diversity of staff within RCEs/CSAP, to grow system leadership and accountability;
- 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; and
- Facilitating cultural leadership and mentorship opportunities for students.

PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAM

Continuing in the 2022-23 school year, the department is focusing on renewing and updating curriculum in the following areas: financial literacy, civics, Netukulimk and environmental stewardship, physical activity and healthy living and diversity, including education on Residential Schools. The goal is to work with teachers/administrators to examine the current curriculum and identify opportunities to enhance the practical life skills development necessary to set our students up for success. It may mean introducing new course options where necessary or revamping existing courses, but always with the full engagement of teachers/administrators. New resources may be added to support these subject areas.

Financial literacy – Personal finance skills are important whether students are going onto post secondary education or entering the workforce. The department will be updating the resources and outcomes throughout the curriculum which will include new career/life-based courses.

Civics – Civics learning will be enhanced and expanded and include the introduction of new resources to support this.

Netukulimk and Environmental Stewardship – New curriculum outcomes and resources are being introduced for Grade 7 and 8. Other grades will be reviewed to identify opportunities to enhance curriculum and add resources.

Physical activity and healthy living – Opportunities will be created to increase physical activity and healthy learning opportunities beyond the core physical education courses.

Diversity, including education on Residential schools – The Treaty Education Framework is under development from P-12 to expand beyond social studies, ensuring the learning is throughout the entire curriculum. The history and culture of our students will be also used to expand inclusive learning opportunities through new or updated essential outcomes and resources.

African Nova Scotian Education Framework (ANSED) will be finalized following a consultation process. ANSED will guide the development of new or updated curriculum and learning resources, educational programming, and parental information modules, ensuring the knowledges, histories, and cultures of African Nova Scotians are embedded to inspire achievement and well-being. ANSED will also be used to support the educational system in identifying and eliminating barriers to equitable access and involvement.

Healthy Living – The department will make it a priority to educate high school students about healthy eating and cooking by introducing a revised Provincial School Food and Nutrition Policy and establishing baseline data on what school healthy eating programs exist provincewide. This information will help identify any educational opportunities to familiarize students with the importance of healthy eating that could be included as part of these programs, or any future expansion of programs (e.g. lunch 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 2022-23 the department will increase and diversify enrollment in skilled trades programming.

The department will increase uptake of existing skilled trades programming and is establishing a broader skilled trades program that includes options beyond the traditional trades. This approach and focus will help to double the students enrolled in skilled trades by drawing in students who may otherwise have not been interested in pursuing skilled trades. It will also help to diversify enrollment by 40%.

The following actions will be undertaken in 2022-23:

- Develop a resource/marketing package for grade 7 and 8 students and their families which will include a clearer narrative around skilled trades and the associated labour and income opportunities available to them with a particular skill set; and
- Provide grade 7 and 8 students with some hands-on experience with skilled trades (e.g. 'Try a Trade' program from Skills Canada).

Skilled trades and experiential learning enable students to develop competencies reflecting the attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary to meet the ongoing demands of life, work, and learning in trades related careers through engaging in trades and related learning opportunities in safe and relevant hands-on ways within the public-school program.

EARLY YEARS

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.

[Early Learning and Child Care Agreement](#) – In July 2021, the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCCA) was signed, which will provide \$605 million over the next five years. The agreement focuses on affordability, accessibility, inclusion, and quality.

The Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care agreement aims to:

- reduce child care fees by an average of 25% now and another 25% on average by December 31, 2022;
- ensure child care fees are, on average, \$10 per day by 2026;

- create at least 9,500 new early learning and child care spaces by March 31, 2025, including new spaces for infants and toddlers and a new three-year-old early learning program with priority access given to vulnerable and equity-seeking families; and
- enhance before and after care options at schools.

[Quality Matters in Nova Scotia's Early Learning and Child Care System](#) - High quality early learning and child care programs have a significant impact on the trajectory of young children. As Nova Scotia expands opportunities for children to access these programs, quality must be at the forefront. Quality Matters is a provincially funded quality assessment initiative that was implemented in 2018 in all funded child care centres.

Beginning in 2022, Nova Scotia will use Quality Matters as the overarching approach to quality for all early learning and child care programs. All programs that are part of the early learning and child care system will be required to participate in a Quality Matters Program. The Province's objective is to support and advance quality in early learning and child care programs. Working towards this objective, EECD will:

- refine the Quality Matters programs used in licensed child care programs;
- create Quality Matters for family home child care programs;
- create Quality Matters for wrap-around programs;
- create Quality Matters for school based early learning programs; and
- support regulated child care programs and Pre-primary programs in implementing Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework.

This approach to quality will have a positive impact for children, staff, families, and programs as all programs will participate in a consistent quality standards program, built from a foundation of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

[Early Childhood Educator Workforce Development](#) - Qualified early childhood educators (ECEs) are in high demand across the province to fill current, future, and projected workforce needs of employers.

The new Workforce Strategy called "Excellence in ECE", with financial support from the Government of Canada totaling \$10.9 million will result in higher wages for ECEs and free tuition, books and bursaries for hundreds of ECEs.

Over the next several years, the department will build on current successes and continue to focus on strengthening and enhancing professional development opportunities for the early learning and child 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. Working towards this objective, the department will:

- develop and implement a compensation framework inclusive of a wage grid and benefits plan;
- develop and implement a regulated certification system for ECEs in Nova Scotia; and,
- increase staff in licensed child care and early learning programs who have at least a diploma level of education.

Professional Development - Professional learning and ongoing development for ECEs is crucial to ensuring ECEs continue to grow and learn throughout their career. Nova Scotia currently supports the professional development of staff in early learning and child care programs on topics related to provincial priorities, such as the Nova Scotia Early Learning Curriculum Framework. The Early Learning Curriculum is a resource that guides educators' practices in licensed child care and Pre-primary programs.

In 2021-22, through the Canada-Nova Scotia Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (ELCCA), the department committed to making enhancements to the Early Learning Curriculum Framework and Educators' Guide, which will reflect Nova Scotia's vision for an early learning and child care system based in inclusion, diversity, and equity. The Province's objective is to support educators and care providers by providing opportunities and access to high quality professional learning related to the updated Early Learning Curriculum Framework. Working towards this objective, the department will develop professional development related to:

- culturally responsive practice, equity and inclusion in early learning and child care programs; and
- outdoor play for regulated and school-based early learning programs.

Departmental Financial Summary

Departmental Expenses Summary			
(\$ thousands)			
<u>Programs and Services</u>	<u>2021 -2022</u> <u>Estimate</u>	<u>2021-2022</u> <u>Forecast</u>	<u>2022-2023</u> <u>Estimate</u>
Senior Management	1,052	1,409	1,121
Strategic Policy, RCE Liaison and Research	4,133	3,525	4,303
Early Learning	62,900	109,525	178,527
Childcare and Licensing	69,708	71,166	74,338
Centre for Equity in Achievement and Well-Being	3,596	2,734	3,719
Education Innovation Programs and Services	15,528	14,092	15,670
Student Services and Equity	2,152	2,013	2,223
African Canadian Services	5,981	6,141	6,246
Mi'kmaq Services	1,093	1,140	1,369
French Programs and Services	10,774	11,475	10,844
Corporate Services	4,533	3,989	4,734
Public Education Funding	1,239,554	1,240,935	1,270,014
Teachers' Pension	96,063	97,063	98,063
School Capital – Amortization	74,327	75,830	80,109
Total - Departmental Expenses	1,591,394	1,641,037	1,751,280
Ordinary Recoveries	24,751	73,167	137,929
Funded Staff (# of FTEs)			
Department Funded Staff	207.8	192.1	212.8

Note:
For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2
For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1