

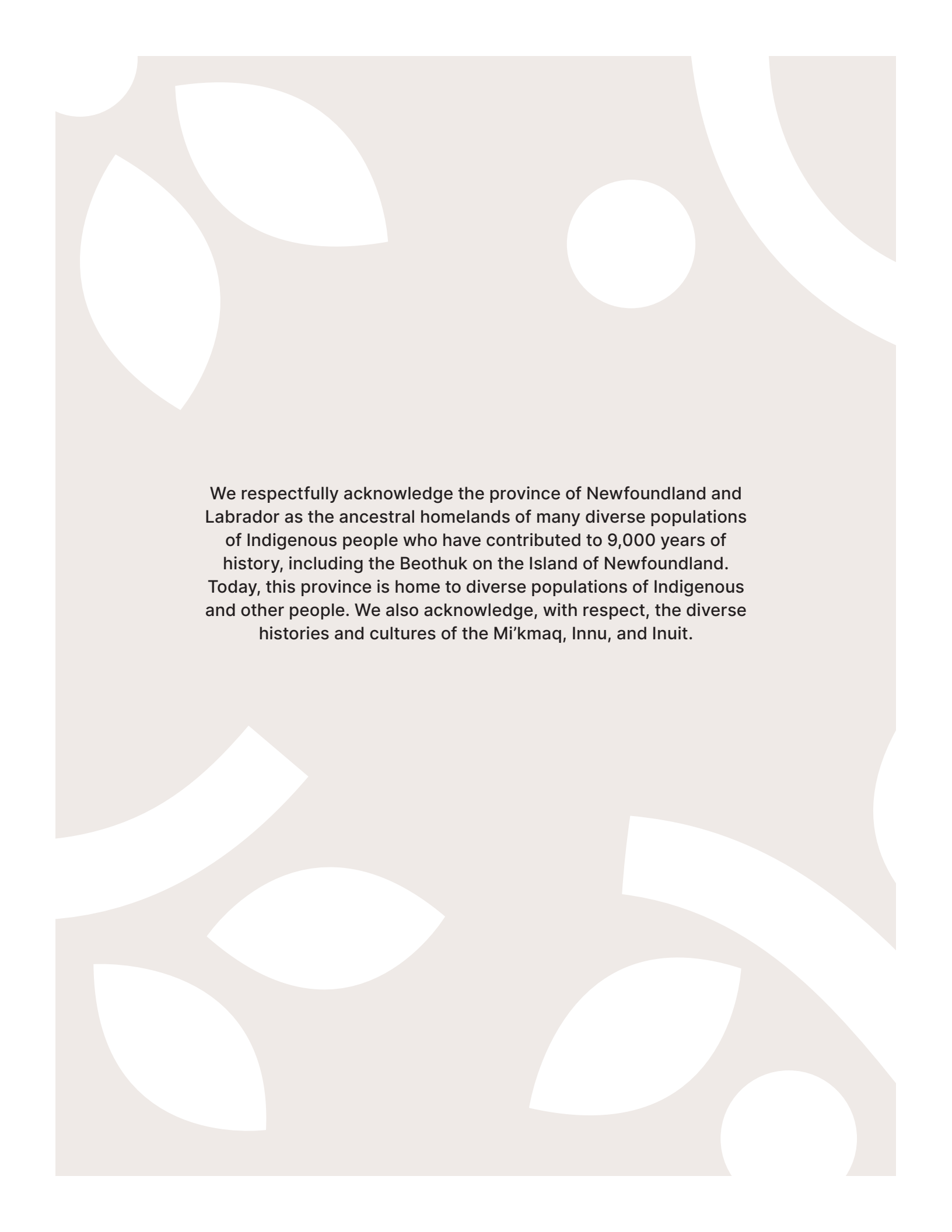
A Vision for the Future:

Transforming and Modernizing Education



**Final
Report**

Education Accord NL



We respectfully acknowledge the province of Newfoundland and Labrador as the ancestral homelands of many diverse populations of Indigenous people who have contributed to 9,000 years of history, including the Beothuk on the Island of Newfoundland. Today, this province is home to diverse populations of Indigenous and other people. We also acknowledge, with respect, the diverse histories and cultures of the Mi'kmaq, Innu, and Inuit.

July 22, 2025

The Honourable John Hogan, KC
Premier

Confederation Building
St. John's, NL

The Honourable Bernard Davis
Minister of Education

Confederation Building
St. John's, NL

Dear Premier Hogan and Minister Davis,

On January 25, 2024, it was announced that we had been appointed as the Co-Chairs of the Education Accord NL. We were given the responsibility of developing a 10-Year Education Accord for Newfoundland and Labrador, outlining strategic actions and recommendations to be implemented throughout its lifespan. We submitted an Interim Report detailing the first phase of our work on December 20, 2024.

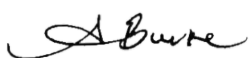
On behalf of the Education Accord NL, we are pleased to present the completed Education Accord NL Report (March 2025): *A Vision for the Future: Transforming and Modernizing Education*. This report marks the culmination of our efforts to reimagine and enhance the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador. It reflects our shared commitment to fostering improved educational outcomes while aligning with the Provincial Government's vision of becoming one of Canada's healthiest provinces by 2031.

The key findings and Calls to Transformation in this report provide a comprehensive roadmap to improving education outcomes across the province. By prioritizing inclusive learning environments, enhancing educator support, modernizing curricula, and expanding access to technology, we aim to equip learners with the critical skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex world. Strengthening early childhood education, improving learner well-being, and fostering stronger partnerships between schools and communities will ensure that every learner—regardless of background or ability—has the opportunity to succeed.

Through extensive collaboration, research, and community engagement, and the focused work of four Pillar Committees under the oversight of the Advisory Board and Education Accord Co-Chairs, we have identified key Calls to Transformation to modernize and strengthen our education system. By equipping learners with the skills and knowledge needed for a rapidly evolving world, we aim to contribute to both individual success and the broader economic and social well-being of our province.

On behalf of all members of the Advisory Board and Pillar Committees, we express our gratitude for Government's support throughout this initiative and look forward to seeing these recommendations inform future policy and action. Together, we can ensure a more equitable, innovative, and forward-thinking education system for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. Anne Burke
Co-Chair, Education Accord
Advisory Team



Dr. Karen Goodnough
Co-Chair, Education Accord
Advisory Team



**Education
Accord NL**

Abbreviations

ABE: Adult Basic Education

AI: Artificial Intelligence

ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

AP: Advanced Placement

ASIST: Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

CDLI: Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation

CNA: College of the North Atlantic

CPR: Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

CSFP: Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador

D.A.R.E.: Drug Abuse Resistance Education

EAL: English as an Additional Language

ECE: Early Childhood Educator

EDI: Early Development Instrument

EECD: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

ELCC: early learning and child care

ELCD: Early Learning and Childhood Development

FAMA: Department of Families and Affordability

FRC: Family Resource Centre

HCS: Department of Health and Community Services

HSHS: Healthy Students Healthy Schools

IEP: Individual Education Plan

IRT: Instructional Resource Teachers

ISTE: International Society for Technology in Education

JPS: Department of Justice and Public Safety

LEARN: Literacy Enrichment and Academic Readiness for Newcomers

MDI: Middle Development Instrument

MOUs: Memoranda of Understanding

NLAOT: Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Occupational Therapists

NLESD: Newfoundland and Labrador English School District

NLPL: Newfoundland and Labrador Public Libraries

NLTA: Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OH&S: Occupational Health and Safety

OT: Occupational Therapy

OTs: Occupational Therapists

PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment

PL: professional learning

Pre-K: Pre-Kindergarten

PRMA: Provincial Reading and Mathematics Assessment

RCMP: Royal Canadian Mounted Police

RNC: Royal Newfoundland Constabulary

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

SDOL: social determinants of learning

SEL: social-emotional learning

SHPLC: School Health Promotion Liaison Consultant

SRO: School Resource Officers

STEM: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

STEAM: science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics

UDL: Universal Design for Learning

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WHMIS: Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System

YDI: Youth Development Instrument

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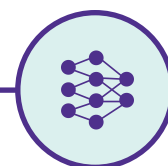
Key Messages

Key Messages from the Education Accord NL



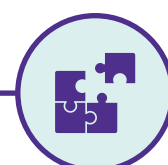
Transforming Education for Every Learner

Shifting toward a truly learner-centric model will enhance the educational experience across all sectors by recognizing and responding to the whole learner—understanding their needs, strengths, and challenges at every stage of their learning journey. In a province with a declining youth population, it is essential that every learner receives the necessary support to succeed, prioritizing inclusivity and opportunities for all.



Modernizing Education for a Responsive Learning System

Education must evolve to meet the needs of today's learners by developing an adaptable, competency-based curriculum, upholding professional standards, and implementing comprehensive assessment practices. A Learning System that continuously evaluates educational outcomes will enhance learner engagement and outcomes while enabling higher-order planning and decision-making to ensure responsiveness to the evolving needs of all learners.



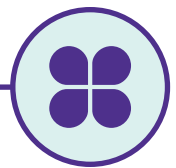
Strengthening Connections and Collaboration Across the Education System

Action must be taken to integrate early learning, K-12, post-secondary, and adult education more effectively within the broader education and health systems. Newfoundland and Labrador is uniquely positioned to foster collaboration across all sectors of education by adopting an Ecosystem Approach that enhances learning outcomes for all learners. A cohesive and nourishing education system is built through strong communication and collaboration among educators, families/caregivers, policymakers, communities, and all partners. This genuine collaboration will not only ensure a seamless learning journey for all individuals but also improve learner outcomes and foster efficiencies and shared resources that benefit early learning, K-12, post-secondary education, and adult literacy programs.



Championing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

A strong and inclusive education system—spanning early learning, K-12, post-secondary, and adult education—empowers learners, educators, and communities by embracing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. A shared vision of success will foster a thriving, sustainable society.



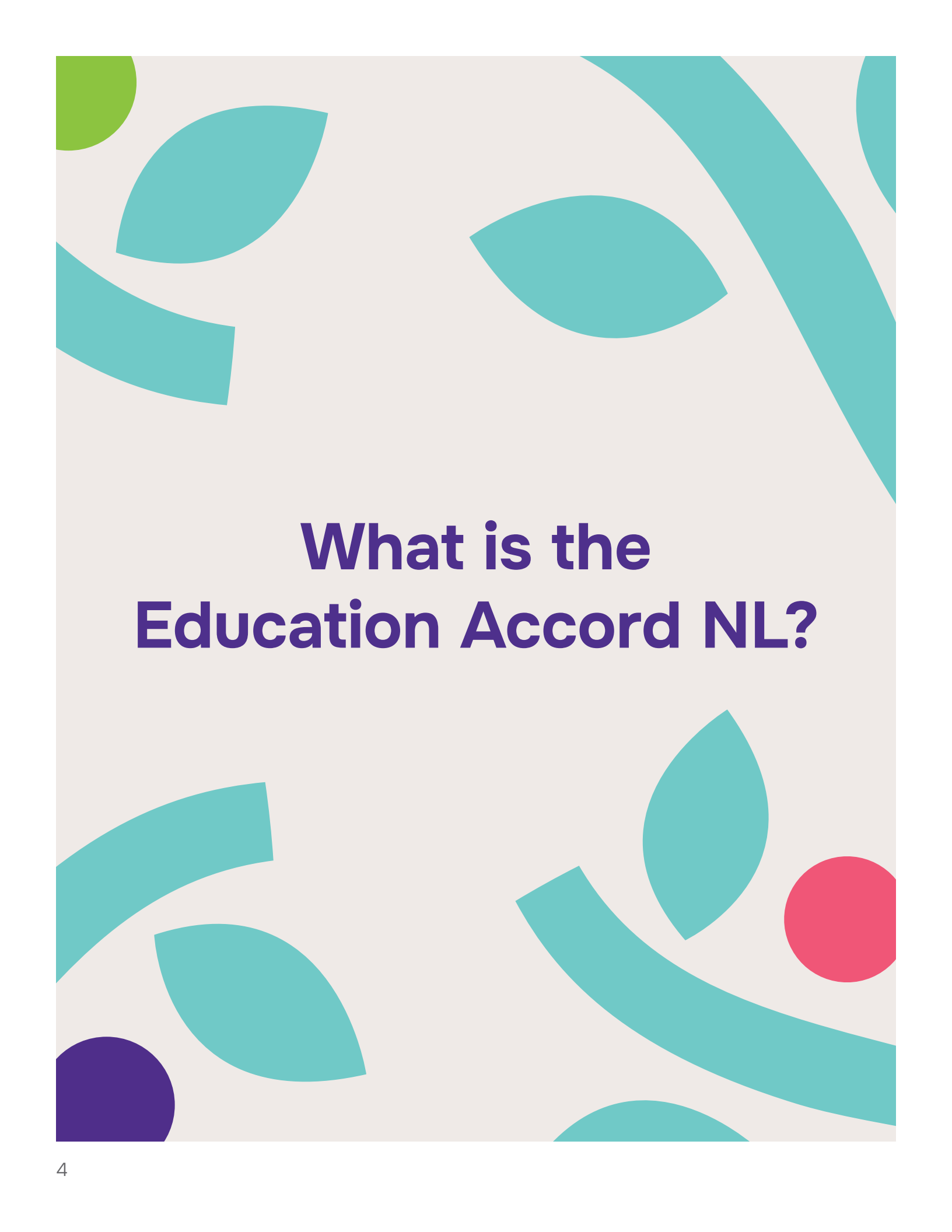
Indigenous Education

Education for all learners must be culturally relevant, inclusive, and equitable, deeply honouring Indigenous peoples' rich heritage, languages, and traditions. Creating an environment where Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and ways of knowing and being are part of the curriculum is essential for Indigenous learners, and all learners. This integration ensures that Indigenous learners are fully supported to reach their potential while fostering understanding, respect, and empathy across diverse cultures. Meaningful collaboration with Indigenous communities, educators, and elders is key to developing a holistic, strength-based approach to learning that enriches the educational experience for everyone, preparing all learners for a successful and empowered future.



Valuing the Early Learning and Child Care Workforce for High-Quality Education

Early learning and child care (ELCC) professionals play a crucial role in shaping children's futures and deserve recognition, fair compensation, and supportive work environments that allow them to thrive. A high-quality early learning system is accessible, affordable, and culturally responsive, ensuring qualified staff foster positive learning experiences for all children.

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What is the Education Accord NL?

Education Accord NL

The Education Accord NL represents a significant initiative by the provincial government, and a milestone for Newfoundland and Labrador, offering a comprehensive 10-year roadmap filled with actionable goals and calls to action. By aligning educational priorities with the changing needs of the province, the Education Accord NL aims to establish a robust framework that fosters individual growth and societal advancement for the next ten years and beyond.

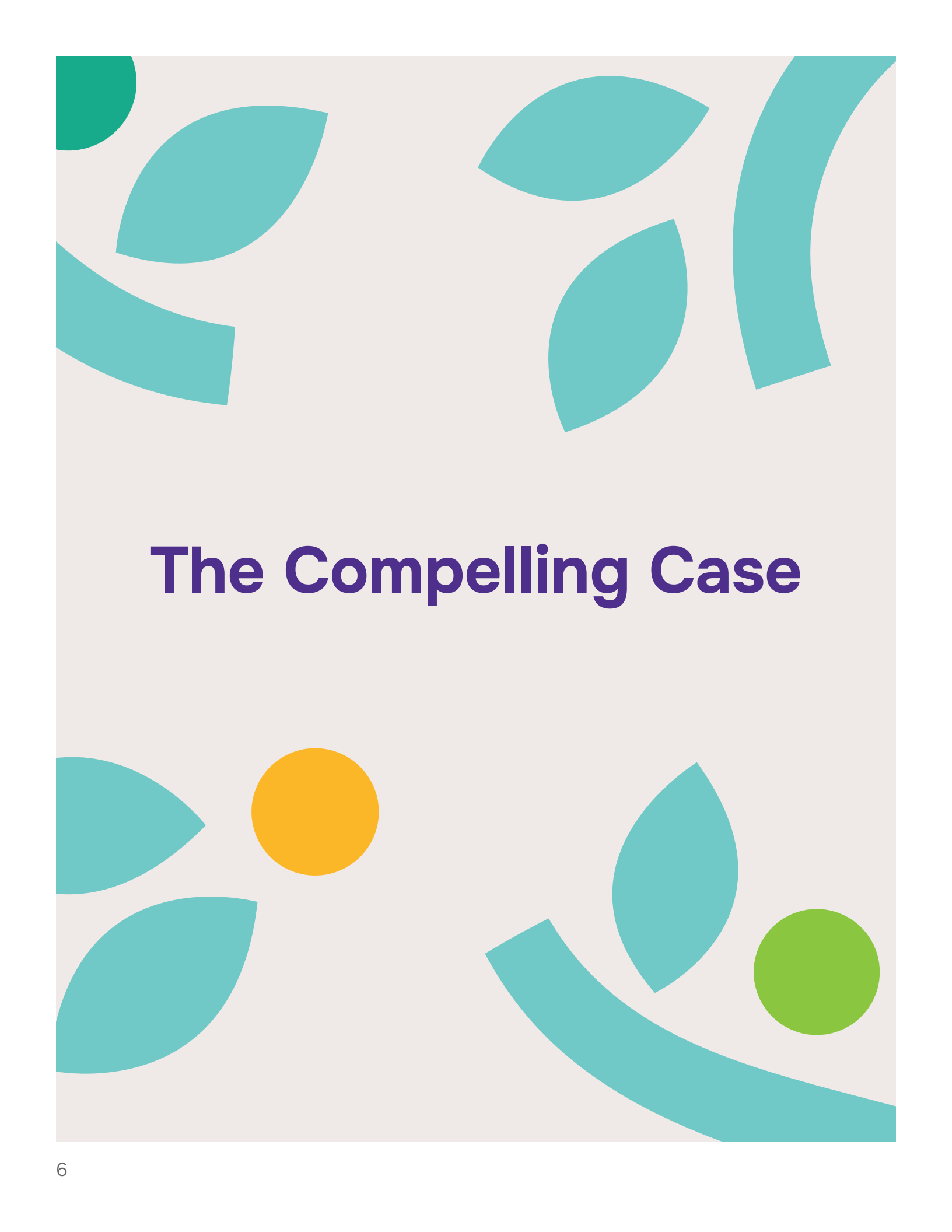
Through a focus on educational outcomes, lifelong learning, and well-being, Education Accord NL seeks to enhance the social and economic well-being of children, youth, and adult learners, thereby ensuring they are equipped to grow and thrive in an ever-evolving society and within a competitive global economy.

Our Logo

As a symbol of harmony, strength and renewal, the tree represents the Education Accord NL's plan and vision taking root. The trunk is composed of four streams, representing the four Accord pillars. From those four pillars, a series of interconnecting branches and leaves highlight collaboration. The presence of colourful berries shows the tree in full bloom, with a section of the branches and leaves forming a subtle shape of Newfoundland and Labrador, symbolizing the bright potential in education transformation and the positive impact it will have on the diverse people of our province.

Education Accord NL envisions a future where learners flourish at every stage of life and learning.



The background is a light beige color. It is decorated with several stylized teal-colored leaves and circular shapes. In the top left, there is a small teal circle. Below it, a large teal leaf points towards the top right. To the right of this, another large teal leaf points towards the top left. Further right, a teal curved shape is visible. In the bottom left, a teal leaf points towards the top right, and below it, another teal leaf points towards the top right. In the bottom right, a teal leaf points towards the top left, and below it, a teal curved shape is visible. A large orange circle is located in the middle left, and a green circle is located in the middle right.

The Compelling Case

The Compelling Case

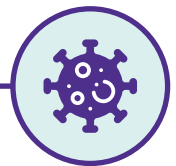
It is critical that Newfoundland and Labrador has an education system that supports a learner's continuous journey from early childhood to post-secondary and beyond. Such a system sets the foundation for young children to develop the necessary cognitive, emotional, and social skills for future success:

- It fosters academic success for all learners;
- promotes individual and societal well-being;
- promotes economic benefits to create a skilled workforce; and
- ensures learning environments are equitable and inclusive, thus reducing learning gaps.

In addition, our education system needs to be learner-centric. This approach focuses on the needs, abilities, interests and learning preferences of learners, fostering personalization, active learning, learner empowerment, and holistic development. It is essential that the education system prepares learners to understand and engage with complex global challenges. By equipping learners with the knowledge and skills to address issues such as environmental sustainability, social equity, and technological innovation, we can ensure they are better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the future. This approach not only strengthens their academic and professional capabilities, but also encourages them to contribute meaningfully to their communities and the world at large.

While Newfoundland and Labrador is adopting many policies and practices to nurture a well-educated, healthy population, we have to address the current, complex realities and demands on our education system to ensure our learning environments are robust, responsive, and transformative. The following insights reflect the realities of the current education system, informed by stakeholder engagement and research, and serve as crucial reminders of why the conversations emerging from the Accord are both timely and essential.

Challenges



COVID-19 Learning Loss

The onset of COVID-19 impacted learning and learner well-being across all educational levels (Center for Education Policy Research, 2023; Sumanac-Johnson, 2025; UNESCO, 2021). The K-12 system was negatively impacted in many areas, with equity-deserving learners being impacted the most. Moreover, the rapid shift to remote learning highlighted many inequities for children and adult learners, with many having limited access to

technological resources and support. Mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and stress were exacerbated during the pandemic for children and adults alike, while post-secondary learners experienced delays in graduation, career interruptions, and financial strain (Donnelly & Patrinos, 2022; Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2022). The possible long-term impacts of these COVID-19 challenges are still unknown.



Chronic Absenteeism

Newfoundland and Labrador public schools are experiencing high levels of absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism occurs when a learner misses 10% or 18 or more school days in an academic year. In the 2022–2023 school year, two-thirds of secondary learners were absent, reflecting a 50% increase from 2018–2019. Alarming, the rate for elementary learners doubled in this time frame (Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, 2023). The causes of absenteeism are complex and may be a result of many factors, such as academic stress, a lack of engagement in schools, family or school-based stress, health issues, a poor school climate, and unstable housing, to name a few. The undesirable outcomes of chronic absenteeism are poor academic performance, increased high school dropout rates, poor health outcomes, and interrupted socioemotional development.



Adult Literacy Rates

Generally, Canada has strong adult literacy rates compared to other countries. In the 2022, the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies or PIAAC (OECD, 2024), Newfoundland and Labrador demonstrated a unique profile when compared to other Canadian provinces. Newfoundland and Labrador performed above the OECD average in literacy and adaptive problem solving, placing it in the mid-range among provinces for these areas. Adults in the province showed sound reading and comprehension skills. However, Newfoundland and Labrador was the only Canadian province to score below the OECD average in numeracy, ranking lowest in the country for mathematical reasoning and quantitative problem solving. In contrast, provinces like British Columbia and Alberta led nationally across all skill areas. These results highlight Newfoundland and Labrador's strengths in reading and problem solving, while also pointing to numeracy as an area needing targeted support.

To support literacy and numeracy needs of adult learners, Newfoundland and Labrador offers programs like Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Foundational Literacy through private colleges and community centres. These services are tailored to local needs across different regions. Low literacy can make daily life more difficult, limit job prospects, and negatively affect health and social participation.



Population Demographics

Newfoundland and Labrador has an aging population. The number of adults aged 65 or older increased from 19.4% of the population in 2016 to 23.6% in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2021). This makes Newfoundland and Labrador the country's oldest and most rapidly aging population. With this shift in demographics, more emphasis will need to be placed on career upskilling, adult education, lifelong learning programs and supports, and inter-generational learning. More educational supports for older adults will foster holistic aging, thus promoting cognitive health, job competitiveness, personal fulfilment, and health and well-being. While the adult population is aging, there has also been a reduction in the number of children under the age of 15 in the province. In 2021, children aged 0 to 14 represented 13.4% of the total population, down from 16.3% in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2021). This decline has implications for school infrastructure, resource allocation, community viability, funding, and staff employment. These reductions may be especially significant for rural areas of the province.

Figures 1–3 on the following pages highlight demographic changes for ten regions in the province from 1990–2024, according to Statistics Canada.

Of the ten regions, only the Avalon had an increase in population. The biggest reductions in population were the South Coast (-49%), Northern Peninsula (-47%), Burin (-40%), and Notre Dame Bay (-37%). (See Figure 1).

Massive reductions in the number of children occurred in the Northern Peninsula (-75%), South Coast (-74%), Burin (-71%), and Notre Dame Bay (-70%). Even on the Avalon, the reduction in children was -32%. (See Figure 2).

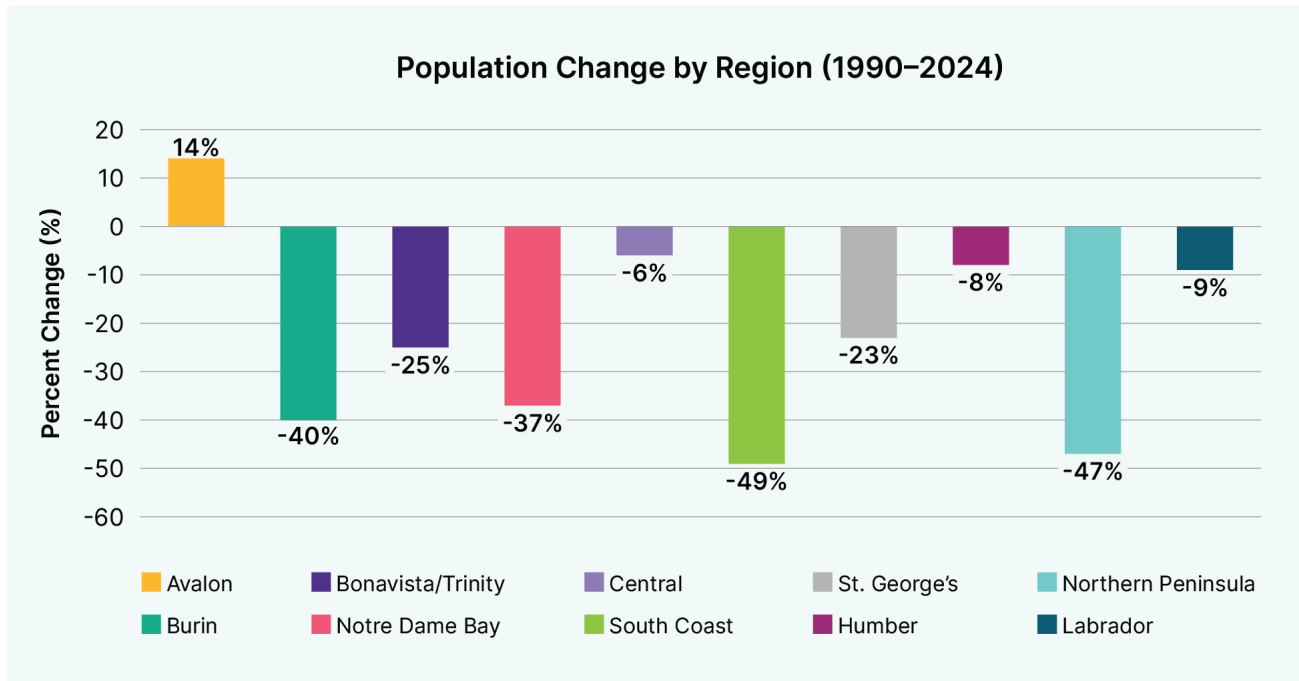


Figure 1: Percent Change in Population by Region (1990–2024).
 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a)

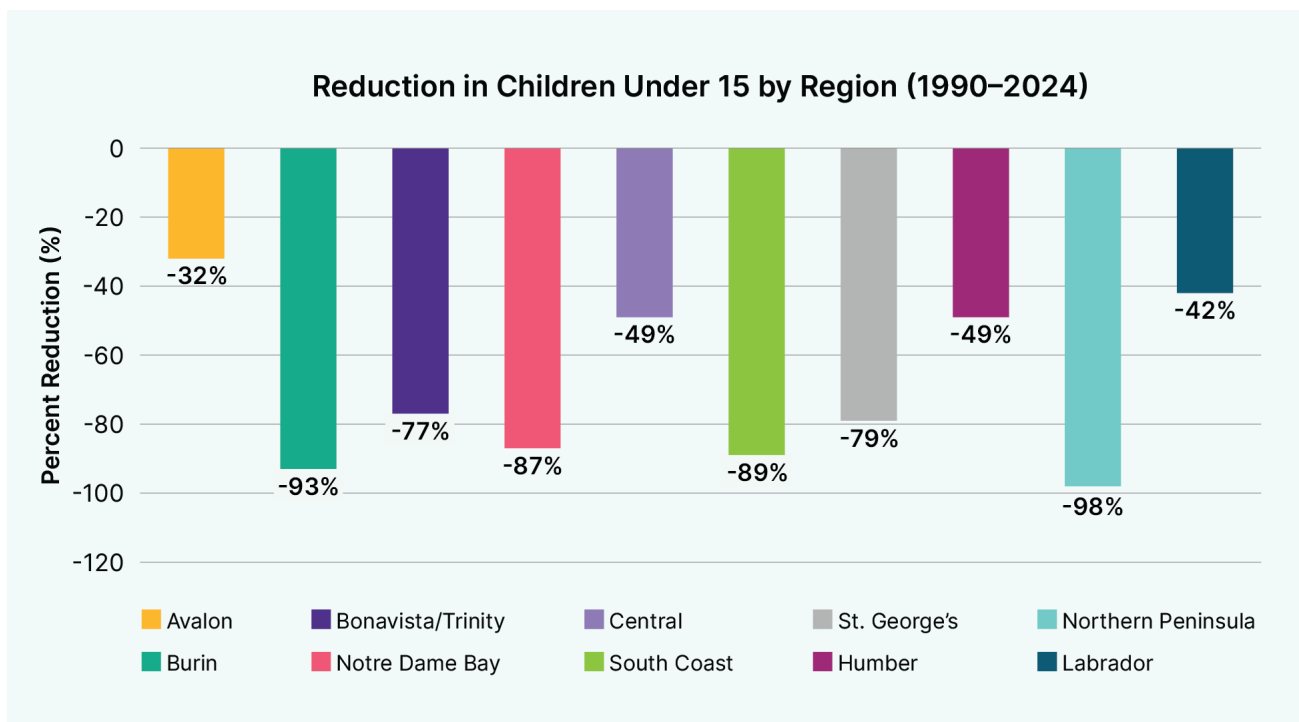


Figure 2: Percent Reduction in Children Under 15 Years of Age by Region (1990–2024).
 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a)

Every region of the province has had **massive increases in the number of seniors**, particularly Labrador (299%), Central (147%), and Humber (146%). (See Figure 3).

The number of persons over 65 years of age has more than doubled over the past thirty years, with increases from 106% in the Avalon region to 147% in the Central region (Statistics Canada, 2024a). The lowest increase is in the Bonavista/Trinity area at 76%, and the greatest increase is in Labrador at 299% (even though the increase in Labrador was from a very small starting number in 1990) (Statistics Canada, 2024a). Over the next two decades, the number of older adults is expected to rise steadily. With aging comes a higher prevalence of chronic conditions, which suggests that pressure on the healthcare system will intensify unless significant measures are implemented to address this trend (Thirgood & Egulu, 2024).

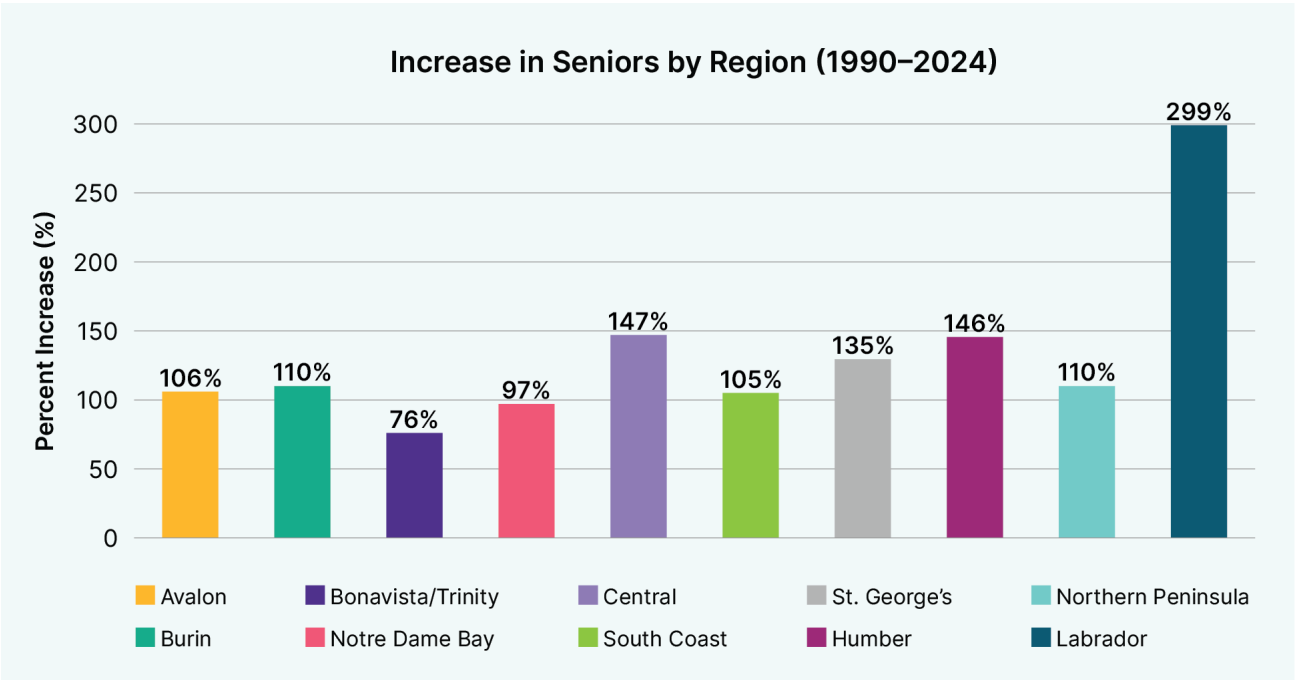


Figure 3: Percent Increase in the Number of Seniors by Region (1990–2024).
(Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a)

Bullying and Violence in Schools



Learners, educators and families/caregivers are all concerned about the reported levels of violence and bullying in schools (Antle, 2024; Kennedy, 2024; Mullin, 2024). Bullying has been a persistent issue, and we are hearing about violence directed at educators and staff. Incidents requiring police intervention have risen in the past several years.

Many learners and families/caregivers have reached out to educators and the media, worried that persistent bullying is not being addressed. The dominance of mobile phones and social media has also meant that cyberbullying can transition from school to home (Statistics Canada, 2023). Families/caregivers, learners, and educators acknowledge that the current processes are insufficient to deal with this growing problem, which has serious implications for workplace and learner safety, as well as the physical and mental well-being of everyone within the education system.



Mental Health and Well-Being

Statistics Canada (2023) reports that over 5 million Canadians (18%) aged 15 and older met the diagnostic criteria for a mood, anxiety, or substance use disorder in 2022. The prevalence of mood and anxiety disorders has increased from 2012 to 2022, with the highest rates among young women (Statistics Canada, 2022). The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate in Newfoundland and Labrador responded to over 445 requests for assistance during the fiscal year 2022–23, advocating for the rights, interests, and well-being of children and youth (Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, 2023).

Without systems that support and prioritize physical, emotional, and mental well-being, education at all levels may be negatively impacted. Families/caregivers may be less involved with their children's education and schools; educators may struggle with being effective in supporting learner progress; and children and youth may have poor school attendance, behavioural issues, and difficulty with social interactions (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2024).

The Health Accord NL and *Towards Recovery* reports support the fact that mental health challenges are rising in learning environments and are having a direct impact on educators and learners who spend increasing amounts of time focused on mental health issues and less time on teaching and learning. Learners are also experiencing added stress related to tuition costs and the cost of living, which are further impacting their ability to focus on their studies. Institutions are seeing a dramatic increase in the demand for the basics of life—food, mental health services, affordable housing and emergency support measures (Health Accord NL, 2022; NL Health Services, 2017).



Education Attainment

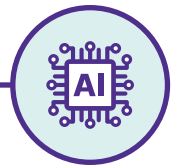
According to the results from Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022 by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (OECD, 2023b), Newfoundland and Labrador students scored below the Canadian average in mathematics, reading, and science. Specifically, the performance in mathematics was notably lower, with only 66% of students achieving at or above the baseline level of proficiency (OECD, 2023b). While Newfoundland and Labrador has consistently scored lower than other Canadian provinces, it should be noted that all performances on PISA globally were lower. The 2021 Census (Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency, 2021) reported that 20.4% of people 15 years of age and older in Newfoundland and Labrador do not have a high school diploma. This has serious implications for youth and how learning environments and systems are organized. Early school leavers and students with low academic achievement may be challenged by having limited access to job opportunities, lower earning potential, and poorer health outcomes. From a broader systems perspective, impacts may affect workforce productivity, employment rates, and economic equity.



Technological Integration

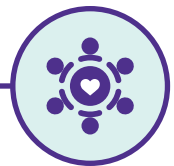
Schools and education environments have often struggled to integrate technology into classrooms and curricula, and when it is integrated, there remain great inequities in accessibility (Rizk & Hillier, 2022). At their most basic functional level, our education systems are still largely based on paper and traditional texts, while society as a whole has moved onto digital platforms. Digital literacy and the way learners interpret and are informed by the world have changed dramatically in the past two decades, and our education systems have not always recognized these changes (Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, 2020). Educators and schools have struggled with the presence of cell phones and smartwatches in the lives of their learners. While at a public level, this struggle has manifested itself as a discipline problem; such thinking ignores the massive role cell phones play in youth socialization and the ways in which young people now absorb information, both of which have a profound effect on learners' educational experiences (Maharaj, 2024). During the COVID-19 pandemic, our education system was forced to experiment with technological integration when entire schools moved online. While many learners struggled, some educators and their students thrived in the online classroom environment, and the COVID-19 learning experience points to ways in which online collaboration environments can be used to supplement traditional instruction. This experience highlights the misguided beliefs that education, learning, and the school

building were and are inextricably linked. Reflecting on this experience may point to ways in which technology can be utilized to bridge the gaps and offer new opportunities for learning within the education system (Burke, 2022).



Understanding Artificial Intelligence

The potential of artificial intelligence (AI)—with its incredible mobile intelligence and ability to learn and self-correct—presents opportunities and challenges to society at large and our education system, and it is already moving into new areas of business and education. AI's unique ability to create work that feels 'human' presents challenges to our abilities to teach and evaluate, and will urgently require our learning systems to adapt and adjust. The new technology also threatens privacy and personal information, and is having dramatic effects on many career choices. A well-balanced and holistic approach to technological advancement and ethics will be required to maximize the benefits of AI while still mitigating its risks.



Social Cohesion

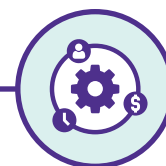
Recent discussions during this Accord's engagement have consistently highlighted a shared concern among families/caregivers and educators: a perceived erosion of discipline and order in classrooms and schools. These concerns reflect more than disruptions in behaviour, they point to a deeper fraying of the relational fabric that holds school communities together. In effect, what is being lost is a sense of social cohesion: the everyday norms of trust, mutual responsibility, and shared belonging that allow learners to thrive not just as individuals but as part of something larger than themselves. The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified these issues, revealing and amplifying long-standing cracks in school culture. Manifestations such as classroom disorder, increased bullying, chronic absenteeism, heightened anxiety, and diminished learner engagement have become increasingly prevalent. Collectively, these trends suggest a broader post-pandemic decline in the foundational culture of mutual respect, routine, and accountability—what many refer to as the 'rules-based and relational' environment essential to a healthy and functional school.

Importantly, these concerns are not confined to the education sector. They reflect deeper societal shifts that have altered the fabric of community life in Newfoundland and Labrador

over the past two decades. While some stakeholders attribute recent challenges to the pervasive influence of smartphones and social media—a position supported by research linking digital immersion to rising mental health issues among youth—others identify broader demographic and cultural trends (Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020).

Given these intersecting social and emotional realities, it becomes increasingly evident that schools must now assume a more intentional role in fostering social cohesion and rebuilding community values. While these responsibilities were once distributed across families/caregivers, churches, and neighbourhood institutions, the shifting structure of NL society demands a recalibration. The fraying of traditional social bonds—exacerbated by digital disconnection and demographic decline—has created a void that education is uniquely positioned to address. As Miller-Llana (2021) highlighted, “schools often remain one of the last functioning community hubs,” especially in regions affected by outmigration.

In this context, schools and post-secondary institutions are called not only to deliver curriculum but to serve as anchors of belonging, resilience, and intergenerational connection. This requires a deliberate emphasis on culturally responsive practices, social-emotional learning (SEL), and inclusive civic engagement—such as student leadership initiatives, cross-age mentorship, community-based arts programs, resilience building, and intergenerational connection.



Resource Education System Alignment

According to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, education spending in Budget 2025 totals approximately \$1.1 billion. (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2025c). Significant resources have been invested to support child care spaces, the addition of 400 educators and learning assistants to K-12 classrooms and school food programming. Consideration of alignment of resources will need to be a focus of the Accord moving forward.

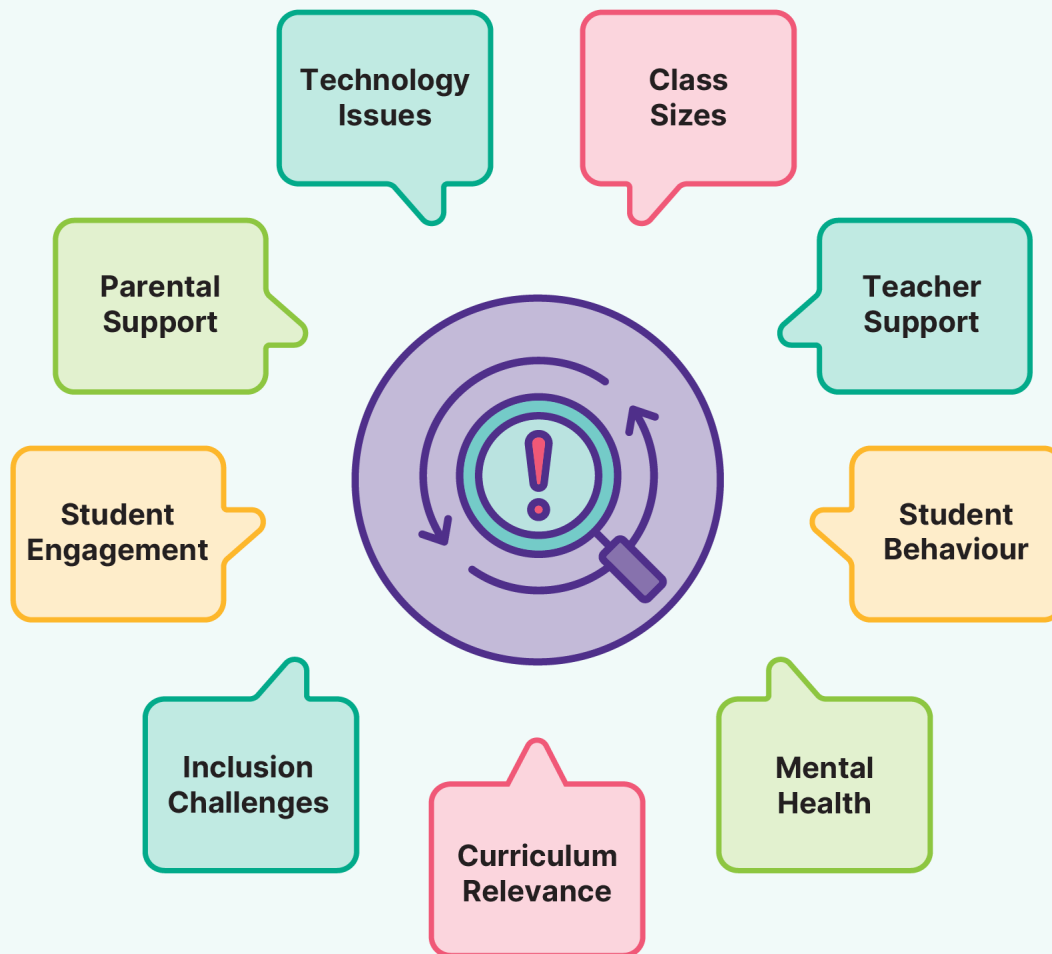


Figure 4: Key Issues Voiced by Educators During Engagement.



The Foundation that Guided the Accord

The Vision

Our vision is a future where all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have access to high-quality education throughout their lifespans. We aim to implement policies and practices that reflect equity, diversity, and inclusion; foster strong collaboration across all communities and government agencies; and build support systems and organizations that are responsive and lead continuous educational innovation and change.



The Guiding Philosophy

Emphasizing the Social Determinants of Learning in an Ecosystem Approach

Learning is deeply influenced by the context which shapes educational outcomes, either positively or negatively. Extensive research and engagement have consistently highlighted the importance of providing children, youth, and adults with enriching educational experiences that foster their growth and prepare them for the future. Learning environments must be thoughtfully designed to unlock each learner's potential, ensuring that every learner, no matter their circumstances, has access to spaces where they can flourish. However, much of what influences learner success are disparities from outside the school, experiences that profoundly impact what happens in learning contexts and spaces. Often described as the social determinants of learning (SDOL), these external disparities embrace the many societal factors affecting the ecosystem and environment in which education lives and evolves.

In the natural world, every organism exists within an ecosystem—a dynamic network of living beings, including plants, animals, and microorganisms, interacting with their physical surroundings to sustain life. If we look to humans, we, too, are part of an ecosystem in which complex interactions and relationships are established between and amongst people, resources, energies, events, and environments (Stephenson, 2024). Through these interactions and relationships, we have the ability to learn, thus fostering individual growth, social cohesion, and an equitable and resilient society.

If we consider education from an ecosystem perspective, we are viewing learning from a holistic, systems-oriented perspective that emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals, groups, and communities within their learning environments. This approach emphasizes integration, adaptability, and transformation to create dynamic and responsive educational settings. “It encourages breaking down silos within education and integrating input from different stakeholders to create more holistic and context-responsive learning experiences” (Woolis, n.d.).

At its core, an ecosystem approach recognizes that learning is not an isolated activity, but is deeply influenced by the social, cultural, and physical contexts in which it occurs. It promotes reflective learning, encouraging learners to think critically about their experiences and the world around them. This reflective process helps learners make meaningful connections between different areas of knowledge and apply what they learn in new and innovative ways.

For example, in K-12 settings, an ecosystem approach might involve project-based learning where learners work on real-world problems that require them to draw on multiple subject areas. A project on environmental sustainability could integrate science, social studies, mathematics, and the arts, encouraging learners to see the connections between these subjects and their impact on the world. Teachers would act as facilitators, guiding collaborative groups of learners to connect knowledge to practical, real-world situations, develop self-directed learning skills and innovative thinking, and enhance collaboration and communication skills.

The Accord, through its Calls to Transformation and Pathways to Action, views learning from an ecosystem perspective. An ecosystem approach to learning in education aims to create interconnected, reflective, holistic, and adaptable learning environments that prepare learners to navigate and contribute to an ever-changing world. By recognizing the interdependencies within the educational ecosystem, we can capitalize on the potential of this approach to create adaptable learning environments that respond to the needs of learners and communities. By focusing on the connecting elements of educational environments, an ecosystem approach addresses disparities—like SDOL—and creates systems that allow all learners to have access to a wide range of resources and supports.

SDOL have a profound impact on the success of educational processes. While most exist outside the education system itself, all of them impact the ability to learn. Primarily, the determinants refer to the social, economic, and environmental conditions that positively or negatively influence a learner’s ability to succeed in their education. Fundamentally, they are the “social and structural factors outside the individual learner, often beyond the traditional reach of teachers and schools, that can affect learning” (Levinson & Cohen, 2023). These can include access to safe housing, food and clean water, quality health care, family

income and employment status, early child development opportunities, race, Indigenous status, access to stable housing, and social inclusion, which includes factors such as positive social connections, equity and community safety.

There are many examples that highlight the impact of SDOL. Numerous studies have illustrated how learners from families with lower socioeconomic positions have access to fewer educational opportunities than learners from wealthier and higher-income families: “Children from low-income families often start school already behind their peers who come from more affluent families, as shown in measures of school readiness. The incidence, depth, duration and timing of poverty all influence a child’s educational attainment” (Ferguson et al., 2007). Meanwhile, food insecurity, a lack of opportunities to develop interests and talents, and access to high-speed Internet and technology at home are all highly correlated with family financial resources and can negatively impact learner progress and development (Stats Canada, 2020).

By viewing the school as an ecosystem, administrators and educators can help identify and address SDOL. Creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment involves fostering strong relationships among learners, educators, and the community. A significant challenge posed by social determinants is that they often seem overwhelming or beyond the control of individual educators. However, it is essential for the entire system to acknowledge these determinants as substantial barriers to learning and take practical steps to mitigate and reduce their effects on individual learners. To address these challenges effectively, existing systems and supports must operate collaboratively, ensuring that they are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, rather than functioning in silos.

By encouraging collaboration among educational partners and reshaping our perspectives on educational experiences, we establish a comprehensive and interconnected system in which learners are recognized and empowered to reach their full potential. Through joint efforts, partners can offer learning supports and opportunities that mitigate the effects of diverse social, economic, and environmental challenges that learners may face. By addressing SDOL within the broader educational context, we can advance inclusive instructional practices, dismantle systemic barriers, and provide equitable access to education. This collective approach ensures the development of an education system that uplifts and supports each and every learner.

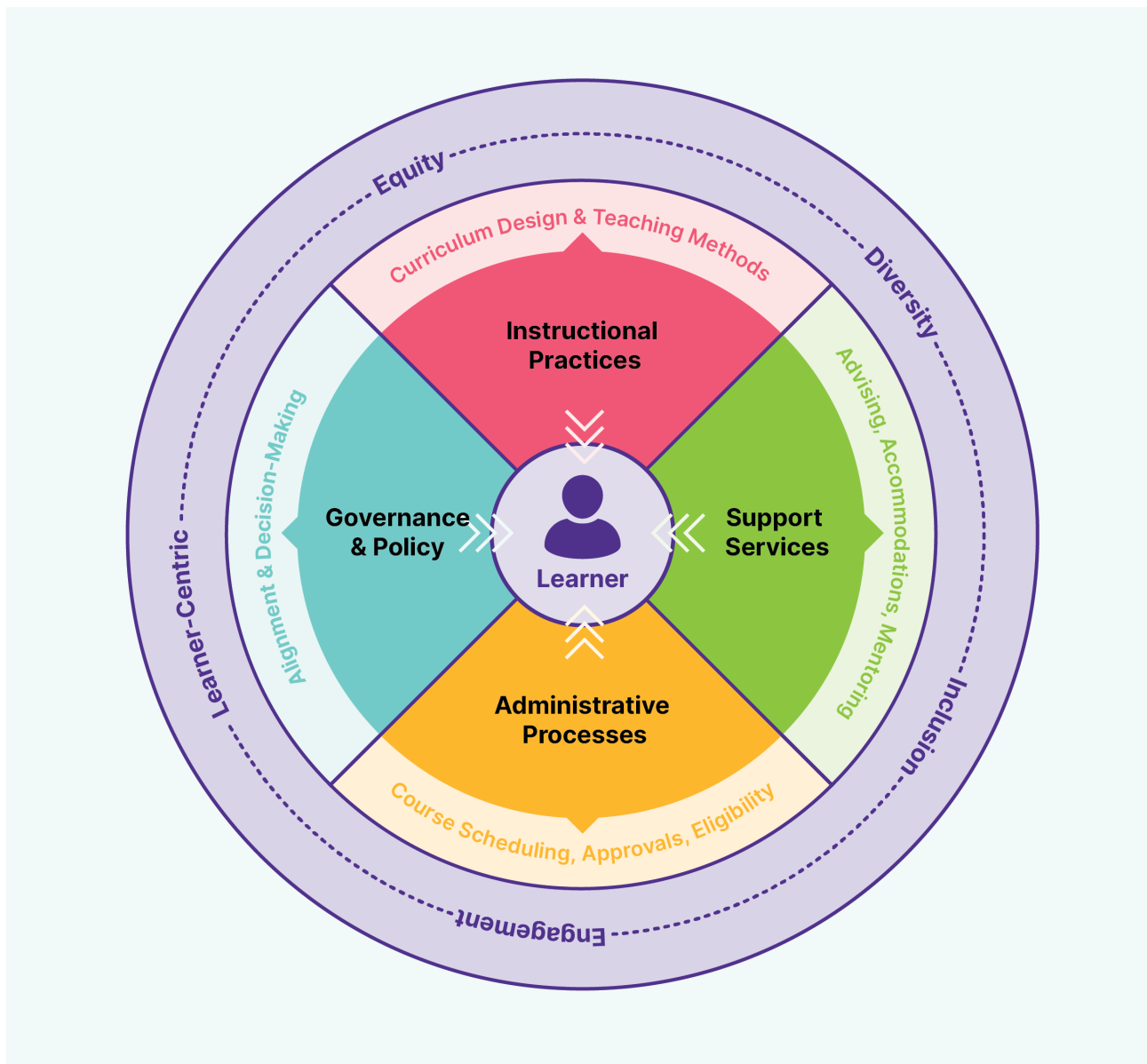


Figure 5: The Learner-Centred Ecosystem.

Meet Our Education Professionals

The engagement process was led by two Co-Chairs, Dr. Anne Burke and Dr. Karen Goodnough, with Senior Advisor, Katrina Moores, from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD). An Advisory Board with broad representation was established to examine the evidence, make suggestions, and consider the recommendations generated by the Pillar Committees and the Accord Co-Chairs. (See Figure 6).

Anne Burke, PhD

Dr. Anne Burke is a professor in Literacy Education and Digital Learning at Memorial University's Faculty of Education, where she is also the Project Lead for the Discovery Play Centre. Dr. Burke's extensive scholarship focuses on the interface of equity, social inclusion and the well-being of children through research that supports broader sociocultural perspectives on literacy education delivery in culturally diverse K-12 classrooms. Much of her international interdisciplinary research in Canada, Finland and the U.K. is public engagement-oriented, showing a broad mastery of partnerships with schools, NGOs, cultural institutions, artistic industries and governments. Dr. Burke has received awards for her scholarship, teaching, and public engagement partnerships. With over 10 years of teaching experience in classrooms across Canada, she continues to advocate for children and young people's voices, agency and well-being through national and international research, with a focus in social justice, equity and well-being in schools.

Karen Goodnough, PhD

Dr. Karen Goodnough is a well-established national and international scholar and former dean of the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. She also completed a three-year appointment as an associate dean (undergraduate programs) in the Faculty of Education. Prior to arriving at Memorial, she held faculty appointments at the University of New Brunswick and the University of Rochester, New York. During her academic career, she has been involved in scholarship and research focused on collaborative action research, inclusive science education, pre-service teacher education, and professional learning (PL) in teacher education and higher education. Dr. Goodnough received Memorial's 2016 President's Award for Outstanding Research in recognition of her contributions to community partnership development, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, and the 'teacher as researcher' movement. She holds a PhD from the University of Toronto, as well as three degrees from Memorial (M.Ed., B.Ed. and B.Sc.). She was a high school science teacher and post-secondary instructor before moving into academia.

Katrina Moores, M.Ed., B.Ed., B.A.

Katrina Moores is a seasoned education professional with more than 25 years of diverse experience in the field. She has excelled in various roles, including French Immersion Classroom Teacher, Learning Resource Teacher, School Administrator, and Program Specialist for Comprehensive School Health. As the Director of Educational Programs and Provincial Lead for Partnerships and Initiatives with NLSchools, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Ms. Moores has played a pivotal role in

shaping educational policies and practices. Her strong commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion has made her an invaluable asset in driving system-wide initiatives that promote learner-centred education. Ms. Moores' expertise not only enhances educational outcomes but also fosters an inclusive environment where all learners can thrive.

Role of Contributors Within the Accord

With multiple partners and stakeholders guiding important discussions, the structure of the Accord allows for collaborative conversations to occur while providing important feedback and guidance from an advisory board. Below is a representation of our collaborative structure, along with the roles of each contributor in the process.

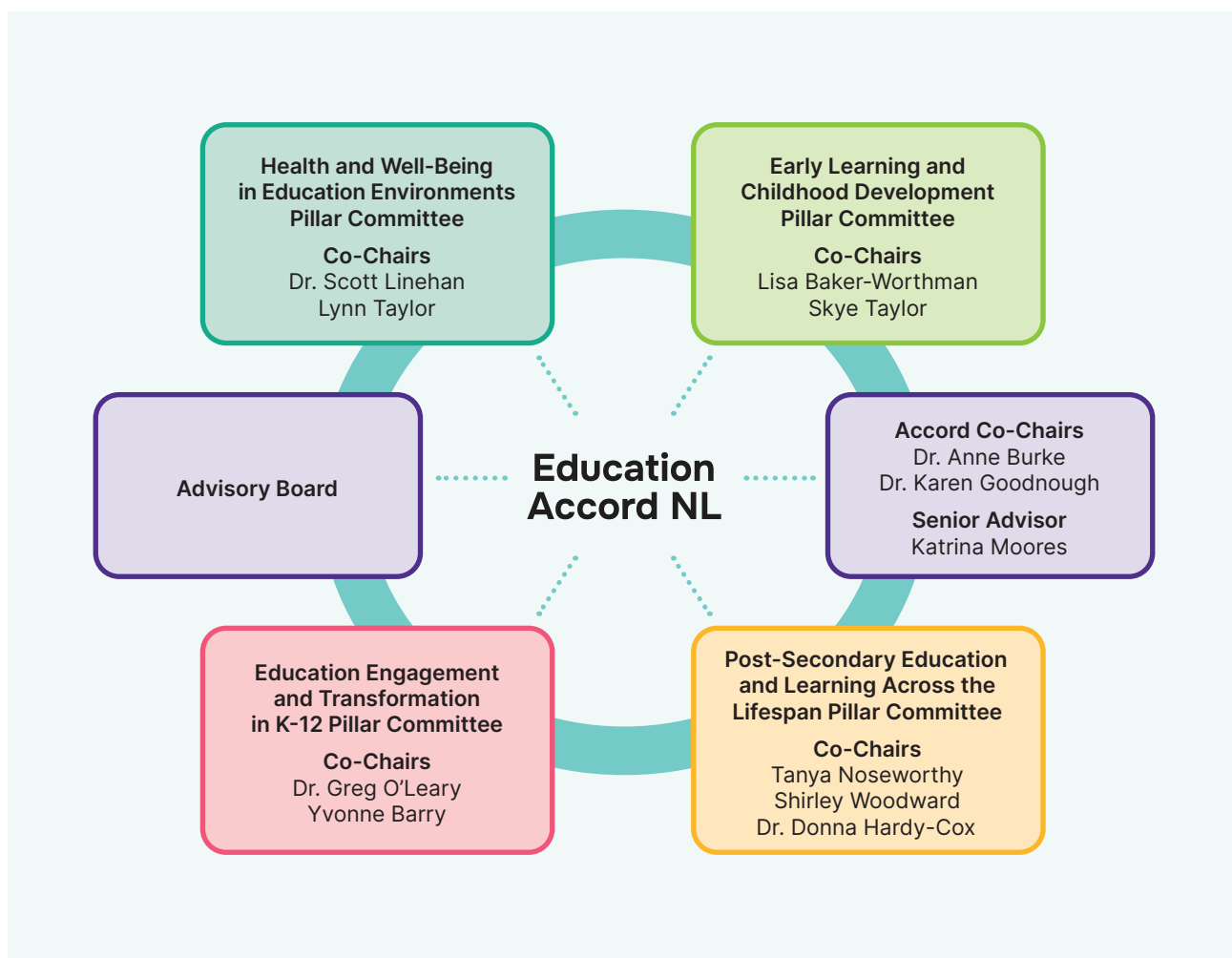


Figure 6: Education Accord NL Collaborative Structure.

Role of the Co-Chairs of the Education Accord NL:

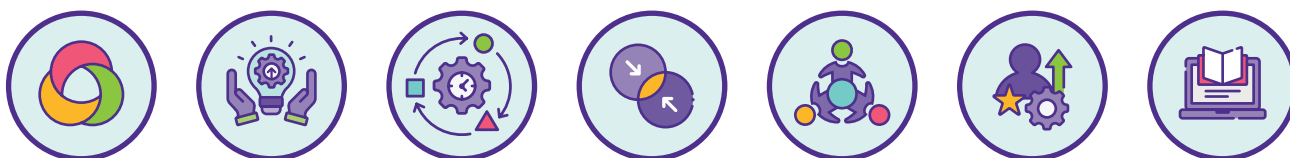
- **Consider previous educational studies:** Review and analyze past research and initiatives to inform holistic recommendations that address the unique needs of all areas of Newfoundland and Labrador, enhancing the overall education experience.
- **Collaborate with Pillar Committees:** Provide strategic direction to the Education Accord NL Pillar Committees, fostering cohesiveness and building consensus among partners and stakeholders regarding actions and recommendations.
- **Engage with all stakeholders:** Actively involve a diverse range of stakeholders—education partners, Indigenous Governments and Organizations, families/caregivers, learners, and the public—in the development and implementation of the Education Accord NL to ensure inclusive perspectives are represented.
- **Accountability to leadership:** Maintain accountability to the Premier and the Minister of Education, ensuring that the Accord’s efforts align with provincial goals and priorities while upholding transparency and responsibility in all actions.

Role of Pillar Committees:

- **Provide valuable input:** Contribute expertise, knowledge, relevant research, and data to inform discussions and decisions, especially as they relate to equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- **Review texts and documents:** Ensure accuracy and coherence in various materials, enhancing clarity and understanding.
- **Identify key stakeholders:** Engage with key partners throughout the process, championing the Accord’s goals and objectives.
- **Generate important information:** Support fellow Co-Chairs by facilitating effective communication and collaboration within and across the Pillar Committees.

Role of Advisory Board Members:

- **Receive regular updates on progress:** Stay informed about developments, milestones, and key outcomes related to the Accord, ensuring awareness of ongoing activities and timelines.
- **Ask questions and provide ideas/input:** Engage in thoughtful dialogue by posing questions that clarify issues and contribute innovative ideas and perspectives to enhance the work being done.
- **Ensure consensus among members on direction and materials:** Foster collaboration and unity by discussing and aligning the Pillar Committee's goals, objectives, and the materials under review, ensuring all voices are heard.
- **Meet monthly with Education Accord Co-Chairs and Pillar Committee Co-Chairs:** Participate in regular meetings to discuss progress, address concerns, and align strategies, ensuring effective communication and coordination among all leadership roles.



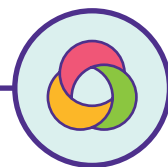
The Guiding Lenses

The Education Accord is grounded in a vision for a dynamic, inclusive, and forward-thinking education system that meets the evolving needs of learners, communities, and society. To achieve this, the Accord embraces a multifaceted approach guided by key lenses that shape its principles and strategies. These lenses—Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; Sustainability; Transformation and Responsiveness; Integration; Stakeholder/Community Collaboration; Active Professional Learning and Engagement; and Digital Literacy—form the foundation of an adaptable and resilient education system. Each lens highlights the importance of innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity in fostering lifelong learning and preparing individuals to navigate an increasingly complex world. This report outlines their role in shaping policies and practices that empower learners and educators alike.

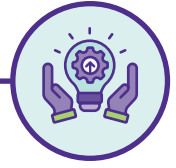


Figure 7: Education Accord NL's Seven Guiding Lenses.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

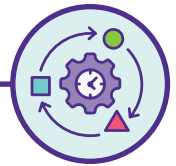


Equity in education ensures fairness in terms of access, equal opportunity, and the allocation of resources for learning, whereas diversity recognizes that people are different, reflected in factors such as race, culture, ethnicity, ability, religion, sex, gender, gender expression, age, and family or socioeconomic status. Inclusion fosters learning environments characterized by belonging and support, where people feel their voices are heard and valued. Through a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, high-quality learning will be accessible to everyone, in every context.



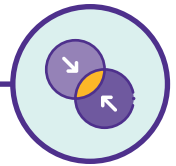
Sustainability

Sustainable approaches to education, teaching, and learning recognize education as a social determinant of health and how education interconnects with complex economic, environmental, and social factors that influence the well-being of individuals. Learners explore ethical questions and issues in a range of learning contexts as they relate to areas such as climate change, harnessing digital technology, and addressing issues of social justice. Examining how systems influence and interact is needed by learners so they may analyze complex interrelationships, understand the implications of human actions on ecological, social, and economic systems, and engage in civic action for a more sustainable future.



Transformation and Responsiveness

Transformative responsive education adapts to changing external factors. It adopts innovative ways of thinking and practices that can address the evolving needs of learners, society, and the workforce. Learning environments premised on transformation and responsiveness empower learners to become critical thinkers, empathetic individuals, and active citizens in creating a more inclusive and equitable society.



Integration

Integrative approaches to education advocate for a sustainable understanding of the multiple perspectives and diverse needs of the education system. Integrative approaches are cohesive and interconnected, embracing the economic, environmental, and social factors that influence society. Such alignment fosters civic engagement thus addressing evolving global challenges.



Stakeholder/Community Collaboration

Stakeholder/community-focused approaches to education reflect collaborative, holistic approaches to learning that value the contributions of all stakeholders and partners, seeking to result in positive outcomes for individual learners and the broader community. These approaches support values, beliefs, norms and principles that foster strong partnerships and collaborations and uphold cultural identity and diversity while helping to build vibrant communities.



Active Professional Learning and Engagement

Active, engaged learning empowers individuals to be advocates of their own continuous, professional learning (PL) journey. In effective PL, individuals and communities have access and opportunities to engage in self-directed learning while being supported by subsystems. Effective PL is needs-driven, embedded in practice, sustainable, and reflective. Regular feedback and assessment processes are needed to ensure personal and professional growth.



Digital Literacy

Creative and safe application of various technologies helps learners develop the abilities and skills to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information effectively. Through the development of a foundational set of skills, high levels of digital literacy empower individuals to participate fully in a digital society, enabling them to access information, communicate with others, solve problems, and succeed in education, work, and daily life.

Stakeholder Consultation Roadmap

The involvement of all stakeholders has been essential in building a broad consensus on the future of our education system. The Education Accord Co-Chairs, in collaboration with the Pillar Committees and the Advisory Board, has completed a comprehensive engagement process through dialogue, consultation, and sharing. This process included input from content experts, focus groups, meetings, symposia, a public survey, and written submissions.

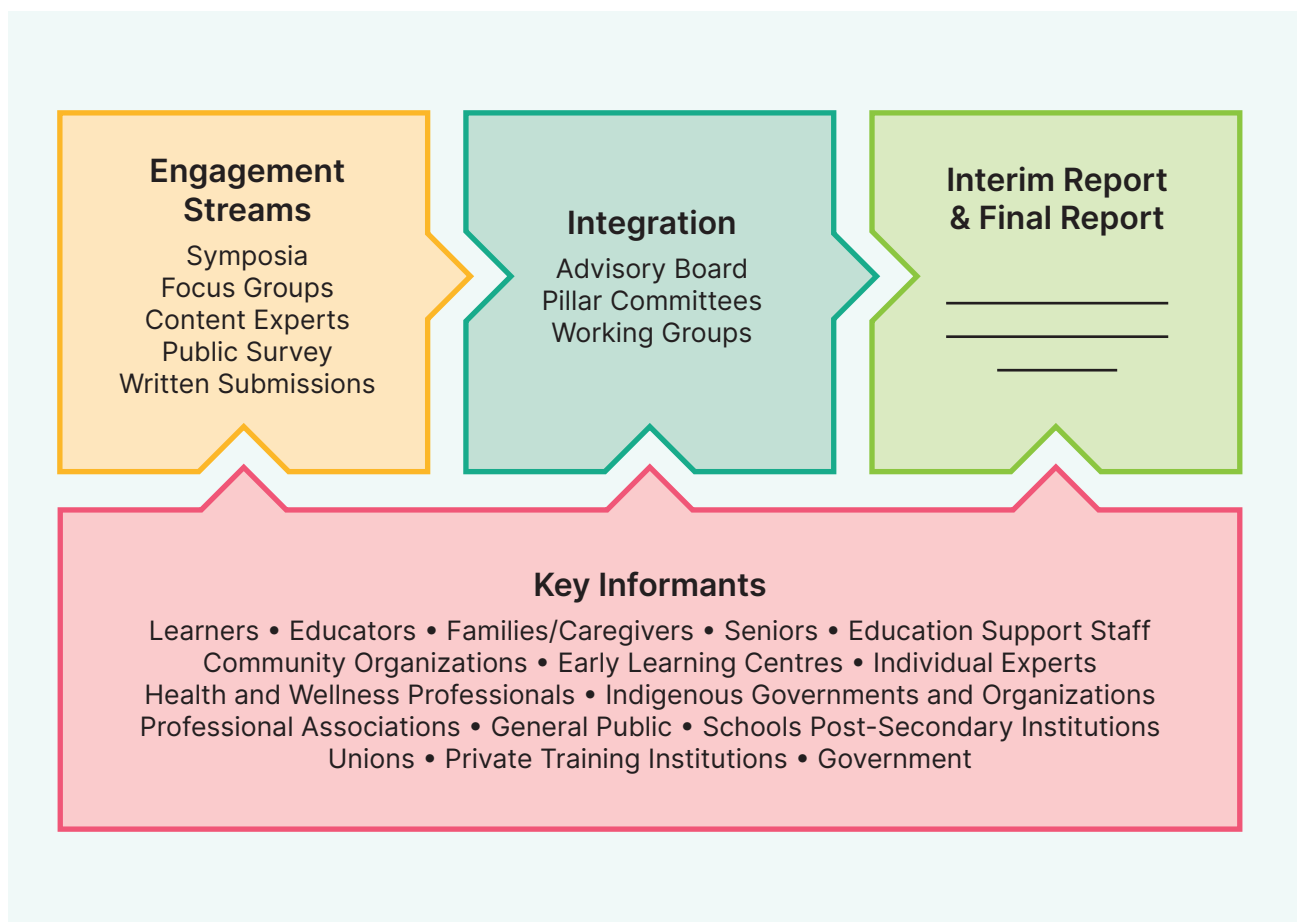


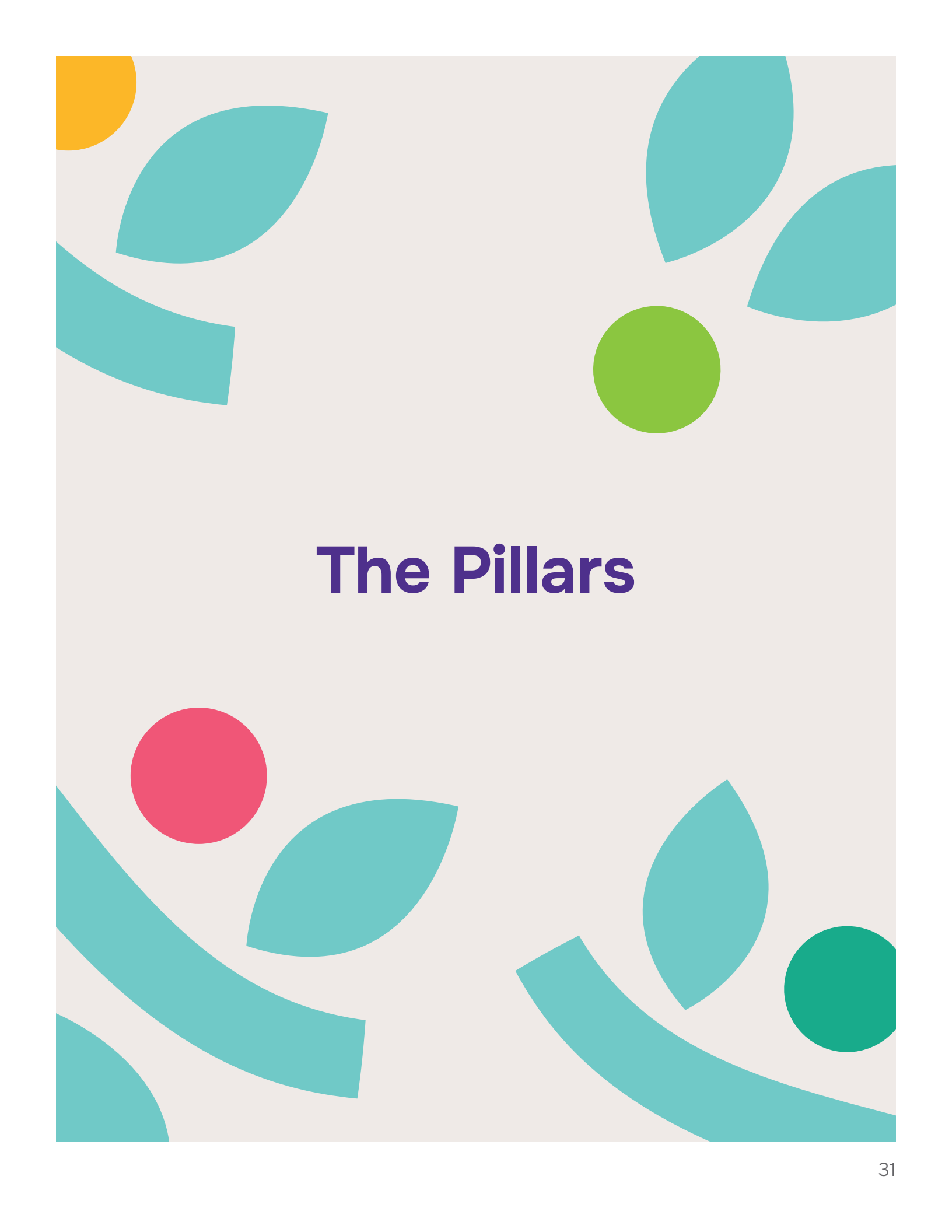
Figure 8: Education Accord NL Collaborative Process.

The following roadmap (*Figure 9*), provides an overview of the involvement of key partners and stakeholders leading to the submission of the Final Report.

Stakeholder Engagement Roadmap



Figure 9: A Timeline of Stakeholder Engagement from Initiation to Final Report Submission.

The background is a light beige color. It is decorated with several stylized teal leaves of various sizes and orientations. There are also four solid-colored circles: a yellow one in the top left, a lime green one in the upper right, a pink one in the lower left, and a dark teal one in the bottom right.

The Pillars

Health and Well-Being in Education Environments

Introduction

The Health and Well-Being Committee of the Education Accord NL envisions all learning environments in Newfoundland and Labrador as nurturing spaces that prioritize the holistic health and well-being of learners, educators, administrators, and staff. Through actionable and evidence-based Calls to Transformation, the Accord intends to inspire a culture of lifelong well-being that empowers individuals to thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. By addressing barriers and fostering collaboration, our work seeks to shape educational experiences that support the health and success of every member of the learning community, now and into the future.

Health and well-being are foundational to a thriving education system, and the transformative themes addressed in this chapter are integral to the Education Accord NL. The role of education extends far beyond producing academic outcomes or standardized scores; it is about preparing learners for life. By fostering resilience, perseverance, and overall well-being, education environments equip learners with the tools to navigate challenges, build meaningful relationships, and contribute positively to their communities. When health and well-being are prioritized, learners are not only more likely to succeed academically but also develop the skills and mindsets necessary for lifelong growth and fulfillment.

This commitment to well-being, however, must extend to the entire educational ecosystem. Education environments do not exist in isolation; they are deeply interconnected with families/caregivers, communities, and partners across sectors. By adopting a holistic approach to well-being, the Education Accord NL recognizes the importance of an ecosystem with supportive and collaborative environments that instill a sense of belonging—one in which everyone can thrive. Embedding health and well-being across all educational settings ensures that Newfoundland and Labrador's education system not only addresses the challenges of today but also builds foundations for a healthier and more equitable tomorrow.

The guiding lenses of the Education Accord NL ensure a holistic, inclusive, and equity-driven approach to education. The lenses have emphasized the importance of addressing systemic barriers, fostering collaboration, and prioritizing lived experiences to promote health and well-being in all learning environments. By applying these lenses, the Accord seeks to promote actionable strategies that consider diverse needs, cultural contexts, and the interconnectedness of physical, mental, and social well-being. This foundation has guided the development of **Calls to Transformation** and **Pathways to Action**, which aim to influence lifelong health and well-being for all members of the educational community.

The transformative themes, alongside the Calls to Transformation and Pathways to Action presented in this pillar, build upon the themes that emerged in the Interim Report, addressing the key challenges and opportunities identified through stakeholder engagement, literature reviews, jurisdictional scans, and data analysis. Central to these transformative themes is the recognition that holistic well-being encompasses physical, mental, social, spiritual, and emotional health, and is foundational to improving educational outcomes for learners, educators, administrators, and staff. The interim report highlighted systemic gaps in access to well-being supports, the importance of creating inclusive, supportive learning environments, and the need for proactive strategies to foster resilience and success. In response, the Pathways to Action prioritize evidence-based approaches to integrate well-being into every facet of the education system, ensuring alignment with the broader vision of a transformative, equitable, and sustainable well-being approach to learning across Newfoundland and Labrador. Building on these emergent transformative themes, the committee charts a clear path forward, moving from reflection to tangible, impactful change.

The Pathways to Action presented here aim to address the interconnected needs of learners, educators, administrators, and staff by emphasizing the importance of wraparound supports and learner-centered approaches focused on belonging. Recognizing that factors beyond the learning environment—such as housing, income, nutrition, and community supports—profoundly impact educational outcomes, these Pathways to Action highlight the critical role of social determinants of learning (SDOL) and the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates well-being into every aspect of the educational experience.

It is important to note that these transformative themes and Pathways to Action are intended to be considered by all educational environments, encompassing early learning, K-12, and post-secondary. While some resolutions may specifically highlight certain educational settings to emphasize their unique relevance or importance, they are generally designed to be broadly applicable across all contexts. This approach ensures that the guidance provided is adaptable, enabling each educational setting to examine and implement the Pathways to Action in ways that align with their specific needs and circumstances while advancing the overarching goals of health and well-being.

The implementation of the Pathways to Action from the Health and Well-Being Pillar Committee must be approached holistically, recognizing their interconnectedness with the suggested Pathways to Action from other committees within the Education Accord NL. Addressing Pathways to Action in isolation risks missing critical synergies and undermining the broader vision of the Education Accord NL. A unified, interdisciplinary approach ensures that the actions align with shared objectives, reinforcing the overarching goal of fostering transformative, well-rounded education environments. This interconnected perspective respects the complexity of systemic change and acknowledges that progress in one area often depends on advancements in others.

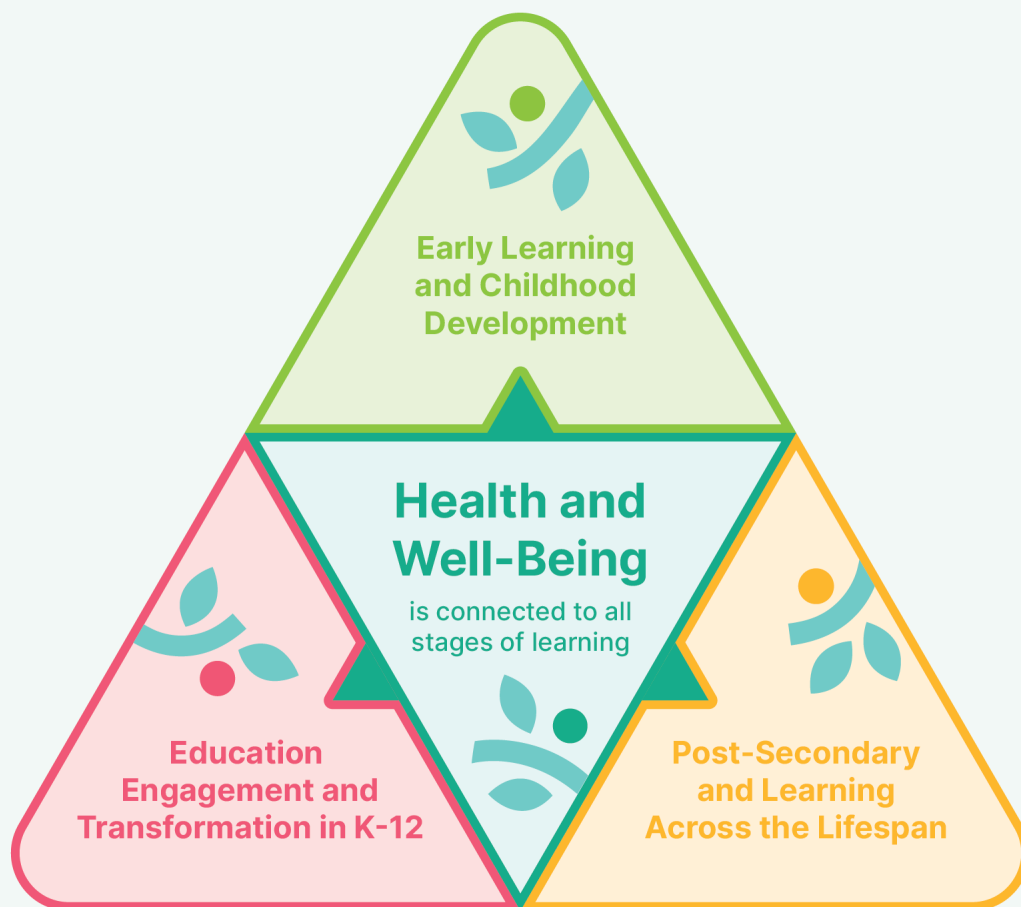


Figure 10: Connecting Health and Well-Being Across All Education Pillars.

It is equally important that the implementation of the Education Accord NL focuses on a dynamic, learning-oriented approach. This means setting clear measures, tracking and evaluating outcomes over time, and adapting based on emerging research, trends, or technologies. Such adaptability ensures that implementation remains evidence-informed and responsive to the evolving needs of learners and communities. To achieve true transformation, the process must prioritize not only technical execution but also the cultural shifts and persistent collaboration required to work toward shared goals. This involves fostering relationships across sectors, promoting a spirit of innovation, and maintaining a steadfast commitment to the collective vision of a thriving, inclusive education system. A robust change management strategy will underpin these efforts, recognizing that ongoing support and adaptation will be critical to achieving the collective goals of the Education Accord NL.

The engagement of all partners throughout the implementation process is essential to ensure that initiatives are inclusive, effective, and reflective of the needs of those they aim to serve. When we engage diverse voices, we hear and explore valuable perspectives that enrich policy development, inform practical approaches, and ensure that measurement and evaluation processes capture the full scope of impact across different education environments. By fostering ongoing collaboration, partners can address challenges collectively, adapt to emerging insights, and create policies and practices that are equitable, sustainable, and truly transformative.

Key Themes

This chapter identifies nine key transformative themes and individual Pathways to Action to support each Call to Transformation.

1.1: Social Determinants of Learning	36
1.2: Sense of Belonging	42
1.3: Chronic Absenteeism	49
1.4: Professional Learning for Educators, Administrators, and Staff	55
1.5: Curriculum for Learners	61
1.6: Connections with Health and Social Programs	66
1.7: Connections with Community	77
1.8: Connections with Justice and Public Safety	89
1.9: Data and Data Utilization	94

Theme 1.1: Social Determinants of Learning

Social determinants of learning (SDOL) encompass the social, economic, and environmental conditions that shape a learner's ability to succeed in education. These factors include access to nutritious food, stable housing, health care, supportive relationships, safe communities, and opportunities for physical and mental well-being. When learners experience challenges such as poverty, food insecurity, or a lack of emotional support, their ability to focus, engage, and thrive in educational settings is profoundly affected. Recognizing these determinants as fundamental to educational success underscores the need for a holistic approach that extends beyond traditional academic supports. Addressing these underlying factors is central to all Calls to Transformation, ensuring that learning environments are equitable, responsive, and designed to instill a sense of belonging. By prioritizing these essential needs, we create the conditions for all learners to reach their full potential.

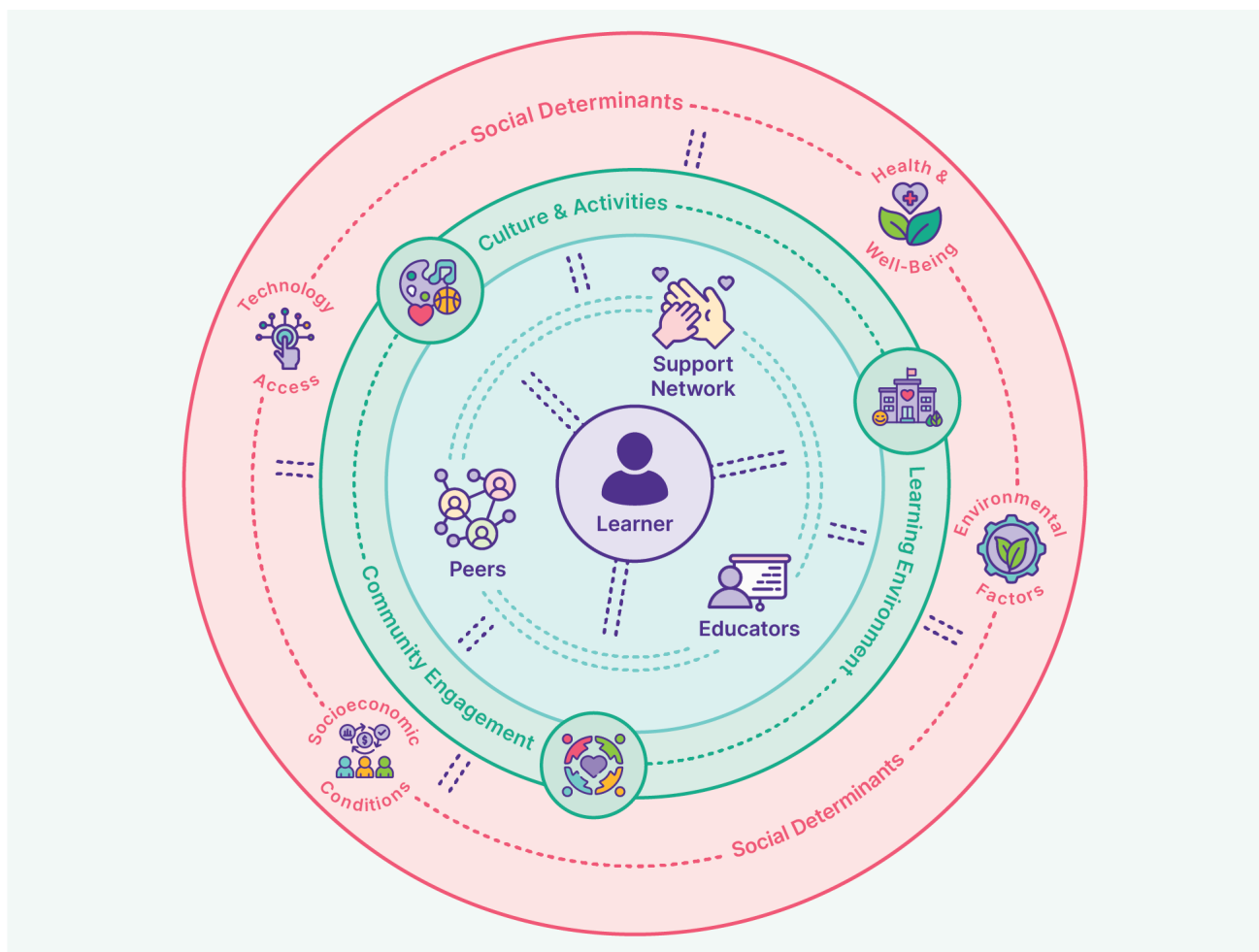


Figure 11: A Model for Considering the Social Determinants of Learning.

Call to Transformation



Call to Transformation 1.1-1:

Adopt a social determinants of learning (SDOL) approach in all education environments that acknowledges the social factors outside the education system that impact learning, and is proactive in supporting individuals and families/caregivers throughout their educational journey. This includes but is not limited to:

- Working across departments, agencies, sectors, and organizations to enhance programs and services that stabilize learners and families/caregivers, recognizing that factors such as nutritious food, stable housing, health care, supportive relationships, safe communities, and opportunities for physical and mental well-being are essential foundations for enhanced educational outcomes.
- Improving public transportation and/or transportation systems to enable access to early learning and post-secondary environments.
- Developing an approach for accessible and affordable child care for adult learners that is supportive of continuous lifelong learning.

Background

While it has long been understood that learning outcomes are deeply connected to learners' lives outside the classroom, the COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the critical need to recognize and address external factors that influence learner success (Dee, 2023; Gaither, 2025; Lumpkin & Vellers, 2025). Social determinants of learning (SDOL)—including housing stability, food security, income, and socialization—play a pivotal role in shaping educational experiences and outcomes. By integrating SDOL into educational models, schools can enhance learning and work toward greater equity in the classroom (Levinson & Cohen, 2023). Partner engagement has reinforced the need for a greater focus on equity in education, particularly in ensuring that learners with disabilities* receive the

**Disabilities refer to a range of visible and invisible conditions that, in interaction with barriers, may limit full and equal participation in society. It includes physical, sensory, intellectual, mental health, and other impairments, and is shaped by social and environmental factors, not just medical diagnoses. (See glossary [p.389] for full definition).*

necessary support to succeed. As one participant noted, “Supporting students with disabilities” must be a priority in our approach to inclusive education, recognizing that accessibility is a foundational pillar of learner success (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). Addressing these barriers requires intentional policy and programmatic interventions that prioritize accessibility, accommodations, and inclusive learning environments.

Despite this reality, some educators may perceive external factors as beyond their control, asserting that they are ‘not my problem’ or that ‘there is nothing I can do about it.’ However, these claims are unfounded. How learners arrive at school—whether hungry, experiencing housing instability, or lacking emotional support—directly impacts their ability to engage, focus, and succeed (Alexander et al., 2022; Bradbury et al., 2023). Research consistently demonstrates that while external factors can create barriers to achievement, the educator remains the single most significant in-school influence on learner success, reinforcing the impact of responsive and supportive teaching practices (Hattie, 2023). Adopting an SDOL-informed approach provides opportunities to build awareness and implement necessary interventions that support learner success, health, and well-being (Burleigh & Wilson, 2023). Ensuring access to post-secondary education is an essential part of this broader strategy, as access to higher education directly influences lifelong economic and social mobility. As one community member expressed, “All Newfoundlanders and Labradorians should get free university tuition. It is hard to succeed in life these days without some post-secondary” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). Reducing financial barriers to education is a critical component of improving learner success and fostering long-term prosperity.

The ability of learners to succeed in education is shaped by social, economic, and environmental conditions. These factors—including access to nutritious food, stable housing, health care, supportive relationships, and safe communities—play a foundational role in learner engagement and achievement. Research consistently demonstrates that when learners face challenges such as poverty, food insecurity, or a lack of emotional support, their capacity to focus and thrive in educational settings is significantly compromised (Alexander et al., 2022; Bradbury et al., 2023). Recognizing these determinants as essential to learner success highlights the need for a holistic approach that extends beyond traditional academic supports and actively integrates well-being into educational policies and practices. A critical part of this effort involves reinvesting in higher education to ensure it remains accessible and adequately resourced. As a Thought Exchange Survey participant emphasized, “Our province needs to put an end to the cuts and begin re-funding our university...It should work with the university to reduce and eliminate barriers to education by reducing tuition fees and student debt” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). Addressing these structural barriers will ensure that all learners, regardless of socio-economic background, have the opportunity to access and complete post-secondary education without insurmountable financial hardship.

The importance of addressing SDOL in education has been reinforced through multiple policy initiatives in Newfoundland and Labrador. *Now is the Time: The Next Chapter in*

Education in Newfoundland and Labrador (Collins et. al, 2017) emphasized the need for cross-sector collaboration between education, health, and social services to improve learner well-being. Similarly, Health Accord NL (2022) identified education as a key social determinant of health, highlighting the strong link between educational attainment and long-term health outcomes. Most recently, in 2024, the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador designated the province as Canada's first Well-Being Province, reinforcing a government-wide commitment to addressing the factors that contribute to residents' overall well-being, including education (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2024c).

This commitment aligns with a growing recognition that education does not occur in isolation. By embedding SDOL into the Newfoundland and Labrador education system, schools and policymakers can promote deeper collaboration between education, health, and social sectors, creating more responsive and equitable learning environments. A SDOL approach ensures that schools are not only places of academic instruction but also supportive spaces where learners and families/caregivers receive the resources they need to succeed. This transformative framework calls for a proactive, multi-sectoral strategy to ensure every learner has the opportunity to thrive.

Educational success is inextricably linked to broader social determinants, including stable income and secure housing. Students experiencing economic hardship, food insecurity, and housing instability are at a heightened risk of chronic absenteeism, reduced concentration, and lower academic achievement (Bradbury et al., 2023; OECD, 2021). Economic precarity not only affects immediate educational outcomes, but also has long-term effects on cognitive development, social mobility, and future earning potential (Duncan et al., 2017). Without targeted interventions that address these foundational barriers, educational reforms focused solely on curriculum and pedagogy will have limited impact.

To mitigate these challenges, a systemic approach integrating education with health and social services is essential. Evidence from global case studies suggests that schools functioning as community hubs—offering access to housing support, income stabilization programs, and wraparound services—see improved learner engagement and academic success (Akee et al., 2020; OECD, 2019). Newfoundland and Labrador's designation as Canada's first Well-Being Province in 2024 presents a critical opportunity to institutionalize these supports. By prioritizing cross-sector collaboration and embedding SDOL into education policies, the province can create a more equitable system that ensures all learners have the stability necessary to thrive academically and beyond.

Beyond economic stability, access to education is significantly influenced by transportation infrastructure, particularly for learners in rural and geographically dispersed regions. Research indicates that inadequate or unreliable transportation is a key barrier to early learning participation, post-secondary enrollment, and overall educational attainment (Burdick-Will & Logan, 2017; OECD, 2021). Students from low-income or rural communities

are disproportionately affected, as limited public transit options often result in long commutes, inconsistent attendance, and reduced engagement in academic and extracurricular opportunities (Bell & Fitzpatrick, 2023). Without equitable access to transportation, systemic educational inequities persist, limiting pathways to early childhood education and higher learning.

Investments in public and school-based transportation systems have been shown to improve educational outcomes by increasing access to high-quality early learning environments and expanding post-secondary participation (Givord et al., 2022). Studies highlight that regions with well-developed transit networks experience higher enrollment rates, lower dropout rates, and greater learner retention in post-secondary education (Hernández & Kutzbach, 2020). Newfoundland and Labrador's unique geographical challenges necessitate a strategic approach to transportation infrastructure that prioritizes affordability, accessibility, and reliability. By improving transportation systems and ensuring seamless connectivity between early learning centers, K-12 schools, and post-secondary institutions, the province can promote greater equity in educational access, particularly for learners in rural and underserved areas.

Similarly, access to affordable child care is a critical enabler of lifelong learning, allowing adult learners—particularly families/caregivers—to pursue education and workforce training without financial or logistical barriers. Research highlights that a lack of child care is one of the most significant obstacles preventing adults from engaging in post-secondary education, skills development, and career transitions (Morrissey, 2017; OECD, 2021). This challenge disproportionately affects women, low-income individuals, and those in rural areas, reinforcing existing economic inequities and limiting opportunities for social mobility (Chien, 2023). Without a comprehensive approach to accessible child care, many adults remain unable to upskill, retrain, or participate in lifelong learning initiatives that are essential for adapting to an evolving labour market.

Recognizing this need, Newfoundland and Labrador has taken significant steps toward expanding affordable child care. In 2021, the provincial government signed an agreement with the Government of Canada to introduce a \$10-a-day child care program, which by 2025 has created over 11,000 child care spaces (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2021a). This initiative has transformed opportunities for families seeking to return to education or reskill for workforce entry, reducing financial strain and increasing participation in post-secondary and vocational training programs. However, gaps remain in ensuring that child care services align with the diverse schedules of adult learners, including evening, weekend, and flexible learning options (Vinopal & Morrissey, 2020). To fully support lifelong learning, Newfoundland and Labrador must expand child care solutions that accommodate the realities of adult education, ensuring accessibility for all who seek to enhance their skills, credentials, and career prospects.

1.1-1 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 1.1-1.a** Establish a collaborative working group with representatives from key government departments (Education and Early Childhood Development, Health and Community Services, Justice and Public Safety, Environment and Climate Change, Families and Affordability, Well-Being NL), NL Health Services, and community organizations to assess and align existing policies that impact the SDOL in educational environments.
- 1.1-1.b** Identify key policies that shape the SDOL, including those under the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) (e.g., Responsive Teaching and Learning Policy, Safe and Caring Schools Policy, Social and Emotional Learning Foundation Document, School Food Policy), and those governed by other departments (e.g., Health and Community Services, Environment, Justice and Public Safety), to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach to learner well-being and success.
- 1.1-1.c** Conduct a review of the identified policies to identify gaps and barriers to effective implementation, ensuring alignment with best practices and the evolving needs of educational environments.
- 1.1-1.d** Evaluate existing resources that support the SDOL—including Safe and Inclusive Schools itinerants, guidance counsellors, student success teachers, student services teaching and learning assistants, student assistants, public health professionals, and community sector professionals—to clarify roles, align responsibilities, and ensure these positions operate to their full scope of training and impact.
- 1.1-1.e** Develop an implementation plan for each policy that accounts for the distinct needs of different learning environments while providing clear, consistent guidance for those responsible for execution.

Theme 1.2: Sense of Belonging

Inclusion has long been recognized as a cornerstone of equitable education, but achieving true belonging requires moving beyond traditional definitions. It demands a deeper commitment to ensuring that every individual, regardless of background or circumstance, feels valued and fully engaged in the learning community. This shift involves not only striving for inclusivity but also critically examining how ingrained cultural norms and practices may unintentionally exclude others. By acknowledging and addressing unconscious biases, we can actively dismantle barriers and create environments where every learner is respected, empowered, and seen. Creating such spaces is not just an aspiration—it must be an intentional, ongoing practice that transforms belonging into a lived experience for all.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 1.2-2:

Develop comprehensive guidelines to embed a culture of belonging within education environments with programs that may be implemented consistently across education environments that position education as a pathway for social connection.

Background

The concept of inclusion inherently acknowledges the presence of exclusion. If inclusion is embraced as an educational philosophy, it implies that certain individuals have historically been marginalized and require intentional efforts to ensure their full participation. Traditionally, inclusion has been associated primarily with learners with disabilities; however, contemporary educational perspectives emphasize that inclusion must extend to all facets of diversity, including race, gender identity, socioeconomic status, linguistic background, and cultural heritage (Florian & Pantić, 2017; Waitoller & Artiles, 2021). Current frameworks recognize that even well-intentioned educational structures can inadvertently sustain exclusion through rigid curricula, implicit biases, and deficit-based perspectives (Graham et al., 2020a). Thus, genuine inclusion demands ongoing critical reflection and systemic action to dismantle these barriers, promoting empowerment and meaningful participation for every learner (Sharma & Sokal, 2016). As educational partners

observe, “social awareness, justice, inclusion, and environmental consciousness shape a collective vision of holistic well-being” (Health and Well-Being Pillar, 2024). This perspective reinforces the necessity of embedding these values into all facets of education to ensure that schools serve as inclusive, transformative spaces for every learner. In particular, dedicated resources and the creation of safe spaces for trans youth are recognized as essential components of promoting belonging within educational environments (Health and Well-Being Pillar, 2024).

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) has a vision for inclusion that states, “students are included in ALL aspects of the learning environment regardless of any facet of diversity” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2020). While this is an aspirational goal, meaningful inclusion requires more than policy statements; it demands an ongoing examination of the mindsets, language, and behaviours that may unintentionally reinforce exclusionary practices (Slee, 2018). Research highlights that implicit biases, deficit-based perspectives, and rigid curriculum structures can serve as barriers to inclusive education, even within well-intentioned systems (Graham et al., 2020b). To move beyond superficial inclusion, educational institutions must actively promote professional learning (PL), policy development, and systemic change that dismantles barriers and ensures all learners experience a genuine sense of belonging and equitable access to education (Sharma & Sokal, 2016). Organizations such as CNIB emphasize the importance of these systemic shifts, noting the need to “promote inclusion and reduce stigma related to visual impairments” (Health and Well-Being Pillar, 2024). Recognizing and addressing such stigmas is essential to creating truly inclusive learning environments where learners with diverse abilities can fully participate and thrive. Similarly, there is a pressing need for more resources for both learners and families/caregivers regarding trans issues, alongside comprehensive policy updates and training within schools to ensure that inclusion efforts meaningfully address all aspects of learner identity (Health and Well-Being Pillar, 2024).

Inclusive education is a key priority within Newfoundland and Labrador’s Education Action Plan, which was developed from the Premier’s Task Force report, *Now is the Time* (Collins et. al, 2017; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018a). The report defines inclusive education as a philosophy grounded in six key principles:

- learners attend school alongside their peers with appropriate programming;
- receive a continuum of supports and services;
- experience a school culture where they feel a sense of belonging;
- are respected and valued in their participation;
- learn in an environment that celebrates diversity; and
- are supported within a safe and caring school community.

The inclusive education section of the report included sixteen recommendations, of which twelve have been fully implemented, while the remaining four are nearing completion. These recommendations focused on improving student services delivery, strengthening social-emotional learning (SEL), increasing human resource supports, expanding PL opportunities, enhancing pre-service training for educators, and developing stronger organizational partnerships to ensure a more responsive and inclusive education system.

Additionally, contemporary research emphasizes the necessity of culturally responsive, anti-racist pedagogies and the meaningful integration of Indigenous knowledge and multicultural perspectives within curricula (Kohli et al., 2017; Aronson & Laughter, 2020). Inclusion must also extend into personalized instructional approaches that affirm each learner's unique identity. Recommendations to strengthen inclusivity include modifications to student services delivery, expanding SEL programs, increasing human resource supports, improving PL, enhancing pre-service educator training, and reinforcing organizational partnerships. Addressing these dimensions will ensure that all learners, educators, and educational partners can collaboratively contribute to and benefit from inclusive educational environments (Sancar et al., 2021; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). These initiatives represent critical steps toward ensuring all individuals within educational communities are genuinely valued, respected, and empowered to succeed.

1.2-2 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 1.2-2.a Establish a working group comprising partners from early learning, K-12 education, and post-secondary institutions to collaboratively review and refine existing policies, ensuring they meaningfully support a sense of belonging, inclusivity, and equitable participation across educational environments.
- 1.2-2.b Collaboratively establish shared definitions of belonging, inclusion, and exclusion within educational contexts to promote consistent understanding, facilitate meaningful dialogue, and ensure equitable, learner-centred practices across all education environments.



- 1.2-2.c Conduct a thorough evaluation of current policies and practices by analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, identifying potential biases, and actively incorporating insights and perspectives from individuals with lived experience.
- 1.2-2.d Enhance current or create new policies, practices, and resources to proactively advance diversity and equity, ensuring all learners, educators, and staff experience authentic inclusion, feel valued and respected, and are empowered to succeed.
- 1.2-2.e Develop and enhance PL opportunities, training programs, and practical resources for educators, administrators, and staff to strengthen cultural competency, reduce bias, promote belonging, and create school cultures that reflect the diverse needs of learners and their communities. Additionally, equip educational personnel with effective strategies and tools to address racism and other forms of discrimination proactively within educational settings.
- 1.2-2.f Develop and expand learning opportunities for families/caregivers to deepen their understanding of belonging and clearly define expectations for all partners in upholding policies and principles that ensure safe, inclusive environments within all educational settings.
- 1.2-2.g Establish and maintain systems that actively involve diverse voices, ensuring meaningful participation of individuals from equity-deserving backgrounds. These systems will guide decision-making, ensuring educational environments are responsive, inclusive, and reflective of the varied needs and experiences of all individuals.
- 1.2-2.h Enhance accessibility across all educational environments by removing physical and systemic barriers, improving infrastructure, and integrating inclusive technologies. These changes will enable learners, educators, and staff, regardless of ability or background, to participate fully, equitably, and successfully in educational experiences.



Call to Transformation 1.2-3:

Develop a comprehensive strategy to welcome newcomers into education environments that includes:

- ensuring access to mental health resources, trauma-informed practices, and social support services tailored to the diverse needs of newcomers;
- providing administrators, educators, and staff with comprehensive training to foster understanding, value, and respect for diverse cultures, languages, and experiences of newcomers;
- partnering with settlement and community organizations and cultural groups to facilitate smooth transitions for newcomer families/caregivers, and provide mentorship opportunities; and
- incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum that reflects and values the diversity of the learners, educators, administrators, and staff.

Background

Newfoundland and Labrador's education system is experiencing a significant demographic shift, with an increasing number of newcomer students entering schools across the province. This transformation brings rich cultural and linguistic diversity into classrooms, offering both opportunities and challenges for educators, learners, and communities. While inclusion remains a guiding principle of the province's education framework, meaningful integration requires more than access to schooling; it demands comprehensive supports that address the unique needs of newcomers. Many learners arrive with varying levels of English proficiency, different educational backgrounds, and, in some cases, experiences of trauma or displacement. Research highlights that without targeted interventions, language barriers and socio-emotional challenges can hinder newcomer students' academic success and social integration (Akwuole & Cacicio, 2024; Government

of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2023a). Ensuring their success requires a responsive approach that goes beyond curriculum adjustments to include mental health resources, SEL, and culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2018; OECD, 2021).

The *Now is the Time* report identified multicultural education as a key area of focus, outlining five recommendations aimed at strengthening the province's approach to diversity and inclusion in education (Collins et. al, 2017). These recommendations emphasized the need for a comprehensive multicultural education framework, enhancements to English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Literacy Enrichment and Academic Readiness for Newcomers (LEARN) programs, increased educator support and access to resources, expanded post-secondary pathways for newcomer students, and the removal of systemic barriers that hinder immigrant integration within the education system. Since the provincial government accepted the report in 2017, Newfoundland and Labrador has experienced a significant increase in newcomer populations. However, recent data from Statistics Canada highlights declining immigrant retention rates across Atlantic Canada, underscoring the need for targeted interventions (Statistics Canada, 2024c). The *Now is the Time* report explicitly states that if Newfoundland and Labrador is to retain newcomers, "it must respond to the educational needs of their children" (Collins et. al, 2017, p. 90). Achieving this requires ensuring that schools are inclusive, culturally responsive, and equipped to support the diverse needs of immigrant learners and their families/caregivers.

The province has made strides in supporting inclusive education, yet barriers persist. The retention of immigrant families is closely linked to the educational experiences of their children, making it critical for schools to promote a sense of belonging and equitable participation (United Nations, 2015). Educators require PL opportunities that equip them with the skills to create inclusive environments, while partnerships with community organizations can help bridge gaps in settlement services (Starlight, 2024). Additionally, curriculum design must reflect the lived experiences of newcomer students, valuing their contributions and integrating diverse perspectives into learning (Aronson & Laughter, 2020). Studies suggest that inclusive and culturally responsive education improves academic achievement, engagement, and long-term success for all learners (OECD, 2021). By prioritizing these efforts, Newfoundland and Labrador can strengthen its education system and create a foundation for newcomer success, ensuring that schools are not only places of learning but also welcoming spaces that empower all learners to thrive.

1.2-3 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 1.2-3.a** Form a working group comprised of representatives from diverse educational sectors (Early Learning, K-12, and Post-Secondary), the Department of Jobs, Immigration and Growth, the Association for New Canadians, and other relevant organizations to collaboratively review and enhance policies that facilitate the successful integration of newcomers into the education system and wider society.
- 1.2-3.b** Conduct a jurisdictional scan to review policies and practices implemented in regions comparable to Newfoundland and Labrador, taking into account the distinct differences between urban and rural contexts.
- 1.2-3.c** Review existing resources, tools, and practices across educational sectors and community organizations to identify opportunities to reimagine and realign priorities, ensuring they effectively support newcomer integration.
- 1.2-3.d** Assess existing partner roles and responsibilities and identify potential new or evolving functions to ensure effective support and alignment with required outcomes.
- 1.2-3.e** Evaluate current EAL supports to identify opportunities for expanding and enhancing programs and services.
- 1.2-3.f** Develop and implement inclusive policies and practices that promote belonging, including anti-discrimination measures and clear protocols for addressing racism and bias.
- 1.2-3.g** Evaluate and enhance facilities to accommodate newcomers, ensuring spaces support multilingual communication and culturally relevant activities.

Theme 1.3: Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism is defined as students missing more than 10% of school days without valid excuses, a growing concern that significantly impacts educational outcomes. Rising absenteeism rates hinder learners from developing essential skills, forming relationships, and fully engaging in learning, particularly in the foundational years of K-6. Research indicates that absenteeism during these early years often leads to persistent attendance issues in later grades, widening academic achievement gaps, lowering graduation rates, and limiting future opportunities (Dee, 2023; Humm-Patnode et al., 2018; Kern et al., 2017). Effectively addressing chronic absenteeism requires a proactive, targeted approach that prioritizes early intervention. Identifying and mitigating barriers such as health challenges, housing instability, and inadequate support systems is essential. By promoting supportive school and community environments, educators and policymakers can help learners establish consistent attendance patterns, laying the groundwork for long-term academic and future personal success.

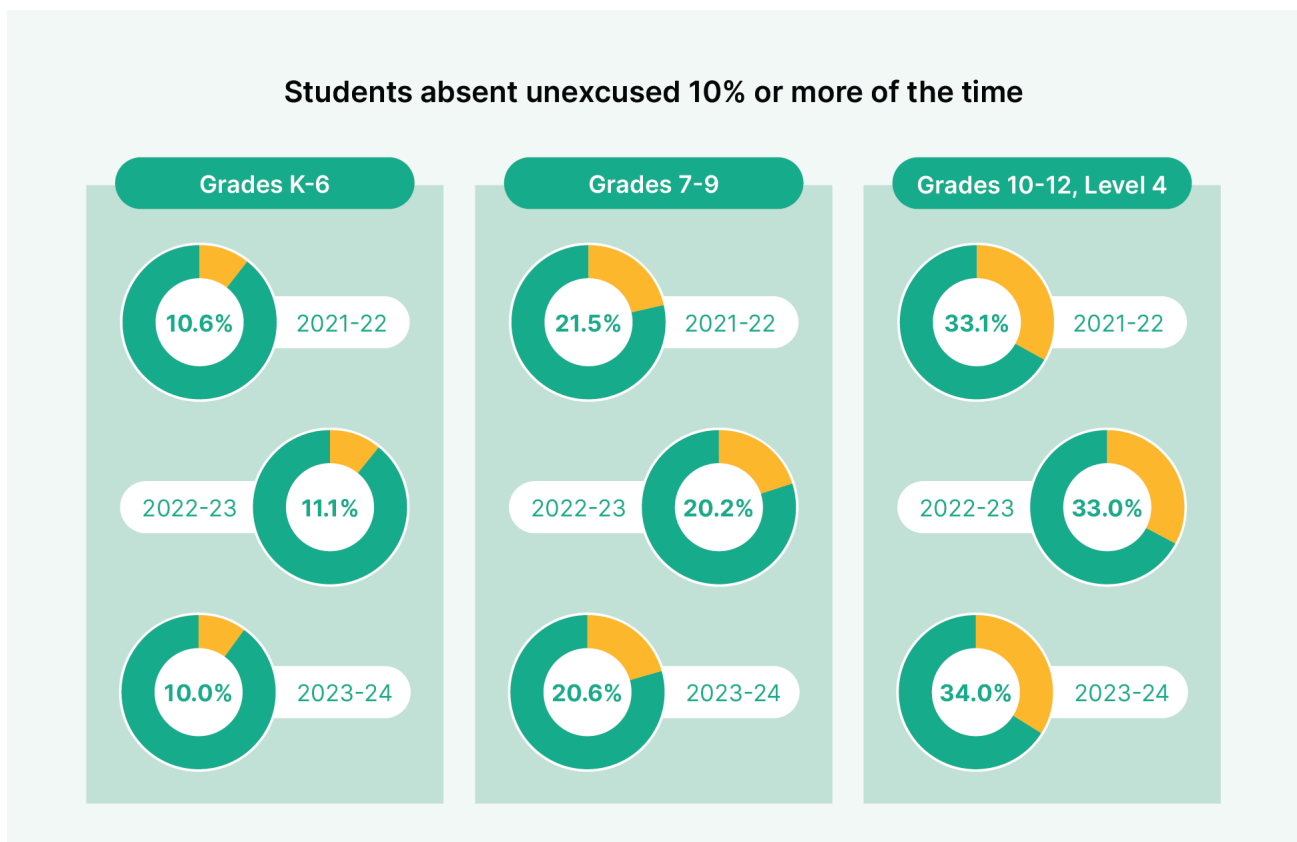


Figure 12: PowerSchool data for NLSchools of unexcused absences in K-6, 7-9, 10-Level 4 in 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24. (Source: NLSchools)

Call to Transformation



Call to Transformation 1.3-4:

Reduce chronic absenteeism in the K-12 education environment with a focus on the early years (K-3) through:

- Supportive attendance policies delivered consistently across education environments.
- Data-informed interventions focused on vulnerable children, youth, and families/caregivers.
- Education for learners and families/caregivers on the importance of consistent attendance and the value of education starting in early learning programs (i.e., Kinderstart).
- The development of strong home-school communication channels and processes to discuss attendance concerns proactively.

Background

Chronic absenteeism has long been recognized as a significant barrier to learner success. While absenteeism was already a concern prior to COVID-19, its prevalence has escalated both provincially and globally post-pandemic (Gottfried & Hutt, 2019). The consequences of chronic absenteeism extend far beyond individual academic achievement, affecting classroom environments, societal well-being, and long-term economic stability. As educational partners emphasize, “Definitely focus on mental health” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). This sentiment highlights the increasing recognition that mental health challenges are a major contributor to learner disengagement and absenteeism, underscoring the need for policies that prioritize well-being as a fundamental component of attendance initiatives.

The impact of chronic absenteeism on learning is profound. Learners who are frequently absent struggle to keep pace with their peers, leading to lower academic performance and disengagement from school (London et al., 2022). At the classroom level, high absenteeism rates disrupt instructional flow, forcing educators to revisit content and adjust learning plans, ultimately affecting overall educational quality (Chang et al., 2021). Research also establishes a clear link between absenteeism and school dropout rates,

with chronically absent students at significantly higher risk of failing to complete their education (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2020). Recognizing this, many learners have expressed a desire for flexible learning options, with one learner noting, “A lot of students struggle with mental health issues and don’t go every day, I think that there should be a system where if you wish to do the work at home sometimes but still wanna go to school sometimes as well that should be an option” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). This perspective aligns with emerging discussions around hybrid learning models and the potential for schools to provide adaptable structures that support learner well-being while maintaining engagement.

Beyond academic outcomes, absenteeism has broader societal implications. It is associated with lower SEL in adulthood, reduced economic opportunities, and increased health challenges (Minges & Redeker, 2016). Studies also indicate a correlation between chronic absenteeism and engagement in high-risk behaviours such as substance abuse and criminal activity (Kearney, 2016). Addressing absenteeism is therefore not just an educational necessity but a broader social responsibility.

The root causes of chronic absenteeism are complex and interrelated, spanning individual, school, and societal factors. Health-related issues—including physical and mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and chronic illness—are among the most common reasons for absenteeism (Lacoe, 2020). At the school level, punitive policies such as suspension, a lack of engaging learning environments, or perceptions of an unsafe or unwelcoming school climate contribute to learner disengagement (Rogers & Feller, 2018). Societal challenges, including housing instability and involvement in the child welfare system, further exacerbate attendance issues, as learners facing instability at home often struggle to prioritize education (Morrissey et al., 2021). Familial attitudes toward education also play a role, as learners who do not perceive school as valuable or who experience challenges at home are at greater risk of absenteeism (McConnell & Kubina, 2022). Addressing these root causes requires a learner-centred approach that considers mental health, flexible learning models, and a redefinition of engagement, ensuring that education remains accessible to all learners regardless of their circumstances.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, chronic absenteeism has been identified as a critical issue requiring interdepartmental collaboration. The *Chronic Absenteeism: When Children Disappear* report by the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (2019) outlined four key recommendations: the development of an action plan to address absenteeism; the implementation of departmental policies to assess and respond to attendance issues; the establishment of a threshold for when absenteeism necessitates a referral to the Department of Children, Seniors, and Social Development; and determining how various departments can contribute to addressing the problem. In response, EECD has taken steps to implement these recommendations, including submitting an action plan and forming a working group to develop a comprehensive attendance policy.

Concerns surrounding absenteeism were also raised in the *Supporting Learning* report (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2000), though primarily in relation to systemic disruptions such as weather-related school closures, examinations, and non-curricular activities rather than individualized learner concerns. However, the report did acknowledge absenteeism as a factor affecting learning time, recommending that EECD and school boards monitor attendance regularly. This aligns with the recommendations of the Child and Youth Advocate to ensure absenteeism is effectively assessed and addressed (Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, 2019).

In the post-COVID era, absenteeism has risen significantly, exacerbating pre-existing educational disparities (Allen et al., 2024). Research underscores the need for policies and practices that address both learning gaps caused by the pandemic and the subsequent increase in absenteeism (Rockwood & Rouse, 2024). This effort must extend beyond academic performance to include social development, as absenteeism disproportionately affects learners from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and visible minorities (Fayed & Cummings, 2021). Effective interventions must be designed through an equity-focused lens to ensure that attendance initiatives also address broader systemic disparities (Lester & Michelson, 2024). The incorporation of flexible attendance options, such as hybrid learning models or mental health accommodations, represents an important evolution in how schools support learner participation and success.

Chronic absenteeism is particularly concerning in early education, especially in Kindergarten through third grade (K-3), when foundational literacy and numeracy skills are developed. Research indicates that young children who are chronically absent exhibit long-term declines in executive function skills and are at higher risk of continued absenteeism in later grades (Gottfried & Hutt, 2019). Absenteeism in early years has been linked to lower engagement, weaker social-emotional skills, and long-term academic difficulties (Ansari & Purtell, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic further worsened these challenges, increasing absenteeism among young learners due to economic instability, disruptions in child care, and mental health concerns. Studies indicate that post-pandemic absenteeism among early learners has widened existing disparities, particularly for children from historically underserved communities (Purtell & Ansari, 2022). Children from lower-income backgrounds face systemic barriers such as unreliable transportation, food insecurity, and housing instability, all of which contribute to attendance difficulties (Thornton et al., 2013). Without targeted interventions, these attendance challenges can lead to long-term inequities in education.

Addressing early absenteeism in Newfoundland and Labrador requires a multifaceted approach that engages families/caregivers, provides transportation solutions, and offers personalized support for vulnerable children. Research emphasizes the importance of early interventions such as parent education programs that stress the value of consistent attendance and school policies that create engaging and inclusive learning environments (Kirksey & Gottfried, 2021). The province must also invest in data-driven strategies that enable schools to identify at-risk learners early and implement targeted interventions

before attendance patterns become entrenched. Tools such as the Responsive Teaching and Learning Database and PowerSchool can help educators track absenteeism trends and tailor interventions accordingly.

Engaging families/caregivers in promoting attendance is crucial, particularly in early education. Families/caregivers play a fundamental role in shaping children's attitudes toward school, and when they understand the long-term impact of absenteeism, learners are more likely to develop consistent attendance habits (Kirksey & Gottfried, 2021). Schools that proactively engage families/caregivers through communication, workshops, and outreach efforts report higher attendance rates, as families/caregivers become partners in addressing attendance barriers (Purtell & Ansari, 2022). In Newfoundland and Labrador, early learning initiatives such as KinderStart provide an opportunity to instill these values in families/caregivers before formal schooling begins (Ansari & Purtell, 2018).

A comprehensive approach to reducing absenteeism in Newfoundland and Labrador must go beyond monitoring attendance records. Many families/caregivers in the province face unique challenges, including seasonal employment in industries such as fishing, long travel distances to school, and limited health care access. Research suggests that schools that offer flexible scheduling, transportation assistance, and culturally responsive outreach programs are more effective in reducing absenteeism among disadvantaged populations (Thornton et al., 2013). Educators can also benefit from PL opportunities focused on family/caregiver engagement and home-school relationships, both of which have been shown to improve attendance outcomes (Kirksey & Gottfried, 2021).

Effectively addressing absenteeism requires the systematic collection and analysis of attendance data to identify trends and underlying causes. Newfoundland and Labrador's diverse educational landscape—including urban, rural, and Indigenous communities—demands tailored interventions based on location-specific challenges. Implementing data systems such as PowerSchool and the Responsive Teaching and Learning Database enables educators to track attendance patterns and develop proactive strategies. Research highlights how predictive models can analyze attendance data to forecast academic challenges, reinforcing the importance of data-driven insights in shaping interventions (Subbarayudu et al., 2024).

A data-driven approach ensures that interventions are both efficient and equitable, directing resources where they are needed most. Schools must identify specific obstacles such as transportation difficulties, mental health concerns, or family obligations to implement upstream solutions that prevent absenteeism before it becomes chronic. Research suggests that data-driven personalization in education enhances learner engagement, leading to stronger school connections and improved attendance (Manasa et al., 2024). By leveraging predictive analytics and real-time tracking, Newfoundland and Labrador can transition from reactive responses to proactive attendance strategies, fostering a more supportive and inclusive education system where all learners have the opportunity to thrive.

1.3-4 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 1.3-4.a** Establish a working group comprising partners from all educational sectors—early learning, K-12, and post-secondary—to develop strategies for addressing chronic absenteeism. Ensure broad and diverse representation, including administrators, guidance counsellors, student success teachers, Safe and Inclusive Schools itinerants, student services teaching and learning assistants and K-6 educators. Prioritize a balanced perspective by including voices from urban, rural and remote education environments.
- 1.3-4.b** Support the implementation of recommendations from the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate to effectively address chronic absenteeism.
- 1.3-4.c** Conduct a review of existing policies and practices aimed at reducing chronic absenteeism across all educational settings, with a specific focus on addressing absenteeism in K-3.
- 1.3-4.d** Utilize PowerSchool and the Responsive Teaching and Learning Database to regularly collect attendance data and the reasons for absenteeism, enabling the identification of emerging patterns and the development of proactive solutions to address the root causes of absenteeism.
- 1.3-4.e** Leverage data from education, health, and other systems to design targeted interventions that support both individual learners and broader learning environments.
- 1.3-4.f** Facilitate access to community, social, and health supports to address barriers to attendance, including transportation, health care, child care, and family challenges.
- 1.3-4.g** Prioritize restorative approaches that promote positive relationships and meaningful connections among learners, educators, administrators, staff and families/caregivers.



- 1.3-4.h Develop implementation guidelines for the Safe and Caring Schools Policy to promote a positive, inclusive school culture. Ensure learners have access to supportive programming, meaningful instructional time, and a safe environment that promotes both well-being and the achievement of curriculum outcomes.
 - 1.3-4.i Expand and enhance innovative, engaging, and inclusive learning experiences—both in the classroom and through extracurricular activities—to strengthen learner engagement and encourage consistent attendance.
 - 1.3-4.j Continuously monitor attendance data and outcomes, gathering feedback from learners, families/caregivers, and educators to evaluate the impact of interventions and refine strategies as needed.
 - 1.3-4.k Define and clarify roles and responsibilities in addressing absenteeism to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach across all learning environments.
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Theme 1.4: Professional Learning for Educators, Administrators, and Staff

Ongoing PL is essential for educators, administrators, and staff, enabling them to stay informed about the latest research, trends, and interventions that enhance educational outcomes (Avalos, 2018). In an ever-evolving world, education professionals must be equipped to navigate emerging local and global challenges that shape the learning environment (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2020). Prioritizing PL promotes confidence, preparedness, and the ability to adapt to the complexities of modern education (Kennedy, 2019). Research highlights that high-quality PL enhances teacher efficacy, improves learner achievement, and contributes to overall school improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). However, for PL to be truly impactful, it must be reimaged through a transformative lens, one that aligns with the evolving needs of educators, learners and families/caregivers. Effective PL should be sustained, collaborative, and embedded within authentic teaching experiences

(Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). This requires a strategic, collaborative approach to designing, prioritizing, and delivering PL, ensuring it remains accessible, relevant, and responsive to the realities of today's education system (Opfer & Pedder, 2019).

Call to Transformation



Call to Transformation 1.4-5:

Develop an approach for mandatory and iterative, continuous professional learning (PL) for educators, administrators, and staff that includes:

- Enhancing knowledge and expertise about the social factors influencing education.
- Increasing awareness of the interventions that are available across sectors to ensure learners can thrive.
- Developing a mentorship program for new educators and educators transitioning to a new role that supports the practical application of evidence-based pedagogies (e.g., curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment and evaluation) and proven practice to support the real-life circumstances presented within education environments.

Background

Effective PL for educators is directly linked to improved educational outcomes for learners (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). High-quality PL must be sustained, well-resourced, and intentionally designed to support educators in their evolving roles. However, it must also be deeply integrated with learner progress, ensuring that educators can effectively apply new knowledge to enhance both academic and socio-emotional growth (García & Weiss, 2019). Recognizing this need, educational partners emphasize the importance of ensuring educators are equipped with the proper tools for supporting learning challenges and social-emotional needs (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). This highlights the growing necessity for PL programs to go beyond subject-specific pedagogy and prioritize holistic learner development.

Beyond instructional responsibilities, educators play a vital role in supporting learner well-being, a responsibility that has become even more critical in the post-COVID era as learner mental health challenges have increased significantly (Mikolajczak et al., 2019). Research indicates that when educators possess the knowledge and skills to be empathetic caregivers, they create more supportive learning environments that promote learner engagement and resilience (Jennings et al., 2017). Professional learning focused on learner well-being is essential, as educators' ability to recognize and respond to learner challenges impacts their effectiveness in managing behavioural issues and supporting positive learner development (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Furthermore, PL that enhances educators' social-emotional competencies has been linked to improved educator-learner relationships and overall classroom climate (Collie et al., 2020). Given that educators are legally bound by a duty of care to their learners, ongoing PL in mental health awareness and learner support strategies is imperative for developing safe, inclusive, and responsive learning environments (Hamre et al., 2020). Educators need access to learning about "trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning, and wellness strategies." This would empower them to "cultivate a positive school climate that prioritizes the holistic well-being of all, including learners and families" (Health & Well-Being Minute Meetings, 2024). By integrating these components into PL, educators will be better prepared to meet the increasing socio-emotional needs of their learners.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the teaching profession operates under unique certification conditions. Once a teaching certificate is issued, it remains permanent, requiring no renewal or ongoing PL to maintain its validity. Unlike other regulated professions, no conditions are attached to certification to ensure continued PL. The current collective agreement for educators mandates that the employer provide four PL days annually; however, participation in these opportunities is not required, nor is any form of PL necessary to maintain certification. The Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes (Collins et al., 2017) recommended a comprehensive review of the Standards for Teacher Certification, as well as a full examination of the Teacher Training Act, which governs certification processes.

Additionally, the task force highlighted the need for sustained resources and leadership to implement a new model of PL, with a focus on sustainability and relevance, in an evolving educational landscape. Notably, early childhood educators (ECEs) in Newfoundland and Labrador who work with young children in regulated child care settings are subject to stricter PL requirements, with certification renewal required every three years and a minimum of 30 hours of ongoing PL. Given that educators across all age groups, from Early Childhood to K-12, play a critical role in shaping learner development and well-being, PL expectations should align across sectors to ensure that all children and youth receive research-informed, high-quality education.

Implementing mandatory and continuous PL for educators, administrators, and staff is particularly important in Newfoundland and Labrador, where social determinants of health significantly shape learner progress and well-being. Many communities in the province face challenges including poverty, food insecurity, housing instability, and limited access to health care, all of which impact learner engagement, academic achievement, and overall development (Basch, 2017). Educators are often the first point of contact for learners experiencing adversity, yet without comprehensive training in the social determinants of health, they may struggle to recognize and address the root causes of behavioural and academic difficulties. With the decrease in mental health and well-being, it needs to be a part of the educational curriculum to have Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), Safe Talk for the Youth, and Mental Health First Aid as a mandatory requirement for youth and educators (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). By embedding health and well-being into PL, schools across the province can ensure that all staff are equipped with the knowledge and strategies necessary to create trauma-sensitive, inclusive, and equity-driven learning environments (Morgan et al., 2019).

Trauma-informed educational practices have become increasingly important, as many learners face chronic stressors, including adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which have been linked to difficulties in emotional regulation, executive functioning, and academic performance (McLaughlin et al., 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns among learners. When educators receive training in trauma-sensitive approaches, they are better prepared to recognize signs of distress, implement de-escalation techniques, and create psychologically safe classroom environments (Chafouleas et al., 2016). Additionally, PL should emphasize mental health literacy, providing educators with the skills to identify and respond to learner mental health concerns early. In a province where access to mental health services is limited in many rural areas, equipping educators with these competencies is essential for ensuring learners receive the support they need to build resilience and succeed in school (Weist et al., 2018).

Recognizing the link between educator well-being and learner success, PL must also prioritize the health of educators and staff. Many educators in Newfoundland and Labrador face high workloads, professional isolation in rural areas, and increasing learner mental health needs, all of which contribute to stress and burnout. Research has shown that educators experiencing high levels of stress are less able to provide the emotional and instructional support learners require (Jennings et al., 2017). The Newfoundland and Labrador Teacher's Association (NLTA) emphasized the critical need to approach the learning environment in a holistic and practical manner, along with the strong relationship between teacher working conditions and student learning conditions in K-12 schools. (Health & Well-Being Pillar, 2024). By incorporating training in self-care, stress management, and mindfulness-based interventions, PL opportunities can strengthen the emotional resilience of educators while promoting a healthier school climate (Herman et al., 2018b). A comprehensive, systemic approach to PL that integrates the social

determinants of health, trauma-informed practices, and educator well-being will ensure that schools across Newfoundland and Labrador serve as protective and nurturing environments where learners, educators and staff can flourish.

Implementing mentorship programs for new educators and those transitioning into new roles is critical in Newfoundland and Labrador, where educator retention, rural and remote school placements, and diverse learner needs require targeted support. Research indicates that structured mentorship programs enhance the practical application of evidence-based pedagogies, improving both instructional quality and learner outcomes (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Given the province's unique geographical and demographic landscape, new educators—particularly those placed in rural communities—often face isolation and a steep learning curve in adapting to their school environments. A well-structured mentorship program can provide essential guidance in areas such as classroom management, differentiated instruction, and culturally responsive teaching, ensuring that all learners receive equitable learning opportunities (Hudson, 2013).

Mentorship opportunities should also integrate an understanding of SDOL—such as socioeconomic disparities, food insecurity, and mental health concerns—to better equip educators in addressing barriers to learner success. Many communities across Newfoundland and Labrador experience high rates of poverty, family mobility, and limited access to health and social services, all of which impact learner engagement and achievement (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018b). A mentorship program that pairs new educators with experienced educators familiar with these challenges can provide essential insights into navigating the social realities affecting learners. Research has shown that mentorship promotes professional resilience and enhances educator effectiveness in supporting learners facing adversity (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Moreover, incorporating trauma-informed and culturally responsive teaching strategies into mentorship can further help educators create inclusive, supportive classrooms that empower learners from diverse backgrounds (Gay, 2018).

Structured mentorship initiatives have proven effective in other jurisdictions and can be adapted to Newfoundland and Labrador's education system. Urban Teacher Residency programs, for example, have successfully prepared educators for high-needs schools by integrating academic coursework with mentored teaching experiences (Berry et al., 2008). Establishing a provincial mentorship framework that provides sustained, collaborative learning opportunities and professional networking, can strengthen teacher retention, enhance instructional quality, and ultimately improve learner success. By creating a supportive community of practice, mentorships will ensure that educators across Newfoundland and Labrador are equipped to apply evidence-based strategies within the real-life circumstances of their teaching environments.

1.4-5 Pathways to Action

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 1.4-5.a Develop a tailored approach for each learning environment that reimagines PL, equipping educators with the confidence and skills to effectively deliver content that supports the health and well-being of learners.
- 1.4-5.b Develop PL opportunities that empower educational leaders to drive cultural change, cultivating empathy, strong relationships, and holistic well-being across all learning environments.
- 1.4-5.c Collaborate directly with Memorial University to enhance opportunities to integrate SDOL and restorative justice principles into educator curriculum.
- 1.4-5.d Develop ongoing PL for educators, administrators, and staff, requiring the annual completion of continuing education credits to maintain teaching certification.
- 1.4-5.e Develop a PL approach spanning early learning, K-12, post-secondary, and lifelong learning that ensures educators, administrators, and staff have dedicated time and opportunities to engage consistently in learning focused on SDOL.
- 1.4-5.f Ensure the PL delivery model is inclusive, forward-thinking, flexible, and responsive to diverse needs.
- 1.4-5.g Design PL that is adaptable to various educational contexts and developmental stages of learners, incorporating awareness and guidance on available social interventions.
- 1.4-5.h Cultivate a sense of responsibility among educators, administrators, and staff to build meaningful connections with learners and their families/caregivers, emphasizing that strong relationships are foundational to academic success.

Theme 1.5: Curriculum for Learners

Integrating life skills and competencies into the curriculum at all levels is crucial to ensuring that learners are not only academically successful but also equipped to navigate life's complexities. Foundational skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, emotional regulation, communication, and adaptability are essential for developing resilient, confident individuals who can thrive in all aspects of life in this province. By embedding these competencies into learning, we empower learners to manage challenges, make informed decisions, and cultivate the self-awareness needed for personal and professional fulfillment. Prioritizing life skills alongside academic achievement develops well-rounded learners who are prepared not just for the workforce, but for active, meaningful participation in their communities and the wider world.

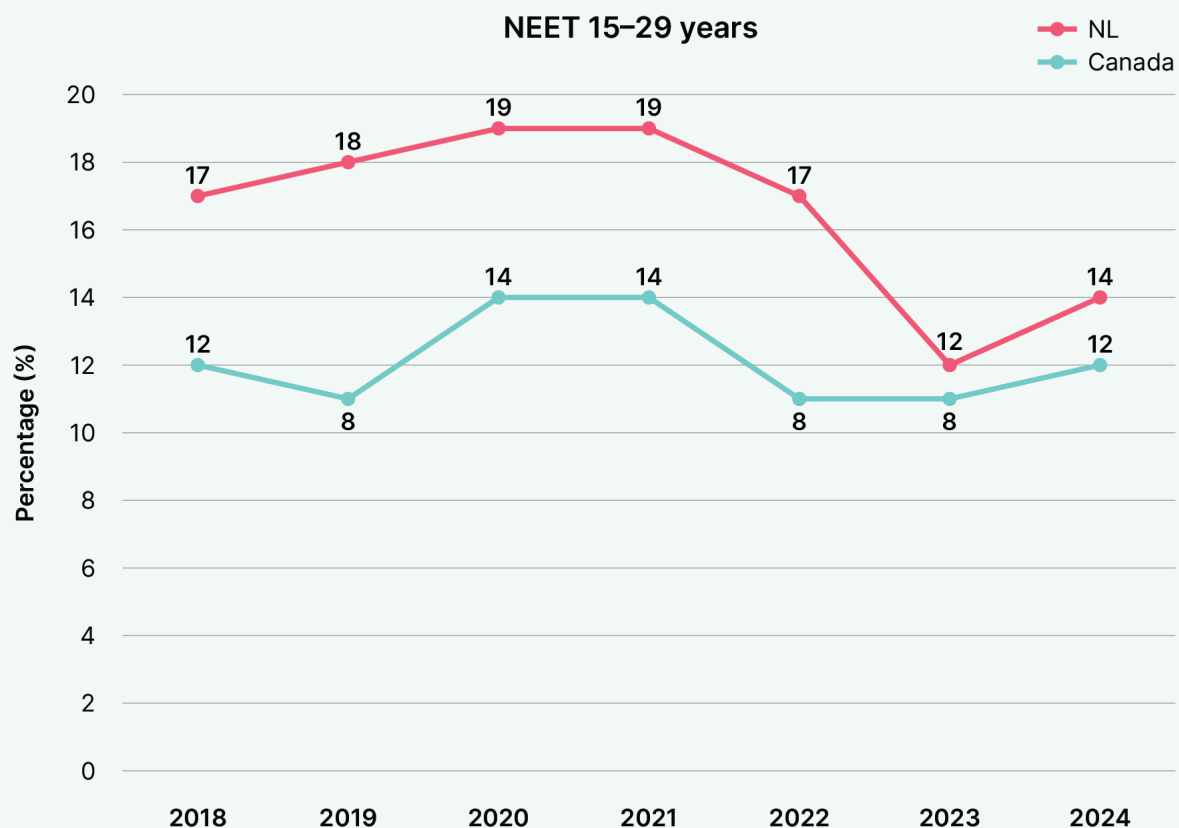


Figure 13: Youth Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in NL and CAN (15–29 years), 2018–2024.

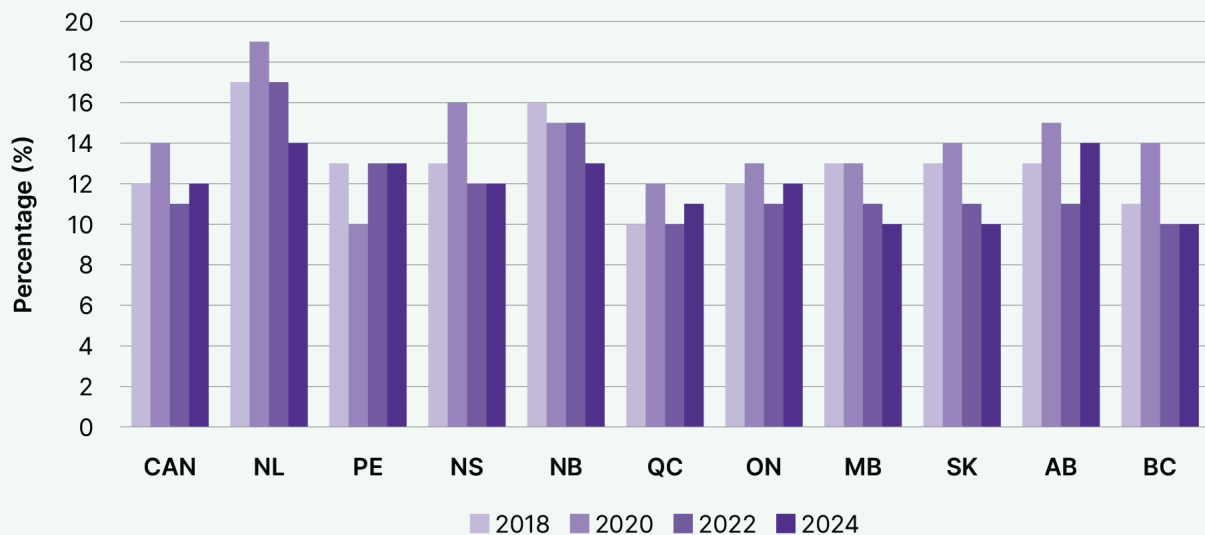


Figure 14: Youth Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (15–29 years) (%), 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024.

Call to Transformation



Call to Transformation 1.5-6:

Integrate opportunities into existing curriculum to emphasize skills and competencies that support lifelong well-being, including but not limited to learning related to daily physical activity, social-emotional learning (SEL), mental health and addictions, sexual health, home repair, personal finance and economics, first aid and survival basics, environmental adaptation and mitigation, and social connection and relationship building.

Background

Newfoundland and Labrador has recently integrated Key Competencies into the K-12 public education system to equip learners with the attitudes, skills, and knowledge needed to navigate an increasingly complex and unpredictable future. These six key competencies—collaboration, communication, citizenship and sustainability, innovation,

creativity and entrepreneurship, self-awareness and self-management, and critical thinking and problem-solving—work alongside strong foundations in literacy, numeracy, SEL, and curriculum indicators to develop well-rounded individuals. As interdependent and interdisciplinary skills, they can be applied across various contexts and evolve over time, ensuring learners are prepared for lifelong learning and meaningful engagement in their communities and beyond. As learners prepare for post-secondary pathways and careers, many express the need for “better preparation post-secondary and for real life,” emphasizing that competencies should be explicitly connected to practical applications that support future success (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). Additionally, instead of adding more requirements, there is a focus on “reimagining how existing content can be leveraged to cultivate essential life skills in learners” (Health & Well-Being Minute Meetings, 2024). This approach ensures that competency-based learning remains dynamic, adaptable, and relevant to learners’ needs.

EECD has embedded these Key Competencies into all curricula, recognizing their essential role in preparing learners for an evolving world. To thrive, learners must develop these competencies alongside academic knowledge, ensuring they are equipped for future challenges. The goal is to integrate these competencies seamlessly into daily teaching, aligning them with learning outcomes across all subjects. By intentionally linking each learning objective to one of the six competencies, educators ensure that learners not only grasp academic concepts but also develop transferable life skills that empower them beyond the classroom.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) introduced the Future of Education and Skills 2030 initiative to develop 21st-century competencies that prepare learners for an increasingly complex world (OECD, 2018). This initiative emphasizes two key areas—learning and teaching, and international curriculum analysis—both aimed at enhancing global educational practices. From this, the OECD developed the Learning Compass, a framework that identifies the essential competencies learners need to navigate and shape their futures. The Learning Compass consists of seven key elements that guide learners toward adaptability, responsibility, and engaged global citizenship (OECD, 2019).

Similarly, in 2015, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, outlining a global vision for peace, prosperity, and sustainability (UNESCO, 2015). This agenda includes seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which serve as a blueprint for global progress. SDG 4 focuses on education, emphasizing the need for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Within SDG 4, seven comprehensive targets have been established to enhance and diversify the competencies and skills necessary for youth and adults to succeed in the modern world. The integration of Key Competencies in Newfoundland and Labrador’s education system aligns with these broader educational frameworks, reinforcing a commitment to preparing learners for

global citizenship and lifelong learning (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2015). Ensuring that career preparation is embedded within these competencies is crucial, as learners have expressed the importance of “having more career guidance and counselling to help us plan for the future” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). This highlights the growing need for structured support in helping learners transition from K-12 education to post-secondary and career pathways.

Beyond academic achievement, integrating competencies that support lifelong well-being into Newfoundland and Labrador’s K-12 curriculum is essential for helping learners navigate an increasingly complex world. Research demonstrates that embedding essential life skills—such as daily physical activity, SEL, mental health awareness, personal finance, and environmental stewardship—promotes holistic development and provides learners with the tools necessary for both personal and societal well-being (Greenberg et al., 2003). Incorporating daily physical activity into the curriculum has also been linked to improved psychological well-being, reduced levels of depression and anxiety, increased self-esteem, and enhanced academic performance (Teferi, 2020). Physical education programs that prioritize active living cultivate positive attitudes toward lifelong health and wellness, reinforcing the importance of movement-based learning (Tobler et al., 2000). In Newfoundland and Labrador, where long winters and rural geography can limit access to recreational opportunities, embedding physical activity within the school day ensures that all learners benefit from movement-based learning, regardless of location or socioeconomic status.

Embedding SEL and mental health education into the curriculum is another essential step toward learner well-being. Studies indicate that integrating SEL into academic instruction enhances mental health, strengthens resilience, and equips learners with coping strategies that support long-term success (Lösel & Beelmann, 2003). This finding is particularly relevant in Newfoundland and Labrador, where youth mental health challenges have been a growing concern, with increasing rates of anxiety and depression among learners. With the decrease in mental health well-being, it needs to be a part of the educational curriculum to have ASIST, Safe Talk for the Youth, and Mental Health First Aid as a mandatory requirement for youth and educators (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). Integrating mental health education as a core component of the curriculum ensures that learners and educators are equipped with the knowledge and strategies necessary to navigate mental health challenges effectively. Proactive school-based mental health education can provide early intervention and support, helping learners develop emotional regulation skills to navigate challenges effectively (Boustani et al., 2014). Furthermore, learners have emphasized the necessity of the “inclusion of robust sexual health and gender-based violence curriculums, as well as the accurate and meaningful inclusion of Indigenous curriculums, including the history and ongoing colonialism in the province” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). These curricular inclusions are critical in fostering a more inclusive, informed, and equitable education system.

Additionally, research consistently shows that learners who engage in real-world applications of essential skills—such as financial literacy, first aid, and environmental awareness—develop adaptive problem-solving abilities and long-term self-sufficiency (Losel & Beelmann, 2003). This is especially important in Newfoundland and Labrador, where learners must be prepared to contribute to an evolving economic landscape that includes emerging industries such as renewable energy, technology, and sustainable resource management. Given the province’s unique climate and geography, incorporating environmental stewardship and survival skills into the curriculum ensures that learners develop the knowledge necessary to adapt to environmental challenges such as extreme weather events and resource sustainability. By integrating these competencies across disciplines, Newfoundland and Labrador can prepare learners for success in both personal and professional domains while developing a resilient, engaged, and informed population.

1.5-6 Pathways to Action

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 1.5-6.a** Strengthen existing partnerships and establish new, mutually beneficial collaborations with organizations across all sectors to support the delivery of specialized programs and services. These partnerships should align with key skills and competencies, ensuring learners have access to diverse expertise and resources (e.g., Public Health, Relationships First, Planned Parenthood, Community Youth Networks).
- 1.5-6.b** Explore ways to integrate knowledge and skills that promote lifelong health and well-being across all areas of the curriculum, ensuring they are not limited to health-specific subjects. This approach supports diverse learning interests and abilities, promoting a holistic foundation for learner success.
- 1.5-6.c** Conduct a review of community resources and supports available for delivering specialized curriculum, and develop a strategic partnership framework to expand program offerings in key areas such as financial literacy, mechanics, home repair, mental wellness, music, and outdoor recreation.



- 1.5-6.d Develop programs that equip learners with a deep understanding of climate change and empower them to actively engage in environmental adaptation and mitigation initiatives.
 - 1.5-6.e Implement personalized learning pathways that integrate application-based experiences while promoting holistic well-being.
 - 1.5-6.f Develop policies and practices that leverage technology as a tool for well-being, providing accessible and personalized support for learners and families/caregivers. This includes integrating devices, artificial intelligence (AI), application-based platforms, and distance learning technologies to enhance learning experiences and engagement.
 - 1.5-6.g Develop policies and practices to ensure the consistent implementation of the Social and Emotional Learning Foundation Document (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2021b), while prioritizing a sense of belonging. This approach will maintain a learner-centric focus, moving beyond a medical model to create inclusive, supportive learning environments for all learners.
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Theme 1.6: Connections with Health and Social Programs

Integrated connections between educational systems and health and social programs are crucial to ensuring that learners have timely access to the supports necessary for their success. Many factors influencing educational outcomes—such as mental health issues, complex medical needs, food insecurity, and housing instability—extend beyond the classroom and require a coordinated, multi-sector approach. By promoting collaboration among educators, health care providers, social services, and community partners, we can align desired outcomes and streamline access to interventions. This ensures the delivery of comprehensive, tailored supports that meet the needs of learners and their families/caregivers. Such integration guarantees that all partners are actively engaged, accountable, and dedicated to overcoming the complex barriers impacting learner well-being and success, ultimately creating healthier, more equitable learning environments.

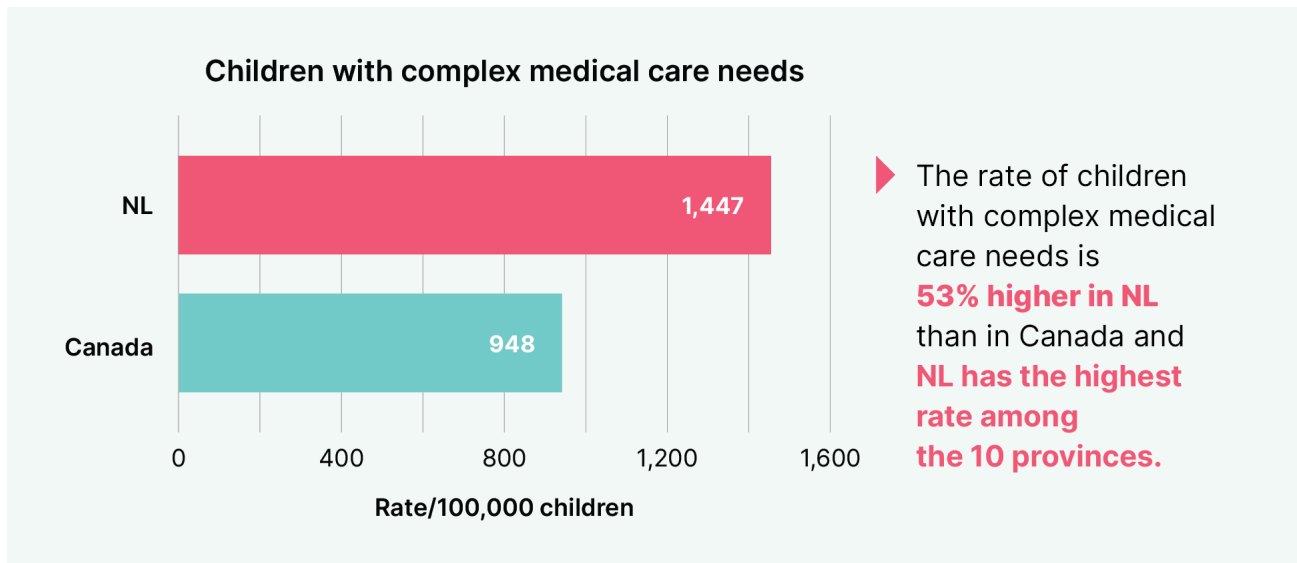


Figure 15: The Rate of Children with Complex Medical Needs per 100,000 Children in NL and in Canada, 2015-16. (Source: Health Accord NL, 2022.)

- The growing number of children with complex medical needs will shape the demand for both formal and informal care, as well as the development of specialized programs within learning environments across all stages of education.
- Although the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) data in this graphic has not been updated since 2015-16, the increasing medical complexity of learners continues to pose ongoing challenges in educational settings.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 1.6-7:

Expand the Healthy Students Healthy Schools (HSHS) Program in K-12 environments to connect every school in the province to a School Health Promotion Liaison Consultant (SHPLC) to deliver programs and services that are broad in scope and support holistic well-being and the social determinants of learning (SDOL)—the factors beyond the educational system that influence learning.

Background

Educational environments play a critical role in health promotion, offering a unique opportunity to reach nearly every learner in the province. Schools serve as central hubs for promoting learner well-being by addressing key health concerns such as nutrition, physical activity, mental health, sexual health, and substance use within the learning environment. They provide proactive support to help learners make healthier choices while enabling the implementation of targeted health interventions when needed.

“Strengthening mental health support services in schools is a priority” (Health & Well-Being Minute Meetings), as learners require more direct access to mental health professionals and wellness initiatives. By integrating health promotion into daily educational practices, schools can establish a strong foundation for lifelong well-being.

Expanding the Healthy Students Healthy Schools (HSHS) Program in Newfoundland and Labrador’s K-12 education system to include a School Health Promotion Liaison Consultant (SHPLC) in every school is a strategic initiative aimed at enhancing learner well-being and addressing SDOL. The HSHS Program has historically focused on promoting health within schools by addressing key areas such as nutrition, physical activity, mental health, sexual health, and substance use (Healthy Students Healthy Schools, n.d.). By embedding SHPLCs within each school, this initiative seeks to provide comprehensive support beyond traditional educational responsibilities, recognizing that factors such as mental health, complex medical needs, food insecurity, and housing instability significantly impact learners’ ability to learn and thrive. “Supporting the health and wellness of the entire education system creates an environment ‘conducive to both personal and academic growth’” (Health & Well-Being Minute Meetings), underscoring the need for a systemic approach that ensures learners’ health and wellness remain a foundational pillar of education.

Integrating SHPLCs into schools facilitates a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach to learner health and well-being. These professionals serve as vital links between schools, health care providers, social services, and community organizations, ensuring that interventions are timely, culturally sensitive, and tailored to the unique needs of each learner. Research indicates that such integrated approaches not only improve health outcomes but also enhance academic performance and reduce absenteeism (Caldas et al., 2020; Medina et al., 2020; Sanders & Galindo, 2020). For instance, studies have shown that when schools actively address the social determinants of health through dedicated personnel, learners exhibit improved engagement and achievement (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002). However, gaps in access to mental health professionals within schools remain a challenge. Learners, families/caregivers and educators continue to voice concerns about the limited availability of school-based mental health resources, with one learner stating, “I think there could be more things to help people with their mental health, that way people can get to people that they need” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). Additionally,

“increasing the number of educational psychologists” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024) has been suggested as a key strategy for improving mental health services in schools, ensuring that learners have consistent access to specialized support when needed. By reducing barriers to essential services and simplifying system navigation for families/caregivers, SHPLCs contribute to creating equitable learning environments where all learners have the opportunity to succeed.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, access to health care and social services remains a challenge for many families, particularly in rural and remote communities. Expanding the SHPLC model would ensure that learners receive the support they need, addressing gaps in mental health services, nutrition programs, and wellness initiatives. Rural schools, in particular, often struggle to connect learners with the necessary resources due to geographic and logistical barriers. By embedding SHPLCs within each school, these professionals can strengthen partnerships with local organizations such as the School Lunch Association, which provides nutritious meals to learners, and regional health authorities that offer specialized care. Furthermore, educators often find themselves struggling to provide adequate support for learners facing significant health challenges. As one educator noted, “More classroom support to help teachers (and students) with students whose needs go beyond what teachers can do (chronic illnesses, disabilities, etc.)” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024), highlighting the need for greater in-school health support personnel. A more integrated and equitable approach to learner well-being within Newfoundland and Labrador’s education system would ensure that all learners, regardless of their background or location, have access to the comprehensive supports they need to succeed.

1.6-7 Pathways to Action

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 1.6-7.a Utilize the HSHS Steering Committee—comprising representatives from EECD, the Department of Health and Community Services, and Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, and Recreation—to conduct a review of the existing HSHS Program. This review will inform strategic enhancements aimed at expanding program offerings and ensuring province-wide implementation, promoting a holistic approach to learner well-being and school health initiatives.



- 1.6-7.b** Explore opportunities to re-envision program offerings and priorities, creating a learner-centred program that directly addresses the SDOL.
- 1.6-7.c** Develop and implement a plan to ensure every school in the province has access to a SHPLCs, providing direct support to administrators and educators in promoting comprehensive, school-wide health and wellness initiatives.
- 1.6-7.d** Strengthen partnerships between the education sector, SHPLCs, Regional Wellness Coalitions, and community health promotion organizations to enhance collaboration, align initiatives, and advance shared goals for learner well-being and holistic development.



Call to Transformation 1.6-8:

Support the implementation of a Child and Youth Community Health Model and teams to create appropriate health and social connections and to facilitate the delivery of timely, wraparound care for learners and families/caregivers.

Background

An inter-departmental and inter-agency approach to addressing youth health and well-being in collaboration with the education system was a key pillar of the Education Action Plan (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018a). The plan recommended coordinated partnerships between EECD, and the Departments of Health and Community Services (HCS), Families and Affordability, regional health authorities, Memorial University, and school districts to streamline interventions and supports for learners. These supports should include, but not be limited to, community nursing, speech-language pathology, psychology, occupational therapy (OT), and social work. From this, the province developed

the Child and Youth Community Health Model and the Coordinating Services for Children and Youth initiative, which promotes a unified approach by linking professionals across agencies and departments to enhance health and well-being in educational settings (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018a). “Choices for Youth’s Upstream program is a ‘preventative initiative aimed at early identification and support for youth at risk of homelessness,’ which enhances educational engagement by providing support based on a Student Needs Assessment” (Health & Well-Being Minute Meetings). Programs like this highlight the value of early interventions that proactively address critical social factors affecting learner well-being and success.

Expanding the implementation of a Child and Youth Community Health Model and teams in the education system is a critical step toward establishing integrated, wraparound support for learners and their families. This model prioritizes the coordination of health and social services within schools, ensuring that learners receive timely and seamless support. Research on full-service school and wraparound support models has consistently demonstrated their effectiveness in improving health outcomes, strengthening social connections, and increasing academic success (Dryfoos, 2011). By embedding this approach within K-12 settings in Newfoundland and Labrador, schools can serve as central hubs for holistic learner support, addressing critical factors such as mental health, social-emotional well-being, and access to essential services. Moreover, as one educational partner emphasized, “Accessibility, affordability, wraparound support. Reduce tuition cost. Invest in our future!” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024), reinforcing the importance of an integrated system where learners not only receive care but are also supported in their transition beyond K-12.

Full-service school models and wraparound support initiatives have proven particularly effective in reducing barriers to learning by providing on-site access to health care professionals, social workers, and mental health services (Shin, 2019). These integrated supports have been linked to improved attendance, reduced behavioural issues, and enhanced academic achievement, particularly for learners from equity-deserving communities (Van Voorhis et al., 2019). Additionally, research indicates that when schools offer comprehensive support services, learners experience increased resilience, higher engagement, and stronger social connections, all of which contribute to their long-term success (Anderson-Butcher & Bates, 2022).

By implementing a Child and Youth Community Health Model and teams, Newfoundland and Labrador can strengthen partnerships between schools, health care providers, and community organizations, creating a coordinated system of care that prioritizes learner well-being. Strengthening these links within the province’s education system will ensure that learners and their families receive wraparound care tailored to their needs, creating a healthier and more equitable learning environment.

1.6-8 Pathways to Action

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 1.6-8.a** Establish a centralized hub to streamline the intake and coordination of referrals from all educational settings, including schools, child care centres, and after-school programs, ensuring timely access to the appropriate supports and services.
- 1.6-8.b** Establish a multidisciplinary intake team of health, social, and education professionals to evaluate and assess referrals, ensuring a coordinated and holistic approach to learner support and well-being.
- 1.6-8.c** Develop policies that clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of all partners involved in the referral process, ensuring a seamless, collaborative, and transparent approach to learner support.
- 1.6-8.d** Develop a structured, step-by-step referral process that outlines clear timelines for acknowledgment, assessment, and action. Implement follow-up protocols to monitor progress, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, and ensure that ongoing needs are met through continuous support and collaboration.
- 1.6-8.e** Develop standardized referral forms and integrated digital platforms to streamline the referral process, ensuring consistency, accessibility, and efficiency across all educational settings.
- 1.6-8.f** Develop clear and transparent intervention pathways tailored to each learner's needs—such as mental health support, speech therapy, and family/caregiver assistance—within a tiered intervention framework. This framework will range from universal supports to specialized services for neurodiverse needs, ensuring direct and timely access to appropriate providers, groups, and organizations.
- 1.6-8.g** Develop comprehensive data-sharing agreements aligned with privacy legislation, outlining clear guidelines on information access, permissible circumstances for sharing, and consent protocols to ensure confidentiality, transparency, and compliance.



- 1.6-8.h** Create targeted PL for educators, administrators, and staff, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to identify when and how to make referrals, collaborate effectively with families/caregivers and service providers, and support learner well-being through a coordinated approach.



Call to Transformation 1.6-9:

Improve consistent access to mental health and health supports for learners transitioning from high school to post-secondary with a focus on peer counselling opportunities.

Background

Post-secondary institutions, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, have reported a significant increase in the demand for student support services. This is especially true for learners transitioning from the K-12 system to post-secondary education, where the need for support is most acute. This transitional period presents challenges, including increased academic pressures, social adjustments, and independence, all of which can heighten stress and anxiety among learners. Research indicates that inadequate mental health support during this phase can lead to decreased academic performance, higher dropout rates, and exacerbation of mental health issues (Conley et al., 2014). “Canada as a whole (while not being the best at it with any flaws,) has been trying for mental health to become a priority like physical health would” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). This underscores the importance of embedding mental health support into career counselling opportunities to ensure that learners receive both the academic and emotional guidance necessary for a smooth transition.

Memorial University, for example, addresses these concerns through its Student Wellness Counselling Centre (SWCC), which aims to enhance learner success by offering innovative health and wellness services and programming. Other colleges and institutions also provide

similar support, but ensuring a seamless transition from K-12 to post-secondary education is critical to alleviating stress and anxiety for learners entering a new learning environment. In Newfoundland and Labrador, where many learners transition from small, close-knit high schools to larger post-secondary institutions, the need for accessible mental health supports is particularly pressing. Learners relocating from rural and remote areas to urban centers such as St. John's may experience heightened feelings of isolation, academic stress, and difficulty accessing health care services. "It would be useful if there were more career guidance and counselling to help us plan for the future. We need classes that actually teach us life skills outside of high school" (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). As learners navigate the complexities of post-secondary education, having structured, ongoing guidance on career paths and essential life skills can help alleviate some of the uncertainty they face. While some institutions in our province have recognized the importance of mental health services, gaps remain in providing consistent and proactive support for learners.

Integrating peer counselling opportunities within these support systems offers significant benefits. Peer counselling leverages the relatability and shared experiences among learners, creating a supportive environment that encourages open discussions about mental health concerns. Studies have demonstrated that peer support can effectively reduce feelings of isolation, promote coping strategies, and enhance overall mental well-being. Research by Shook and Keup (2012) indicates that peer leader programs positively influence learner engagement and retention, while a study by Sontag-Padilla et al. (2018) found that peer counselling opportunities were associated with increased knowledge and positive attitudes toward mental health issues. "Career guidance is super important, kids are too young to decide a career on their own so they might go on the wrong path and regret it later" (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). By embedding career counselling alongside peer mental health supports, learners can receive holistic guidance that prepares them both emotionally and academically for their future.

Expanding peer counselling initiatives within post-secondary institutions and strengthening partnerships between high schools and mental health service providers can help ease this transition. By ensuring that learners have access to structured, school-based mental health services before leaving high school, and continuing those supports in post-secondary institutions, Newfoundland and Labrador can develop a more resilient, mentally healthy learner population. Establishing stronger collaboration between K-12 and post-secondary education, and embedding peer-led mental health support programs, will provide learners with the necessary tools to navigate academic and social challenges successfully. "Instead of adding more requirements, there is a focus on 'reimagining how existing content can be leveraged to cultivate essential life skills in learners'" (Health & Well-Being Minute Meetings). By integrating mental health supports, career counselling, and essential life skills education into the transition process, the province can better equip learners for success beyond high school.

1.6-9 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 1.6-9.a** Identify opportunities for collaboration among key partners—including Safe and Inclusive Schools itinerants, guidance counsellors, student success teachers, administrators, allied health professionals, learners, and families/caregivers—to align with post-secondary Calls to Transformation. This partnership will integrate health and well-being initiatives into a transformative approach, enhancing support systems and ensuring smoother transitions from high school to post-secondary education.
- 1.6-9.b** Evaluate existing programs and policies that support learner transitions, with a particular focus on peer counselling, to identify opportunities for expansion and enhancement of peer support networks.
- 1.6-9.c** Develop programs that provide Grade 12 learners with early access to health and well-being services, ensuring seamless continuity of support as they transition to post-secondary education.



Call to Transformation 1.6-10:

Enhance collaboration with Provincial Public Health to provide enhanced opportunities for public health nurses and professionals to work at their full scope of practice to support the health and well-being of learners and families/caregivers.

Background

Concerns about learner health and well-being surged during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. While supporting learner well-being has always been a priority for educators, it has now become a central focus for guidance counsellors. However, schools cannot address these challenges in isolation. As demands continue to grow, developing partnerships with government agencies and community organizations is essential for a coordinated, integrated approach. Educational spaces offer unique opportunities to support health and well-being, and embedding services within these environments helps reduce barriers for learners and families/caregivers by simplifying system navigation (Caldas et al., 2020; Medina et al., 2020; Sanders & Galindo, 2020). A centralized intake process further enhances support by ensuring seamless, wraparound services that meet learners where they are.

A key strategy for strengthening learner health and well-being involves enhancing collaboration with Provincial Public Health to enable public health nurses and professionals to operate at their full scope of practice within schools. As integral members of the educational environment, school nurses play a pivotal role in safeguarding learner health, facilitating normal development, and advancing academic success (Collins et al., 2024). Their responsibilities encompass direct care, health education, and acting as liaisons between health care providers, families/caregivers, and the community. By working to their full scope of practice, public health nurses can address a broad spectrum of health issues, from managing chronic conditions to implementing preventive health measures, thereby creating a supportive environment conducive to learning.

The integration of public health nurses into schools has been associated with numerous positive outcomes. For instance, in the Northern Territory of Australia, the appointment of a health promotion school nurse after a four-year vacancy led to the revitalization of immunization programs and the implementation of educational sessions on topics such as mental health and substance abuse, directly benefiting the learner population (Jasper, 2024). Additionally, school-based health centers (SBHCs), which often include public health nurses as key staff members, have been shown to improve access to health care for underserved populations, reduce absenteeism, and enhance academic performance. These centers provide a range of services, including primary care, mental health counselling, and health education, underscoring the critical role of nurses in delivering comprehensive care within the school setting (Schlitt et al., 2008).

In Newfoundland and Labrador, adopting a similar collaborative approach could yield significant benefits. By empowering public health nurses to fully utilize their expertise within schools, the province can proactively address learner health challenges such as managing chronic illnesses, providing mental health support, and conducting community-specific health education programs. This strategy not only promotes the immediate well-being of learners but also establishes a foundation for healthier communities in the long term.

Additionally, such collaboration can lead to early identification and intervention for health issues, reducing the burden on the broader health care system and ensuring that learners are healthy, present, and ready to learn.

1.6-10 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 1.6-10.a** Establish a working group comprising partners from EECD, HCS, NL Health Services, Family Resource Centres (FRCs), and community organizations providing individual and family/caregiver supports to evaluate existing programs and identify opportunities for enhancement and alignment.
- 1.6-10.b** Utilize the expertise of Public Health to equip families and caregivers with knowledge and resources to support the development of secure attachments, laying a strong foundation for social and emotional learning and ensuring school readiness.
- 1.6-10.c** Enhance coordination and collaboration with Public Health and public health nursing to prioritize support for families/caregivers, strengthening families and promoting healthy growth and development from birth to school entry.
- 1.6-10.d** Utilize public health nursing resources to improve education and school outcomes by delivering targeted health promotion and education initiatives that address the specific needs of school communities, such as mental health, sexual health, and vaping prevention.

Theme 1.7: Connections with Community

Educational environments must strengthen their partnerships with community organizations to enhance the support and resources available to the education system, tapping into the valuable expertise these organizations provide. Acknowledging that schools cannot—and

should not—shoulder every responsibility alone is essential for promoting sustainable and impactful support for learners and families/caregivers. Community organizations play a crucial role in addressing needs beyond the classroom, offering essential services such as mental health support, nutrition programs, after-school enrichment, and family/caregiver assistance. By creating clear communication, intentional collaboration, and meaningful partnerships, schools can ensure that administrators, educators, and staff are well-supported in delivering a holistic approach to education. This alignment not only expands the collective ability to meet the diverse needs of learners and families/caregivers but also creates a more integrated, responsive support system where all partners work together to promote learner success and well-being.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 1.7-11:

Establish formal partnerships between community organizations and educational settings to facilitate the delivery of programs and services in specialized areas of well-being, such as mental health and addictions, family/caregiver supports, sexual health, inclusion, trauma, diversity, and others.

Background

The Big Reset report outlined a transformational strategy to address the challenges and opportunities facing Newfoundland and Labrador (Greene et al., 2021). While it examined efficiencies within the education system, it also highlighted the pressing challenges confronting youth, particularly regarding health and well-being. The report acknowledged that young people are experiencing significant concerns that require immediate attention and emphasized the role of schools in connecting learners and families/caregivers with appropriate supports. As a result, it recommended that the K-12 education system strengthen its connections with community partners, particularly for youth experiencing heightened vulnerability. Additionally, it advocated for a formalized framework that enables community-based organizations to collaborate with schools and provide alternative education settings to better support diverse learner needs (Greene et al., 2021).

A systemic approach to well-being establishes equitable learning conditions by developing coordinated partnerships between educational institutions, families/caregivers, and

community organizations. Research highlights that integrating educational, familial, and community supports leads to improved learner engagement and mental health outcomes (Basabe & Galigao, 2024; Pellerin, 2024). While schools play a vital role in providing support, studies demonstrate that incorporating community resources within a whole-school approach significantly enhances social and emotional well-being, promoting resilience and positive developmental outcomes (Rush et al., 2024; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). Aligning efforts across multiple sectors enables schools to build a comprehensive and sustainable framework that promotes learner well-being and long-term success.

Establishing formal partnerships between community organizations and educational institutions is crucial for delivering comprehensive programs and services that address various aspects of learner well-being, including mental health, substance use, family/caregiver support, sexual health, trauma, inclusion, and diversity. Research indicates that such collaborations significantly enhance the support systems available to learners, leading to improved academic performance and personal development (Derzon et al., 2012). The Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) initiative, a collaborative effort among U.S. federal agencies, exemplifies the positive impact of such partnerships. By integrating efforts across educational institutions, mental health providers, law enforcement, and juvenile justice agencies, the SS/HS initiative created safer and healthier school environments. A national evaluation of the program demonstrated significant improvements, including reductions in violence and substance use, as well as enhanced school safety and learner well-being (Derzon et al., 2012).

In addition to formal partnerships, peer-led health education programs have shown promise in addressing learner well-being. A study evaluating a student-led peer support service at a Canadian university found that participants reported improved mental health and well-being, highlighting the effectiveness of peer support in educational settings (Suresh et al., 2021). These findings underscore the importance of involving community resources in schools to provide specialized services that cater to the diverse needs of learners.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, access to specialized services in areas such as mental health, addictions, and family/caregiver support is often limited, particularly in rural and remote communities. Research has shown that integrating community-based support services within educational settings can significantly improve learner engagement, attendance, and overall well-being (Basabe & Galigao, 2024). Expanding partnerships with local organizations would strengthen learner success by ensuring that all learners have access to the resources and supports they need. By fostering collaboration between schools and community service providers, Newfoundland and Labrador can create a more inclusive and responsive education system that prioritizes learner well-being and academic achievement.

1.7-11 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 1.7-11.a** Establish a working group comprising partners from all education sectors—including Early Learning, K-12, and Post-Secondary—alongside community organizations, learners, and families/caregivers to develop an implementation plan for integrating community partnerships into educational environments.
- 1.7-11.b** Develop policies that facilitate greater access for community organizations to educational environments, enabling them to deliver programs and services that enhance holistic well-being and support learner success.
- 1.7-11.c** Establish structured processes to assess needs and identify opportunities for community programs and partnerships that enhance learning capacity and enrich educational environments.
- 1.7-11.d** Develop a comprehensive directory of vetted resources and partners accessible to education systems, ensuring alignment with learning objectives and learner support needs.
- 1.7-11.e** Evaluate the capacity of community organizations to deliver programs and services within education environments, identifying gaps and strategically allocating resources to enhance existing supports or develop new initiatives that effectively meet learners' needs.
- 1.7-11.f** Develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with partners to establish a clear, shared understanding of the partnership's purpose, engagement terms, and mutual expectations and responsibilities. These agreements will promote transparency, accountability, and alignment while incorporating structured review processes to ensure they remain responsive to evolving needs.
- 1.7-11.g** Create a communication plan to ensure administrators, educators, and staff are informed about available resources that support learner success and enhance educational outcomes.



Call to Transformation 1.7-12:

Expand the role of Family Resource Centres (FRCs) to include the delivery of programs and services for all families/caregivers to improve the social support required for holistic well-being, appropriately connecting FRCs to all education environments.

Background

The *Supporting Learning* report, published by the Ministerial Panel on Educational Delivery in the Classroom, examined Newfoundland and Labrador's education system and provided recommendations to improve program delivery and effectiveness (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2000). The report highlighted concerns regarding the increasing prevalence of extremely disruptive behaviours, emphasizing that the optimal learning environment for some learners may not always be a traditional classroom setting. This aligns with more recent analyses, which assert that alternative education environments are necessary for high school-aged learners who struggle in conventional classroom settings. The panel recommended that learners be provided with alternative education options featuring individualized, specialized programming. Specifically, it advised EECD to establish policies supporting alternative education and ensure that school boards have the necessary accommodations to provide appropriate learning environments (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2000).

Currently, Newfoundland and Labrador has six alternative education environments designed to support learners who require learning settings outside the traditional classroom. Compass Academy operates across three health care facilities in the province: Janeway Children's Health and Rehabilitation Centre in St. John's, Tuckamore Centre in Paradise, and Hope Valley Centre in Grand Falls-Windsor. Compass Academy's mission is to provide academic instruction to youth admitted to health care settings, ensuring continuity in their education. Horizon Academy, located in St. John's, offers a combination of two to four academic courses alongside alternative programming focused on social skills, life skills, self-advocacy, self-regulation, and group counselling. Pathfinder Learning Centre, an alternative high school with locations in Stephenville and Corner Brook, serves learners in Grades 10–Level 4 who have faced challenges in traditional school environments due to factors such as mental health concerns or chronic absenteeism. The Pathfinder Learning Centre provides individualized learning plans, allowing learners to progress at their own pace while receiving ongoing educator support.

Given the role these alternative education environments play in meeting diverse learner needs, further consideration should be given to their impact. Examining their effectiveness could provide valuable insights for enhancing conventional school systems and expanding educational pathways for learners who require non-traditional learning approaches. Expanding alternative education models and integrating lessons learned from their success may enhance overall educational responsiveness for learners facing complex challenges.

Beyond alternative learning environments, FRCs may serve as an additional support system for learners and their families/caregivers by extending services beyond the K-12 system. Research highlights the importance of integrating family/caregiver support programs within educational settings to improve learner well-being and academic success (Durham, 2016). Expanding the role of FRCs to deliver programs and services for all families/caregivers while establishing formal connections with schools can significantly strengthen social support networks essential for learner success (Nettles et al., 2015).

School-Based Family Counseling exemplifies the benefits of integrating family/caregiver support services within educational environments. These programs have demonstrated positive outcomes, including reductions in problem behaviors both at home and school, across diverse populations (Tran, 2014). Programs like Families and Schools Together and Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers have effectively engaged low-income families, leading to improved learner behaviour and academic performance (Rudo & Dimock, 2017).

Similarly, the Full-Service Community Schools model in the United States illustrates the advantages of co-locating educational and family/caregiver support services. Evaluations of these initiatives have reported academic gains, particularly in reading and math, improved school attendance, and increased parental involvement (Egalite, 2016). These outcomes highlight the potential of integrated service delivery in promoting holistic well-being within communities.

By expanding FRCs to collaborate closely with schools in Newfoundland and Labrador, communities can create accessible, supportive environments that address the unique challenges faced by families/caregivers. Given the geographical isolation of many communities, integrating family/caregiver resource services within schools can provide vital access to early childhood education, mental health support, and parenting resources, reducing barriers that families/caregivers often encounter when seeking services. This integrated approach aligns with the province's commitment to inclusive education and community well-being, ensuring that children and families/caregivers receive holistic support regardless of their location. Furthermore, such collaborations can promote stronger relationships between schools and families, reinforcing community cohesion and resilience (Eppler & Weir, 2009).

1.7-12 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 1.7-12.a** Assess existing partnerships with FRCs to identify effective practices and insights that will guide the strategic expansion of these connections across educational environments.
- 1.7-12.b** Assess existing interventions to identify opportunities for continuous improvement, enabling iterative change that drives enhanced health and social outcomes.
- 1.7-12.c** Identify opportunities for collaboration among key partners—including ECEs, diversity professionals, Safe and Inclusive Schools itinerants, guidance counsellors, student success teachers, administrators, allied health professionals, public health professionals, learners, and families/caregivers—to develop a coordinated implementation plan that aligns roles, responsibilities, and shared objectives.



Call to Transformation 1.7-13:

Expand social navigation in education environments to focus on the social determinants of learning (SDOL), building positive relationships, and making meaningful community connections to enable early intervention and prevention to improve learner and family/caregiver well-being.

Background

Expanding social navigation within educational environments is essential for addressing SDOL, building positive relationships, and promoting meaningful community connections. Social navigation refers to the process of guiding and supporting learners and families

through the social aspects of the educational environment. This includes recognizing and responding to factors such as socioeconomic status, access to resources, and family dynamics that influence educational success. By embedding social navigation within schools, learners and families can access targeted supports that enable early intervention and prevention, helping to reduce barriers before they escalate into crises. “Redefining schools as community centres can enhance family involvement and create welcoming environments” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). Positioning schools as central hubs for community engagement can strengthen partnerships, increase access to social and recreational resources, and promote a sense of belonging among learners and their families.

Research indicates that school-based programs addressing SEL significantly improve learners’ social skills, attitudes, behaviour, and academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011). A meta-analysis of 213 school-based SEL programs demonstrated that participants exhibited enhanced social-emotional skills, improved attitudes toward self and others, increased positive social behaviour, reduced conduct problems, and better academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011). Strengthening SEL within schools promotes positive relationships among learners, families, and educators, contributing to well-being and academic success.

Furthermore, integrating family/caregiver support services within schools has been shown to yield positive outcomes. School-based family counselling programs have effectively reduced problem behaviours both at home and in school, benefiting diverse populations (Gerrard et al., 2020). These programs facilitate collaboration between educators and families, addressing issues that may hinder a learner’s ability to succeed academically and socially. By prioritizing such integrative approaches, Newfoundland and Labrador can enhance educational outcomes while strengthening community well-being, ensuring that learners and their families receive the support they need within school environments.

While social navigation plays a crucial role in learner success, expanding access to physical activity and recreation is also essential in supporting overall well-being. Provincial and national indicators suggest that Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the least physically active populations in the country (Statistics Canada, 2024b). Maximizing the use of existing infrastructure presents an opportunity to expand access to recreational and social activities, which play a vital role in supporting the SDOL. These opportunities are especially crucial for individuals who face barriers to community engagement, recreation, and social participation.

Expanding the use of existing facilities can also have a significant impact in rural and remote areas, where access to sport, recreation, and community infrastructure may otherwise be limited. Ensuring that learners have opportunities for regular physical activity and participation in structured recreational programs can improve their physical and mental health, aid in creating stronger social connections, and contribute to their academic

success. By integrating social navigation strategies with physical activity initiatives, Newfoundland and Labrador can create a more inclusive and supportive education system that addresses the diverse needs of learners and their families.

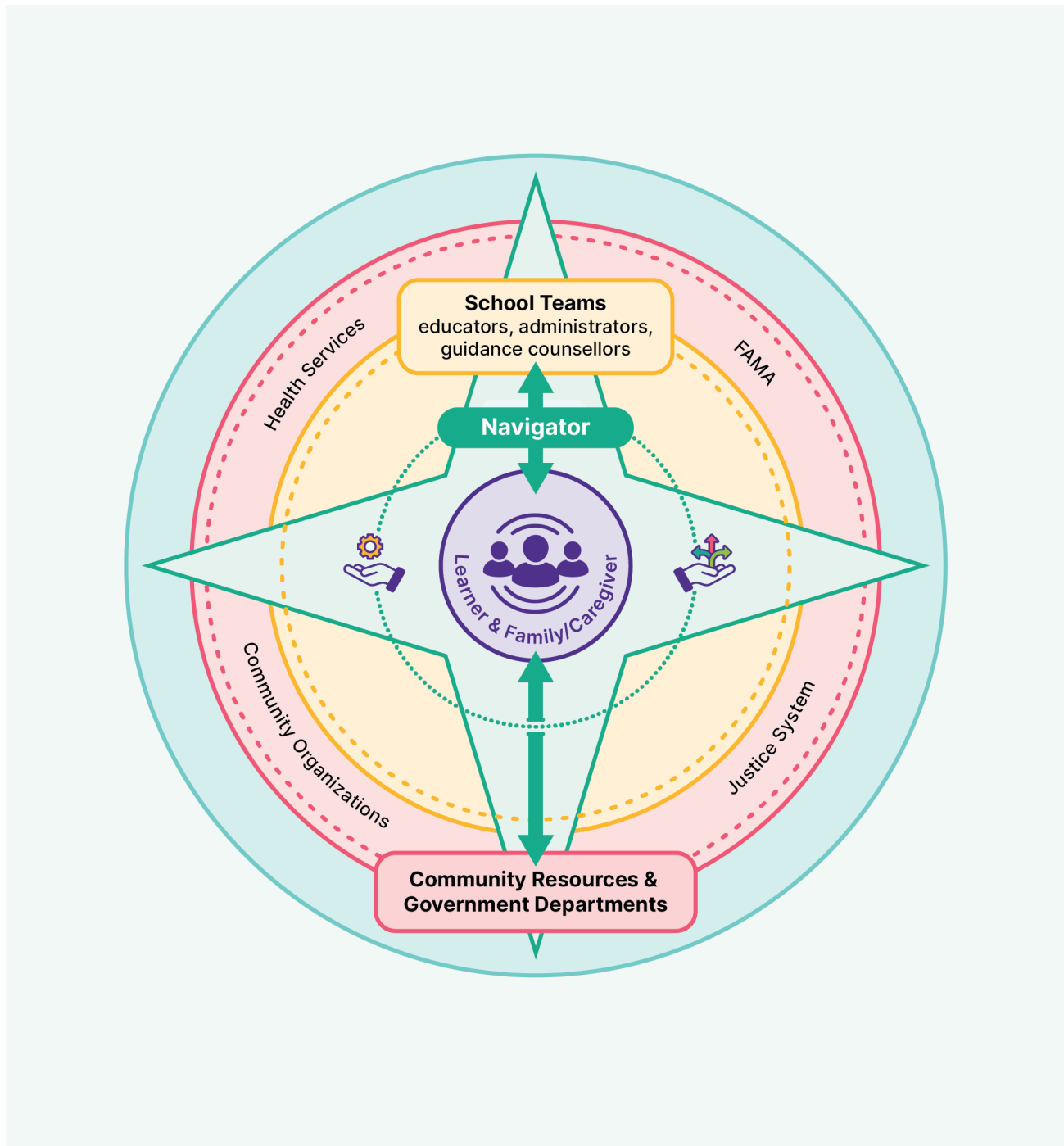


Figure 16: The Integrated Support Network.

1.7-13 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 1.7-13.a** Establish a working group with representatives from all education sectors—Early Learning, K-12, and Post-Secondary—alongside leadership responsible for implementing the Child and Youth Community Health Model and teams to explore opportunities for enhancing social navigation supports within each education environment.
- 1.7-13.b** Conduct a review of existing positions within education environments, examining current roles and responsibilities to assess their scope of work. This review will explore opportunities to realign roles and responsibilities to ensure that training and skills are effectively utilized (e.g., Safe and Inclusive Schools itinerants, student services teaching and learning assistants, student success teachers, guidance counsellors, student assistants).
- 1.7-13.c** Assess gaps in navigation services, taking into account the distinct needs and challenges of both rural, remote and urban education environments.
- 1.7-13.d** Engage with families and communities to increase awareness of available supports and clearly outline pathways for access, including connections to resources such as Community Youth Networks.
- 1.7-13.e** Strengthen connections between social navigation resources and guidance counsellors and student success teachers to establish a coordinated support network within education environments, equipping administrators, educators, and staff to effectively address SDOL and well-being concerns.
- 1.7-13.f** Develop objectives for social navigation that align with the Child and Youth Community Health Model and teams, and establish measurable indicators to track progress and impact over time.



Call to Transformation 1.7-14:

Integrate educational systems into the community by leveraging educational infrastructure as a natural gathering place for families and communities to offer accessible social, health, and well-being programs and services including physical activity, music, and a broad range of other activities.

Background

The Big Reset report emphasized the importance of schools in promoting community engagement and support and recommended strengthening partnerships between the K-12 education system and community organizations to enhance access to critical services, including mental health supports, physical activity, music, and other enrichment opportunities (Greene et al., 2021). Additionally, the report called for the development of a formalized framework that enables community-based organizations to collaborate with schools and expand alternative education settings to better support diverse learner needs (Greene et al., 2021).

Integrating educational systems into the community by utilizing school infrastructure as a natural gathering place for families can significantly enhance access to social, health, and well-being programs. This approach aligns with the community school model, where schools serve as hubs offering a range of services beyond traditional academics, including physical activity, music, and other enrichment activities. Research indicates that such integration leads to improved learner progress, stronger families, and healthier communities (Dryfoos & Maguire, 2002).

Utilizing schools as community hubs is particularly beneficial for families who may not have the financial means to afford private extracurricular activities. By offering accessible programs in physical activity, music, and other enrichment areas within the school setting, these initiatives help bridge the gap for equity-deserving learners, ensuring they have equal opportunities for personal and academic growth. A study by Anderson et al. (2017) found that urban full-service community schools providing extended services experienced positive outcomes in learner achievement and family/caregiver engagement. Similarly, Biag & Castrechini (2016) reported that coordinated strategies in community schools contributed to holistic child development and academic success.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, transforming schools into community hubs is a strategic priority aimed at enhancing educational outcomes and promoting community well-being. By leveraging existing educational infrastructure to offer accessible social, health, and well-being programs, the province seeks to create supportive environments that cater to the diverse needs of all learners and their families. Expanding partnerships with local organizations and embedding services within schools will ensure that learners and families have access to comprehensive, integrated supports that foster both academic and personal development.

1.7-14 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 1.7-14.a** Establish a working group of administrative leaders from K-12 education environments, ensuring representation from rural, remote and urban settings to address diverse needs and perspectives.
- 1.7-14.b** Develop and enhance policies and procedures that allow community groups and organizations to access educational infrastructure outside of school hours, including evenings, weekends, and designated breaks such as Christmas, Easter, and summer, to maximize community engagement and resource utilization.
- 1.7-14.c** Prioritize the use of educational infrastructure for community partners seeking to create inclusive and accessible spaces for gatherings, including recreational activities, PL, family/caregiver support programs, innovative childcare initiatives, cooking classes, affordable sports, intergenerational engagement, and other social opportunities that build connection, belonging, and trust.
- 1.7-14.d** Identify barriers to community use of educational spaces and develop action plans to address them, including establishing new policies, creating memorandums of understanding for user groups, addressing insurance and liability considerations, and implementing processes for building maintenance and care.

Theme 1.8: Connections with Justice and Public Safety

Strengthening connections between education and law enforcement agencies, such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC), is crucial for developing trust and positive relationships among learners, families, and police. Thoughtful and consistent integration of justice and policing officials within K-12 learning environments can help reframe law enforcement's role from punitive to supportive, laying the groundwork for collaboration and mutual understanding. This connection is particularly significant for learners already engaged with the justice system, as education serves as a critical pathway for reintegration and reducing recidivism through targeted supports and interventions. Recognizing education as a key tool for addressing the root causes of bullying, violence, and disruptive behaviour allows for more effective, proactive interventions that promote safer, more inclusive school environments. By prioritizing prevention and support, education systems can work alongside law enforcement to create meaningful opportunities for learners and families, ultimately fostering stronger, healthier communities.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 1.8-15:

Expand opportunities to integrate the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC) as trusted and essential partners in supporting the holistic well-being of learners, families/caregivers, administrators, educators, and staff.

Background

Recent reports highlight a rise in youth aggression, bullying, and dysregulation within schools. While school administrators typically manage these behaviours through established protocols, including Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Behaviour Management Plans (BMPs), extreme incidents still occur. Research indicates that severe disciplinary measures can negatively impact academic performance and increase the likelihood of involvement with the juvenile justice system (Novak, 2019). In response to school violence and misconduct, many education systems have implemented zero-tolerance policies aimed at curbing aggression and crime (Muñiz, 2021). However, these policies often escalate

disciplinary actions, leading to police referrals for incidents that could otherwise be managed within the school (Muñiz, 2021). This approach tends to be more punitive than restorative, prioritizing punishment over social and behavioural support. Educational partners observe how “social awareness, justice, inclusion, and environmental consciousness shape a collective vision of holistic well-being” (Health & Well-Being Minute Meetings). This reinforces the importance of embedding restorative justice and equity-focused strategies into school disciplinary policies rather than relying solely on punitive measures.

School Resource Officers (SROs) are often positioned as a proactive measure for addressing school violence. Their role extends beyond law enforcement, ideally incorporating teaching, counselling, and community-based policing to foster positive relationships between law enforcement and the school community. SROs can also provide valuable support for school administrators. However, research indicates that their presence in schools remains complex and controversial. Studies show that schools with SROs report higher incidents of serious violence, largely because their presence increases the reporting of such incidents (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016). Where serious behavioural infractions were once handled through school-based disciplinary measures, the involvement of SROs has led to an increase in police referrals and arrests (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016).

Efforts to integrate law enforcement into education have aimed to position justice as a proactive influence in learners’ lives. For example, the 1983 Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program sought to equip learners with decision-making skills (Singh et al., 2011). However, studies have shown that D.A.R.E. has little long-term effectiveness (Singh et al., 2011). Research further suggests that promoting SEL, relationship building, and a positive school climate are more effective strategies for enhancing school safety and learner well-being than the placement of SROs (Bartlett et al., 2024).

The integration of justice-related initiatives within education, particularly through partnerships with the RCMP and RNC, should be carefully assessed and thoughtfully implemented. Collaborating with community agencies can be beneficial as with other programs that complement the curriculum and enhance learning such as Roots of Empathy, Well-Being Canada, Skills Canada, Junior Achievement, Enterprise Olympics, Brilliant Labs, and Let’s Talk Science. However, such partnerships must align with educational priorities, uphold teaching standards, and genuinely serve the needs of learners.

Integrating law enforcement agencies, such as the RCMP and the RNC, into educational settings as trusted partners requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes the holistic well-being of learners, families/caregivers, educators, and staff. Research indicates that SROs who adopt multifaceted roles—serving not only as law enforcement officials but also as educators and informal counsellors—can positively influence school environments (Canady et al., 2012). This tripartite model promotes collaboration, enhances mutual respect, and contributes to a supportive school climate.

However, the effectiveness of such integration hinges on the implementation of restorative practices over punitive measures. Restorative justice approaches, including restorative circles and peer mediation, have been associated with reductions in disciplinary actions and improvements in school climate (Schiff, 2018). By focusing on relationship-building and community engagement, these practices address the underlying causes of misconduct and promote a culture of accountability and support. In Newfoundland and Labrador, aligning the roles of the RCMP and RNC within schools can strengthen community ties and enhance the overall well-being of the educational community.

1.8-15 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 1.8-15.a** Establish a working group comprising partners from Early Learning and K-12 education environments, the RNC, the RCMP, the Department of Justice and Public Safety, municipalities, families/caregivers, and learners to develop collaboration and address key community and educational priorities.
- 1.8-15.b** Evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs, policies, and engagement initiatives that facilitate collaboration between law enforcement and education environments, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.
- 1.8-15.c** Define clear objectives and establish the purpose for integrating law enforcement within each education environment to ensure alignment with learner support, safety, and community engagement goals.
- 1.8-15.d** Conduct a jurisdictional scan to identify opportunities for co-designing innovative programs and policies or refining existing initiatives to effectively achieve desired objectives.
- 1.8-15.e** Define objectives aimed at creating safe, inclusive, and supportive education environments through community engagement, proactive initiatives, and strengthened relationships founded on trust and mutual respect.



- 1.8-15.f** Collaborate with law enforcement agencies to develop innovative, age-appropriate approaches for officer engagement in the learning journey, starting in early learning and continuing through K-12, building positive relationships and community connection.



Call to Transformation 1.8-16:

Develop a strategy for delivering education and training to learners in youth and adult correctional facilities that considers the distinct needs of learners as residents of the facilities and as individuals preparing to reintegrate into society.

Background

Developing effective educational and training strategies for youth in correctional facilities requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both their current circumstances and future reintegration into society. Research indicates that programs emphasizing personal development, skill acquisition, and therapeutic engagement can significantly reduce recidivism rates among incarcerated youth. The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program, for instance, facilitates collaborative learning between incarcerated individuals and college students, promoting mutual respect and personal growth (Pompa, 2013). Similarly, Storycatchers Theatre engages detained youth in creative writing and performance, helping them process their experiences and develop essential life skills (Palidofsky & Stolbach, 2012).

Moreover, integrating vocational training with educational curricula has proven beneficial. The Last Mile program, which teaches coding and technology skills to incarcerated individuals, exemplifies how equipping youth with marketable skills enhances their employment prospects upon release, thereby facilitating smoother reintegration (Sullivan, 2014). Additionally, initiatives like the Rikers Debate Project demonstrate that developing

critical thinking and communication skills can empower incarcerated youth, boosting their confidence and aiding societal reintegration (Broderick, 2023).

In Newfoundland and Labrador, where correctional facilities serve a diverse population with varying educational backgrounds and support needs, implementing a tailored strategy that integrates academic learning, vocational training, and restorative programming is essential. By aligning education and training opportunities within these facilities with community-based reintegration programs, such as employment partnerships and transitional support services, the province can enhance outcomes for incarcerated youth and adults, reducing recidivism and promoting long-term social inclusion.

1.8-16 Pathways to Action

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 1.8-16.a** Leverage the existing Health Transformation sub-table on Corrections to prioritize the development of a strategy for delivering education and training to learners in youth and adult correctional facilities. This strategy will integrate wraparound social supports to facilitate educational completion and long-term success.
- 1.8-16.b** Assess the educational needs of learners across various facilities, identifying barriers to curriculum delivery and pinpointing existing gaps in each facility to inform targeted improvements.
- 1.8-16.c** Leverage existing policies and programs and develop new ones to meet curriculum outcomes consistently across all facilities.
- 1.8-16.d** Develop memorandums of understanding with community partners to support learners in addressing all aspects of the SDOL, with a particular focus on planning for successful reintegration into educational environments outside of correctional institutions.
- 1.8-16.e** Develop low-barrier processes to support youth transitioning back into education environments outside correctional facilities, as well as adults seeking to continue their education beyond these institutions.

Theme 1.9: Data and Data Utilization

A strategic and comprehensive approach to data utilization is fundamental to shaping education policies and practices that are both impactful and adaptable over time. When decision-makers have access to accurate, relevant, and robust data, they gain deeper insights into the complexities of education systems, enabling them to implement evidence-informed strategies that address current challenges and future opportunities. A data-driven framework ensures continuous evaluation, allowing policies and practices to be assessed, refined, and recalibrated based on measurable outcomes. More than just an evaluative tool, this approach promotes a culture of continuous improvement—one that is responsive to shifting circumstances, emerging needs, and evolving learner experiences. However, this level of responsiveness requires a fundamental commitment to change, recognizing that education systems must remain dynamic, proactive, and capable of driving meaningful, measurable transformation for all learners.

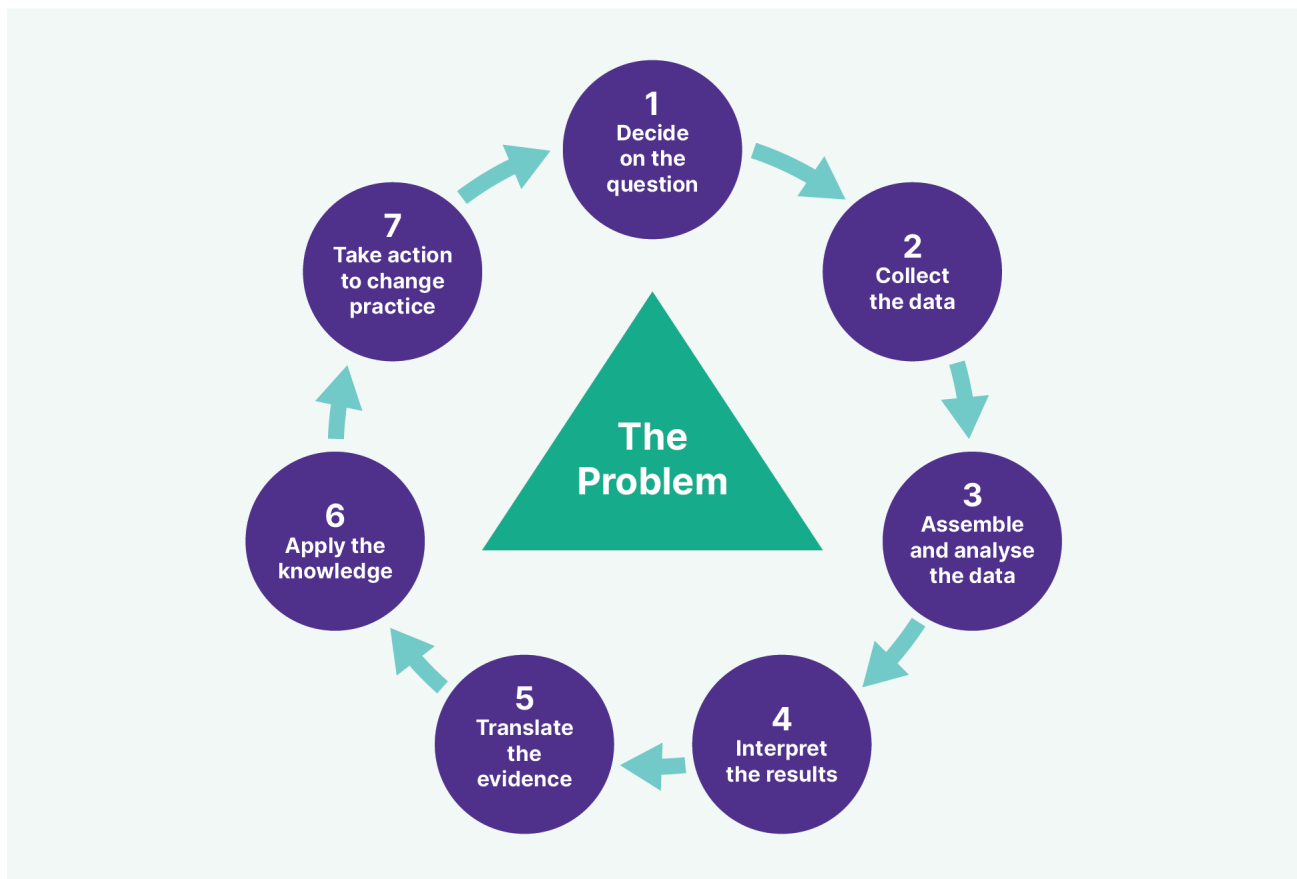


Figure 17: Learning Cycles for Data-Driven Decision-Making.

(Source: Health Accord NL, 2022)

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 1.9-17:

Establish policies and processes that enable learning cycles that regularly utilize data to identify trends, gaps, and opportunities for improvement and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions at defined intervals to inform decision-making in education environments.

Background

Evidence-based, data-informed decision-making is a fundamental principle of EECD's planning and policy development. Curriculum design is guided by ongoing research, jurisdictional analysis, and established best practices, while policy directives are shaped by insights drawn from both research and practice. Professional learning models align with the latest research on adult learning, ensuring educators receive effective, research-driven training. Across all areas, evidence and data serve as critical tools in shaping decisions that advance the education system. However, educational partners emphasize the need for more effective use of existing data, with one individual noting, "Every year, I fill out surveys on how to improve education. This government has the data. They need to use it" (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). This sentiment highlights the importance of translating collected data into actionable change, ensuring that feedback from learners, educators, and families/caregivers directly informs educational policies and practices.

To support informed decision-making, EECD collects extensive data across multiple platforms. Key mechanisms include PowerSchool, Review 360, the Responsive Teaching and Learning Database, the Performance Measurement Framework, Computer-Based Testing, the Provincial Reading and Mathematics Assessment (PRMA), and high school graduation data. These platforms track attendance, learner achievement, learner supports, and engagement, providing valuable insights for targeted interventions in academics, learner well-being, and behavior management. Data-driven decision-making allows for more precise responses to issues such as mathematics performance, chronic absenteeism, and aggressive behaviours. However, an educational partner questioned data transparency, "Our test data should be available. That would give everyone an idea of what the system is really like" (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). Transparency in learner performance data can enable

educators, policymakers, and families/caregivers to better understand systemic strengths and challenges, ensuring a collaborative and data-driven approach to education reform. However, there is always room to enhance data collection, dissemination, and application to strengthen learning environments and improve learner outcomes.

Establishing policies and processes that ensure regular data utilization is essential for identifying trends, addressing gaps, and driving continuous improvement in K-12 education. Research highlights that data-driven decision-making enhances educational outcomes by providing empirical evidence to inform policy and practice. For example, Mandinach and Gummer (2016) emphasized the need to build educators' capacity to interpret and use data effectively, underscoring the importance of PL in data literacy for informed decision-making. As an educational partner stated, "I think it would be beneficial to most students if every senior has to complete a survey to help guide them through and to give advice on what plans they have in the future" (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024). Establishing learner-driven data collection, such as senior exit surveys, would provide direct insights into learner needs, post-secondary aspirations, and challenges, allowing the education system to refine career guidance, transition supports, and skill development initiatives.

Moreover, integrating data systems across educational levels facilitates a comprehensive understanding of learner progress and system performance. The Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) initiative by the World Bank underscores the importance of robust data systems in shaping policy decisions and promoting accountability within education systems (World Bank, 2011). Similarly, the Data Quality Campaign advocates for linking data systems from early childhood through post-secondary education to provide a holistic view of learner trajectories, enabling targeted interventions and more efficient resource allocation (Data Quality Campaign, 2012).

Embedding iterative data analysis processes within Newfoundland and Labrador's education system will enhance the effectiveness of existing tools such as PowerSchool, Review 360, the Responsive Teaching and Learning Database, and the Performance Measurement Framework. Hamilton et al. (2009) highlighted that regular analysis of learner achievement data allows educators to adjust instructional strategies promptly, leading to improved learning outcomes. By systematically integrating these data sources into decision-making cycles, policymakers and educators can better identify gaps, monitor trends, and refine interventions in real time. This cyclical approach ensures that educational practices remain responsive, creating a more adaptive and data-informed education system that promotes continuous improvement and enhances outcomes for all learners.

1.9-17 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 1.9-17.a** Utilize the existing Health Transformation sub-table structure for the Learning Health and Social System to develop a framework for a Learning Education System that addresses the collection, management, integration, and utilization of data within education environments, while also enabling data sharing with community, health, and other sectors.
- 1.9-17.b** Review current opportunities for data collection, analysis, knowledge translation, and intervention implementation (e.g., Responsive Teaching and Learning Database, PowerSchool, Review 360) and identify new ways to design and implement systems that gather more relevant and comprehensive data. This data should consistently capture the nuances of learner, family/caregiver, and educator experiences, with a particular focus on SDOL and well-being.
- 1.9-17.c** Develop policies and processes for collecting, analyzing, utilizing, and sharing data to support informed decision-making.
- 1.9-17.d** Identify the skill sets necessary for ongoing engagement with data, interpretation, and intervention development, and develop processes to acquire these skills, such as upskilling through PL.
- 1.9-17.e** Develop processes for the regular interpretation and communication of data insights and learnings to educators, administrators, staff, families/caregivers, and learners.
- 1.9-17.f** Develop processes to use data insights for adjusting interventions, ensuring they remain responsive and adaptable to evolving needs.



Call to Transformation 1.9-18:

Facilitate population-based data collection by consistently administering the Early Development Instrument (EDI), the Middle Development Instrument (MDI), and the Youth Development Instrument (YDI) in all education environments throughout the province to assess the developmental health and well-being of learners across the province.

Background

Data and monitoring play a vital role in public health, particularly within schools and early childhood settings, by providing critical insights into the health and well-being of learners. Systematic data collection and analysis allow public health professionals to identify emerging trends, health disparities, and risk factors that influence learner development. Tracking key indicators such as growth and development, mental health, social and emotional learning, and academic outcomes supports the creation of targeted interventions that enhance learner well-being. In early childhood education, data helps identify concerns at an early stage, enabling timely support for learners and families/caregivers. Within school settings, data-driven approaches inform policy decisions, guide resource allocation, and shape programs to meet learner needs. Comprehensive data collection ensures that public health initiatives are evidence-based and responsive to community needs, making them essential for monitoring progress, evaluating program effectiveness, and ensuring equitable access to services that promote positive health outcomes for all learners.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, no population-based surveys are conducted in schools to assess social-emotional development and learning readiness. Instead, existing evaluations are administered at the discretion of individual school administrations, resulting in fragmented data that provide only selective insights rather than a comprehensive understanding of learner needs across the province. Establishing standardized data collection and monitoring systems would provide a more complete picture of learner well-being and readiness, enabling more effective wraparound services and targeted interventions to support learners.

Population-level assessment tools such as the Early Development Instrument (EDI), Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI), and Youth Development Instrument (YDI) are widely used across Canada to measure the well-being and developmental health of children and youth at key stages of their growth. Supported by the Federal Government of Canada and various provincial and academic partners, these instruments provide comprehensive data to inform policy and programming in education, health, and community services. The EDI is used for kindergarten-aged children and assesses five key developmental domains: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills. The MDI, designed for learners in Grades 4 through 8, examines social-emotional well-being, relationships, school experiences, and after-school activities, providing insight into childhood development. The YDI extends this framework to adolescents, gathering data on mental health, well-being, academic engagement, and future aspirations among high school learners. These tools track trends over time, identify disparities in child and youth development, and guide policies aimed at improving education, social supports, and community resources across Canada.

Implementing population-based data collection through consistent administration of instruments like the EDI, MDI, and YDI is pivotal in comprehensively assessing the developmental health and well-being of learners across the province (Janus & Offord, 2007; Guhn et al., 2016). Such large-scale data collection enables the identification of developmental trends and disparities among children and adolescents, facilitating targeted interventions and policy formulation. For instance, the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) assesses children in their first year of full-time school across five developmental domains, providing data that informs policies and community programs aimed at improving early childhood development outcomes (Brinkman et al., 2018).

Similarly, the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study in the United States is a longitudinal research project involving over 11,500 children, collecting extensive data on behavioural and brain development (Garavan et al., 2018). This study provides valuable insights into factors influencing adolescent health and cognitive development, thereby informing public health strategies and educational policies. These examples underscore the efficacy of systematic, population-level data collection in understanding and enhancing the developmental health and well-being of learners. By adopting similar approaches, Newfoundland and Labrador can ensure that educational and health interventions are data-driven and tailored to the specific needs of its youth population.

1.9-18 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 1.9-18.a Establish a collaborative partnership between Health and Education to align data collection efforts through designated instruments.
 - 1.9-18.b Develop a policy to ensure all schools participate in the administration of these instruments at designated intervals.
 - 1.9-18.c Authorize public health as the lead agency for collecting, analyzing, and distributing instrument data.
 - 1.9-18.d Develop clear processes to create awareness and understanding of instrument results, ensuring their effective use across settings to inform targeted interventions for learners and families/caregivers.
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Early Learning and Childhood Development

Introduction

Early Learning and Childhood Development (ELCD) is the foundation of all learning and is central to a holistic vision for substantial improvements to our education systems. Critical to this long-term vision is an early learning environment that is accessible to all, diverse, and welcoming of varying perspectives, one that creates safe spaces that foster social and emotional well-being, and adapts to the unique interests and dispositions of all children with continual assessment and reflection. It must also identify and nurture children's strengths, help children engage with the world around them, inspire a sense of agency and critical thinking, and promote safe and responsible use of technology.

The first step is clearer and better-guided communication. The creation of a cohesive and nourishing education system begins with communication and collaboration between the early childhood education system, policymakers, families/caregivers, communities, and other participants. Concentrated and intentional action needs to be taken to ensure our ELCC system strengthens its connection with the rest of the education system and with the health system and other community supports.

To strengthen and expand ELCD opportunities for children and families/caregivers, it is imperative to recognize the early learning and child care (ELCC) workforce for its significant impact on children's development, setting the stage for positive lifelong outcomes. We can improve ELCC by having qualified and trained staff who receive fair compensation, allowing them to work and thrive in early learning environments. Success requires our province to ensure that care is inclusive, accessible, affordable, and culturally responsive.

The ELCD system in Newfoundland and Labrador has been the subject of a great deal of scrutiny and community focus, and in recent years, the government has made a number of policy improvements and initiatives within this specific area. From the beginning of the Accord engagement process, previous reports and reviews served as a baseline for guiding the work in this area. The themes and Calls to Transformation are grounded in current research focused on population statistics, post-secondary enrollments in early childhood

education, graduation rates, and financial statistics regarding tuition, revenues, operational funding, and student aid programs. The examination of this data was followed by a series of ongoing engagement presentations and sessions on a variety of topics relevant to the ELCD environment and systems. Engagement was later expanded to include meetings that brought together various groups of stakeholders. Information, feedback, and input were also collected from families/caregivers and end users of the system, as well as early childhood educators (ECEs) and providers.

Key Themes

This chapter identifies Calls to Transformation with supporting Pathways to Action, aligning with the following five key themes:

2.1: Quality Early Learning and Child Care Programs.....	102
2.2: Early Learning and Child Care Workforce Challenges and Requirements	112
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Theme 2.1: Quality Early Learning and Child Care Programs

Quality in early learning and child care (ELCC) is often understood in terms of process and structural quality. ELCC process quality includes interactions/relationships with and among children, as well as experiences with appropriate/engaging learning materials (Eckhardt & Egert, 2020). ELCC structural quality includes space and physical environment, regulatory requirements, staff qualifications, working conditions, and group composition (Eckhardt & Egert, 2020). High-quality ELCC has direct and indirect effects on children’s outcomes in early elementary school. For example, children with more classmates who attended Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K), regardless of their own Pre-K attendance histories, show slightly larger gains in vocabulary and behaviour controls (Burchinal et al., 2023). Even when not everyone attends child care, there are still benefits to all children in Kindergarten. Considerable evidence shows that high-quality publicly funded Pre-K programs improve school readiness skills, with large benefits for reading, math and working memory (Carr et al., 2021; Phillips et al., 2017; Schmitt et al., 2023). Some research shows

that the positive academic effects of high-quality Pre-K programs last well into middle school test scores (Anderson & Phillips, 2017). According to the Canadian Child Care Federation, high-quality ELCC promotes children’s health and safety, as well as their emotional, social, cognitive, ethical, and creative development (Canadian Child Care Federation, n.d.). Recent changes through the Operating Grant Program outlined that child care services must adhere to the quality initiatives set out by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD). The Provincial Action Plan has many quality initiatives currently underway, which will be foundational, such as a mentoring program, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and significant policy initiatives related to improving quality.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 2.1-19:

Establish a culture of quality. Maximize developmental opportunities and establish indicators and accountability mechanisms which measure and track quality. Initiate public education campaigns so that the public can recognize and participate in child care quality initiatives.

Background

A systematic review of all the data highlighted how play-based learning is beneficial for the development of children in all areas including social-emotional development, language development, physical development, and academic development (Kalinde et al., 2024). A review of recent studies that aimed to clarify concepts that contribute to high-quality ELCC environments found that sustainable funding, adherence to regulations, government investment, and ongoing assessment and evaluation are important in supporting high-quality practices (McLean et al., 2023). This review also confirmed that programs that are fundamentally responsive to children’s ways of learning (e.g., play-based learning) are associated with high-quality learning environments, as the “...beneficial effect of child care on child development cannot only be explained by whether or not children attend child care; it is rather the specific characteristics of child care settings that foster or hinder child development. To date, the quality of the ELCC has been the most recognized and consistent determining factor on child outcomes” (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019).

Quality in ELCC is often understood in terms of process and structural quality, however, ELCC process quality includes interactions/relationships with and among children, as well as experiences with appropriate/engaging learning materials (Eckhardt & Egert, 2020). As one stakeholder explained, “Quality is determined not by our ability to check things off in boxes but by the relationships created in an early learning space. Quality is following best practice and using evidence-based approaches. Quality is meaningful outdoor play in all weather. Quality is educators trained in child development and ongoing communities of practice” (AECENL Conference Participant, 2024).

Unfortunately, the concept of quality has often been difficult to quantify. During ELCD Pillar Committee meetings, the importance of being able to define and measure quality within our ELCC spaces was discussed, as well as establishing accountability mechanisms to ensure all ELCC environments are adhering to the standards outlined in NL’s [Early Childhood Learning Framework](#) (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, n.d.-a). This desire for more accountability was reflected in many stakeholder discussions—as one participant stated, “I think the key is to have some common policies and regulation for all family resource centres to take some of the work out of trying to come up with the basics on our own” (Family Resource Staff, 2024).

Since Newfoundland and Labrador implemented the \$10 per day initiative, child care has become more affordable. With the increase in affordability, it is important that this does not unintentionally result in a lower quality system. Since the signing of the Canada-Wide Agreement, child care spaces are being created at a faster rate than ever before. It is important to ensure that every space is of high quality and operating under the highest standards, and that operators, ECEs, and families/caregivers all know what those standards are. Stakeholders themselves recognize that inconsistent standards are an issue within the sector: “I highly feel that the ‘minimum’ requirements that licensed centres must follow in terms of overall appearance, materials, programming, etc., should be reviewed. When you have parents walk into centres of low standards, it makes the sector look bad overall” (Minister’s ELCC Advisory Committee, 2024).

During ELCD Pillar Committee meetings, the importance of being able to measure quality was discussed in detail. One participant pointed out that a clear and consistent approach to measuring quality will be critical for the overall sector, and therefore, quality indicators in early learning programs should be based on our knowledge and understanding of best practice, child development, healthy work environments, etc. For example, “ensure time for planning as a team and professional learning, group appropriate ratios and children remaining with peers and teachers despite being old enough for the preschool room, site and group-specific health and safety policies and risk management should be considered in the program standards” (AECENL Conference Participant, 2024).

The Accord supports establishing accountability mechanisms to ensure all ELCC environments are adhering to the standards outlined in NL’s Early Childhood Learning Framework.

2.1-19 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.1-19.a Ensure that all regulated early learning settings follow the Early Childhood Learning Framework and have engaging environments that enable affirmative, asset-focused, play-based learning opportunities.
- 2.1-19.b Establish clear, evidence-based indicators of quality for ELCC environments.
- 2.1-19.c Have accountability measures in place to ensure all early learning partners (operators, owners, ECEs, staff) are adhering to evidence-based policies and practices.
- 2.1-19.d Implement regular quality improvement plans that include stakeholder input and reflect community needs.
- 2.1-19.e Strengthen partnerships with Indigenous organizations to ensure collaborative decision-making and resource allocation in early learning.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 2.1-19.f Use children's unique identifiers to develop comprehensive and continuous individual profiles that document their skills, competencies, achievements, and learning preferences.
- 2.1-19.g Support the implementation of a finalized plan that recognizes the various needs of diverse Indigenous communities that embed traditional knowledge, storytelling, and cultural teachings in early learning environments.



Call to Transformation 2.1-20:

Establish welcoming, positive, responsive, and long-lasting relationships among early learning professionals, children, families/caregivers, communities and the regulatory authorities.

Background

Family and community engagement are important elements of high-quality ELCD programs (McLean et al., 2023). ECEs can encourage involvement by being respectful to families/caregivers, engaging in regular communication through different formats (e.g., newsletters, meetings, websites, etc.), including them in their children's learning plans, and providing links to community resources (Morrison et al., 2015). At heart, the early learning environment thrives on positive relationships—"Quality in early learning is when a child feels accepted, understood, supported and respected by adults and [they] enjoy positive relationships with other children. Educators should reflect on the growth areas through self-assessment and feedback from families/caregivers. Things to ensure high-quality early learning must include low child-to-educator ratio, small group sizes, well-trained staff and a positive and safe learning environment" (Childcare Centre-Based Staff, 2024).

During the engagement phase, many stakeholders requested professional learning (PL) for ECEs on strategies to engage families/caregivers so that mutual respect and a relationship can be formed—especially when engaging families/caregivers from varying social and cultural contexts. Community leaders, early childhood providers, and policymakers all have a role to play in designing policies and programs that support continuity of care, so that "if investments in early childhood are to realize the significant returns often touted by advocates, continuity of care must be included in program design and implementation" (Reidt-Parker & Chainski, 2015).

Children thrive in environments in which they can be reassured by a continuity of care, personnel and programming. Currently, children going through early learning services generally move to different rooms/facilities depending on their birthdate, resulting in constant changes in core relationships. It is important, however, that children have a predictable and consistent learning environment (Brock et al., 2018). Many ECEs agreed, feeling that such decisions should be based on the needs of the child, not the calendar:

“Change the moving of children to September of every year like the school system so no child gets kicked out mid-way because their birthday arrives” (Centre-Based ECE, 2024). ECE professionals also believe that class size ratios need to be treated with similar flexibility, as “having realistic ratios with the higher number of behaviours and needs of the children would go a long way with me” (Centre-Based ECE, 2024).

2.1-20 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.1-20.a** Provide PL for early learning professionals to build strong, respectful relationships with children, peers, and families/caregivers.
- 2.1-20.b** Provide cultural competency training for early learning professionals to build respectful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous families/caregivers and communities.
- 2.1-20.c** Create policies, standards and operational procedures that support and promote relationship building and support continuity of care between families/caregivers, children, early learning services, and the community.
- 2.1-20.d** Develop culturally responsive family/caregiver engagement strategies that prioritize vulnerable populations and Indigenous communities.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 2.1-20.e** Provide consistent ELCD environments so that the same children interact with the same adults and peers over time using a developmentally appropriate cohort model.
- 2.1-20.f** Develop and implement Indigenous-specific regulatory standards that reflect Indigenous cultural values, traditional knowledge, and community-based approaches to early learning.



Call to Transformation 2.1-21:

Promote a research-informed culture in early learning and child care (ELCC) environments.

Background

In ELCC, research should inform policy by providing an avenue to develop theories, explore new methods of practice, and identify solutions to issues when they arise (Eberhard et al., 2017). For example, research can reveal characteristics of what is a 'good' ELCC environment and provide insight into the factors that benefit children and ECEs. This type of research can inform the decisions of policymakers so that ELCC environments are operating in ways that are beneficial to everyone (Eberhard et al., 2017).

Regular research and data input also benefit practitioners and other professionals, given that "regular training and professional development for educators can ensure they stay informed about the latest research and practices in child development and education. This, in turn, directly impacts the quality of care" (AECENL Conference Participant, 2024). The creation of a research-based culture has other benefits, in that ELCD researchers and organizers receive regular front-line input and feedback. "Given the vast potential for participatory partnerships to bridge the gap between research and practice, it is imperative that investments be made...to foster inclusion of practitioners in the development of priorities that might affect social and public health services" (Pinto et al., 2019).

2.1-21 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.1-21.a** Establish a research facility to allow for locally meaningful research within the province and welcome ECEs to participate in research pedagogies and practices.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 2.1-21.b** Build partnerships between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to ensure findings are translated into actionable policies and practices.
- 2.1-21.c** Develop mechanisms to minimize timelines from research to policy and practice.



Call to Transformation 2.1-22:

Establish Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in all early learning and child care (ELCC) environments.

Background

UDL is an evidence-based framework that improves and optimizes teaching and learning for all people (CAST, n.d.). It is particularly useful in the early years, as “even typical young learners vary so much in terms of their interests and abilities. Given the wide range of developmental abilities in any group, early childhood teachers are wise to build in ways to make sure that all children benefit from a rich learning environment” (Dinnebeil et al., 2013).

The three principles of UDL include providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression.

The Accord has concluded that UDL principles should be applied to all ELCD systems and environments. Further, individual planning should take place so that children can have every opportunity to reach their learning potential (Moffat, 2022). Applying the UDL framework to ELCC environments can help all children meaningfully participate within any

setting (Gauvreau et al., 2019). Access to high-quality materials and equipment can be a critical aspect of UDL, as “quality starts with educated staff who love their work and are committed to lifelong learning, supporting all families, and quality programming, next comes dedicated time for planning and access to quality materials” (AECENL Conference participant, 2024).

Currently, access to appropriately designed materials is haphazard, and creating more equitable access was a point made by many participants in the Accord’s outreach, with the following being a common sentiment: “Quality equipment for the utilization of children is also very important for children to be able to grow, learn and develop at age-appropriate levels” (Community Partner, 2024).

2.1-22 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.1-22.a** Integrate UDL principles into post-secondary curriculum planning, ELCC curriculum planning, and the design and operations of physical environments, in order to support all learners, including those with disabilities* and other distinct challenges.
- 2.1-22.b** Provide ongoing training for early learning professionals in the use of adaptive strategies that meet individual learning needs.
- 2.1-22.c** Ensure equitable access to materials and experiences that promote inclusion.
- 2.1-22.d** Provide access to specialized PL focusing on anti-bias practices, inclusive education, trauma-informed practices and responsive teaching and learning.

**Disabilities refer to a range of visible and invisible conditions that, in interaction with barriers, may limit full and equal participation in society. It includes physical, sensory, intellectual, mental health, and other impairments, and is shaped by social and environmental factors, not just medical diagnoses. (See glossary [p.389] for full definition).*



Call to Transformation 2.1-23:

Recognize that post-secondary institutions, certification requirements, professional associations, and other related organizations play an important role in promoting quality.

Background

“Quality care comes from educated professionals” (AECENL Conference Participant, 2024).

Consistent qualifications and professional training of ECEs is important for providing high-quality, meaningful learning experiences for early learners (Nutbrown, 2021). The curriculum taught in early learning programs and that offered by post-secondary institutions should align with the current certification requirements, as there must be “a core body of knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions early childhood educators must demonstrate to effectively promote the development, learning, and well-being of all young children” (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2019).

Establishing common standards and aligning them across organizations will help to ensure that every ECE and learning environment is practicing at the same high-quality level. Our evolving systems require a “collaborative approach, where professionals work together to support young children’s learning and development and work with their families, delivers better outcomes for everyone” (Department of Education [Victoria], 2024). This would be improved by enhanced education and PL opportunities to be provided by both Memorial University’s Faculty of Education and College of the North Atlantic (CNA), collaborating on enhanced ECE educational programs and protocols.

2.1-23 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.1-23.a** Collaborate with CNA, Memorial University and private colleges to ensure that ECE programs align with both current industry standards and the best practices in quality early learning.
- 2.1-23.b** Strengthen partnerships among post-secondary institutions, professional associations, and other sector participants and policymakers.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 2.1-23.c** Create a direct link between current and exemplary research, policy, and practice to eliminate gaps between innovation and implementation across the post-secondary institutions offering early childhood learning programs.

Theme 2.2: Early Learning and Child Care Workforce Challenges and Requirements

A competent, healthy workforce is key to ensuring quality in early learning environments. While families/caregivers are the primary educators in a child's life, early learning professionals are, in many cases, the first educators that children and families/caregivers encounter. As trained professionals in pedagogy and early learning environments, early learning professionals play a vital role in shaping children's foundational experiences and should be valued on par with educators in the K-12 system. They care for children during the most critical period of development, fostering learning, socialization, and well-being. However, the ELCC workforce has been reported to be undervalued despite their essential contributions to children, families/caregivers, and society. Early learning professionals often

work in demanding environments with limited pay, respect, and benefits (Farewell et al., 2022), leading to high turnover rates within the profession (Ng et al., 2023). Early learning professionals are instrumental in ensuring that early learning programs are high-quality, inclusive, and supportive of families/caregivers, while also providing smooth transitions for children as they progress through the education system. Specific topics raised in meetings, forums, and presentations include compensation, workplace conditions, empowerment of early learning professionals, and the professionalization of the sector.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 2.2-24:

Professionalize and stabilize the early learning and child care (ELCC) workforce.

Background

Many participants in our research felt that despite recent progress, the professionalization of the sector and workforce still needs improvement. Repeatedly, we heard that “government needs to commit to a truly robust ECE workforce strategy. There can be no ‘ABCs’ without ECEs. Without workers, we cannot build child care capacity” (ABCs & ECEs-Parent Advocacy Group, 2024). However, a clearly defined workforce strategy “ensures that early childhood educators have the qualifications they need to support children’s learning and development. It ensures that early childhood educators can earn fair wages that provide a decent living. It supports positive working conditions that help keep people in the field” (Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta, n.d.).

In the past, the consensus among participants is that the ECE sector has been undervalued and insufficiently resourced, which has hindered the profession (Bull et al., 2024; Pramling et al., 2018). To increase and enhance the professionalization of the sector, the following steps were suggested:

- Create and share messaging with the public and the ELCC sector that highlights the importance of the field.
- Continue to build the career and education ladder that includes more post-secondary opportunities and financial incentives.

- Provide more opportunities for professional engagement between early learning professionals and policymakers.
- Establish feedback mechanisms for government, post-secondary institutions, associations, employers, and other authorities with a vested interest in professionalization pertaining to all aspects of the sector.

Increased PL, mentoring programs, and diversifying the workforce were brought up during meetings as key opportunities to strengthen the profession. Educators' interpretations of professionalism influence their relationships with children, families/ caregivers and co-workers (Hostettler Schärer, 2018). Work is meaningful if employees believe it is significant in that it serves an important purpose (Martela & Pessi, 2018). ECEs and early learning professionals largely agreed, seeking forums in which their own experiences and knowledge would be valued: "Build a forum that can gather ideas from ECEs in the workforce. More incentive to keep people in the field. More transferable experience to education from working in the field for a certain amount of time" (AECENL Conference participant, 2024).

Articulation agreements, which help college diploma graduates transition into university degree programs, are required or supported in various Canadian provinces. A study at the University of Guelph-Humber compared college transfer students with those entering directly from high school, analyzing factors like age, academic performance, and course experience. While transfer students were generally older, their learning approaches and academic outcomes were similar. These findings support the value of transfer pathways for non-traditional students when supported by thoughtful policies and formal agreements between institutions (Acai & Newton, 2015).

There are also opportunities for more micro-credentials—smaller and more achievable education programs that could still add knowledge and experience to early learning professionals. These credentials are a growing opportunity in many fields, and there are great opportunities for our post-secondary institutions to enhance these offerings, as "micro-credentials are generally more affordable than traditional degrees. They can typically be completed in up to 18 credit hours, and many programs are fully delivered online—lowering tuition costs even more when compared to undergraduate or graduate degrees" (Roberto, 2024).

One consistent theme of our discussions with ECEs in particular was a concern that their career suffered by not being taken seriously within education systems. There is a universal belief that the profession needs more support in general. As one of our respondents explained, "Professionalizing the workforce would help a lot in a lot of different areas for ECEs. We are not regarded as professionals; therefore, we don't get professional treatment" (AECENL Conference participant).

We conclude that the academic success of college-transfer learners is attainable with careful consideration of policies, such as admissions criteria, and the drafting of formal articulation agreements between institutions.

2.2-24 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.2-24.a Develop a workforce strategy that will be implemented across ELCC environments and post-secondary institutions.
- 2.2-24.b Increase the options for transferring and laddering credits for learners between college and university degree programs, including consideration for micro-credentials.
- 2.2-24.c Create and disperse messaging to increase public awareness of the importance of early learning professionals and environments.
- 2.2-24.d Engage in regular consultations and establish ongoing feedback mechanisms between early learning professionals and policymakers, with the aim of strengthening the sector.
- 2.2-24.e Provide specific, tailored supports for new and international ECEs, such as onboarding programs, cultural connections, and PL.
- 2.2-24.f Increase work-integrated learning experiences during high school and post-secondary training to increase understanding of the range of available early learning career opportunities.
- 2.2-24.g Provide ECEs with resources and opportunities to gain knowledge and skills that boost empowerment and instill competence and confidence in themselves, as well as others who work in the early learning sector.
- 2.2-24.h Include Indigenous cultural diversity training, along with culturally appropriate and trauma-informed practices, into all levels of post-secondary early childhood education programs.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 2.2-24.i Define clear training programs/pathways for the ELCC workforce that will provide individuals with information about opportunities for upskilling or reskilling, using a learner-centric asset-focused approach.
- 2.2-24.j Increase post-secondary opportunities by adding a Master’s Degree Program in early learning at Memorial University.



Call to Transformation 2.2-25:

Align compensation and benefits, scope of work, and level of education for all early childhood educators (ECEs).

Background

To strengthen the ELCC workforce, many participants discussed the importance of fair compensation for the system’s professionals. The implementation of Newfoundland and Labrador’s ECE wage grid in January of 2023 was a big step in the right direction. However, it does not include leave and other paid time (i.e., time spent working without children and doing administrative work or PL). In October 2024, medical benefits became available to ECEs and other staff working in regulated child care services participating in the Operating Grant Program. Nonetheless, concerns among ECEs remain: “Government needs to have professional guidelines and training in place to ensure quality. Increasing one’s salary and providing benefits does not always equate to better services. It all stems from quality training where ownership needs to be maintained” (AECENL Conference participant, 2024).

In the fall of 2023, the Muttart Foundation, the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta, and the Alberta Leaders' Caucus hosted focus groups with ECEs across that province to determine what ECEs themselves say about improving their working conditions and compensation. Dr. Christopher Smith subsequently presented the findings to the ELCD Pillar Committee in NL, and the following points are quite relevant to the NL context:

- There is variation in access to pension and benefits across the sector,
- access to benefits help reduce staff turnover,
- access to paid sick days is needed,
- lack of access to workplace pensions is prevalent,
- challenges are associated with taking vacation time,
- compensation needs to reflect the demands of the work, and
- unfair compensation leads to workforce shortages and deters people from furthering their education.

Similar comments were made during the three forum meetings held locally with those currently working in the field. As one pointed out, “early learning professionals need to be fairly compensated to ensure retention and recognition for their critical role. Increasing salaries and providing benefits that reflect the level of expertise and education required will help attract and retain skilled professionals” (AECENL Conference Participant, 2024). A professional from a FRC argued that enhancing worker stability would ultimately enhance the level of early child care, as ECEs and early child care supervisors “should not have to worry about keeping staff with years of experience and training because we cannot pay them enough to keep them here” (Family Resource Centre staff, 2024).

Research has shown that higher wages and access to benefits are associated with increased retention of staff (Ng et al., 2023). Therefore, our recommendations focus on addressing these issues.

2.2-25 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.2-25.a Create standards that improve workplace conditions and create access to benefits across the sector.
- 2.2-25.b Reduce the barriers associated with accessing paid leave.



Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 2.2-25.c** Regularly review the ECE wage grid to ensure that pay scales reflect the level of education, experience, and responsibilities of early learning professionals, as well as the current costs of living.



Call to Transformation 2.2-26:

Provide access to practice-based competency development and mentorship opportunities.

Background

Defining core competencies is important to build engaging, structured and high-quality ELCC environments, as well as aid in strengthening professional competence on core concepts, and help coordinate service delivery (LeMoine, 2020). Professional competence requires both initial and continuing education; therefore, providing ongoing competency development opportunities is crucial to the success of ECEs (European Commission, 2021). During our Pillar Committee meetings, many members felt that identifying core competencies and providing opportunities to improve on ECE's pedagogical practices were crucial in bettering the workforce and improving workplace retention. "High-quality learning settings need to start with education and training of ECE," explained one participant. "Having a diploma in ECE does not equate to quality. One need is continued ongoing training and education. The government has policies in place; however, these policies will not always ensure quality. ECE Consultants need to provide opportunities for training, education and mentorship" (AECENL Conference Participant, 2024).

ELCD early learning professionals also recognized that significant aspects of their training required different educational approaches, as the nuances of their skillset are often learned within the ELCD spaces themselves. "Many of the skills needed to work in a Family Resource Centre (FRC) are not covered with an ECE diploma because there are

skills needed to work with families, community partners, offering parent and community programs, etc.,” explained one FRC manager (2024). “If the proper supports are in place through the Newfoundland and Labrador Family Resources Program (NLFRP), there should be many training opportunities available to help build skills of staff once they are hired” (FRC Staff, 2024).

Mentorship offers a road to a different form of individualized education. In its simplest forms, mentorship “is a form of professional learning in which a more experienced individual guides a less experienced individual through a mutually beneficial ongoing relationship. Mentoring is a strategy used to nourish and inspire ECEs at any stage in their career. Mentoring offers support to those who are new to the field and encourages reflecting on daily practices to recognize their strengths and goals for growth” (Doan, 2016). Local operators agreed, stating that “providing avenues for relationships that facilitate exchanging information could help a less experienced ECE navigate the field more confidently and provide relationships development skills, leadership skills, and career development opportunities for experienced ECEs” (Hamm, 2017). This type of support has been requested by ECEs to improve their confidence, competence, and professionalism (Doan, 2016). The relationship between a mentor and mentee can increase retention rates for both, encourage attainment of higher educational credentials, improve quality, and lead to better child outcomes (Nolan & Molla, 2016).

2.2-26 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.2-26.a Identify and focus on core competency/skill development for early learning professionals.
- 2.2-26.b Create more opportunities for experiential learning, such as internships, project-based learning, and real-world problem-solving in various community-based early learning environments.
- 2.2-26.c Increase mentorship and sponsorship learning opportunities.
- 2.2-26.d Promote and support the development of Indigenous leadership in ELCC through training, mentoring and capacity-building initiatives.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

2.2-26.e Create partnerships between post-secondary institutions and early learning settings to integrate pedagogy, theory, research and practice.



Call to Transformation 2.2-27:

Create positive and supportive workplace conditions with clearly outlined requirements for all early learning and child care (ELCC) environments.

Background

Positive and supportive work environments are important for any sector, but especially within an early learning setting—for ECEs the work environment is the same as the children’s learning environment (Schlieber & McLean, 2021). A positive and supportive environment is crucial for early learning professionals, as it benefits their well-being, motivation, and performance, and improves retention rates (Cadima et al., 2021). It is also beneficial for children and families/caregivers by encouraging positive relationships and high-quality pedagogical practices, which are associated with improved outcomes (Cadima et al., 2021). Discussions amongst the pillar committee and forums highlighted the importance of having a workplace culture that welcomes, celebrates, and respects all participants. Sentiments like these were a common theme: “Improved working conditions, including manageable staff-to-child ratios, access to professional development, and resources, are essential. Supporting early childhood educators with tools for their personal and professional growth can help prevent burnout” (AECENL Conference Participant, 2024). Having access to mental health supports was another request that was repeatedly made by sector participants, as were requests for more consistent and supportive benefits: “Keep the ones who have been doing it the longest happy with benefits, sick days, vacation time, being able to get a day off without a fight. Protect[ing] the ECEs that you have from burn out” (Centre-Based ECE, 2024). Accord research also spoke about how improved access to technology could

ease paper burdens and free up more time for primary care: “Technology can greatly benefit the staff of many child care centers when it comes to administrative duties and reporting. The average child care worker spends 45 minutes per day on documentation tasks, taking valuable time away from the children in your care. With software created with child care staff in mind, reporting time can be drastically reduced, as information can be easily entered into a tablet or mobile device rather than recorded on paper” (Spreeuwenberg, 2015).

2.2-27 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.2-27.a Create PL opportunities on positive workplace practices and effective human resource practices for leaders/administrators working in early learning settings.
- 2.2-27.b Create and implement policies that promote welcoming, inclusive, respectful, safe, environments.
- 2.2-27.c Develop an orientation resource kit for non-profit ELCC boards that will provide information and training in board participation, leadership, and operating child care services.
- 2.2-27.d Ensure early learning professionals have access to wellness programs and mental health resources.
- 2.2-27.e Provide training in the use of technologies (e.g., AI, Early Learning Gateway, and other emerging technologies) that have the potential to enhance ELCC experiences and reduce administrative burdens.

Theme 2.3: Inclusive Early Learning and Child Care Programs

According to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, inclusive child care means “that children of all abilities and diversities have equitable access to quality child care programs and are supported in learning through play along with their peers in a regular program” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2023b). Inclusive child care supports the individual strengths and needs of each child so that they can participate meaningfully in all aspects of the child care day. All ECEs and child care providers should work together as a team to meet the needs of all of the children in their care. Inclusion is rooted in the principles of equity and justice, emphasizing that all children belong, and merely placing learners in a regular classroom or providing access to a resource room does not guarantee their true inclusion (Boueivitch, 2016; Iannacci, 2020). The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Registered Early Childhood Educators in Ontario (2017) described inclusive practices in ELCC environments as “an approach to policies and practice in early years settings where all children and families are accepted and served within a program and where each child and family/caregiver experiences a sense of belonging and is supported to participate fully in all aspects of the program or service. Inclusive practice includes being attentive to the capabilities, personalities and circumstances of all children and understanding the diversity of development of all children” (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2017).

Research shows a positive relationship between participating in ELCC and child developmental outcomes, with greater benefits for marginalized children and families/caregivers with socioeconomic disadvantages (Van Huizen & Plantenga, 2018). Therefore, it is important that ELCC environments establish inclusive practices that offer meaningful participation for all groups, including new Canadians, those with neurodiverse needs, and those with low socioeconomic status. Children of all developmental styles benefit from their involvement in an inclusive learning environment by aiding in the development of positive self-images, friendship, social skills, problem-solving, and respectfulness (Hehir et al., 2016).

In the Accord consultations, we heard from many advocates in the Early Childhood field calling for the improvement of inclusivity practices, which include developing inclusive environments in early child care settings, advocating for a continuum of inclusion from child care to K-12 environments, and promoting collaboration across disciplines and with families/caregivers. Many informants called for a need for confident and competent staff, supported by aligned resources and ongoing PL. Supportive research findings suggested co-teaching as a foundational resource for inclusive classrooms, where there is a need for multi-professional cooperation within the school and with experts from outside the

school to develop a shared understanding of inclusive schooling and a common responsibility for implementing inclusive education. In our consultations, early child care operators proposed multi-professional cooperation to quality integrated training for ECEs and primary school educators, widespread sensory stations, and a policy shift towards zero rejection of children with high needs at child care centres. The Accord affirms that collaboration is critical for inclusion to be effective. In fact, Carter et al. (2009), suggested that “when schools adopt specific procedures or models for collaboration, students with disabilities benefit from teachers’ collaborative planning.” Provision of higher quality inclusive practices in ELCC centres involves fostering “a ‘levelling’ field for children, where all children can have access and opportunity to achieve their potential” educational practices to ensure holistic development and inclusion, thereby creating an environment where all children have opportunity to achieve their fullest potential (Garvis & Taquchi, 2021).

To foster and enhance inclusion in ELCC environments, it is important to get to know the children through observation, documentation, and interactions with family/caregivers, ensure the physical environment meets the needs and extends the interests of all children, incorporate cultural competence and use intentional teaching practices (Dalton, 2022). It is important that educators work with families/caregivers using a ‘strength-based approach’, one which builds on children’s self-determination and strength by seeing them as resourceful and resilient (Iannicci, 2020). Additionally, it is crucial for early learning professionals to engage in critical reflection by considering and challenging their beliefs, assumptions, and understandings, which shape the learning experiences they provide.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 2.3-28:

Provide continuity of care/supports to address the needs of all children and establish clear assessment strategies that include observation and documentation for children and their early learning and child care (ELCC) environments.

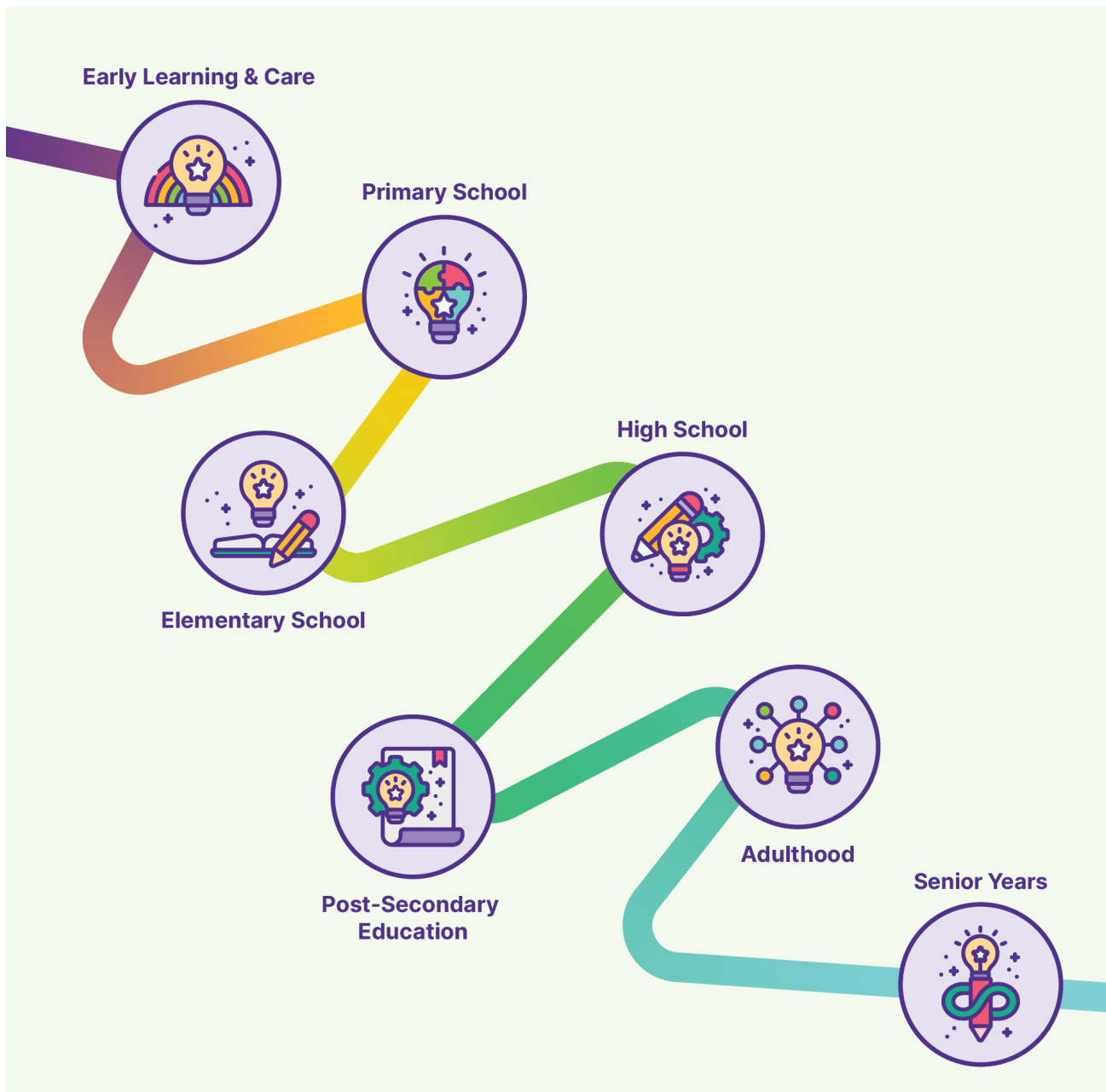


Figure 18: The Lifelong Learning Pathway.

Background

Continuity of care requires current systems to cooperate and coordinate in the best interests of children, families/caregivers and other participants. Numerous studies have demonstrated that establishing an inclusive, human rights and children's rights-based approach to regulations, standards, assessments, and evaluations is important to ensure that all children receive the equitable access to required supports and services, allowing

their fulsome participation in early learning settings and in their communities. Families/caregivers need to be able to navigate transitions, ensuring the supports they receive are always available, even while their environments change. Additionally, using documentation and observation strategies for identifying and providing early interventions that support neurodiversity is important—early interventions are more likely to be effective when they are accessed earlier in life rather than later (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.).

Many early child care practitioners spoke about gaps and inconsistencies in the current system, gaps the Accord needs to address. As one respondent explained, “Way too many centres don’t even document progress for the children. Then the children go into the educational school system and parents are informed that their child needs help, but this could have been happening since age three” (AECENL Conference participant, 2024). Others were concerned that while inclusion was important, within centres it presented many challenges for resource-strapped ECEs and owners: “I understand that inclusion is a very important part of [the] day. But, the process of the inclusion program takes a long time. ECEs and children aren’t getting the support needed to be successful” (AECENL Conference Participant, 2024).

Participants also spoke about the need for better data, information that can be used to track and support children and families/caregivers facing challenges. Holistic studies have revealed that “data-based problem solving and decision-making is an essential component of high-quality programs that foster a culture of data use and is defined as a consistent process used by stakeholder teams and applied at multiple levels to analyze and evaluate relevant information to plan and implement strategies that support sustainable improved student and system outcomes” (Colorado Department of Education, 2025).

2.3-28 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.3-28.a Implement policies to ensure mandatory training in inclusive and equitable practices and supports for all early learning professionals.
- 2.3-28.b Develop trauma-informed practices and implement practices in early learning settings to address the historical and ongoing impacts of trauma.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 2.3-28.c Implement culturally responsive training for early learning professionals, focusing on land-based learning and culturally safe practices to support Indigenous children and families/caregivers.
- 2.3-28.d Increase access to early intervention, including a streamlined early identification and referral process, to ensure timely support for children and families/caregivers requiring additional assistance.
- 2.3-28.e Use data to inform the development of tools and resources for early learning professionals to systematically and effectively assess both learning environments and individual child needs.
- 2.3-28.f Create a data collection framework in collaboration with communities to track children’s participation in ELCD programs that can be utilized for community-led decision-making.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 2.3-28.g Establish a mechanism that will allow for documenting and following the child through their educational journey within our early learning, K-12, and post-secondary education systems.



Call to Transformation 2.3-29:

Create systematic approaches to address inequities experienced by vulnerable populations. Ensure all children can participate in early learning and child care (ELCC) environments in a meaningful and safe way.

Background

Children are especially vulnerable to the impact of social disadvantage and inequities, which are evident from birth and have a profound effect on health across the lifespan (UNICEF, 2016). The earliest years are the most important in influencing children's development; therefore, having a system in place for children that addresses these inequities is important to mitigate any potential and future impacts. Centre-based ECE pillar members and study participants felt that access to all types of supports, including health, nutrition, education, transportation, etc., needs to be more readily available and more centralized. Many members mentioned that there is a need for a reliable and consistent point of access for all types of support, one that allows transitions across time and environments. As one participant explained, "The waitlist for many, most specialists are extremely long, appointments are far in between, our children are getting lost between the cracks. Some children need these direct services by 2–3 years old, and for the most part, they don't get this until later in the education system" (Minister's ELCC Advisory Committee, 2024). Other supports are simpler and less of a strain on human resources, but nonetheless critical to families/caregivers transitioning into the ELCD systems: "Transportation and child care are huge restrictions to providing supports to families" (FRC Staff, 2024).

Universal access to early promotion and assessment of child development from birth are associated with equitable outcomes. Early education programs enhance early childhood development among disadvantaged children and impact health and well-being across the lifespan for all children (Heckman et al., 2010; Welshman, 2010; Rao et al., 2017). Many pillar participants felt that developmental and intellectual assessments need to be done earlier and supports should continue across the lifespan of the early child education process, explaining that "a key consideration is by creating physical environments that are welcoming, curriculum should reflect inclusiveness and attend to the different cultural backgrounds, as well as involving the family and the community" (Centre-based ECE, 2024).

2.3-29 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.3-29.a** Ensure that early learning professionals engage families/caregivers in co-creating strategies for children's full participation in ELCC environments.



- 2.3-29.b** Develop culturally safe learning environments by incorporating Indigenous languages, land-based learning, and traditional knowledge into early learning programs.
- 2.3-29.c** Prioritize policy initiatives that target early learning programs in equity-deserving communities, especially for those children experiencing food insecurity.
- 2.3-29.d** Expand food security initiatives in Indigenous communities by integrating traditional food programs and partnering with local Indigenous organizations to support access to culturally relevant nutrition.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 2.3-29.e** Provide access to transportation options, where feasible and required, to ensure that children have access to early learning programs and services.
- 2.3-29.f** Create a central hub where government departments, community organizations, and other relevant authorities and partners can effectively collaborate to provide families/caregivers with integrated, wraparound supports such as health and community services, nutrition and language programs, family/caregiver resources, etc.



Call to Transformation 2.3-30:

Ensure early learning professionals are supported in developing competence and confidence in their inclusive practices.

Background

During consultations with sector participants, several ECEs requested increased PL opportunities on inclusive practices to improve their competence and confidence in addressing the interests and needs of all children in their care. “A key is that training around cultural sensitivity, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, Autism, etc., should be ongoing, and perhaps some of it should be mandatory. Accessible buildings are a challenge for many FRCs, so anything that will help FRCs become more accessible would be helpful” (FRC Staff, 2024). Another ELCD participant pointed out that inconsistencies in training could lead to downstream problems: “Inclusion as it is right now does not always ensure the child and family is receiving the best quality services. Having one-on-one support for a child in a daycare setting will not prove successful unless the ECE understands what inclusion is, and this is where the consultant can provide mentoring. Including families from different cultures also means celebrating their uniqueness. There needs to be more training on how to accomplish this in a daycare setting” (AECENL Conference Participant, 2024).

Families also spoke to the Accord about the lack of training and supports for inclusionary practices, requesting that systems “provide greater training and professional learning for early childhood educators. Current inclusion policies are highly subjective, and clear definitions would ensure a more inclusive system across the board. Within this definition, recognize that inclusion supports should be tailored to fit the needs of the child. The focus of inclusion should be making the environment work for the child, not forcing the child into the environment” (ABCs & ECEs – Parent Advocacy Group, 2024). Defining inclusion as an educational practice with specific goals and measures is a persistent challenge: “Inclusion is not putting the least qualified person ‘in charge’ of a particular child. Inclusion is properly funding programs, extensive and specialized training for inclusion staff, inclusion coordinators in each child-care program who know the needs of the children and families in their care and build on those relationships” (AECENL Conference Participant, 2024).

Past research has found that collaboration among community, early learning educators, support staff, and families/caregivers is important in establishing an inclusive, diverse, and sustainable learning environment (Abubakar et al., 2024). Some ECEs identified that the settings in which they practice are not accessible for everyone. This presents challenges to meeting the goal of accessible ELCC for everyone, challenges that could be improved by embracing the principles of UDL, as a “UDL approach not only ensures that the physical environment is accessible, but it also provides flexible ways of teaching and learning so that all learners can participate. Applying the UDL framework to ELCC environments can help all children meaningfully participate within any setting (Gauvreau et al., 2019).

2.3-30 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.3-30.a** Provide ongoing and accessible PL opportunities on inclusive teaching strategies, and the use of flexible materials and adaptive technologies, to equip early learning professionals with the knowledge and skills to support all children and ensure equitable access to learning opportunities for all children.
- 2.3-30.b** Provide early learning professionals with hands-on PL in UDL and social-emotional supports.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 2.3-30.c** Develop mentorship programs and peer learning networks to build confidence and collaboration among early learning professionals in supporting diverse needs.

Theme 2.4: Family Connections and Engagement in the Early Years

Family engagement in early childhood involves the active and collaborative participation of families/caregivers in their children’s early learning and development. It emphasizes the crucial role that families/caregivers play in influencing educational experiences and outcomes. This engagement extends beyond tokenistic or casual involvement to instead include meaningful interactions, partnerships, and shared decision-making with their child’s ECEs. It also focuses on creating a positive and supportive relationship between families/caregivers and the educational environment, characterized by open communication, trust, and mutual respect (Western Community College (WCM), 2024). The benefits of family/caregiver engagement in early childhood include enhanced

academic achievement, holistic development, smooth transitions through different stages, stronger family bonds, support for cultural and linguistic diversity, improved parenting practices, and long-term educational success (WCM, 2024).

Call to Transformation



Call to Transformation 2.4-31:

Ensure respectful and responsive engagement opportunities with all families/caregivers, especially priority populations, and streamline service provision of prenatal and postnatal supports that integrate with early learning services.

Background

Throughout engagement sessions with participants, key themes emerged regarding the necessity of consistent family/caregiver connections and engagement: “The benefits of family engagement in early childhood include enhanced academic achievement, holistic development, smooth transitions through different stages, stronger family bonds, support for cultural and linguistic diversity, improved parenting practices, and long-term educational success” (WCM, 2024).

It was repeatedly mentioned that resources and supports need to be centralized and available from the prenatal stage onward in a timely manner, family navigators are required to guide families/caregivers when needed, and regular points of contact need to take place during key developmental milestones and transitions. “Often families do not receive resources due to others not knowing where to direct them,” explained one participant. “The accessibility to the information and types of supports available and how to access them...I feel that this information is still not easy for families to find” (AECENL Conference Participant, 2024). Others pointed out that “early learning centres can collaborate with health professionals to offer resources, parenting classes, and mental health support from pregnancy onward. Providing families with information on child development can help ensure that the whole family is equipped to support a child’s growth” (AECENL Conference Participant, 2024).

These challenges are especially prevalent for newcomers, who experience additional cultural, linguistic, and technological barriers when navigating the ELCC system (Jimmy Pratt Foundation & Multicultural Women’s Organization of NL, 2024). Some stakeholders

mentioned how it is important to reduce barriers to engaging with families/caregivers in which English is their second language. Other stakeholders asked for more family intergenerational programming, which included the arts and digital technology.

Many participants also spoke about how the FRC system should be better resourced and directed to support these early and consistent support networks: “Each school should have an FRC. Having worked at a FRC inside a school for a number of years and making connections within the school, supporting families and the community centre is a win-win. The families and children get the opportunity to build connections. Hear and see the sights and sounds of the school” (FRC staff, 2024).

2.4-31 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.4-31.a Streamline inter-agency and community collaboration to minimize barriers and ensure seamless support for families/caregivers.
- 2.4-31.b Develop policies and standards that ensure regular points of contact and varied methods of engagement between early learning professionals and families/caregivers.
- 2.4-31.c Develop and implement family/caregiver connections and engagement strategies across ELCC environments that will remain consistent throughout the transition to school and beyond.
- 2.4-31.d Provide accessible resources, such as parenting and well-being supports, to empower families/caregivers during critical developmental periods.
- 2.4-31.e Establish partnerships with Indigenous organizations and communities to co-develop culturally appropriate pre- and post-natal support programs that integrate with early learning services.
- 2.4-31.f Develop resources and information materials in Indigenous and other languages to support family/caregiver engagement and access to services.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 2.4-31.g Ensure continuity of care through partnerships between health care providers, early learning services, schools, and family services, including the Department of Families and Affordability (FAMA) and Child Protection and Youth Services.
- 2.4-31.h Develop a clearly defined system that includes a continuum of inclusion supports in collaboration with FAMA and Child Protection and Youth Services, with identified and accessible navigation for families/caregivers.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 2.4-31.i Develop a central hub of evidence-based resources and wraparound supports for all families/caregivers that is accessible during the prenatal years and onwards. These hubs will focus on family/caregiver empowerment, enhanced children's development, improved well-being, and community needs.
- 2.4-31.j Establish a system of family navigation that is responsive to the unique needs of diverse families/caregivers, including newcomers, Indigenous communities, and priority populations, to guide families/caregivers through available services, resources, and supports.

Theme 2.5: Transitions Between Early Learning Environments

Transitions refer to the process of changing environments, e.g., from ELCC to Kindergarten, that requires adjustments to the ways of being, doing, learning, and interacting (Atchison & Pompelia, 2018). In Newfoundland and Labrador, there are different types of transitions during the early years, which can include entering an early learning program such as family resource programs, regulated centre-based child care and/or regulated family child care,

ultimately transitioning to Pre-K, Kindergarten, and afterschool programs. Throughout these transitions, we need to ensure that the continuity of education and care between family/caregivers, community, and the ELCC environment remains a priority.

Positive relationships are essential for helping children smoothly navigate any changes they face, which highlights the need to build a system of continuity of education and care between service providers, families/caregivers, and children (Cherry, 2023).

Newfoundland and Labrador has a Kinderstart program, which is a school transition program offered the year before Kindergarten. It includes orientation sessions organized and promoted by schools for children and their families or caregivers. There is currently no formal system in place to bridge early learning programs and Kindergarten together. Instead, both education systems are working independently rather than in collaboration, placing the responsibility on families/caregivers to bridge gaps in information sharing. However, the system is becoming more unified as early learning, the K-12 English school system, and post-secondary are all housed within the same government department. Additionally, there is steady movement towards co-location of Pre-K programs in schools, which provides opportunities for collaboration and aids in smoothing the transition into the K-12 system.

Call to Transformation



Call to Transformation 2.5-32:

Formalize structures that facilitate collaboration, communication, and engagement between early learning, the K-12 system, and families/caregivers throughout transitions.

Background

The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation conducted a review of the literature and gathered key informant perspectives about transition strategies and coordinated transition practices intended to support educators, families/caregivers, and children moving between systems (Ehrlich et al., 2021). It highlighted that successful Kindergarten transitions depend on systems-level supports, including policies and investments in PL to align expectations and foster relationships among administrators, educators, early

learning professionals and families/caregivers across early childhood and primary education settings. The review also highlighted the '4Ps' that influence transitions: policies, perspectives, professional supports, and practices that exist at every level—governing agency, administration, schools, and early learning services (Ehrlich et al., 2021). Early and consistent universal access to “early promotion and assessment of child development from birth are associated with equitable outcomes. Early education programs enhance early childhood development among disadvantaged children and impact health and well-being across the life span for all children” (Human Early Learning Partnership & Commission on Social Determinants of Health, 2007).

These transition and continuity of care issues represented a considerable aspect of the Accord’s research, with many in the ELCD system speaking passionately about their concerns. As one participant explained, “I feel there should be more communication and professional working relationships between early learning professionals and school officials. I feel a portfolio with documents of children’s work and behaviour should be developed and handed off to school officials. There is a very clear divide between early learning settings and the school system” (AECENL Conference Participant, 2024). Others spoke of a lack of even the most basic communication between the early learning and the K-12 systems: “I think that when a child is leaving daycare to go to Kindergarten there should be meeting between the Kindergarten staff and daycare staff to help the child have a better start” (Centre-Based ECE, 2024), or as another participant stated, “I feel [with] child care and school systems with children going to Kindergarten, there needs to be more communication. ECEs spend four plus years with these children, so who better to pass on the child’s strengths and weakness to the school systems than us as ECEs” (Centre-based ECE, 2024). Such communication also needs to enhance early learning’s accomplishments as much as focus on weaknesses and challenges: “When a child leaves an early setting with certain skills, techniques and supports that determined their success, this needs to be continued in the next setting” (AECENL Conference participant, 2024).

Surveying the many comments, in summary, sector participants provided the following feedback:

- In child care services, children should be moved in cohorts, similar to the K-12 system, rather than transitioning based on birth dates. This will allow for the preservation of important relationships with peers and adults.
- Collaboration among early learning professionals, Pre-K and Kindergarten educators is essential so that all professionals and caregivers are familiar with the child prior to entering their own learning environment.
- Collaboration among families/caregivers and community partners is imperative.

- Familiarization needs to occur for the children with the environment they will be entering (e.g., prepare packages from future schools, visits to future schools, etc.).
- Earlier preparation among families/caregivers, current, and future educators prior to transitions.
- Establish a family navigator that can help throughout every transition.

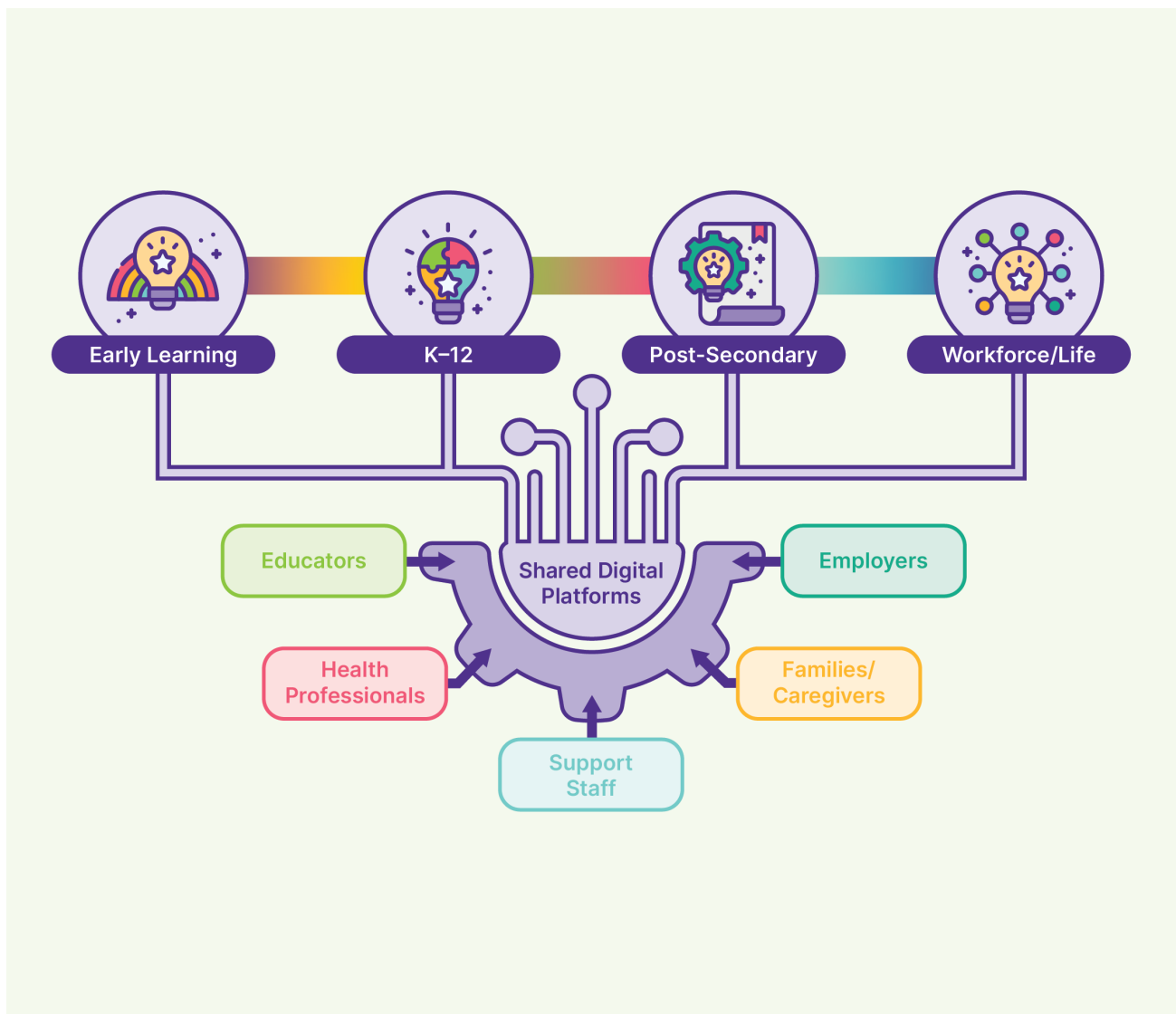


Figure 19: The Continuous Support Pathway.

2.5-32 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 2.5-32.a Strengthen partnerships to align Pre-K and Primary (K-3) curriculum that is grounded in evidence-based principles established in the Early Childhood Learning Framework.
- 2.5-32.b Develop policies that establish meaningful connections between early learning services and Kindergartens that increase information-sharing to help families/caregivers with transitions and provide continuity of care and learning experiences for children.
- 2.5-32.c Redefine 'school readiness' as respecting each child's unique background, experiences, and needs.
- 2.5-32.d Develop communication protocols to streamline the exchange of information about children, families/caregivers, and tailored pedagogical practices.
- 2.5-32.e Build connections among Early Learning Professionals, FRCs, children, families/caregivers, and the school community through collaborative PL and structured information-sharing plans.
- 2.5-32.f Align approaches to better connect with families/caregivers by establishing a family navigator who provides accessible and clear information about what to expect during transitions and how they can support their children, with targeted support for vulnerable families/caregivers, including translation services, navigation, and connections to community resources.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 2.5-32.g Provide joint PL (e.g., mentorship) for early learning professionals and professionals working in the K-12 system to align pedagogical approaches and share perspectives.
- 2.5-32.h Utilize digital platforms to facilitate collaboration and resource sharing to create a cohesive learning ecosystem across the two systems.

Education Engagement and Transformation in K-12

Introduction

Since the pandemic, there have been ever-increasing calls from the teaching field for a re-envisioning of the three major focus areas of learning, namely curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment and evaluation. Our province is facing critical challenges in education, including low learner engagement, chronic absenteeism, and poor performance in numeracy, reading, and creative thinking. A rapidly changing global economy, technological advancements, and shifting workforce demands require an education system that equips learners not just with knowledge but with the ability to apply it creatively and meaningfully.

Based on many sources of research and input, specifically, data on academic results, engagement numbers and attendance, the leave and sick time of educators, graduation rates, health outcomes, post-pandemic feedback from educators and educational stakeholders and various reports such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and *The Big Reset* (OECD, 2022; Greene et al., 2021), change is needed in order to foster greater learner engagement and to improve learning outcomes in the K-12 system.

Curriculum transformation plays a critical role in defining the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are most valued by society and essential for preparing learners for the future (Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training [CAMET], 2018). As well, system change is influenced by provincial and international benchmarks:

- Provincial Reading and Mathematics Assessments (PRMAs) (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2022a)
- Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2022)
- Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) (IEA, 2023)
- Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (IEA, 2021)

Specifically, Newfoundland and Labrador's PISA results highlight a need for transformative action. The province ranks among the lowest in Canada across key domains in mathematics

and reading (Council of Ministers of Education, 2022). These results have been trending downward for years, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated this decline (OECD, 2023a).

To meet these demands, we must modernize our curriculum to emphasize real-world applications, creative thinking and problem-solving. Assessment and evaluation methods must shift to prioritize creativity, collaboration, and the demonstration of skills in authentic contexts. Additionally, instructional practices need to focus on personalized and experiential learning, supported by consistent, evidence-based professional learning (PL) for educators. Achieving these changes will require further collaboration among policymakers, educators, families/caregivers, and communities to establish a shared vision, secure the necessary resources, and cultivate a culture of innovation that ensures success for all learners.

Assessment and evaluation should be closely aligned with curriculum indicators, ensuring that learners not only master foundational content but also demonstrate their ability to apply it in diverse contexts. By using formative assessments and evaluations that incorporate competencies, educators can provide ongoing and informative feedback. This approach makes assessment an integral part of the learning process rather than just a final measure of achievement. Without these critical skills and responsive assessment practices, learners will be ill-prepared to navigate the complexities of the future (OECD, 2005). Aligning curriculum transformation with innovative assessment practices will equip learners with the knowledge and capabilities they need to succeed in a rapidly changing world (OECD, 2019).

Many educators in this province, particularly those teaching grades 7–12, have faced inconsistent access to modern, targeted PL opportunities. This lack of access hinders their ability to adopt high-impact, evidence-based instructional practices essential for promoting learner success. To address this gap, a transformative approach to PL is necessary—one that is flexible, inclusive, and aligned with both system-wide goals and individual educator needs (Sancar et al., 2021; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). But, it is not only educator PL that needs to change. This will also require corresponding curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative changes. We are advocating for a bold shift, one that drives innovative change within the educator workforce and enhances communication across all levels of the education system, creating a more cohesive approach to modern education overall (Collins et al., 2017).

Transforming education systems requires a societal shift in how education is understood. A major obstacle is the lack of clear communication between educators and families/caregivers, many of whom still favour traditional teaching and assessment methods, such as tests and exams (Nilimaa, 2023). Although testing can be part of a balanced assessment framework, its format must move beyond rote memorization. Families/caregivers need to understand that mastering content is only the foundation, and learners

today must develop skills like synthesis, evaluation, and critical judgment to thrive in modern workplaces, particularly in the context of AI and rapidly evolving information landscapes.

Equally important is helping families/caregivers see the value of incorporating learner voice and active engagement in instructional practices. Experiential learning opportunities outside the classroom are essential for achieving meaningful, system-wide transformation. Without visible support from families/caregivers and communities, educators may hesitate to adopt innovative practices, underscoring the critical need for partnership and trust to drive real progress.

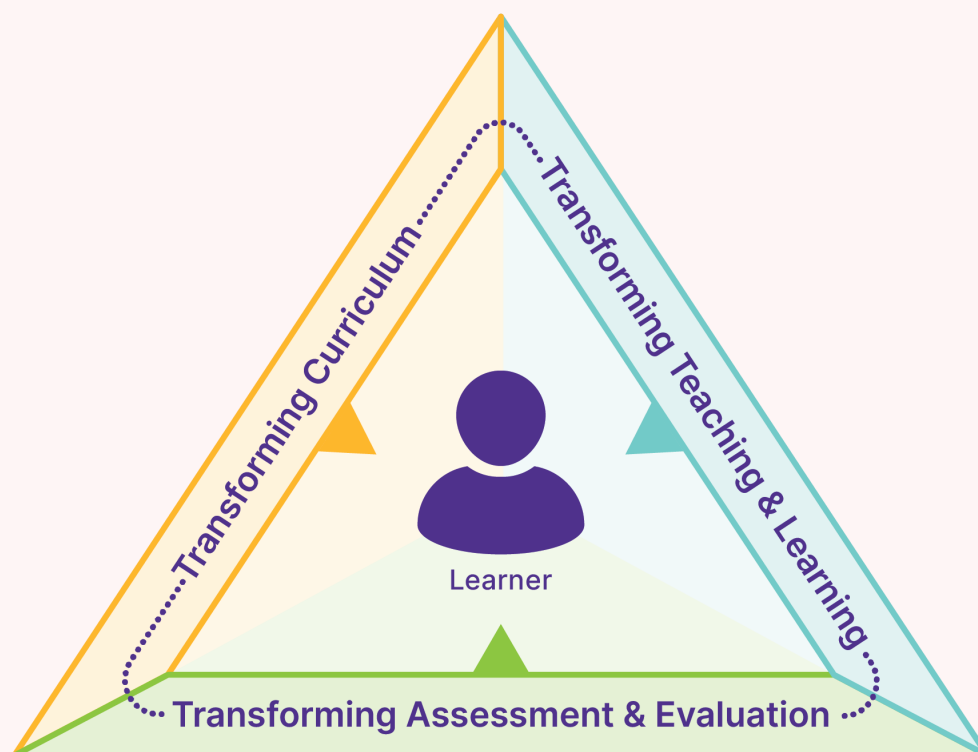


Figure 20: The K-12 Educational Transformation Triangle.

To create meaningful change in classrooms, we recommend a multi-faceted approach to align these three major domains of education:

1. Transforming Curriculum

Redesign the curriculum to align with modern educational priorities, emphasizing key competencies and real-world applications. This approach ensures that learners are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in an ever-evolving world.

2. Transforming Teaching and Learning

Transform PL by providing educators with access to high-impact teaching strategies and support. Implement a new model of PL delivery to ensure educators can effectively integrate innovative practices into their instruction.

3. Transforming Assessment and Evaluation

Update assessment and evaluation practices to reflect a competency-based approach, focusing on evaluating learners' mastery of essential skills and their ability to apply knowledge in real-world contexts. This shift promotes meaningful learning and a more accurate understanding of learner progress.

By aligning the efforts of policymakers, educators, learners, and families/caregivers, we can ensure our K-12 education system not only addresses current challenges, but also creates an environment where every learner can thrive.

Actionable strategies are offered to integrate a competency-based framework, balanced assessments, and evaluative practices into K-12 education, while providing impactful PL opportunities for educators. These calls strive to incorporate meaningful opportunities for learner and educator voice and choice, empowering them to co-create learning environments that nurture healthy, positive learning relationships. A transformed K-12 education system can play a significant role in fostering learner wellness and well-being, helping educators and learners to develop agency and a sense of belonging in their academic journey. These Calls to Transformation are designed to guide our system, educators, policymakers, and partners in building a responsive, inclusive, and future-ready learning ecosystem where all learners can thrive.

Key Themes

To guide this approach to alignment, six key themes with individual Pathways to Action to support each Call to Transformation are outlined in this chapter. They include:

- 3.1: Transforming Education With a Unified Approach to Competency-Based Education..... 142
- 3.2: Transforming Assessment – Building a Balanced, Competency-Based Framework for Student Success..... 160
- 3.3: Building and Strengthening Educator Capacity for Transformative Student Learning and Engagement 170
- 3.4: Transforming High School Graduation Pathways – Empowering Learners for Success 180
- 3.5: Transforming Education Through Equitable Access for All Learners 188
- 3.6: Transforming Education with Artificial Intelligence – Enhancing Learning, Empowering Educators, and Preparing Students for the Future 206

Theme 3.1: Transforming Education With a Unified Approach to Competency-Based Education

One of the most significant changes in education today is the shift toward competency-based education. Unlike traditional content-based models, competency-based approaches focus on the combination of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and characteristics that learners need for success in life and work. This shift reflects changes in the workforce, where the application of knowledge is increasingly valued over mere acquisition. Engaging with competencies helps learners connect their learning to practical, real-world problems, fostering critical and creative thinking, emotional intelligence, and a sense of purpose (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2017). More importantly, Newfoundland and Labrador’s education system must promote these skills and adapt teaching methods to align with the demands of the new economy (Greene et al., 2021).

A new province-wide curriculum would ensure that learners transitioning to high school have a solid and consistent knowledge base. This foundational approach addresses gaps in the current system, particularly in reading. For example, the *Education Action Plan: The Way Forward* report (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018a) highlights that while learner performance in reading is above average on international assessments,

Newfoundland and Labrador ranks lower than other Canadian jurisdictions. These gaps underline the need for a curriculum redesign that balances foundational reading and numeracy skills with the competencies needed to succeed in a global economy.

The importance of competencies is evident in assessments like PISA (OECD, 2022), which measures learners' ability to apply knowledge in real-world contexts. Unfortunately, Newfoundland and Labrador learners consistently score below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average and rank near the bottom in Canada for reading, science, and mathematics. These scores have been trending downward for years, with the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbating the decline. These results underscore the necessity for a curriculum that not only prioritizes foundational skills but also fosters the application of learning through innovative and competency-based methods.

Evidence-informed practices must guide transformation efforts to address these challenges. A redesigned curriculum that integrates competency-based learning with foundational skills will better prepare learners for success in a rapidly changing world. For instance, Newfoundland and Labrador must prepare learners for emerging industries by incorporating technology, science, and sustainable development into the curriculum (Greene et al., 2021). The emphasis on real-world application also encourages the development of civic responsibility, digital literacy, and social-emotional skills, ensuring learners are equipped to thrive in interconnected global environments (Blaschke & Hase, 2021; Hattie, 2023; Hattie et al., 2021; Llewellyn, 2013).

To guide these efforts, the province is developing a 'Portrait of a Learner,' a collaborative initiative between the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) and NLSchools. These recommendations call for the development of essential qualities and competencies learners need for success. It emphasizes holistic development, recognizing that academic excellence is only one dimension of a well-rounded education. Social, emotional, ethical, and global competencies are equally important for developing resilient, empathetic, and responsible individuals who are equipped to thrive in a complex and evolving world (Mills et al., 2024; Quigley, n.d.).

These Calls to Transformation focus on creating a learner-centric, competency-based education system in Newfoundland and Labrador. Key recommendations include revising curriculum guides to emphasize application-based learning, aligning teaching and assessment practices with this vision, and developing a guiding framework to streamline efforts. Professional learning for educators and continuous program monitoring will ensure adaptability, promote real-world skills, and foster lifelong learning. A province-wide curriculum focused on foundational skills and the ability to adapt to future demands will ensure learners are prepared to succeed in evolving economies while reflecting the rich history and diverse communities of Newfoundland and Labrador.



Call to Transformation 3.1-33:

Implement a comprehensive vision of learning for the province in consultation with K-12 transformation groups and the findings of the Accord that defines desired educational outcomes, emphasizing future readiness, lifelong learning, and the skills required to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

Background

Learning is the foundational concept that drives educational practice. Yet, a historical review of educational documents in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador reveals that what constitutes learning is something rarely addressed in the curriculum or teaching guides. Sometimes, there is an assumption that our foundational driving concepts are widely understood in the same way by everyone. This is problematic because learning is not only a very complex concept, but it is also one that constantly evolves and changes significantly over time.

Through extensive, in-person consultation in all ten families of schools, in each of the provinces regions, the K-12 Transformation Pillar of the Accord had significant discussions about the evolution of learning in the province with educators, learners and families/ caregivers. As a result, the Accord recommends implementing a modern, comprehensive vision of learning, with input from all levels of the system—something that has not been done in this province. The integration of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) with EECD presents an ideal opportunity to align the work of Development and Implementation Program Specialists. Newfoundland and Labrador's education system must equip learners for a rapidly changing global landscape, emphasizing not just knowledge but also its application. Reports indicate that the province's learners struggle with workforce preparedness and future-readiness, which affects their quality of life and ability to navigate complex information and relationships (OECD, 2023a; CMEC, 2022). Therefore, the school system should focus on learning that complements subject knowledge with critical thinking, adaptability, and digital literacy.

A comprehensive and flexible conception of learning would unify innovation efforts across curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment and evaluation, fostering an inclusive education system that balances foundational knowledge with applied problem-solving skills. Establishing this provincial vision of learning is crucial for preparing K-12 learners for all aspects of their lives.

3.1-33 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.1-33.a** Implement a vision of learning, based upon the feedback of learners, educators, families/caregivers, industry leaders, and post-secondary institutions.
- 3.1-33.b** Review best practices from other jurisdictions and research future workforce trends.
- 3.1-33.c** Establish working groups to define core themes (e.g., future skills, lifelong learning) to inform a collective vision of learning.
- 3.1-33.d** Implement a draft of the provincial vision of learning, including key priorities like digital literacy, critical thinking, and adaptability.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.1-33.e** Finalize and adopt the comprehensive vision of learning, ensuring it is embedded in the provincial education framework.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.1-33.f** Regularly review and refine the vision of learning to ensure continued relevance.



Call to Transformation 3.1-34:

Develop a Portrait of a Learner, which outlines the competencies, literacies, and proficiencies of learners in the province.

Background

Newfoundland and Labrador has yet to define a clear vision of the learner. While the curriculum outlines the valued content in various subjects and grade levels, it lacks a clear depiction of the learner. What competencies, proficiencies, and literacies do we value, and how can these manifest in individuals to prepare them for any challenge the world presents? We are helping to develop people, so our understanding of what it means to be a learner and a well-rounded individual must be central to our approach.

The Accord recommends the development of a Portrait of a Learner document. It is not meant to be a vision of one way of being in the school system or, by extension, the world. Rather, we recommend identifying a range of characteristics that can come together in different ways in NL learners, and that have meaning in our unique instructional practices and ever-increasingly diverse cultural context. In relation to the process for creating a provincial Portrait of a Learner, the intention is to incorporate voices that have not always been included in the development of educational conversations, as well as to present an opportunity for the recently integrated Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) to include contributions from educators across previously separated areas. In this way, educational partners will establish clear goals for learner success, guiding curriculum development, teaching and learning strategies, and assessment and evaluation practices.

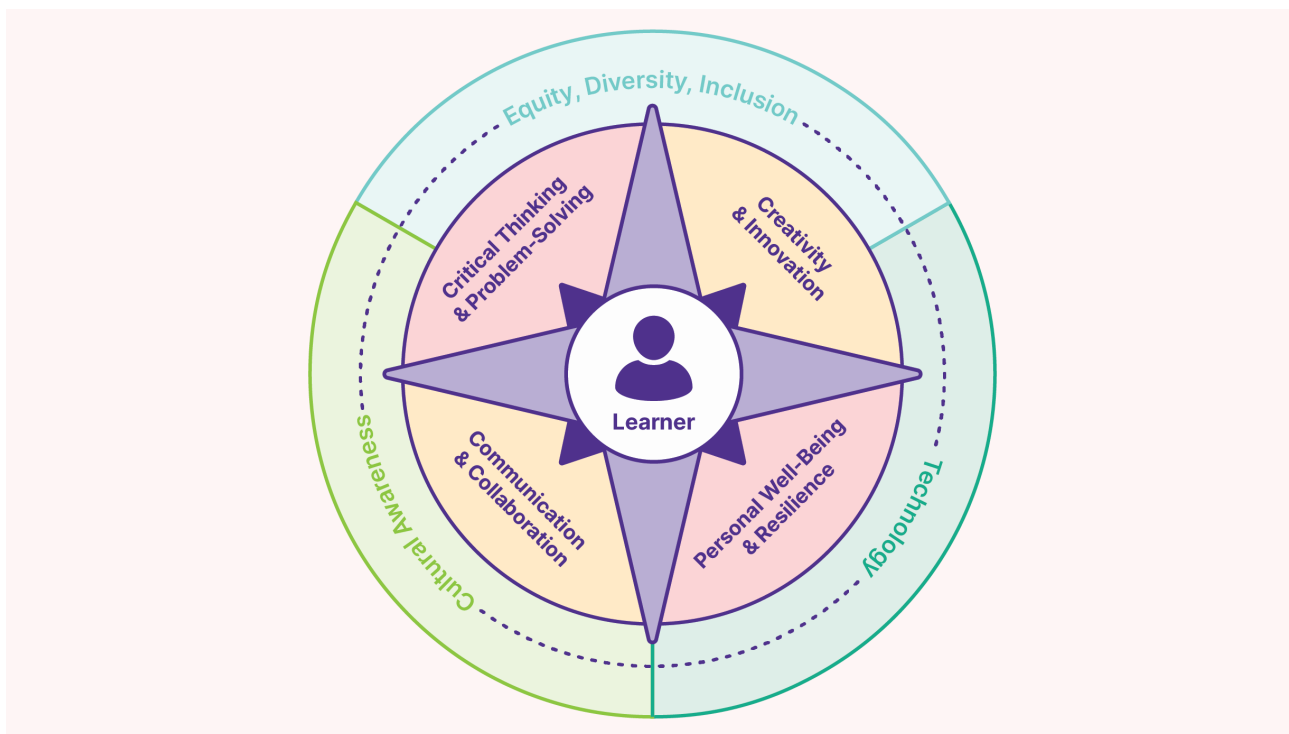


Figure 21: Illustrating the 'Portrait of a Learner' Concept.

3.1-34 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.1-34.a** Develop a Portrait of a Learner that outlines the key attributes, characteristics, and competencies learners should possess upon graduation. This document will serve as a visual and conceptual representation of the essential qualities and competencies for learners, emphasizing future readiness, adaptability, and lifelong learning; it will guide curriculum design and assessment practices.
- 3.1-34.b** Design and deliver a comprehensive suite of PL opportunities tailored to support educators in integrating the Portrait of a Learner into curriculum design, teaching, and assessment:
- Facilitate workshops, webinars, and collaborative learning sessions focused on how to embed competencies into daily classroom practice.
 - Provide practical examples, tools, and templates that connect the Portrait of a Learner to specific subjects, grade levels, and learner outcomes.
 - Develop leadership training for school administrators to promote and embody the Portrait of a Learner within their schools and communities.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.1-34.c** Utilize the Portrait of a Learner as a guiding framework for developing curriculum and informing assessment and evaluation practices across the province.
- 3.1-34.d** Develop tools, templates, and subject-specific resources for educators to embed competencies in classroom practices effectively.



3.1-34.e Update the Portrait of a Learner regularly to reflect societal, economic, and technological changes, engaging educational partners in periodic reviews.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

3.1-34.f Regularly update the Portrait of a Learner every 3–5 years, based on emerging trends and feedback from educators, learners, and global education trends.



Call to Transformation 3.1-35:

Explicitly integrate the Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) Key Competencies into the curriculum by writing competencies in context directly into curriculum indicators, highlighting the interplay between competencies and indicators across all subject areas.

Background

Many jurisdictions have adopted competency-based approaches, combining characteristics, attitudes, skills, and knowledge for successful learning, living, and working. Unlike traditional content-based models, competencies link learned content to thinking, action, and problem-solving.

NL Key Competencies include:

1. **Collaboration:** co-constructing knowledge, meaning, and content, and learning from—and with—others in physical and virtual environments.

2. **Communication:** expressing and receiving information in a variety of contexts and for a range of audiences and purposes.
3. **Citizenship and Sustainability:** acquiring skills for engaged citizenship that are crucial to living sustainably in a contemporary world.
4. **Innovation, Creativity, and Entrepreneurship:** turning ideas into actions and enhancing concepts, ideas, and products innovatively.
5. **Self-Awareness and Self-Management:** having awareness of one's identity as a learner and the ability to self-regulate, manage, and advocate as lifelong learners.
6. **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:** acquiring, processing, interpreting, synthesizing, and analyzing information.

For true transformation, these competencies must be fully integrated into the curriculum, influencing course content, teaching and learning, and assessment and evaluation. This reciprocal relationship ensures learners develop real-world skills alongside subject knowledge. Newfoundland and Labrador's PISA results highlight persistent gaps in problem-solving, literacy, and numeracy, indicating the need for an application-based education model (CMEC, 2022). Integrating competencies into curriculum indicators across all subjects will emphasize their importance and encourage their use in instruction (OECD, 2023a).

3.1-35 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

3.1-35.a Revise existing curriculum guides and develop new indicators to explicitly incorporate NL Key Competencies. This revision should emphasize application-based learning strategies, making room for learner choice and voice, and providing learners with opportunities to engage in hands-on projects, real-world problem-solving, and skill-building activities that align with the Key Competencies and prepare them for future success.

3.1-35.b Develop PL modules for competency-based instruction.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.1-35.c Complete the revision of curriculum guides for competencies.
- 3.1-35.d Roll out competency-based curriculum province-wide.
- 3.1-35.e Develop resources to support application-based and competency learning strategies.
- 3.1-35.f Provide PL on competencies and application-based learning.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.1-35.g Adjust curriculum to ensure continued alignment with future skills needs.
- 3.1-35.h Embed competencies into the culture of teaching and learning.
- 3.1-35.i Provide advanced PL for continuous growth.
- 3.1-35.j Regularly review and adapt based on emerging educational trends and continuous consultation with educators and administrators.



Call to Transformation 3.1-36:

Prioritize application-based learning language and opportunities within and alongside indicators in curriculum guides, equipping learners with both practical, real-world skills and commensurate problem-solving abilities for future success in an increasingly complex and unpredictable world.

Background

While the full integration of competencies in our curriculum guides is a necessary first step to transformative practice, it will only be fully successful if it is simultaneously complemented by increased application-based language and opportunities in our curriculum outcomes and indicators. The traditional emphasis on content-heavy instruction in Newfoundland and Labrador's schools has not fully equipped learners with the necessary problem-solving and critical-thinking skills required in today's workforce or for their lives in general. Research suggests that application-based learning, such as experiential learning, case studies, and project-based assessments, improves learner engagement and knowledge retention (OECD, 2019). Thus, by embedding application-based learning into curriculum guides, learners will have greater opportunities to connect classroom knowledge to real-world scenarios, making learning more relevant and impactful (Chen et al., 2023).

Families recognize this need for more hands-on, experiential learning, with one parent stating the importance of expanding "experiential learning opportunities and resources for students, e.g., field trips, creative projects, enriched experiences" (Parent, School Development Data 2022). Learners have shared this perspective as well, emphasizing the need for more direct engagement in learning. As one learner said, "Have more hands-on learning experiences, such as more science experiments in a lab or in nature" (Student, School Development Data 2022). These perspectives reinforce the importance of ensuring that learners not only acquire knowledge but also apply it in meaningful and engaging ways.

3.1-36 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.1-36.a** Conduct a review of existing curriculum guides to identify gaps in application-based learning opportunities.
- 3.1-36.b** Embed initial application-based learning language into curriculum indicators where feasible.
- 3.1-36.c** Begin revisions to key curriculum documents, ensuring alignment with future-readiness competencies.



Medium-Term 2-5 Years

- 3.1-36.d** Fully integrate application-based learning indicators into curriculum guides across all grade levels and subject areas.
- 3.1-36.e** Shift assessment models toward performance-based evaluations, emphasizing real-world applications.

Long-Term 5-10 Years

- 3.1-36.f** Establish application-based learning as a core foundation of the provincial education system.



Call to Transformation 3.1-37:

Redesign classroom infrastructure and plan new school builds to prioritize flexible, real-world learning environments. Incorporate modular spaces, industry-aligned labs, and collaborative work areas to promote hands-on experimentation, interdisciplinary problem-solving, and creativity.

Background

Classrooms in Newfoundland and Labrador often follow traditional setups, with rigid desk arrangements that encourage passive rather than active, collaborative learning. These outdated structures fail to prepare learners for the complexities of modern workplaces. To bridge this gap, learning spaces need to evolve with flexible, modular designs, maker spaces, and industry-aligned labs that promote creativity, innovation, and hands-on experiences. Such environments should reflect real-world settings, allowing learners to engage in interdisciplinary projects and develop skills for a dynamic workforce.

Research underscores the value of flexible learning spaces in boosting learner engagement, problem-solving, and adaptability. Modular designs and collaborative layouts foster learner-centred progress (Manousou & Kalogridi, 2024). Maker spaces and labs connect theory with practical application (Erdemir et al., 2024), while technology-driven, adaptable designs cater to diverse learning needs (Altaee & Al-kazzaz, 2024). Hybrid models further support critical thinking skills for evolving workplaces (Mulenga & Shilongo, 2025). Addressing classroom infrastructure, alongside resources and tools for experiential learning, enables educators to adopt relational, problem-based teaching strategies in dynamic, personalized environments.

3.1-37 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.1-37.a** Provide the required resources and supports necessary to create application-oriented and real-world learning experiences.
- 3.1-37.b** Conduct a review of the needs of the classroom learning environment, including the different types of learners, as well as the required resources and supports necessary to create application-oriented and real-world learning experiences.
- 3.1-37.c** Redesign and renovate current classrooms to field test modular layouts and industry-aligned labs.
- 3.1-37.d** Collaborate with educators, learners, industry partners, and architects to define priorities for future learning spaces.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.1-37.e** Expand classroom renovations into modular learning spaces and collaborative work areas across multiple schools based on field test results.
- 3.1-37.f** Establish specialized labs in key subject areas (e.g., STEAM, skilled trades, digital technology) to promote hands-on learning, with attention to emergent careers such as AI and Green Energy.



3.1-37.g Embed adaptable infrastructure guidelines into school design policies for all renovations and new school buildings.

3.1-37.h Equip educators on how to maximize the use of flexible, interdisciplinary spaces for experiential learning.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

3.1-37.i Ensure all new school builds follow the flexible learning model with modular and adaptable spaces.

3.1-37.j Continuously refine classroom design based on emerging trends in education, industry, and technology.

3.1-37.k Deepen collaboration with industries to keep labs and learning environments aligned with workforce needs.



Call to Transformation 3.1-38:

Address curriculum overload by focusing on essential competencies, eliminating redundant or non-essential learning outcomes, and ensuring the number of outcomes in each subject aligns with the allocated instructional time.

Background

Curriculum overload is a challenge reported by educators and learners in Newfoundland and Labrador, making it difficult to engage deeply with subject material. Research supports streamlining the curriculum by removing redundant outcomes and prioritizing essential skills, which may enhance both learner achievement and teaching effectiveness (Martin, 2024). Ensuring that learning objectives align with instructional time allows learners to

build critical knowledge and skills without feeling overwhelmed (Hattie, 2023). A focused and streamlined curriculum enables richer and more meaningful learning experiences.

Administrators stress the importance of flexibility in curriculum design, cautioning against rigid structures. One administrator noted, “A rigid curriculum limits adaptability. Developing a flexible framework with periodic updates can ensure education remains relevant, responsive, and inclusive” (Administrator, Feedback from Administrators, 2024). This highlights the need for reforms that address overload while allowing for adjustments to meet changing needs and demands.

To resolve curriculum overload, the focus should be on essential skills, removing unnecessary objectives, and aligning instructional goals with available instructional time. This approach fosters a sustainable balance between content delivery and skill-building, promoting deeper learning and better outcomes for learners.

3.1-38 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.1-38.a** Through the curriculum renewal process, identify and reduce curriculum indicators to eliminate redundancy and to prioritize application-based learning.
- 3.1-38.b** Ensure that the number of curriculum indicators in each subject is aligned with the allocated instructional time by reviewing and adjusting outcomes to maintain a manageable scope for curriculum delivery.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.1-38.c** Provide sustained PL opportunities for educators to transition from content-heavy to competency-focused instruction.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.1-38.d** Use data to track learner performance and engagement under the revised curriculum structure.



Call to Transformation 3.1-39:

Develop a Learning Alignment Framework to align curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment and evaluation practices with the unified vision of learning and key competencies, ensuring all components work together to support learner success and future readiness.

Background

A Learning Alignment Framework is necessary to ensure that curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment and evaluation practices are aligned to support learner progress and future readiness. Consistent messaging from educators across the province indicates a concern with the lack of cohesion around what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is assessed in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Administrators also emphasize the critical role of ensuring that the curriculum remains aligned with learner needs and real-world applications. As one administrator noted, “When curriculum fails to align with student needs, learning loses its impact. Regular reviews ensure relevance, engagement, and real-world connections” (Administrator, Feedback from Administrators, 2024). This highlights the necessity of an ongoing, structured approach to alignment that prioritizes both learner engagement and meaningful learning experiences.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the disconnection between curriculum delivery and assessment methods, for instance, has contributed to gaps in learner achievement, specifically in reading and numeracy, and has negatively impacted our results (CMEC, 2022). An overall alignment plan and framework will serve as a roadmap to reframe curriculum with competency-based learning models. Alignment of the major learning domains through competencies also gives learners the best chance of being assessed in ways that reflect their ability to apply knowledge in practical contexts (OECD, 2019).

3.1-39 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.1-39.a Establish working groups of educators, researchers, policymakers, community partners, and experts in curriculum design, instructional practices, and assessment and evaluation.
- 3.1-39.b Jurisdictionally review curriculum frameworks.
- 3.1-39.c Develop a Learning Alignment Framework—a guiding provincial framework for designing and developing the K-12 curriculum.

The Learning Alignment Framework should outline:

- the key teaching approaches and guiding principles that underpin modern education,
- the revision of alternate curriculum for adaptive needs,
- incorporating competencies and the Portrait of a Learner,
- the alignment with the Teaching and Learning and Assessment and Evaluation frameworks.

Medium-Term 2-5 Years

- 3.1-39.d Provide PL to educators and staff on the new Learning Alignment Framework.
- 3.1-39.e Implement the framework into curriculum development.
- 3.1-39.f Review and adjust the framework based on implementation feedback from participants.

Long-Term 5-10 Years

- 3.1-39.g Fully integrate the Learning Alignment Framework, ensuring alignment with teaching practices, and assessment and evaluation.



3.1-39.h Annually review provincial, national, and international data to inform teaching and learning, assessment and evaluation, and curriculum updates and changes.



Call to Transformation 3.1-40:

Enhance foundational reading skills and instructional practices to improve literacy rates and reading outcomes while strengthening science and mathematics to achieve measurable improvements in provincial, national, and international evaluations across all areas.

Background

Improving reading, science, and mathematics instruction is critical for Newfoundland and Labrador's learners at all grade levels. Internal and external results indicate that the province's learners underperform in key areas of reading and mathematics and rank below other Canadian jurisdictions in international assessments (CMEC, 2022; OECD, 2023a). Strengthening foundational reading skills through targeted instructional strategies, early intervention programs, and enhanced educator training will lead to measurable improvements in learner outcomes (Hattie, 2023). Often, it is not the content knowledge but the content literacy that is lacking in Newfoundland and Labrador. Investing in these core areas will equip learners with the foundational skills and subject-based knowledge necessary for post-secondary education and workforce readiness.

Educators across the province recognized the need for stronger reading instruction and explicit literacy strategies to support learner success. As one educator emphasized, there is a need to "explore more areas of reading instruction" (Educator, School Development Data, 2023). This reinforces the importance of evidence-based literacy instruction that strengthens learners' ability to engage with subject material across disciplines.

To improve learner achievement in foundational literacy, science, and mathematics, we recommend enhancing instructional practices in reading and content literacy while ensuring evidence-based teaching strategies are embedded in all subject areas. Specifically, we support the integration of structured culturally responsive literacy approaches with explicit instruction in reading that is grounded in language and cognitive development, alongside targeted interventions and PL opportunities for educators. Strengthening mathematics and science instruction through research-based methodologies will further ensure measurable improvements in provincial, national, and international evaluations across all areas.

3.1-40 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.1-40.a** Use the Responsive Teaching and Learning Database to compile and report data to support informed decision-making, particularly in areas such as the identification and assessment of diverse learner needs, reading, and literacy rates.
- 3.1-40.b** Review the current school-based reading specialist roles and, if proven effective, expand these roles into grades 7-12.
- 3.1-40.c** Review assessment data (provincial, national and international) to identify gaps in reading outcomes and literacy rates.
- 3.1-40.d** Develop and deliver PL to help educators interpret and utilize assessment and data results.
- 3.1-40.e** Work with the Faculty of Education to incorporate a structured approach to literacy instruction based on linguistic, psychological, sociocultural and educational research.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.1-40.f** Analyze provincial, national and international data and results in reading, science and mathematics outcomes.



- 3.1-40.g** Use cumulative data and feedback to improve instructional practices, assessment strategies, and PL.
- 3.1-40.h** Provide ongoing collaboration and information for learners, educators, staff, families/caregivers, and community partners for continuous improvement.

Theme 3.2: Transforming Assessment – Building a Balanced, Competency-Based Framework for Student Success

The need to diversify assessment and evaluation has also emerged as a major theme. It became clear early in the engagement process, based on feedback from educators and learners, that the current assessment methods in our classrooms have not evolved over time, especially at the junior high and high school levels. With the workplace now demanding different skills, it is time to rethink how learners demonstrate and represent their knowledge in the classroom. Aligning with the major themes of the Accord, there is a growing recognition that assessment must move beyond traditional, 'one-size-fits-all' approaches to better capture the full span of learner progress.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 3.2-41:

Develop an assessment and evaluation framework to ensure alignment across school-based assessment and provincial large-scale evaluation.

Background

Newfoundland and Labrador's assessment system requires a unified framework that ensures consistency between classroom-based assessments and large-scale provincial, national, and international evaluations. Currently, discrepancies in assessment practices create gaps in measuring learner progress, making it difficult to track long-term learning outcomes and compare results across schools and districts (OECD, 2013). A well-structured assessment framework will establish clear guidelines on how school-based assessments align with large-scale evaluations, ensuring that both provide meaningful insights into learner achievement and curriculum effectiveness.

These guidelines should also address such issues as consistency, fairness, and effectiveness in measuring learner achievement, as well as support educators with PL and regularly review and refine assessment practices. By implementing an aligned assessment framework in this way, Newfoundland and Labrador can create a cohesive and transparent system that ensures learners are evaluated in a way that promotes deep learning and skill development while improving provincial and national achievement outcomes, leading to better instructional decisions and system-wide improvements in educational outcomes in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Finally, such a framework will also encourage more diversity in assessment. Families/caregivers have expressed concerns about the limited range of assessment methods currently used in classrooms. As one parent noted, "Use a variety of forms of assessments rather than relying on only one form, which is almost always unit tests and exams. These only test the memorization skills of students. Very little opportunities are offered to students to show their learning" (Parent, School Development Data, 2023). This highlights the need for a more diverse and balanced approach to assessment, with meaningful opportunities to demonstrate their understanding through multiple formats.

3.2-41 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.2-41.a** Establish working groups of educators, researchers, policymakers, community partners, and experts in curriculum design, instructional practices, and assessment and evaluation to develop a Provincial Assessment and Evaluation Framework that aligns school-based assessments with large-scale evaluations.



- 3.2-41.b** Review international and national assessment frameworks; analyze best practices and trends to inform the provincial design.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.2-41.c** Gather feedback and refine the Provincial Assessment and Evaluation Framework.
- 3.2-41.d** Offer PL to familiarize educators with the Provincial Assessment and Evaluation Framework and support ongoing learning.
- 3.2-41.e** Implement the Provincial Assessment and Evaluation Framework.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.2-41.f** Conduct Framework updates to periodically review and revise the framework based on emerging research and societal changes.
- 3.2-41.g** Offer ongoing PL and support for educators.



Call to Transformation 3.2-42:

Reframe school-based assessments to better integrate higher-order thinking skills by balancing application-based and content learning, as well as formative and summative assessments, emphasizing a system-wide, coordinated and intentional focus on creative thinking, problem-solving, and real-world application of learned content.

Background

Many of the school-based assessments in Newfoundland and Labrador remain heavily content-driven, primarily evaluating learners on their ability to memorize and recall information rather than on their capacity to think critically, solve problems, or apply knowledge in meaningful ways. This reliance on rote learning does not adequately prepare learners for the complexities of the modern world, where success increasingly depends on analytical thinking, creativity, and adaptability. Research shows that assessments emphasizing higher-order thinking skills improve learner engagement and long-term knowledge retention (Blaschke & Hase, 2021). While the acquisition of content is a foundational step in learning, it cannot be the sole focus. Learners must also be given opportunities to apply what they have learned to deepen their understanding and make learning more relevant. Integrating more application-based and formative assessments will allow learners to demonstrate mastery through projects, problem-solving tasks, and real-world applications (Chen et al., 2023), aligning assessment practices with the skills necessary for both post-secondary education and the workforce. While all learners must be assessed on specific curriculum indicators, the ways in which they represent their knowledge should be diverse and, where possible, incorporate learner voice and choice. Formative assessment can play a critical role in creating this diversity and needs to be better utilized to inform the timing and nature of summative assessments overall (William, 2023).

We have definitely heard the concerns over the limitations of traditional assessment methods. One parent expressed frustration with outdated evaluation practices, stating, “I feel evaluation practices need to be more progressive. Things are very traditional and archaic, with students receiving percentages with very little meaningful feedback and room to show growth over time. There have been times when my child was ‘graded’ on things that did not relate to curriculum outcomes and have very little relevance to the subject matter in today’s world” (Parent, School Development Data, 2023).

While visiting schools across Newfoundland and Labrador, learners also shared their experiences, highlighting the need for more personalized and meaningful assessment methods that align with their strengths and learning styles. Many learners expressed a desire to be assessed in ways that allow them to showcase their knowledge beyond traditional tests and essays. One learner noted the importance of assessments that incorporate creativity and individual strengths, stating that they prefer “activities or making videos, or doing something in a way to include something you are best at.” Another learner shared that instead of writing an essay, they would prefer to “talk to the teacher one-on-one about what I know because I find it hard to write my thoughts, and it takes me a long time to write them.” For some, the stress associated with conventional testing methods is a significant barrier to demonstrating understanding, as one learner explained, “I get really stressed during tests. I would rather talk with the teacher.” Others emphasized the value of being assessed on projects and experiential learning opportunities, such as “projects, field trips,” or creative formats like “film and art” that

allow them to engage more deeply with the material. This also draws on an ever-growing demand for oracy skills and media skills needed in society.

In addition to these preferences, learners also suggested alternative ways to demonstrate their understanding, including posters, clay and cardboard projects, films, slideshows, poems, and other hands-on activities. These multimodal responses reinforce the notion that assessment should not be limited to traditional formats but should instead allow for a range of methods that foster critical thinking, creativity, and engagement.

Finally, as one learner critically observed, “They just test your memorization, and after the test, you just forget the information. That’s not education” (Student, School Development Data, 2023). These perspectives reinforce the need for a shift toward more progressive and meaningful assessment practices that prioritize critical thinking, real-world application, and learner growth over time. By incorporating more diverse and application-based assessment methods, Newfoundland and Labrador schools can create a system that not only evaluates knowledge but also nurtures the skills necessary for learners to succeed beyond the classroom.

3.2-42 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

3.2-42.a Establish working groups to:

- Design balanced and responsive assessments,
- Diversify assessments for accommodations such as voice-to-text, oral assessment, or assistive technology.

3.2-42.b Provide PL for integrating critical thinking into teaching and assessment practices.

3.2-42.c Add exemplar assessment tools and resources to the eNLighTenED Digital Platform.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

3.2-42.d Provide ongoing PL on balanced assessment.



3.2-42.e Provide regular updates to eNLightenED platform of assessment tools and resources.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

3.2-42.f Continuously adapt assessments to meet evolving culturally responsive educational goals and incorporate varied multimodal forms of responses to increase learner engagement and interest.

3.2-42.g Maintain and expand the eNLightenED platform.

3.2-42.h Ensure access to the eNLightenED platform by Memorial University Faculty of Education and pre-service teachers.

3.2-42.i Continue to diversify assessment design and tools.



Call to Transformation 3.2-43:

Improve assessment and reporting mechanisms that provide clear and detailed communication of learners' progress with individual course indicators.

Background

In Newfoundland and Labrador, many learners and families/caregivers lack a clear understanding of the specific course indicators on which they are being assessed. A grade of 80% on a test or report card does not provide meaningful information about mastered skills or areas needing improvement. Without clarity on goals and progress measurement, learners lack a clear learning roadmap. Meaningful assessment must go beyond numerical grades to provide specific, actionable feedback.

Research suggests that competency-based grading systems enhance engagement and academic achievement by increasing transparency and offering a structured framework for learning progress (Melley, 2024). Traditional grading methods often reinforce inequities rather than support learning (Wisniewski, 2024). A learner-centric approach to reporting ensures learners understand their strengths, areas for improvement, and next steps in their learning journey. Competency-based and formative assessments, paired with transparent grading practices, can foster self-regulation and ownership (Gill & McCollum, 2024). This requires a consistent and transparent reporting system that provides detailed insights into learner progress.

Inconsistent reporting practices across Newfoundland and Labrador's schools have created disparities in measuring and reporting learner progress. Improved reporting mechanisms through PowerSchool and modernized report cards will provide more specific information, such as strengths, challenges, descriptive feedback, and strategies for success. These insights allow for better interventions and support while reducing educator workload.

During the engagement process, educators emphasized the importance of timely and meaningful feedback in supporting learner growth. Regular feedback sessions and digital tools ensure timely, constructive feedback. Modernized and consistent reporting systems track progress effectively and provide actionable insights for improvement. By streamlining assessment, reporting, and leveraging digital tools, schools can create a more transparent, consistent, and learner-centric evaluation system that supports both learning and instructional decision-making.

3.2-43 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.2-43.a** Establish working groups of educators, researchers, and policymakers who have knowledge and expertise in assessment and evaluative practices to develop a Provincial Assessment and Evaluation Program for Newfoundland and Labrador.
- 3.2-43.b** Review the current Provincial Assessment and Evaluation Policy as it relates to Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador (CSFP) and NLSchools.



- 3.2-43.c Conduct a national and international jurisdictional review of assessment and evaluation programs.
- 3.2-43.d Develop course-specific and competency-based reporting categories in PowerSchool, with predefined weighting based on course indicators that are provincially consistent.
- 3.2-43.e Redesign K-12 report cards to provide a more detailed picture of a student's learning and progress on individual course indicators.
- 3.2-43.f Offer PL on effective assessment practices.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.2-43.g Finalize the Provincial Assessment and Evaluation Program.
- 3.2-43.h Implement course-specific and competency-based reporting in PowerSchool.
- 3.2-43.i Ensure full implementation of redesigned K-12 report cards.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.2-43.j Assess and report on short- and long-term provincial learner outcomes.



Call to Transformation 3.2-44:

Establish system-wide communication about provincial, national, and international evaluations by providing ongoing professional learning (PL) for educators and context on what the scores mean in accessible language for families/caregivers and learners.

Background

Many learners, families/caregivers, and even some educators in Newfoundland and Labrador lack a clear understanding of how large-scale provincial, national, and international evaluations contribute to learner success. These assessments are essential tools for measuring learning progress, identifying gaps, and ensuring that the education system remains responsive to the evolving demands of both the classroom and the workforce. However, without accessible explanations and clear communication, many stakeholders struggle to see the connection between these evaluations and the development of critical skills such as problem-solving, creativity, and analytical thinking. Enhancing transparency around evaluation data and its applications will help foster a more engaged and informed approach to education.

A well-informed education system requires transparency in evaluation reporting, ensuring that educators, learners, and families/caregivers understand the significance of large-scale evaluations. Studies have shown that when educators receive PL opportunities about interpreting and applying evaluation data, they are better equipped to use this information to refine instruction and improve learner outcomes (Brown, 2024). However, many educators face challenges in translating evaluation results into actionable strategies, underscoring the need for targeted PL and system-wide communication efforts (Zapata-Rivera et al., 2024). Research also indicates that making evaluation results accessible to families/caregivers and learners enhances engagement with the education system, helping stakeholders see the connections between assessment data, curriculum adjustments, and learning progressions (Mayhew et al., 2024).

By prioritizing PL and clear communication, Newfoundland and Labrador can help all stakeholders understand the evolving value of large-scale assessments and evaluations, which now emphasize both content knowledge and real-world problem-solving skills. These evaluations, when used effectively, enhance instructional improvement, curriculum development, and learner success, ultimately strengthening the province's education system.

3.2-44 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.2-44.a** Develop lesson plans and classroom activities that include higher-order thinking questions and scenarios modelled after provincial, national, and international evaluations, such as PISA.



- 3.2-44.b Focus on real-world problem-solving and critical thinking.
- 3.2-44.c Provide PL sessions on utilizing data from multiple sources, including PISA, for improving educator practice.
- 3.2-44.d Emphasize strategies to integrate assessment data into classroom instruction.
- 3.2-44.e Educate families/caregivers and learners on the purpose and value of balanced assessments.
- 3.2-44.f Ensure K-12 and post-secondary institutions are aligned when considering new approaches to assessment and evaluation.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.2-44.g Dedicate an eNLighTenED platform section for provincial, national, and international evaluations.
- 3.2-44.h Develop visually engaging, actionable reports summarizing key evaluation outcomes.
- 3.2-44.i Regularly distribute and refine reports for different audiences, including educators and policymakers.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.2-44.j Expand the eNLighTenED platform's capacity to provide ongoing updates, data analysis, and innovative resources for educators.
- 3.2-44.k Continue long-term awareness among families/caregivers, learners, and communities about the importance of educational evaluations.
- 3.2-44.l Use evaluation data to shape policies and prioritize transformative education initiatives for improved learner outcomes.

Theme 3.3: Building and Strengthening Educator Capacity for Transformative Student Learning and Engagement

The transformation of Newfoundland and Labrador's education system will significantly impact educators, requiring them to adopt new technologies, inclusive practices, and updated teaching methods to align with curriculum changes. This shift emphasizes the importance of PL and consistent support. As outlined in *The Education Action Plan: The Way Forward* (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018a), a sustainable mix of system-wide and school-based PL opportunities is critical for fostering changes in teaching practices. Regular and relevant PL helps educators stay current with technological advancements and evolving pedagogy while encouraging collaboration in learning communities to share best practices and resources.

Provincial feedback and research highlight the need for strong support through teacher development, as the quality of teaching is key to learner success (Hektoen & Wallin, 2024). A Provincial Professional Learning Framework aims to enhance teaching quality by providing targeted initiatives, workshops, mentorship, and access to high-quality resources. This ensures educators remain updated while improving instructional practices (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018a).

Efforts to elevate PL include promoting collaboration, reflective practices, and research-based pedagogy. These strategies create engaging, learner-focused environments (Dass et al., 2024; Levesque-Bristol et al., 2019; Paudel & Shrestha, 2024). Well-trained educators with access to modern tools and practices can better meet diverse learner needs, leading to improved outcomes. A provincial, systemic emphasis on PL will ensure high teaching standards, adaptability, and innovation.

Developing Teacher Standards of Practice supports continuous professional growth by defining effective teaching and maintaining professionalism. Professional learning empowers educators, leading to job satisfaction and reduced turnover (Canrinus et al., 2012; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2005). Holistic PL, guided by a sustainable framework (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2018a), prioritizes collaboration, equity, and innovation, ensuring educators are equipped to meet diverse learner needs and to lead in an evolving education system.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 3.3-45:

Establish a dedicated professional learning (PL) team to support early childhood education and K-12 education in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD).

Background

Newfoundland and Labrador's educators require ongoing PL to adapt to modern teaching methodologies, technological advancements, and competency-based education models. Consistent feedback from educators in the field illustrated a desire for a more modernized, diverse and ongoing PL approach, with the inclusion of more self-directed options. Research shows that effective PL enhances teacher efficacy, leading to improved learner outcomes and greater job satisfaction (Hektoen & Wallin, 2024). A dedicated PL division will address these concerns, as well as ensure consistency in training opportunities across the province, addressing gaps in access, especially in rural and remote areas (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021).

Effective PL initiatives contribute to teacher retention and job satisfaction, thus positively impacting learner progress outcomes (Sandiford, 2024). Research emphasizes that a centralized PL framework enhances teaching efficacy, promotes innovation, and supports the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices (Rush et al., 2024). Given the increasing demands of competency-based education models and technological advancements, a structured approach to ongoing educator-PL will strengthen instructional quality and foster adaptability within the education system (Zurakowski, 2024).

3.3-45 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

3.3-45.a Develop and implement mentorship and leadership development programs.



- 3.3-45.b Establish coaching models to support job-embedded PL.
- 3.3-45.c In partnership with Memorial University's Faculty of Education, create and implement an Educator Induction Program supporting pre-service, new, and transitioning teachers.
- 3.3-45.d Actively participate in national and international conferences and networks to stay informed about global best practices and emerging trends.
- 3.3-45.e Capitalize on the expertise and resources of the NLTA Special Interest Council when planning and implementing PL in K-12 in NLSchools and CSFP.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.3-45.f Expand mentorship and leadership programs.
- 3.3-45.g Roll out a coaching framework province-wide, integrating continuous improvement strategies.
- 3.3-45.h Expand the educator induction program.
- 3.3-45.i Deepen involvement in national and international networks, leveraging connections for provincial advancements.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.3-45.j Sustain and evolve PL initiatives to ensure alignment with evolving educational needs.
- 3.3-45.k Evaluate mentorship, leadership, coaching, and induction programs, adapting to emerging trends.
- 3.3-45.l Position the province as a leader in PL by adopting and influencing global education trends.



Call to Transformation 3.3-46:

Ensure all future professional learning (PL) is designed with an awareness of the impacts on, and alignment of, the major domains of learning, namely curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment and evaluation.

Background

For PL to be impactful, it must be directly connected to the evolving curriculum, assessment and evaluation strategies, and instructional practices within Newfoundland and Labrador's education system. Each of these three major domains of learning impact one another, but this has not always been an overt consideration when planning for PL in this province. Changing this has to be a priority to eliminate silos and fragmented approaches which often fail to produce meaningful classroom changes, leading to inconsistent learner experiences (Levesque-Bristol et al., 2019).

Across the province, educators consistently emphasized the importance of collaborative PL to enhance instructional effectiveness. As one educator noted, there is a need to “establish collaborative planning sessions and co-teaching models to share expertise and strengthen teaching practices” (Educator, Feedback from Administrators, 2024). This highlights the necessity of structured, ongoing collaboration among educators to ensure PL translates into meaningful changes in the classroom. By promoting co-teaching models, shared planning, and responsive, accessible, and current PL to educators, Newfoundland and Labrador's education system can create a more cohesive and effective learning environment for both educators and learners.

3.3-46 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

3.3-46.a Create a working group to develop best practices and new PL strategies for teaching within the system.

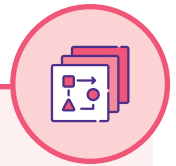


Medium-Term 2–5 Years

3.3-46.b Provide training for PL facilitators to enhance their capacity in designing aligned learning experiences, and instructional practices.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

3.3-46.c Review for continuous improvement to ensure PL opportunities are regularly evaluated and refined based on feedback and impact data.



Call to Transformation 3.3-47:

Develop a Professional Learning Framework that offers system-required professional learning (PL) linked to professionalization and certification, as well as personalized PL opportunities for educators.

Background

Educators in Newfoundland and Labrador need access to both mandatory system-wide PL and personalized professional growth opportunities that address their unique teaching needs. Educators thrive when PL is ongoing, collaborative, and tailored to their specific needs and career goals (Mayer et al., 2024). A provincial Professional Learning Framework will create structured learning pathways, offering specialized training in competency-based instruction, inclusive education, and innovative assessment practices (Sancar et al., 2021). This initiative will ensure that all educators, from beginners to experienced professionals, receive the support necessary to enhance their practice to improve learner progress.

Educators have voiced the need for greater flexibility in PL opportunities. As one educator noted: “Give more flexibility on PL sessions we do in the building, like that one last term where we could submit our own ideas of PL and engage on them on our own. So often,

the group-led PL is incredibly redundant and unrelated to my actual classroom practice. I'd like to be able to pursue things I actually need growth in, related to my curriculum" (Educator, School Development Data, 2023).

This perspective reinforces the importance of balancing system-wide training with educator-driven PL that is relevant and meaningful to classroom practice. By creating a Professional Learning Framework that integrates both structured and self-directed opportunities, Newfoundland and Labrador can support educator growth in ways that directly impact instructional quality and learner outcomes.

3.3-47 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.3-47.a Establish working groups of educators, researchers, policymakers, community partners, and experts in teaching and learning and PL.
- 3.3-47.b Gather input from educators on their PL goals, interests, and professional needs.
- 3.3-47.c Review international and national professional learning frameworks to identify best practices and trends while analyzing the strengths and weaknesses.
- 3.3-47.d Develop a provincial Professional Learning Framework that provides all educators, including pre-service teachers, with equitable access to current best practices in teaching and learning, ensuring consistent, high-quality instruction and supporting ongoing PL throughout the province.
- 3.3-47.e Share the draft Framework with educators, the public, and partners for feedback.
- 3.3-47.f Implement Professional Standards of Practice aligned with the provincial Framework.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.3-47.g Finalize and adopt the Framework.
- 3.3-47.h Develop PL pathways tailored to diverse educator needs and contexts.
- 3.3-47.i Use the eNLighTenED platform for consolidating and accessing resources, collaborative spaces, and learning modules.
- 3.3-47.j Roll out the Framework province-wide.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.3-47.k Update the Framework to reflect emerging research, trends, and societal changes.
- 3.3-47.l Scale up flexible, personalized PL opportunities, balancing system-aligned and self-directed growth.
- 3.3-47.m Expand eNLighTenED’s capabilities, including advanced features for collaboration, resource sharing, and interactive learning.
- 3.3-47.n Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the Framework, ensuring alignment with educator needs and provincial goals.



Call to Transformation 3.3-48:

Create professional learning (PL) opportunities that are focused on equipping all educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively implement application-based learning classrooms.

Background

Traditional teaching methods in Newfoundland and Labrador have often emphasized content delivery over real-world application, limiting learner engagement and problem-solving abilities. Studies suggest that application-based learning, such as experiential learning and inquiry-based instruction, improves learner retention, critical thinking, and adaptability (Blaschke & Hase, 2021). PL opportunities must equip educators with strategies to integrate real-world scenarios, hands-on projects, and collaborative problem-solving into their instruction (OECD, 2019). Educators have lacked this type of PL in subject-specific areas, especially in grades 7-12 in Newfoundland and Labrador. By embedding application-based learning into PL, educators will be better prepared to cultivate innovation and future-ready skills with their learners.

In engagement sessions with learners across the province, learners emphasized the need for interactive, hands-on learning beyond traditional classrooms. They expressed a desire for outdoor classes, more experiments in science, and real-world experiences such as field trips. One learner said, “Have outside classes,” while another noted, “More time outside.” They also highlighted the importance of collaborative learning, with one suggesting that classrooms should “allow talking to other students while working” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024).

Educators and administrators also recognize the need for greater collaboration and higher-order thinking. One educator stated, “Sharing of best practices in staff and PL meetings ensures staff is aware of what’s happening in other classrooms” (Educator, School Development Data, 2023). Administrators stressed the importance of integrating critical thinking across subjects to nurture deeper learning and problem-solving skills. One noted, “We need to integrate critical thinking across subjects and assess higher-order skills” (Administrator, Feedback from Administrators, 2024).

Promoting collaborative PL and prioritizing critical thinking and real-world application will better prepare learners for complex challenges. The perspectives shared by learners highlight the urgency for a shift in instructional practices and assessment, creating a more dynamic and immersive educational experience.

3.3-48 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

3.3-48.a Create PL to support educators' readiness for application-based learning.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

3.3-48.b Integrate coaching and mentorship programs that provide sustained, in-classroom support for educators implementing application-based learning.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

3.3-48.c Embed application-based learning into PL policies and practices to ensure long-term sustainability and system-wide adoption.



Call to Transformation 3.3-49:

Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the learning environment, ensuring that resources are appropriately allocated to increase learner engagement and attendance. This should include the implementation of dynamic, inclusive pedagogies that foster active learner involvement, provide opportunities for learner choice and voice, and create a sense of belonging, ultimately promoting learner success.

Background

Many learners in Newfoundland and Labrador struggle to find meaning in what is taught, how it is taught, and how it is assessed, leading to increasing absenteeism and disengagement. Traditional classroom instruction often fails to connect with learners' interests, lived experiences, and future aspirations, limiting their motivation and sense of purpose in learning. Research shows that learner-centred approaches, such as project-based learning, personalized instruction, and culturally responsive teaching, significantly enhance motivation and participation (Aronson & Laughter, 2020; Pane et al., 2021). Providing PL focused on inclusive, engaging pedagogy will help educators promote classroom environments that prioritize learner choice, voice, and belonging (Riddle et al., 2021). Give educators more professional autonomy to be more creative in their instructional practices. Strengthening active learning strategies will ultimately improve learner outcomes, increase learner engagement, and boost attendance across the province.

Families and learners have emphasized the importance of expanding learning opportunities. One parent called for greater diversity in course offerings, stating, "Offer more variety of classes—shops, outdoor survival skills, teach them actual life skills" (Parent, School Development Data, 2023). Learners also highlighted the need for more interactive and hands-on learning experiences, with one learner expressing, "Bring us outside more to learn. Because I find when you're outside, it's easier to learn", while another stated, "More learning with physical objects and not pen and paper" (Student, School Development Data, 2024). While in Labrador, members of the Accord team saw firsthand how schools used the Labrador tent, relevant cultural experiences, and land-based approaches to help learners establish connections between the required knowledge and the much-needed application of that knowledge.

Educators echo these concerns, particularly regarding junior high learners who struggle with the high academic demands of the curriculum. As one educator noted, "We need more hands-on opportunities for [learners] who are struggling with the high academic demanding curriculum. So many of our problems are from kids in junior high who are struggling, overwhelmed, and defeated from a curriculum that is not suited to their abilities" (Educator, School Development Data, 2023).

Expanding experiential and application-based learning opportunities must go hand-in-hand with reimagining classroom design and support. Both require a rethinking of how learning spaces, tools, and teaching strategies can better reflect and respond to the variety of learner needs. This includes making room for different types of learners and ensuring the availability of the resources, materials and supports necessary to make learning active, relevant, and relational. As schools move toward more collaborative, inquiry-driven, and real-world learning environments, it is essential to identify the tools and structures educators need to confidently shift their practice toward more dynamic and personalized approaches—approaches that foster deeper engagement through exploration, problem-solving, and meaningful connection to place and purpose.

Expanding hands-on learning opportunities, along with outdoor, out-of-classroom, land-based, and experiential education, while promoting curriculum flexibility, enables Newfoundland and Labrador to foster a more inclusive and engaging educational environment. These measures address the diverse needs of learners and help to reduce absenteeism and disengagement.

3.3-49 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

3.3-49.a Analyze attendance and engagement data to identify trends across different learner groups, schools, and regions.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

3.3-49.b Promote cross-curricular, real-world learning experiences that make education relevant and engaging.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

3.3-49.c Ensure that learner choice, voice, and active participation are embedded in all curriculum areas.

Theme 3.4: Transforming High School Graduation Pathways – Empowering Learners for Success

In an era of rapid change and evolving opportunities, Newfoundland and Labrador's education system must adapt to meet the diverse needs of its learners while preparing them for a dynamic world. High school graduation pathways must go beyond traditional

requirements to empower learners with the skills, experiences, and credentials necessary for success in their chosen futures. By reimagining graduation requirements and creating multiple, flexible pathways, we can provide learners with meaningful learning opportunities that align with their interests, aspirations, and the demands of an ever-changing global community.

In addition to well-established economies and industries, Newfoundland and Labrador is developing new industries, energies, and technologies. These new systems require learners to be educated in ways that respond to emerging and future demands, including the unique and evolving potential of AI for schools and workplaces. Learners must have the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to be confident and innovative decision-makers in whatever field they choose, as well as curious and engaged lifelong learners. Aligning with the major themes of the Accord, this shift toward a modernized education framework highlights the essential role of collaboration, adaptability, and inclusivity in curriculum design, assessment models, and learning opportunities, which can be achieved through:

Collaboration and Community Partnerships: This transformation emphasizes the importance of vocational training, experiential learning, and partnerships with local industries to integrate skilled trades, cooperative education, and apprenticeship opportunities into the curriculum. The provincial report, *Now is the Time* (Collins et al., 2017), recommended developing partnerships with provincial and federal government agencies to support dynamic high school cooperative education and apprenticeship programs. Education transformation also involves recognizing learners' achievements in volunteer work, extracurricular activities, and certifications, fostering personal growth and community engagement. These efforts ensure every learner thrives in post-secondary education, the workforce, and beyond.

Well-Being and Holistic Development: Curriculum development should involve creating curriculum, assessment tools, and learning strategies that allow for learner choice in selecting courses and multiple pathways to graduation. Offering a balance of vocational, mainstream, and advanced learning opportunities positively impacts learner engagement (Basabe & Galigao, 2024; Riddle et al., 2024). A curriculum incorporating skilled trades is essential for re-engaging learners currently disengaged with the high school program. Calls to transformation include reconfiguring high school graduation requirements and creating multiple learning pathways. Emphasizing vocational training and experiential learning at intermediate and secondary levels, integrating skilled trades, cooperative education, and apprenticeships enhances employability. Recognizing and crediting learners' achievements in volunteer work, certifications, and advanced programs by awarding graduation credits supports well-rounded development and community engagement.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 3.4-50:

Evaluate and modernize high school graduation requirements, create multiple pathways to graduation, and modernize course offerings in areas such as financial literacy, climate action, film and media studies, artificial intelligence (AI), and emerging fields.

Background

Newfoundland and Labrador's current high school graduation pathways do not fully address diverse learner needs or workforce demands. Modernizing graduation requirements with flexible pathways, such as career-oriented programs, dual-credit opportunities, and skills-based credentials, can increase learner success (Collins et al., 2017; Basabe & Galigao, 2024). The current academic structure limits opportunities for learners who benefit from hands-on or career-focused learning. Expanding pathways to include career-focused programs, dual-credit opportunities, and practical skill development equips learners for success beyond high school.

Learners voiced the need for a curriculum reflecting their interests and future careers in areas such as film, theatre, photography, sports, dance, criminology, and video game design. They also emphasized practical skills like doing taxes, managing stress, investing, saving money, and starting a business. Technical and career-based subjects like robotics, mechanics, law, medical sciences, and global affairs were also highlighted. Outdoor and survival skills, such as canoeing, skating, and outdoor education, were important to learners.

Families also stressed the need for practical life skills in the curriculum. One parent stated, "Teach personal finance classes so kids know the value of money and how to plan for what they want to buy. Kids are graduating without knowing how interest works. A phone can tell you what an equilateral triangle is, but we also need to teach finance—something they will need their entire lives" (Parent, School Development Data, 2023).

This perspective, echoed by learners and families/caregivers, underscores the necessity of modernizing graduation requirements to include courses that prepare learners for real-world challenges. By offering flexible and relevant learning pathways that incorporate

career-focused and life skills-based courses, Newfoundland and Labrador can ensure all learners graduate with practical knowledge and meaningful credentials that align with their aspirations and personal development.

3.4-50 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.4-50.a** Establish a committee to review and evaluate current high school graduation requirements in collaboration with the Department of Immigration, Population, and Skills.
- 3.4-50.b** Research and analyze best practices from other provinces, territories, and nations that have successfully modernized their high school graduation requirements.
- 3.4-50.c** Engage education partners, including learners, families/caregivers, educators, employers, and post-secondary institutions, and create strong community partnerships to gather insights and recommendations.
- 3.4-50.d** Incorporate financial literacy and career counselling into programming and courses that can empower learners with practical skills and knowledge that are essential for their future.

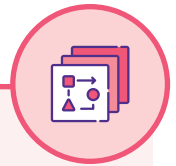
Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.4-50.e** Develop multiple pathways to graduation.
- 3.4-50.f** Establish a process for recognizing extracurricular achievements, certifications, or projects for high school credit. Pilot and refine the process based on stakeholder feedback.
- 3.4-50.g** Fully integrate financial literacy (K-12) and career counselling (7-12) into the curriculum.



Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.4-50.h Evaluate and adapt graduation pathways.
- 3.4-50.i Provide for approval of high school credits of accredited extracurricular achievements, certifications, projects or mastery of skills.
- 3.4-50.j Build mechanisms for ongoing stakeholder engagement and policy reviews to keep graduation requirements relevant over time.



Call to Transformation 3.4-51:

Re-envision the physical structure of learning whereby school-based learning is complemented by learning opportunities in the community and workspaces, for the intermediate and secondary school levels.

Background

Newfoundland and Labrador's education system must evolve to meet learners' changing needs by reimagining how and where learning occurs. Traditional classrooms, while foundational, do not always support all learning preferences and needs, especially in the province's diverse geographical and cultural context. Expanding learning into community and workplace settings provides learners with hands-on, practical experiences to apply their knowledge (Chen et al., 2023). Research shows that experiential learning enhances engagement and real-world understanding in fields like skilled trades, technology, and business (OECD, 2019). Hybrid models combining school, community, and work-based learning can better support learner engagement.

3.4-51 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.4-51.a** Engage learners, educators, families/caregivers, industry leaders, and community organizations to identify opportunities for learning beyond the classroom.
- 3.4-51.b** Analyze existing school infrastructures and local community resources to assess feasibility for off-site learning.
- 3.4-51.c** Partner with local businesses, research institutions, Indigenous organizations, and nonprofits to create initial work-integrated learning opportunities.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.4-51.d** Develop regional learning hubs, allowing learners access to different community spaces for hands-on experiences.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.4-51.e** Move towards a hybrid learning model where school-based, community-based, and work-integrated learning is available to learners.



Call to Transformation 3.4-52:

Create a vocational training pathway at the intermediate and secondary school levels that integrates additional skilled trades, cooperative education, and modular experiential learning in school and community.

Background

Newfoundland and Labrador's education system has long prioritized a singular academic pathway, sidelining learners interested in trades and applied skills. The rigid graduation requirements and limited vocational programming do not reflect the diverse talents and aspirations of learners. Expanding pathways beyond traditional academia will ensure that learners pursuing trades and technical fields have equal access to meaningful learning and career opportunities.

The province's growing industries, such as renewable energy, ocean technology, and skilled trades, present new opportunities. There is strong demand for specialized training and certifications that allow learners to enter the workforce with industry-relevant skills. Expanding vocational pathways through cooperative education and modular experiential learning provides valuable hands-on experience (Soricone, 2020). Research shows that learners engaged in career-focused training exhibit higher motivation, better academic performance, and increased post-secondary enrollment (Mokher & Mella-Alcazar, 2024). Well-structured vocational programs address the critical skills shortage by creating a pipeline of qualified professionals (Wilk, 2016).

Administrators have identified rigid graduation requirements as barriers. One administrator noted, "Graduation requirements are rigid. Tiered programming with more flexibility in high school is needed. It's not only about the university-bound student" (Administrator, Feedback from Administrators, 2024). Educators also emphasized the need for more vocational options, stating, "More vocational and applied options in high school with tech and skills trade" (Educator, Feedback from Administrators, 2024).

Integrating additional skilled trades, cooperative education, and modular experiential learning will provide more career development options that align with industry needs. Vocational programs emphasizing real-world application and community engagement result in increased learner satisfaction and job readiness (Belani & Parnami, 2020). Schools implementing stackable credentialing and work-integrated learning models create accessible pathways for smooth transitions into employment or further education (Langworthy & Hirsch-Allen, 2022). A modernized vocational training system ensures all learners have pathways to success.

3.4-52 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

3.4-52.a Introduce a reimagined cooperative education program at the high school level and implement modular learning structures that provide hands-on, experiential opportunities tailored to learner interests and industry demand:

- Develop a high school cooperative education program.
- Pilot the program in select high schools.

3.4-52.b In consultation with the Department of Jobs, Immigration, and Growth, partner with local industries, businesses, and organizations to develop a high school apprenticeship program. Provide structured mentorship, real-world experience, and certification upon completion to ensure learners are job-ready:

- Form industry partnerships and design the apprenticeship pathway.
- Launch a pilot program in targeted industries and schools.

3.4-52.c Incorporate internationally recognized certifications such as Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S), First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) into the vocational training programs to prepare learners for a competitive workforce:

- Plan and pilot OH&S, First Aid, CPR, and WHMIS certifications in vocational programs.
- Establish partnerships with certification providers.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

3.4-52.d Offer the cooperative education program in all high schools and refine them based on feedback.



- 3.4-52.e In consultation with the Department of Immigration, Population, and Skills, explore the scaling of the Apprenticeship Program across the province, adding new industries and refining mentorship processes.
- 3.4-52.f Roll out international certifications to all vocational programs province-wide, ensuring educator training and learner accessibility.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.4-52.g Cooperative Education Program: Regularly update the curriculum to align with evolving industry needs and global best practices.
- 3.4-52.h Apprenticeship Program: Establish the program as a core component of the high school system with formal pathways into the workforce or post-secondary education.
- 3.4-52.i International Certifications: Integrate additional certifications to align with emerging workforce demands and maintain competitive preparedness for learners entering the job market.

Theme 3.5: Transforming Education Through Equitable Access for All Learners

In an increasingly interconnected and rapidly evolving world, our province's education system must ensure that all learners have equitable access to high-quality learning experiences that reflect their diverse needs and aspirations. Education transformation must go beyond traditional models to create inclusive, adaptable, and learner-centric environments that remove barriers to learning, and support every learner in achieving success. Aligning with the principles of accessibility, inclusion, and innovation, this transformation calls for a comprehensive approach to redesigning curriculum, modernizing learning environments, and addressing socio-economic disparities that impact educational outcomes.

Newfoundland and Labrador's learner population is a vibrant tapestry of diverse cultural backgrounds, linguistic communities, and geographic settings, enriched by neurodiverse individuals, 2SLGBTQIA+, and those with a variety of disabilities* and distinct challenges. With Indigenous learners attending both Indigenous-led and provincial schools, a growing number of newcomers, and learners in both English and French-language settings, the education system must reflect and respond to this diversity. Equitable access to education means ensuring that all learners have the resources, support, and opportunities they need to thrive. By embedding inclusive practices, culturally responsive pedagogy, and digital learning innovations into the education system, we can create learning environments that empower neurodiverse and neurotypical learners and those with disabilities and distinct challenges.

Equity in education requires a deliberate commitment to designing learning environments that meet the diverse needs of all learners. In line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (United Nations, 2015; 2023), Newfoundland and Labrador must create an education system that is inclusive, high-quality, and accessible to all. Achieving this transformation means identifying and eliminating systemic barriers to education, integrating culturally responsive teaching practices, and ensuring that curricula reflect and support neurotypical and neurodiverse learners, and those with disabilities. A redesigned K-12 curriculum must be rooted in equity, diversity, and accessibility, while also incorporating Indigenous knowledge, multicultural perspectives, and flexible assessment models that support all learners (OECD, 2021).

Further, equitable education extends beyond curriculum reform to include innovative approaches to learning. Digital and online learning platforms provide critical opportunities to close accessibility gaps, particularly for learners in rural and remote areas. Expanding access to virtual education, blended learning, and adaptive technologies ensures that all learners can engage meaningfully with their education (OECD, 2020).

Creating truly inclusive schools means creating environments where every learner feels valued, respected, and supported in their learning journey. Transformation efforts must prioritize policies and initiatives that actively address systemic barriers, including targeted strategies to support Indigenous learners, newcomers, and learners from historically underserved backgrounds. This includes embedding Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing in education, as well as ensuring that schools implement inclusive policies that recognize and affirm diverse identities (OECD, 2021).

Additionally, equitable education requires investments in programs that promote learner well-being, enhance mental health resources, and provide the necessary supports to ensure that all learners, regardless of background or ability, can fully participate in their

**Disabilities refer to a range of visible and invisible conditions that, in interaction with barriers, may limit full and equal participation in society. It includes physical, sensory, intellectual, mental health, and other impairments, and is shaped by social and environmental factors, not just medical diagnoses. (See glossary [p.389] for full definition).*

education. By prioritizing learner voice and agency in shaping education policies and practices, we can create a system that empowers learners to see themselves reflected in their learning experiences.

Transforming education in Newfoundland and Labrador requires reimagining how learners engage with learning in both traditional and digital spaces. The province must expand the eNLighTenED platform as a centralized hub for curriculum, assessment, and PL, ensuring that educators and learners have access to up-to-date, high-quality educational resources. Further, the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) must be enhanced to provide more flexible hybrid learning opportunities that meet the evolving needs of learners across the province.

Equitable access also demands investments in digital infrastructure and connectivity, particularly in rural and remote areas where access to technology and limited digital connectivity persist. By modernizing learning environments and leveraging technology to bridge accessibility gaps, Newfoundland and Labrador can create a forward-thinking education system that prepares learners for the future. These transformation efforts are essential to ensuring that all learners, regardless of geography, background, or ability, have the tools they need to succeed in an increasingly digital and globalized world.

The following Calls to Transformation aim to advance equitable education by embedding inclusion, diversity, and accessibility in all aspects of the K-12 system. By integrating culturally responsive curricula, strengthening digital learning platforms, and ensuring that every learner has the resources and opportunities they need, Newfoundland and Labrador can build an education system that truly supports all learners.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 3.5-53:

Establish and expand multicultural policies and protocols for addressing systemic racism in K-12 schools, including educational tools, reporting mechanisms, and support for educators and learners.

Background

Newfoundland and Labrador's classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, requiring robust policies and protocols to address systemic racism and ensure equitable learning environments. Research highlights that those systemic barriers, including biases in curriculum and disciplinary policies, contribute to racial disparities in learner achievement and well-being (Kohli et al., 2017). Implementing clear anti-racism policies and practices, including structured reporting mechanisms and accountability frameworks, helps educators and administrators address racial injustices in schools (Parris, 2023). Furthermore, PL programs focused on anti-racism education enhance the confidence and competence in promoting inclusive classrooms (Legette et al., 2023). Establishing a province-wide policy framework promotes culturally responsive teaching while ensuring that learners and educators feel supported.

To effectively address systemic racism in K-12 schools, a multifaceted approach is necessary. Successful anti-racism initiatives incorporate learner-centred support systems, educator training, and transparent mechanisms for reporting discrimination (Force, 2023). Schools that integrate inclusive curricula, promote equity-focused pedagogy, and provide institutional support for educators demonstrate improved learner outcomes and reduced racial biases (Baranidharan & Chandrakala, 2025). Moreover, embedding anti-racist policies into daily school operations ensures that anti-discrimination efforts are sustainable rather than reactionary (Clark, 2022). A province-wide initiative addressing racism through education tools, reporting systems, and educator-learner support programs promotes a more equitable, inclusive learning environment.

3.5-53 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.5-53.a** Establish a working group for jurisdictional review of multicultural policies and practices within the education system as it relates to racism.
- 3.5-53.b** Establish an equity, diversity, and inclusion accessibility advisory group.
- 3.5-53.c** Review existing education policies and practices for biases and systemic racism.



- 3.5-53.d Develop accessible and anonymous reporting systems for incidents of racism.
- 3.5-53.e Draft an anti-racism policy for K-12 schools.
- 3.5-53.f Provide PL on multicultural education, anti-racism, and unconscious bias education for EECD staff.
- 3.5-53.g Provide teaching and learning materials and resources for anti-racism.

Medium-Term 2-5 Years

- 3.5-53.h Implement anti-racism policy across K-12 schools.
- 3.5-53.i Expand PL opportunities with ongoing workshops, coaching, and expert-led sessions on anti-racism and unconscious bias.
- 3.5-53.j Maintain and improve reporting systems on racism to ensure effectiveness and accessibility.

Long-Term 5-10 Years

- 3.5-53.k Conduct regular reviews and updates of the anti-racism policy and practices.
- 3.5-53.l Continue to promote a culture of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility for educators and all learners—neurotypical, neurodiverse, and those with disabilities and distinct challenges.



Call to Transformation 3.5-54:

Create an educational environment where 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals are affirmed, valued, and empowered to thrive academically and personally, while continuously monitoring and addressing systemic barriers to inclusion.

Background

Research shows that when schools actively promote inclusivity through representation, support networks, and PL for educators, learner well-being and academic achievement improve (Maine et al., 2024). Policies that explicitly affirm and protect 2SLGBTQIA+ learners have been linked to decreased rates of bullying, lower mental health risks, and greater academic engagement (Campbell-Chudoba, 2024). Inclusive education environments that incorporate gender and sexual diversity in curricula, alongside safe reporting mechanisms for discrimination, contribute to a stronger sense of belonging among 2SLGBTQIA+ learners (Linklater, 2025). Additionally, systemic barriers, such as heteronormative policies and inadequate educator training, need to be continuously addressed to ensure equitable educational experiences for all learners (McBrien et al., 2022).

To create a learning environment where 2SLGBTQIA+ learners feel valued and empowered, proactive measures must be implemented. Schools that provide ongoing PL for educators on inclusive practices, facilitate youth-led initiatives such as Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs), and integrate 2SLGBTQIA+ perspectives into curricula, report higher levels of learner satisfaction and engagement (Wells et al., 2024). Addressing systemic barriers requires continuous monitoring of policies, as well as responsiveness to the evolving needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth (Linklater, 2025). By strengthening and enforcing inclusive policies and practices, Newfoundland and Labrador's education system can create a safe and affirming space where all learners can thrive academically and personally.

3.5-54 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.5-54.a** Engage learners, educators, families/caregivers, and advocacy groups in consultations to identify systemic barriers.
- 3.5-54.b** Provide guidance and enhanced support for educators on creating safer, more inclusive learning environments, including support for gender-diverse learners.
- 3.5-54.c** Support peer mentorship and well-being programs for 2SLGBTQIA+ learners.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.5-54.d Strengthen community partnerships with 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations to provide learner and educator support.
- 3.5-54.e Regularly analyze learner achievement, well-being, and graduation rates for 2SLGBTQIA+ learners.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.5-54.f Lead provincial initiatives and participate in national initiatives on 2SLGBTQIA+ learner well-being and success.



Call to Transformation 3.5-55:

Embed Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing in curriculum guides and resources, teaching and learning strategies, assessment and evaluation practices, and school culture.

Background

To support culturally relevant education for Indigenous learners in Newfoundland and Labrador, integrating traditional knowledge, histories, and perspectives into the K-12 system is essential. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Indigenous Education Framework (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, n.d.-b) emphasizes embedding Indigenous content across subjects to enrich education for all learners. Incorporating Indigenous worldviews supports learners in developing a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous cultures (Lake, 2018) and strengthens their sense of identity and well-being (Schneider, 2022).

Families/caregivers emphasize the need for more Indigenous-focused learning, particularly through curriculum enhancements and outdoor experiential learning. One parent stated, “Provide more Indigenous curriculum and explore more outdoor/field learning” (Parent, School Development Data, 2023). Another emphasized, “Hands-on cultural learning, going out on the land” (Parent, School Development Data, 2023). Research highlights that land-based learning fosters deeper connections to Indigenous knowledge and enhances learner engagement (Starlight, 2024). Integrating land-based and experiential education helps Indigenous learners feel connected to their traditions while providing all learners with authentic learning experiences.

Embedding Indigenous ways of knowing within the curriculum is crucial for advancing reconciliation and promoting educational equity (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Culturally responsive strategies like integrating Indigenous languages, land stewardship teachings, and community-led learning ensure education is inclusive and reflective of Indigenous experiences (Stansberry et al., 2023). This integration must be continually assessed to remain meaningful and responsive to Indigenous learners and communities. Moreover, schools adopting experiential and relational learning methods, such as learning circles and land-based approaches, benefit all educators and learners. We have much to learn from Indigenous educators and communities about both the content and delivery of education.

3.5-55 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.5-55.a Hire a Provincial Lead and additional Program Specialists for Indigenous Education.
- 3.5-55.b Enhance partnerships with Indigenous governments, organizations, and Communities.
- 3.5-55.c Embed Indigenous perspectives, values, and knowledge in curriculum.
- 3.5-55.d Embed teaching and learning practices, including storytelling, oral histories, and experiential learning in curriculum.



3.5-55.e Integrate land-based learning opportunities in curriculum.

3.5-55.f Support the development of local Indigenous courses.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

3.5-55.g Roll out revised curriculum province-wide with Indigenous perspectives integrated across key areas.

3.5-55.h Embed Indigenous teaching and learning practices in curriculum.

3.5-55.i Provide land-based learning opportunities to more schools and regions.

3.5-55.k Offer local Indigenous courses provincially.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

3.5-55.l Continue to embed Indigenous views, values, and land-based learning as core components of the curriculum.

3.5-55.m Continue to maintain collaboration and partnership with Indigenous governments and organizations in curriculum development, assessment, and teaching and learning practices.



Call to Transformation 3.5-56:

Provide required prescribed curriculum (Literacy Enrichment and Readiness for Newcomers [LEARN]) and programming (English as an Additional Language [EAL]) for newcomer students.

Background

With the increasing influx of immigrants to Newfoundland and Labrador, the province is undergoing a transformation that enriches communities with diverse cultures, perspectives, and opportunities. As such, education systems must provide newcomer students with tailored language support, equitable access to curriculum, and culturally responsive programming. Research highlights that students learning EAL require structured literacy support, specialized curriculum adaptation, and social integration opportunities to succeed in academic settings (Akwuole & Cacicio, 2024). The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Multicultural Education Framework (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2023a) outlines the necessity of EAL instruction, access to curriculum resources, and specialized programming such as Literacy Enrichment and Readiness for Newcomers (LEARN) to foster academic success for newcomer students. Additionally, research suggests that embedding multicultural education across K-12 helps address stereotypes, discrimination, and systemic barriers, while promoting a sense of belonging (Gay, 2018).

Without targeted language instruction and responsive programming support, many newcomer students struggle to integrate, leading to lower academic performance and disengagement (Gay, 2018). Studies indicate that EAL programs that incorporate individualized learning plans, peer mentorship, and culturally responsive teaching practices result in improved literacy development and social-emotional well-being for learners (Akwuole & Cacicio, 2024). Furthermore, when schools actively promote inclusive learning environments and train educators in best practices for multilingual instruction, newcomer students demonstrate higher confidence, engagement, and academic achievement (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2023a). By expanding programming, strengthening multicultural education, and embedding culturally responsive teaching, Newfoundland and Labrador can ensure that newcomer students develop the language skills, confidence, and sense of belonging needed to thrive academically and socially in the province's school system.

3.5-56 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

3.5-56.a Provide resources for EAL and LEARN programming and prioritize programming needs.



- 3.5-56.b** Embed and enhance cultural diversity in curriculum and provide appropriate teaching resources.
- 3.5-56.c** Deliver PL on EAL teaching strategies, trauma-informed practices, and inclusivity.
- 3.5-56.d** Pilot the expansion for LEARN in grades 2-6. Give consideration to K-1, evaluate and refine program resources and delivery.
- 3.5-56.e** Assess CDLI capacity and develop tailored programming: Pilot EAL and LEARN programming via CDLI in remote areas.

Medium-Term 2-5 Years

- 3.5-56.f** Fully integrate cultural diversity and global perspectives across all subjects.
- 3.5-56.g** Develop annual PL opportunities in EAL and LEARN for all educators.
- 3.5-56.h** Expand the LEARN program for grades 2-6 provincially.

Long-Term 5-10 Years

- 3.5-56.i** Continue offering PL.
 - 3.5-56.j** Fully incorporate the LEARN program as a core part of curriculum for newcomers.
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Call to Transformation 3.5-57:

Improve inclusive practices in K-12 classrooms to enable meaningful participation from all learners—neurotypical and neurodiverse learners and those with disabilities and distinct challenges—by ensuring that optimal learning environments are varied and responsive to create flexible, learner-centred spaces where all learners can thrive.

Background

Despite existing frameworks that emphasize inclusive practices in K-12 education, there remains a disconnect between policy language and its practical application of inclusivity in classrooms. While inclusion is often understood as ensuring physical access for all learners, meaningful participation in learning environments requires more than presence; it necessitates dynamic and responsive teaching practices that accommodate diverse learning needs (Herman & Baaki, 2024). Many educators struggle to implement truly learner-centric environments due to a lack of PL on differentiated instruction and inclusive pedagogies (Zhang et al., 2021). Without clear, actionable guidelines on inclusive teaching that go beyond accessibility, some learners—especially those with disabilities, neurodivergent conditions, and multilingual backgrounds—continue to face barriers to full engagement in their education (Whitney & Nave, 2020).

Ensuring that inclusive education is meaningfully implemented requires equipping educators with the knowledge, resources, and flexibility to create inclusive learning spaces where all learners can thrive. Schools that prioritize Universal Design for Learning (UDL) frameworks and adaptive instructional strategies see improved engagement and academic outcomes for learners with varied needs (Basham et al., 2017). Additionally, research suggests that incorporating collaborative learning models, technology-enhanced accessibility tools, and culturally responsive teaching enhances inclusion by addressing learners' diverse strengths and challenges (Bernard et al., 2019). By promoting learner-centric environments that are varied and responsive to individual learning abilities and preferences, Newfoundland and Labrador can create a truly equitable education system where every learner has the opportunity to succeed.

3.5-57 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

3.5-57.a Provide PL opportunities for educators focused on inclusive teaching strategies at each grade band (K-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12) and differentiated instruction strategies to create responsive, learner-centred classrooms.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

3.5-57.b Fully implement and refine flexible learning environments by incorporating assistive technologies, varied instructional strategies, and targeted interventions to support diverse learning needs across all schools.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

3.5-57.c Review inclusive education practices that ensure sustainable support systems, ongoing PL, and continuous assessment of inclusive practices to foster meaningful learner participation in all learning environments.



Call to Transformation 3.5-58:

Ensure access to the necessary resources, technology, and supports for all learners, recognizing and accommodating the diverse abilities and required needs of neurotypical and neurodiverse learners, those with disabilities and distinct challenges.

Background

Newfoundland and Labrador's education system must ensure equitable access to resources, technology, and specialized support for all learners, particularly those in rural and remote areas. The province is not immune to the digital divide, lack of assistive technologies, and limited access to specialized services, all of which create significant barriers to learning for individuals with disabilities, newcomers, and those in equity-deserving communities (Workie et al., 2022). Research highlights that equitable access to technology and inclusive learning tools significantly improves educational outcomes for learners requiring additional support (Callahan, 2018). The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Education Action Plan (2018a) emphasizes the importance of inclusive learning environments, adequate technological infrastructure, and specialized staff to ensure all learners have the tools they need to succeed. By adopting a province-wide approach to accessibility, the education system can create a more inclusive, learner-centric learning environment where every learner is empowered to reach their full potential.

Providing access to necessary resources and accommodations is particularly important for learners with physical and other disabilities, sensory impairments (Hearing Impairment or Deafness; Vision Impairment or Blindness), developmental and neurodivergent conditions, mental health conditions, and social-emotional disorders. Research suggests that schools that implement UDL, assistive technology, and individualized education plans (IEPs) create more equitable learning environments for learners with diverse needs (Garcia, 2022). Digital equity is another essential factor, as technology gaps disproportionately impact learners in lower-income and rural communities (Ciuffetelli Parker & Conversano, 2021). Ensuring that learners with sensory disabilities, communication disorders, and neurodivergent conditions have access to specialized supports will reduce achievement gaps and improve overall well-being (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). By investing in adaptive technologies, increasing access to specialized educators, and implementing inclusive teaching strategies, Newfoundland and Labrador can provide a truly equitable education system that accommodates all learners.

3.5-58 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.5-58.a** Conduct a needs assessment to identify gaps in technological accessibility and resource distribution.



- 3.5-58.b Review allocation formulas for Instructional Resource Teachers (IRT).
- 3.5-58.c Review workload and caseload for itinerant teachers working in student services in the Early Learning, Inclusion, and Childhood Development Division.
- 3.5-58.d Continue with the Responsive Teaching and Learning Policy into grades 7-9 and high school.
- 3.5-58.e Provide PL on Responsive Teaching and Learning, Special Education framework and comprehensive assessments to educators in grades 7-12.
- 3.5-58.f Offer PL for educators on Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity, Accessibility and Equity through K-12.
- 3.5-58.g Provide PL on UDL to educators in Grades 7-12.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.5-58.h Begin to modify existing schools to meet universal design standards.
- 3.5-58.i Ensure all new school construction adheres to accessibility principles.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.5-58.j Ensure all schools meet universal design standards.
- 3.5-58.k Maintain funding for assistive technologies, specialized staff, and accessibility resources.
- 3.5-58.l Ensure resource allocation is responsive to evolving school and system needs.
- 3.5-58.m Fully embed the IDEA (Inclusive, Diverse, Equitable, and Accessible) Framework into all provincial education policies.



Call to Transformation 3.5-59:

Continue investment in the expansion of the eNLighTenED platform to develop a centralized portal for aligning curriculum indicators, assessment tools, teaching and learning strategies, and professional learning (PL) resources.

Background

Newfoundland and Labrador's school system requires a centralized digital platform that consolidates curriculum indicators, assessment tools, teaching strategies, and PL resources. Research highlights that accessible and well-structured online platforms improve educator collaboration, streamline curriculum implementation, and enhance instructional consistency across schools (Johnson et al., 2023). Digital education tools support differentiated instruction and data-driven decision-making, ultimately leading to better learner outcomes (Adorni et al., 2024). Expanding the eNLighTenED platform will provide a one-stop resource for educators, reducing workload inefficiencies and ensuring that all educators have equitable access to high-quality instructional materials.

A robust digital education platform should offer alignment between curriculum content, formative and summative assessments, and PL opportunities. Studies indicate that digital platforms that integrate adaptive learning, real-time analytics, and educator-driven content improve pedagogical effectiveness and learner engagement (Bondie, 2015). Additionally, online tools that allow educators to share resources, access evidence-based strategies, and participate in virtual PL communities foster innovation and continuous improvement in teaching practices (Arslankara et al., 2025). Ensuring the continued investment in eNLighTenED will enable Newfoundland and Labrador to build a future-focused education system that enhances learning for both educators and learners.

3.5-59 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.5-59.a Map all curriculum indicators to the eNLighTenED platform, organizing them for accessibility and searchability by subject, grade level, and competency to ensure curriculum integration.
- 3.5-59.b Incorporate and map assessment tools to the eNLighTenED platform curriculum indicators.
- 3.5-59.c Develop and integrate PL opportunities, training modules, instructional guides, and resources into the eNLighTenED platform.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.5-59.d Refine eNLighTenED features and interface.
- 3.5-59.e Broaden the range of PL opportunities, incorporating advanced and specialized training modules for eNLighTenED.
- 3.5-59.f Update curriculum indicators and assessment tools to align with evolving educational policies and standards on eNLighTenED.

Long-Term (5–10 Years)

- 3.5-59.g Continuously review and update all eNLighTenED content, ensuring alignment with emerging educational trends and technologies.



Call to Transformation 3.5-60:

Expand the mandate of the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) as a hybrid and flexible learning platform that integrates both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities, meeting the diverse needs of learners.

Background

Many learners in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly those in remote areas, require flexible and hybrid learning options that provide equitable access to high-quality education. Research highlights blended learning models, which integrate synchronous and asynchronous instruction, enhance learner engagement, support personalized learning, and accommodate diverse educational needs (Pellerin, 2024). Expanding the mandate of the CDLI to function as a hybrid learning provider will bridge gaps in subject availability, specialized courses, and individualized learner support. By leveraging technology to combine real-time interactive learning with self-paced modules, CDLI can ensure learners receive a dynamic, adaptable, and high-quality education, regardless of geographical constraints.

Modernizing CDLI's platform to incorporate hybrid and flexible learning opportunities aligns with global trends in digital education. Studies indicate that hybrid learning environments improve learner motivation and performance by allowing learners to access materials at their own pace while still benefiting from structured, synchronous educator support (OECD, 2016). Additionally, digital platforms that integrate co-modal learning—seamlessly blending in-person and online instruction—have been shown to increase learner autonomy and learning retention (Pellerin, 2024). By enhancing CDLI's capabilities, Newfoundland and Labrador can create a responsive and future-ready education system that supports all learners in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

3.5-60 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

3.5-60.a Expand the CDLI to include grades 7-9 courses.

3.5-60.b Plan resource needs, recruit, and train educators for CDLI grades 7-9 as expansion evolves in the delivery of courses.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

3.5-60.c Expand the CDLI to include grades K-6 courses.

3.5-60.d Implement infrastructure improvements.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

3.5-60.e Fully implement the province-wide expansion of CDLI for grades K-6 and 7-9 courses and programming.

Theme 3.6: Transforming Education with Artificial Intelligence – Enhancing Learning, Empowering Educators, and Preparing Students for the Future

In a world increasingly shaped by AI, Newfoundland and Labrador’s education system has the opportunity to lead by integrating AI technologies into teaching, learning, and administration. This transformation is about more than adopting new tools; it is about creating a system that uses AI to personalize education, empower educators, streamline operations, and create an understanding of AI’s ethical and societal implications.

AI offers the potential to personalize learning for every learner by adapting to individual needs, pacing, and preferences, ensuring that all learners receive targeted support to master essential skills or accelerate their progress. At the same time, educators gain valuable insights through AI-powered data analysis, which enables them to identify trends, address gaps, and focus on what matters most: teaching and mentorship.

As AI becomes a cornerstone of the modern workforce, it is essential to prepare learners with both the technical knowledge and ethical understanding necessary to navigate this new reality. Building AI literacy, teaching responsible technology practices, and emphasizing data privacy are all key to equipping learners to succeed in and contribute to an AI-integrated world as informed, innovative, and ethical individuals (Zapata-Rivera et al., 2024). Aligning with the major themes of the Accord, by embracing AI responsibly and equitably, Newfoundland and Labrador can position itself as a leader in leveraging technology to create a more inclusive, adaptive, and future-ready education system.

Innovative and Responsive Learning Environments

Technology integration and digital literacy play a crucial role in curriculum redesign. It enables adaptive learning, data analysis, and AI-driven tools to customize education. As the world becomes more digitized, equipping learners with the skills to navigate, evaluate, and create using digital technologies is essential. Educators must also participate in technological PL to incorporate digital tools effectively in their instruction. Digital literacy extends beyond basic skills to include communication, collaboration, and problem-solving in a digital world. However, addressing the digital divide to ensure all learners have access to necessary resources is equally important.

These Calls to Transformation recommend strategies to leverage AI for modernizing education, enhancing learning, streamlining administrative tasks, and preparing learners for a technology-driven future. Key focus areas include personalizing education through adaptive AI tools, equipping educators and learners with AI ethics and technology skills and modernizing school systems for effective AI integration.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 3.6-61:

Provide learners and educators with essential AI knowledge, including ethics, data privacy, and responsible technology use.

Background

AI is transforming both industries and schools, and Newfoundland and Labrador's learners must develop AI literacy for both their schooling and future readiness. Integrating AI ethics, data privacy, and responsible technology use into education helps learners become informed digital citizens (Zapata-Rivera et al., 2024). Equipping educators with AI-related PL will ensure that they can effectively incorporate AI tools into instruction while addressing ethical considerations (OECD, 2023b). Establishing AI education as a core component of the curriculum will future-proof learners' skills and align Newfoundland and Labrador's education system with global technological advancements. Developing and participating in educator training and ethical AI policies will ensure that schools use this technology responsibly and equitably (OECD, 2023b).

3.6-61 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.6-61.a Develop an AI policy and guidelines.
- 3.6-61.b Create interactive learner progress on AI ethics and use.
- 3.6-61.c Provide educators with PL on AI and AI tools.
- 3.6-61.d Develop and pilot AI tools for automating administrative tasks, such as learner progress report generation.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.6-61.e Achieve widespread PL and embed AI tool training as a regular part of ongoing PL.
- 3.6-61.f Increase deployment of AI tools across all schools.



Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.6-61.g** Continuously update content to reflect advancements in AI ethics, data privacy, and responsible technology practices.
- 3.6-61.h** Transition to advanced AI professional learning, including using AI to enhance instructional practices and personalized learning.
- 3.6-61.i** Explore new applications of AI to further reduce administrative burdens, such as predictive analytics for learner performance and resource planning.



Call to Transformation 3.6-62:

Transform learning experiences for all learners by modernizing school systems to enable seamless integration and usage of adaptive artificial intelligence (AI) tools tailored to individual learner needs.

Background

Newfoundland and Labrador's schools must leverage AI to enhance personalized learning, streamline administrative tasks, and improve learner outcomes. Investing in AI-driven tools and infrastructure can provide real-time feedback, adapt learning pathways to individual learner needs, and support educators in designing data-informed instruction (Zapata-Rivera et al., 2024). Experts and educators who provide feedback to the Accord noted that AI can aid educators and learners on a content level, but also in promoting the development of critical and creative thinking skills. It thereby enables learners to progress at different paces based on their needs. A modern education system that embraces AI will create more efficient, responsive, and future-ready learning environments across the province.



3.6-62 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 3.6-62.a Form a committee to define goals and evaluate existing AI practices and tools.
- 3.6-62.b Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to identify gaps in technology access and infrastructure, with a focus on rural and remote regions. Address these gaps to ensure learners and educators can effectively engage with AI platforms.
- 3.6-62.c Develop a roadmap for addressing gaps and piloting AI tools.
- 3.6-62.d Upgrade infrastructure in pilot schools, focusing on broadband and device accessibility.
- 3.6-62.e Train educators to use adaptive AI tools.
- 3.6-62.f Implement pilots and gather data to evaluate effectiveness and refine strategies.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 3.6-62.g Scale infrastructure improvements to underserved regions.
- 3.6-62.h Provide educator PL on how to use AI tools.
- 3.6-62.i Establish processes to refine AI tools based on feedback and emerging needs.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 3.6-62.j Achieve full integration of AI tools across the educational framework.



- 3.6-62.k Regularly review and update tools to align with evolving educational goals.
 - 3.6-62.l Expand functionality for diverse learning needs, including multilingual support.
 - 3.6-62.m Establish partnerships for continuous innovation and ensure equitable access for all regions.
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Post-Secondary Education and Learning Across the Lifespan

Introduction

One major focus of the Post-Secondary and Learning Across the Lifespan Pillar is an emphasis on an ecosystem approach to education and learning, recognizing the interconnectedness of all elements within the educational environment. This holistic perspective emphasizes collaboration among institutions, community organizations, governments, and industry to create a network of support for learners. By breaking down silos and fostering strong partnerships, schools and educational institutions can create learner-centric systems and processes that address the diverse needs of learners, ensuring that individuals receive the support they need to succeed. This approach not only enhances learner outcomes, but also contributes to the overall sustainability and resilience of educational systems.

Creating learner-centric systems and processes is essential for supporting both learner and educator well-being. By focusing on the individual needs and experiences of learners, educators can develop personalized learning plans that cater to different learning interests and preferences. This personalized approach helps learners stay engaged and motivated, leading to better academic performance and overall satisfaction. At the same time, supporting educator well-being through professional learning (PL) opportunities, mentorship programs, and a positive work environment ensures that educators are equipped to provide high-quality education and support to their learners. As one respondent emphasized, “We need an education ecosystem that capitalizes on the abilities of our learners and focuses on their happiness and mental well-being” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024).

Modernizing educational systems and processes is crucial for maximizing research, innovation, and sustainability. By incorporating cutting-edge technologies and innovative teaching methods, schools can create dynamic and adaptable learning environments that

prepare learners for the challenges of a future-oriented education. This modernization also involves integrating sustainability principles into the curriculum, encouraging learners to think critically about environmental issues and develop solutions for a more sustainable future.

Another important aspect of creating an equitable and accessible learning ecosystem is increasing educational opportunities for older adults. As the population ages, it is essential to provide lifelong learning opportunities that help older adults stay active, engaged, and productive members of society. This can be achieved through community-based programs, online and hybrid courses, and partnerships with local organizations and businesses. By offering a variety of learning options, educational institutions can support the personal and professional growth of older adults, contributing to their overall well-being and ensuring that they remain valuable contributors to their communities.

Key Themes

This chapter identifies seven key themes, Calls to Transformation to support each theme, and possible pathways for implementing the calls in the areas of post-secondary education and learning across the lifespan:

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Theme 4.1: Ecosystem Approach

The term “ecosystem” is often used in the natural sciences around the interconnections and interdependencies of organisms or systems. In recent years, this term has been adapted to other sectors, such as education, to describe how a group of interconnected or interdependent partners/organizations/businesses/entities come together to support each other and spur innovation. To enhance the work in post-secondary education and lifelong learning, the Accord envisioned learning and education as an ecosystem comprising a network of stakeholders—schools, institutions, community organizations, governments,

and industries—collaborating to support better learner outcomes and ensure system sustainability. As a key informant noted, “Education is everyone’s responsibility” (Committee Member, 2024).

Throughout the engagement process, the Accord leadership heard repeatedly about challenges related to the silos present in and across the K-12 and post-secondary systems. Topics such as the need for better learner transitioning between K-12 and post-secondary, the need for improved and informed career counselling in junior high and high school, the increased costs and duplication of effort across systems, and the importance of strong partnerships with employers and industries were brought forward by stakeholders at all levels.

The Pillar Committee received presentations on increasing retirement rates, decreasing youth populations, statistics related to the highest level of educational attainment by residents, and the skills and productivity gaps currently occurring in the province and how they will worsen over the next ten-year period (Greenwood, 2024). While the statistics presented painted a potentially grim picture, it was widely recognized that the province is uniquely positioned to work collectively to address the challenges, find efficiencies, and capitalize on strengths. This is a pivotal time to engage new processes and practices that will improve outcomes for learners, make systems stronger and more sustainable, and help the province capitalize on emerging economic opportunities.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 4.1-63:

Support successful transitions from K-12 to post-secondary.

Background

Successful transitions from K-12 to post-secondary education can be improved when partners are working together and are aligning relevant programs and processes. Learners are making choices in junior high school about the courses they will take in high school. These course selections have a direct impact on learner readiness for post-secondary education and whether they have the requirements necessary to enter chosen programs at the college and university level.

Discussions by Accord members identified the lack of preparedness of many learners entering post-secondary education. It was noted that the pandemic likely exacerbated existing challenges related to assessment methodologies, skills such as communication and problem-solving, the lack of adequate career counselling, and the lack of guidance provided to K-12 learners in course selections. Clarity in learner career aspirations can lessen uncertainty, assisting learners in making informed choices about their future career pathways. Similar feedback was echoed by learners and by institutions and industry associations that presented to the Accord Co-Chairs, and to the Committee in several symposiums and presentations (Greenwood, 2024; Hurley, 2024).

Presenters to the Accord expressed concerns about changes that have occurred in the K-12 system (e.g., standardized assessments) without an appropriate level of communication and alignment between the K-12 and post-secondary systems. In addition, significant concerns have been raised about the lack of up-to-date career counselling for learners in junior high and high school. While it is acknowledged that K-12 schools have developed career counselling curriculum supports like MyBlueprint (MyBlueprint, 2020), it is noted by both sectors that there have been challenges in having educator/counselling resources to support learners outside of the curriculum structure. In addition, it is difficult for educators, families/caregivers and learners to have up-to-date information on the range of career options available, and the related program pathways in post-secondary. This is particularly true in emerging and rapidly advancing sectors such as green energy and information technology.

Post-secondary institutions have programs in place to support entering learners by offering readiness supports, such as the Start Smart Program offered at College of the North Atlantic (CNA) (College of the North Atlantic, 2024), or early exposure opportunities like Kick Start and MUN 101 offered by Memorial University (Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2022, 2024). Private training institutions also offer pre-program upgrading to ensure that new learners have the skills necessary to be successful in their chosen programs. Despite the existence of these programs, many learners still experience significant challenges adjusting to post-secondary education, and unfortunately, many are lost to attrition. Effective transition between high school and post-secondary systems is essential to maximizing the learning outcomes for all learners.

4.1-63 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.1-63.a** Increase coordination and alignment between K-12 and post-secondary regarding learning, programming, and assessment approaches to ensure learners transition effectively.
- 4.1-63.b** Take immediate and dedicated action to increase career counselling and supports in the K-12 system to:
- Develop formal pathways to bring post-secondary program and career information to the K-12 system, including a career development website and coordinated social media campaigns;
 - Increase general access to information;
 - Increase family/caregiver, learner, and educator knowledge of the range of programs and careers available in the province;
 - Provide information on entrepreneurship opportunities and the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises to the provincial economy;
 - Create meaningful, authentic, quality work-integrated learning opportunities for learners in junior high and high school;
 - Provide dual credit options for high school learners who participate in relevant structured work-integrated learning opportunities to support learners in selecting appropriate career paths and in successfully completing their programs;
 - Collaborate with post-secondary institutions to maximize their career counselling/planning resources and supports; and
 - Review graduation requirements in K-12 to ensure that current and future skills requirements are included as mandatory courses versus electives—e.g., critical thinking, digital literacy, technology, coding, and well-being.



Call to Transformation 4.1-64:

Formalize structures to increase collaboration between post-secondary and adult education partners to support higher-level education planning, continuous learning, and skill development.

Background

Communication and collaboration among post-secondary institutions in Newfoundland and Labrador is often limited, particularly as it relates to learner recruitment and success. When a learner chooses a program at the university, but for whatever reason is not successful in that program, there is no process to then refer the learner to an alternate program at the college level. Similarly, when a learner excels at a private or public college program, there are very limited channels to support and encourage the learner to continue their studies across colleges or at the university level.

Post-secondary providers on the Pillar Committee and presenters to the Committee noted that there are also opportunities for post-secondary providers to work together to capitalize on sharing resources and infrastructure and reducing duplication of efforts across institutions. They pointed out many areas of overlap and duplication of effort related to campus infrastructure, website resources, technology acquisition, PL, administrative processes, and partnerships where cooperation could result in operational and service improvements. Providers did highlight the informal connections that have been developed in a more ad hoc way between institutions, but also stressed the importance of having a formal oversight body with authority to ensure that opportunities for shared value are realized.

It was recognized that it will take all partners, working together, to address the training and education demands currently facing post-secondary systems and that competition will only limit success. Regardless of the economic sector, all institutions play a critical role in meeting labour market demands, with different providers having different strengths (location, expertise, delivery method, program availability, expansion opportunities, etc.). Under a formal oversight body, mechanisms can be established to build collaborative and productive relationships between providers, between providers and community-based organizations that support learners, and between providers and employers/industry representatives to share information and achieve learner and employment market outcomes.

4.1-64 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.1-64.a** Advance post-secondary and adult learning cultures in the province toward a collaborative partnership model focused on higher-level education planning and learner success. Ensure collaboration with the Department of Immigration, Population and Skills.
- 4.1-64.b** Utilize digital platforms and Centralized Digital Hubs to facilitate collaboration and resource sharing, helping to create a cohesive learning ecosystem.
- 4.1-64.c** Restructure the Council on Higher Education to ensure formal structures for active, dedicated, and focused collaboration among early childhood educators (ECEs), K-12, post-secondary and adult learning partners with a focus on learner outcomes.
- 4.1-64.d** Through partnerships, identify opportunities to maximize the use of technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), to enhance learning environments and instruction.
- 4.1-64.e** Increase sharing of information and best practices within and across post-secondary institutions on practical topics that support learning and decrease institutional risk (e.g., cybersecurity).

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 4.1-64.f** Implement a 'Campus Hub' Model in the province, particularly in more rural and remote areas, to allow for institutional resource and infrastructure sharing.
- 4.1-64.g** Increase sharing of human and other resources across post-secondary institutions, such as resources related to mental health, well-being, accessibility, student services, and PL opportunities.



4.1-64.h Formalize relationships with employers to:

- Effectively plan for upcoming workforce market challenges;
- Support the regular review of curriculum content to ensure that learners have the knowledge and practical skills to succeed in work environments; and
- Enable and enhance further industry support and commitment for work-integrated learning opportunities.



Call to Transformation 4.1-65:

Streamline general functions, within and between institutions, to enhance consistency and efficiency, improve learner experience, and reduce administrative burden.

Background

Through collaboration within the education ecosystem, barriers to learner success, such as administrative burdens and dated program requirements, can be reduced to enhance learner success. Through engagement, numerous examples were provided of situations where learners were required to go through multiple channels and prepare multiple forms/applications to get supports or to avoid losing services they had been receiving for a number of years.

Being required by the system to repeatedly justify their circumstances and validate requests for support can be particularly traumatic for learners with disabilities*, mental health and addiction illnesses, and those who have experienced trauma. This occurs both within and across education systems and undoubtedly adds unnecessary stress and pressure on learners. Many of the concerns noted were attributed to the lack of interoperability of

**Disabilities refer to a range of visible and invisible conditions that, in interaction with barriers, may limit full and equal participation in society. It includes physical, sensory, intellectual, mental health, and other impairments, and is shaped by social and environmental factors, not just medical diagnoses. (See glossary [p.389] for full definition).*

learner registration and tracking systems and the inability to have learner information advance through the system with the learner. This also impedes next-level providers in preparing for the supports/needs of future learners.

Finally, it was noted that one system used by all education providers would be the best solution. This system would require the development of a personal Unique Identifier that would allow learner information to move with the learner as the learner navigates from early learning through to lifelong learning. Changes to streamline general functions, standardize common programs, and flow learner information would remove unnecessary stressors on mental health and well-being and support an improved learner experience (Future Education Magazine, 2025).

4.1-65 Pathways to Action

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 4.1-65.a** Develop comprehensive learner profiles through a Unique Identifier for learners that will follow them throughout their educational journey. This will allow the tracking of learner skills, competencies, and achievements; identifying gifted, neurodiverse, and at-risk learners; ensuring appropriate supports, accommodations, and informed pathways are in place for individual learners; and measuring learner success and labour force engagement.
- 4.1-65.b** Increase coordination across institutions/providers to eliminate arbitrary barriers that exclude learners (e.g., pre-requisites that are irrelevant or outdated) with a focus on skills/competency versus standard program requirements.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 4.1-65.c** Work towards the advancement of a central intake repository (within a digital hub) for post-secondary and adult education that houses learner-related data, such as transcripts, applications, credit transfers, and prior learning assessments, to ensure seamless data flow, improve communication and collaboration, and reduce redundancy.



Call to Transformation 4.1-66:

Increase laddering and articulation opportunities across the post-secondary system.

Background

Learners in Newfoundland and Labrador seeking to increase their levels of education and improve employment opportunities, like those in other jurisdictions, require formal laddering and articulation opportunities between institutions (O'Meara, Hall, & Carmichael, 2007). Equally important in an era of productivity and skills gaps is the need to remove any barriers for those seeking to upskill or reskill. Pillar committee members and stakeholders identified dated and often unrelated entrance requirements as a key barrier to continuing education. For example, the need for skilled workers to complete entry-level general studies courses when they return to the education sector has been questioned.

In general, Accord members agreed that the province's low ranking in completing high school and post-secondary programs, coupled with the declining youth demographic and unprecedented labour supply demands anticipated in the next five to ten years, warrant a significant focus on increasing two-way laddering. Articulation opportunities between post-secondary providers and removing barriers where possible for those electing to re-enter post-secondary institutions. For example, Academy Canada and CNA have formed a groundbreaking collaboration, creating innovative educational pathways for learners in Newfoundland and Labrador. This partnership allows graduates of Academy Canada's programs to gain direct-entry acceptance into advanced programs at CNA, enhancing their career opportunities and earning potential. For instance, graduates of the Information Systems Specialist program can enter the third year of CNA's Bachelor of Applied Information Technology – Systems and Network Cybersecurity degree, while Early Childhood Education graduates can pursue an Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Education Administrative Leadership and eventually a Bachelor of Applied Arts in Early Childhood Education. Additionally, graduates of the Pre-Employment Cook program with relevant work experience can join the second year of CNA's Culinary Management program.

This collaboration not only increases the supply of highly trained professionals, but also provides learners with the unique opportunity to earn multiple credentials, including diplomas and degrees. By leveraging each other's strengths, Academy Canada and CNA

are committed to fostering a collaborative environment that prioritizes learner success and prepares graduates to meet the demands of their respective fields.

Utilizing opportunities to build pre-determined articulation agreements into new programming and increasing recognition of current programming will provide opportunities to improve learner well-being and open new learner recruitment pathways for institutions.

4.1-66 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.1-66.a Increase the options for laddering and scaffolding between college and university programs, including consideration for micro-credentials.
- 4.1-66.b Increase the focus on recognizing transferrable skills, prior learning, and competencies for learners who move from one institution to another or those who choose to upskill after some time in the workforce.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 4.1-66.c Increase the number of formal articulation agreements among the post-secondary education institutions within the province.
- 4.1-66.d Increase dual credit options for adult learners who are completing upgrading requirements necessary to enter post-secondary.



Call to Transformation 4.1-67:

Improve transitions from post-secondary and other adult learning programs to the workforce.

Background

Job requirements are rapidly changing in many career fields. Throughout the Education Accord engagement period, the media has been inundated with published information on the impacts of shrinking workforce resources and advancements in technology on employers within sectors throughout the province, country, and world. Many articles have been written discussing how employers are now utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) to carry out entry-level work within their organizations, and elevating employee roles to involve more problem-solving and decision-making (Levy & Verlint, 2025; Mayer et. al., 2025; Wang & Lu, 2024). These changes have led to increasing calls to ensure that post-secondary graduates are prepared for the work environment, including ensuring competencies related to adaptive learning, critical thinking, problem-solving, and critical digital literacy (Brink, 2012).

The Accord members heard from industry professionals on the many reasons post-secondary institutions need to be well-connected with employers to ensure program relevance and learner preparedness. Post-secondary institutions represented on the committee also noted the importance of these connections and how experiential learning (work-integrated learning) should play an ever-increasing role in how learners are educated. In addition, Committee members discussed the increased options for learners to avail of educational programming outside of the province through online learning, a measure they may choose if programming within the province does not keep pace.

The recent Australian Universities Accord (Australian Government, 2022) also noted the importance of aligned programming and the role that dated accreditation and certification protocols can play in restricting post-secondary institutions. Australia is currently reviewing these national structures and requesting updates to ensure they do not hinder or discourage post-secondary institutions from updating their programming to keep pace with evolving roles and responsibilities in the workforce.

The education ecosystem has an obligation to ensure that graduates of educational programs are prepared for current and emerging workforce needs. Responsive work-integrated learning and collaboration on curriculum development in changing and emerging sectors can improve labour market outcomes for NL.

4.1-67 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.1-67.a Share best practices across providers to ease learner transitions to the workforce.
- 4.1-67.b Strengthen partnerships between educational institutions and workplaces to align curriculum with workplace needs and offer practical learning experiences.
- 4.1-67.c Increase mentorship and sponsorship learning opportunities for learners and new graduates.
- 4.1-67.d Increase the prevalence of practicums and alternative forms of work-integrated learning in program designs.
- 4.1-67.e Increase engagement with learners to determine supports required to ensure learner labour market readiness.

Theme 4.2: Learner-Centric Systems and Processes

‘Learner-centric’ is not an unfamiliar term in post-secondary and adult literacy education systems within Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). Obviously, these systems were established to serve learners, and great care is taken within all institutions to provide supports and to foster learners’ success in their educational journeys. Unavoidably, the silos in these systems have over time contributed to different definitions and interpretations of what learner-centric can mean.

Throughout the engagement period, learners provided examples of many administrative and service processes within institutions that were designed to suit a particular institutional need (e.g., approve an academic accommodation), but were not looked at from a learner perspective (ease of access, duplication of effort, cost, etc.). Committee members discussed how decisions are made at all levels of a post-secondary institution, and that formal requirements are not necessarily in place to ensure that learners are placed at the forefront of these decisions. Furthermore, discussion focused on the increasing diversity of the learner population and the need to ensure that instructional methods are inclusive of learning differences and neurodiversity. Research is demonstrating that traditional instructional models are no longer sufficient to meet the needs of diverse learners. Instructors and faculty identified how small changes to curriculum and the incorporation of learning technologies can increase learner success.

Finally, challenges exist when different levels of the educational system implement learner-centric principles in different ways and without the input of all stakeholders, especially the learner. Governing boards and administrators may have a particular focus for a decision or policy that unknowingly can have a negative impact on learners, or a particular group of learners. Similarly, when one instructor, academic program, or school puts a learner-centric focus on course design and delivery, but their recommendations are not supported at an administrative level, the misalignment limits the learner-centric approach.

Increasing learner diversity in NL has highlighted the need for an ecosystem that is responsive to learner needs. Prioritizing learner needs, abilities, interests, and learning preferences places the learner at the heart of the learning system. This approach can enhance learner engagement and motivation, improve understanding and retention, develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, increase autonomy and responsibility, and better prepare the learner for success (Fitzgerald, 2023).

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 4.2-68:

Implement a responsive system that supports personalized learning options that adapt to individual learner needs and goals.

Background

As previously mentioned, a learner-centric education system recognizes that learners have different learning preferences and needs. Educators and faculty emphasize the importance of acknowledging these varied learner needs to genuinely support all learners' success, especially as we move towards 2034. The number of post-secondary and adult literacy learners requiring accommodations and supports is expected to rise, along with challenges in learner engagement. It is evident that the traditional methods of 'teaching to the middle' are outdated and ineffective.

For example, Keyin College has redefined its identity, evolving from a conventional private college into a forward-thinking post-secondary institution that prioritizes educational solutioning for industry. At the heart of this transformation is Keyin's proprietary Subway Model—a sophisticated, structured framework that seamlessly integrates learning pedagogy with an adaptive learner journey. The implementation of the Subway Model has been widely recognized as a strategic innovation, equipping graduates with both the technical expertise and critical thinking skills necessary to excel in a competitive, ever-evolving landscape. Over the past years, Keyin College has seamlessly integrated community-based campuses with a hybrid learning modality.

Equally crucial is the need to assist educators in adjusting delivery methods and creating feedback mechanisms to ensure the strategies used for instructional delivery are responsive. The Committee concurred that understanding and adapting to learner needs through differentiated instruction and assessment strategies that respect the diversity of learners is vital for the effective implementation of a learner-centric approach.

4.2-68 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.2-68.a Increase options for active learning where learners are engaged through problem solving and projects in their interest areas.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 4.2-68.b** Develop robust platforms for continuous feedback and support to learners and educators to ensure teaching and learning practices are meeting learner needs and addressing differing learning preferences.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 4.2-68.c** Develop individualized learning pathways supported by accessible and adaptive learning technologies that can pivot and adapt to the needs, learning styles, and goals of individual learners, allowing for competency-based progression.



Call to Transformation 4.2-69:

Create a system committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Background

Incorporation of equity, diversity, and inclusion principles is essential in the creation of an environment where learners feel valued, respected, and safe. The importance of these principles is recognized by post-secondary institutions, and all agree that work must continue to ensure the system is free of unconscious bias and discrimination in all areas of the learning environment. Throughout the engagement process, the Accord and Pillar committee members examined the work underway within post-secondary providers to support equity, diversity, and inclusion, also recognizing that there is considerable work to be completed. Presenters highlighted the need to have equity, diversity, and inclusion

supported at all levels of our system (operational, administrative, and governance) if organizations are to be successful in creating truly inclusive environments. This is captured by the comments of one respondent:

“Meeting the diverse and unique needs of specific vulnerable populations will allow for enhanced equitable access to education and the mitigation of barriers and challenges faced by specific groups of at-risk individuals. Doing so not only has the potential to foster social inclusion, enhance an individual’s economic mobility, and improve one’s quality of life, but can also help break a generational cycle of disadvantage and poverty” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024).

One of the three key priority areas identified in CNA’s 2023-2026 Strategic Plan (College of the North Atlantic, 2023) is equity, diversity, and inclusion, which focuses on the implementation of educational initiatives to enable a better understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion, enhanced program curricula with an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens, and a review of policies and processes with a focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. The removal of intellectual, emotional, cultural, and physical barriers for all learners is a necessary step toward ensuring a culture that values equity, diversity, and inclusion.

4.2-69 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.2-69.a Review and update course and program curriculum and policies for bias and relevancy (gender, cultural, neurodiversity, etc.) and representation every five years.
- 4.2-69.b Review programming to ensure there are no barriers to completion for vulnerable populations.
- 4.2-69.c Upgrade infrastructure, where needed, to ensure all physical accessibility requirements and standards are maintained so learners with physical disabilities are not excluded (e.g., working elevators, functioning automatic door openers, accessible door handles, etc.).



Call to Transformation 4.2-70:

Develop and implement a consistent model for Universal Design across the K-12 and post-secondary systems.

Background

During the engagement, Accord members heard from post-secondary institution divisions responsible for learner supports and accommodations. They reported that more learners than ever are requesting supports with a shortage of resources to meet growing demand. They noted that learner diversity is growing and the ‘typical persona’ of a post-secondary learner no longer exists. It is known that the volume of learners in our province requiring accommodations and supports is rising, and data from the K-12 system suggests that these numbers will continue to increase (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2025d).

Of particular interest to the Committee were discussions about the nature of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differences in UDL conceptions, and practices across education ecosystems. It was acknowledged that implementing a UDL policy takes time and a dedicated focus. Like the pillar committee, many groups and individuals who were part of the engagement process noted the importance of UDL for eliminating barriers to learning, promoting equity, enhancing learner engagement, supporting diverse learners, and improving learner outcomes.

The Committee believes that moving forward in a deliberate and consistent manner toward the adoption of UDL will decrease barriers to learning for many learners, ensure diverse learning needs are supported, reduce the administrative burden on accommodation programs and educators, permeate institutional silos, and directly support learner success (Fovet, 2024).

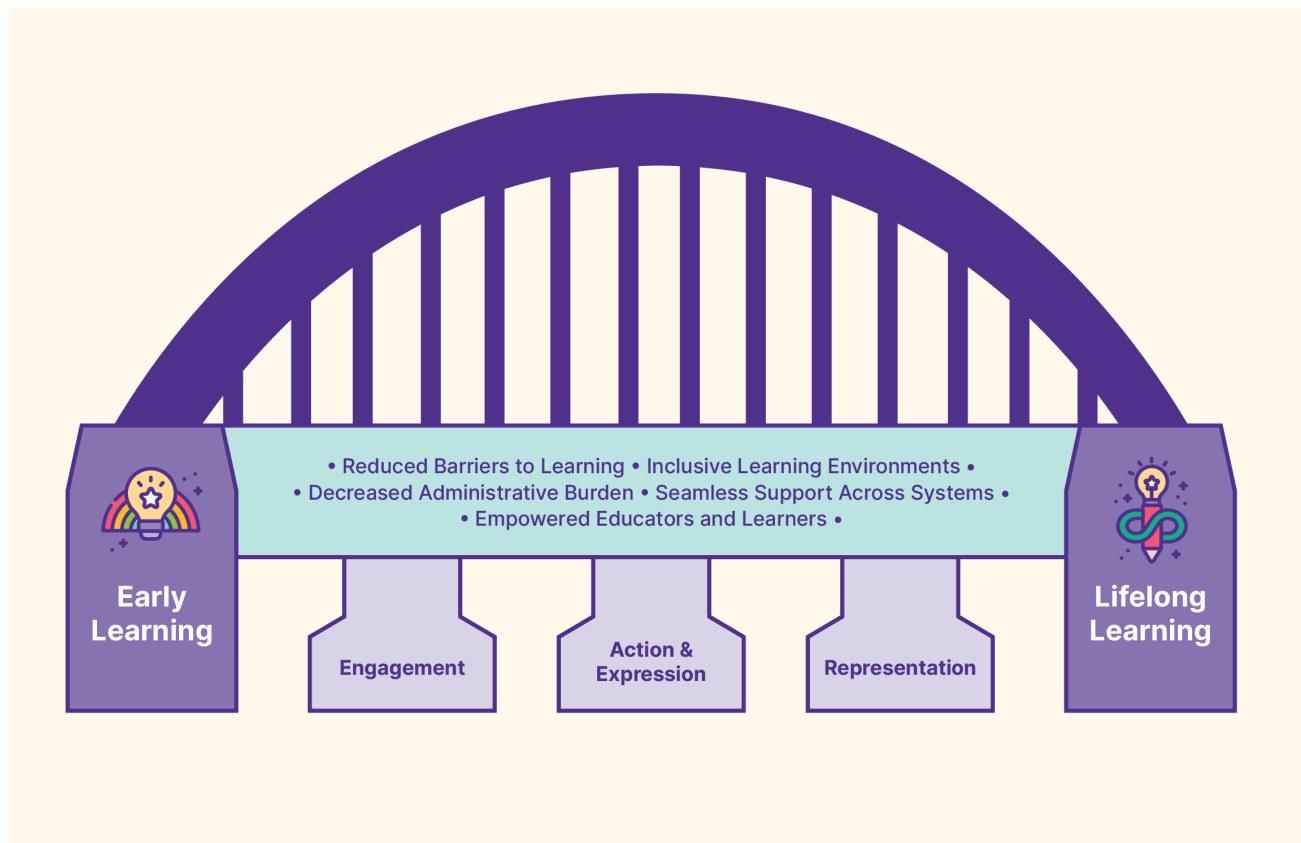


Figure 22: The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Bridge to Inclusive Learning.

4.2-70 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.2-70.a Develop a common definition and policy for UDL to be used across educational levels and institutions.
- 4.2-70.b Ensure supports necessary for inclusive and equitable learning environments are in place—e.g., equitable access to technology.
- 4.2-70.c Provide necessary training and supports to instructors and faculty to advance learner-centric instructional models.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

4.2-70.d Work towards maximizing the use of technologies, particularly AI, to assist learners, educators and other support providers to enhance learning environments and instruction in a Universal Design for Learning Model.



Call to Transformation 4.2-71:

Transition governance, policy, and delivery models to be learner-centric.

Background

A learner-centric approach places the learner at the center of all levels of program, faculty, administrative, and governance planning and decision-making processes. It ensures that learners are at the forefront in all strategic and operational decisions, including those related to funding, operational structure, curriculum development and delivery, support programming, and data systems.

The Committee acknowledges the many strong programs within the post-secondary and adult literacy systems that are moving forward in adopting a learner-centric view. Individuals from these programs presented to the Committee, emphasizing the value created by using a learner-focused lens. Programs such as Start SMART, Stay SMART, and the Work Integrated Learning Program at CNA, as well as the Student Wellness and Counselling Centre at Memorial University, are increasingly supporting learners and ensuring learner success is central to all program decisions. There is, however, the opportunity to ensure consistent policy and application within and across organizations.

4.2-71 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.2-71.a Incorporate a learner-centric lens for governance and executive/ leadership decision-making functions within all post-secondary institutions and adult learning providers.
- 4.2-71.b Implement requirements to ensure that all program content and delivery reviews are carried out through a learner-centric lens focused on learner outcomes and success.
- 4.2-71.c Ensure adult learners are engaged in the system change process by providing them a voice on committees, councils, and working groups.
- 4.2-71.d Review and revise system-related guidelines, policies, legislation and regulations through a learner-centric lens.
- 4.2-71.e Implement standardized policies across institutions and providers to ensure common definitions for terms, e.g., 'disability' and 'accommodation' and other language that follows learners as they transition within all levels of the educational system.



Call to Transformation 4.2-72:

Ensure a fulsome learner-centric approach to Indigenous education.

Background

Education, in all forms and at all levels, is a key to reconciliation. Emphasizing learner-centric Indigenous education helps to address historical injustices and paves the way for a more diverse and culturally responsive academic landscape. Centring the post-secondary educational experience around Indigenous learners' unique cultural perspectives and needs will lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of Indigenous knowledge systems.

A learning environment grounded in mutual respect and cultural understanding is fundamental for both educators and learners to achieve their prescribed goals. An approach such as this not only supports the academic success and well-being of Indigenous learners, but also enriches the broader educational community.

Actionable items outlined below are in the spirit of the objectives and principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, and the Provincial Indigenous Women's Steering Committee report entitled, *Hear Our Voices: MMIWG Policy Recommendations of the First Women of Newfoundland and Labrador*, presented to the provincial government in July 2022 (Provincial Indigenous Women's Steering Committee, 2022).

4.2-72 Pathways to Action

Source Documents:

Recommended Pathways to Action outlined below are in the spirit of the objectives and principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, and the Provincial Indigenous Women's Steering Committee report entitled *Hear Our Voices: MMIWG Policy Recommendations of the First Women of Newfoundland and Labrador*.

- 4.2-72.a Holistically support Indigenous learners by ensuring access to high-quality educational opportunities and outcomes for post-secondary learners.
- 4.2-72.b Partner with Indigenous Governments and Organizations to explore initiatives to address the unique literacy needs of Indigenous learners in the province.



- 4.2-72.c Work towards the development of admission streams for post-secondary applicants with Indigenous ancestry.
 - 4.2-72.d Facilitate PL opportunities for adult literacy instructors and volunteers, including exploring alternative teaching practices, to meet the culturally appropriate needs of Indigenous adult learners.
 - 4.2-72.e Provide cultural sensitivity, diversity, and awareness training to all new and existing Adult Basic Education (ABE) and adult literacy instructors in the province.
 - 4.2-72.f Implement mandatory and ongoing Indigenous cultural sensitivity training and cultural diversity training as annual PL for all employees in the public service.
 - 4.2-72.g Tailor the ABE program to meet the needs of Indigenous learners and mitigate specific barriers and challenges to quality post-secondary education.
 - 4.2-72.h Through the provincial government's Office of Women and Gender Equality, work collaboratively with the Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council to remain relevant and responsive to Indigenous post-secondary educational issues, challenges, and needs.
 - 4.2-72.i Provide increased opportunities for cultural ceremonies to be incorporated into post-secondary education institutional events and engagement.
 - 4.2-72.j Work to ensure broadband/high-speed internet and/or updates to existing networks to facilitate access to online post-secondary training and education programs is available.
 - 4.2-72.k Develop policies and programs to include healing and health programs within post-secondary educational systems.
 - 4.2-72.l Ensure all post-secondary educators are trained in culturally appropriate and trauma-informed practices so that they understand the need for flexible accommodations for Indigenous learners.
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Theme 4.3: Learner and Educator Well-Being

The relationship between the mental and physical well-being of educators and learners is critical and reciprocal in nature. Learners who feel safe, supported, and valued in their learning environment are more likely to be engaged and motivated in their learning; achieve higher academic success; develop critical social skills, resiliency, and empathy for others; and engage in less harmful and disruptive behaviours (Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2023). When educators feel prepared, supported, and valued, they are more likely to experience job satisfaction and deliver high-quality instruction and support to their learners. This creates a positive learning culture, which is closely linked to improved educational outcomes and academic success for learners.

Stakeholders who presented to the Accord emphasized the growing mental health challenges faced by post-secondary learners and how these affect their ability to learn and succeed in educational settings. This was also supported by Accord survey data, in which post-secondary respondents emphasized the need for responsive, proactive support for learners with disabilities and diverse learning needs. As one post-secondary learner noted, there is a need for “holistic support systems; schools should provide more resources for mental health, counselling, and academic advising” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024).

Institutions reported that an increasing number of learners arrive at post-secondary institutions lacking the coping skills and resilience needed to handle typical pressures such as moving away from home, increased academic demands, and exam stress. Additionally, despite relatively low tuition rates, higher average family incomes, and comprehensive student aid packages, learners are challenged with external intersecting variables such as housing costs, food insecurity, and the pressure of maintaining part-time jobs while studying. Student groups have highlighted that these pressures are often more intense for international students, who do not qualify for provincial student aid, face employment limitations, and lack local support networks.

In reviewing the discussions on adult basic education, stakeholders noted that learners in adult literacy programs often have additional challenges related to life and family circumstances that impact their ability to learn. Learners who did not complete secondary school and returned to adult learning may also experience poverty, mental health issues, addictions, trauma, learning disabilities, and other challenges that persist when they return to the educational environment. For these learners, successful progression often relies on support programs that are responsive to and respectful of the life circumstances they endure (Barron, 2024).

Research shows that increased workload and pressures related to learner mental health and wellness have an impact on the well-being of faculty and instructors. This is particularly true for educators who have not had the training and supports to help them be successful in these roles.

While the Accord acknowledges the incredible efforts of institutions and community-based organizations in defining and responding to increasing stressors, these efforts need to be sustained and far-reaching such as the Guard Me 24/7 online counselling application used at Memorial University (Student Wellness and Counselling Centre, 2025) and Bridge the GApp resources being used at Keyin College (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2025b). Through institutional policies, procedures, supports, and planning, post-secondary institutions and other adult education providers can play a vital role in ensuring learner and educator mental health and well-being are supported and learners are positioned to succeed. “Adult Basic Education (ABE) plays a crucial role in providing learners with foundational literacy and numeracy skills while rebuilding confidence for those who faced challenges completing their high school education. To ensure access to these critical services, ABE must balance physical learning spaces—offering nurturing, positive environments—with quality online options” (Accord participant comment).

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 4.3-73:

Prioritize the mental and physical well-being of educators and learners to create supportive and safe learning environments.

Background

Creating safe and flexible post-secondary learning environments is a necessary first step in supporting learner and educator mental health and well-being. Not all learners learn in the same manner or have similar life experiences. Respecting and implementing strategies to appropriately address the diversity of learning preferences, as well as learner and educator life experiences, helps to create a safe, flexible, and modern learning culture that prioritizes mental health and well-being.

Accord members heard how dedicated and concerted efforts, such as training educators in trauma-informed practice; reducing assessment red-tape for learners with exceptionalities; providing equitable access to counseling, support services, mental health resources, and information, are examples of strategies that can help create a learning environment where both educators and learners can thrive.

As post-secondary and adult literacy systems look ahead to the next decade, there is a growing expectation for technology to play a significant role in supporting well-being training. This includes using technological advancements to measure and address mental health and other challenges faced by learners and educators in the educational environment.

4.3-73 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.3-73.a Ensure that policies and procedures at the institutional level are developed/revised with learner mental health and well-being impacts included as a primary consideration.
- 4.3-73.b Where possible, integrate mental health and well-being factors into curriculum and monitor the effectiveness of the resources provided.
- 4.3-73.c Complete educational assessments early in the learning process and ensure they accompany learners throughout their educational journey.
- 4.3-73.d Ensure educational assessments and required documentation are aligned across secondary and post-secondary education, as well as other entities such as Student Aid, to facilitate a smooth transition from secondary to post-secondary.
- 4.3-73.e Where appropriate, enhance the mental health supports available to learners, including the establishment of, or continuation of, equitable access to in-person and/or virtual counselling and support services.



- 4.3-73.f Ensure safe and flexible learning environments that recognize all learners' capabilities and provide pathways that work for them individually to reduce learner anxiety and system frustration.
- 4.3-73.g Increase knowledge and skills on trauma-informed work environments within institutions and community-based organizations that not only acknowledges intersectionalities but also respects and celebrates learner differences.
- 4.3-73.h Establish/expand mentorship models amongst learners to create a sense of connectedness and minimize feelings of isolation and anxiety.
- 4.3-73.i Provide/enhance PL for educators focused on supporting resilience and self-care for learners.
- 4.3-73.j Ensure the provision of accessible mental health resources for learners and educators that promote healthy and safe educational environments (e.g., information on available supports, stress management, self-care, coping skills, wellness activities, the promotion of work-life balance, etc.).
- 4.3-73.k Embed social justice principles within student codes of conduct.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 4.3-73.l Work toward implementation of AI-powered health monitoring tools to identify at-risk individuals, allowing for early intervention.
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Call to Transformation 4.3-74:

Institutions take a 'Whole Person' approach to supporting successful learner outcomes, considering how external social, cultural, economic, and societal factors impact mental health and well-being.

Background

A 'Whole Person' approach to supporting learner outcomes recognizes that success requires reaching beyond academics in the classroom. The goal of a holistic, ecosystem approach is to recognize that factors outside of the classroom can have a significant impact on learners and their educational journeys. This must be considered in how institutions design and deliver their programs, and how governments and other organizations offer funding and support programs.

The Accord heard about the importance of responsive student aid programs, child care options for learners with families/caregivers, wraparound supports in funding programs, and flexibility in course structure and delivery mechanisms for learners struggling with transportation, employment, or other challenges. Furthermore, feedback focused on the need for flexibility in course and program offerings for vulnerable groups in our province in terms of accessibility, navigation, and advanced education opportunities.

4.3-74 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.3-74.a** Provide system navigation supports to increase awareness about the supports available and reduce learner anxiety.



- 4.3-74.b Institutions/providers actively partner with student unions, municipalities, etc., as appropriate, to improve learner knowledge of, and access to, transportation, food, accommodation, childcare, and other necessary services.
 - 4.3-74.c Increase government and institution recognition of and support for access to wraparound services outside of the institution/provider that are essential for learner mental and physical well-being.
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Theme 4.4: Improved Learner Outcomes

Improving learner outcomes is key to increasing graduation rates and ensuring all individuals achieve their potential. Historically, enrollment and graduation rates in Newfoundland and Labrador have varied, but as the youth population declines and labour market gaps grow in sectors like health and business, every learner matters.

The Accord recognizes the need for a foundational shift in education to address these challenges. Education is a crucial social determinant of health, affecting income, housing security, and well-being. Improving learner outcomes will boost literacy levels and support overall health and critical social services. Opportunities exist to make system changes in post-secondary and adult literacy programs, such as:

- Increasing the number of high school graduates moving to post-secondary education;
- offering alternative learning methods and modernizing assessments;
- encouraging advanced educational opportunities through laddering and articulation between institutions; and
- increasing financial supports for continuing education through scholarships, industry sponsorships, and government funding.

Improving data systems to focus on learner outcomes will help make higher-order planning decisions that support system advancement. These efforts collectively contribute to a more effective education system that empowers learners to reach their full potential.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 4.4-75:

Expand alternative methods of learning and opportunities for learners.

Background

Embracing diverse educational approaches, such as hybrid and online courses, experiential learning, and competency-based education, caters to the varied needs and preferences of learners. These alternative methods provide flexible pathways for learners to acquire knowledge and skills, making education more accessible and relevant. The Accord heard from many stakeholders about the varied learning options and delivery models now occurring in classrooms around the province and in institutions around the world. Increased use of project-based learning models, the incorporation of technology as a learning aid, and the move away from a reliance on standard lecturing are ensuring that learners of all types are more successful in the classroom. For example, Memorial University has recently approved a Bachelor of Arctic and Sub-Arctic Interdisciplinary Studies (BASIS) that was developed as a program focused solely on Arctic and Subarctic regions and has a curriculum created by and for people in Labrador and the North. Of particular interest is the variety of alternative instructional methods included in the program. As noted by Memorial University, this unique program provides learners with opportunities to pursue a full and complete undergraduate degree at the Labrador Campus, which integrates multiple ways of knowing and multiple disciplinary approaches and emphasizes Indigenous leadership.

Through a combination of classroom-based, land-based, and experiential learning opportunities, the BASIS program aims to create a hub of Northern-focused and Indigenous-led educational excellence that brings people together to work on the key challenges and priorities of the North and supports Innu, Inuit, and Indigenous self-determination, sovereignty, and resurgence in Labrador and across the North (Labrador Campus, 2025). Offering a wide range of learning opportunities helps to engage learners who may not thrive in traditional settings, ultimately fostering a more dynamic and effective learning environment for all.

4.4-75 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.4-75.a Enhance program flexibility for lifelong learners who need to upskill or reskill to remain current in their field, explore new career pathways (e.g., micro-credentials), or re-enter the workforce.
- 4.4-75.b Increase efforts to promote entrepreneurship to broaden learner mindsets and opportunities.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 4.4-75.c Increase opportunities for experiential learning, such as internships, project-based learning, funded placements, and real-world problem-solving.
- 4.4-75.d Increase opportunities to learn about and experience different occupations through mentorship or partnership programs during high school.
- 4.4-75.e Implement adaptive learning technology options, e.g., AI-driven tutoring/assistance systems, to provide additional supports.



Call to Transformation 4.4-76:

Provide additional supports to increase learner completion rates and high levels of attainment.

Background

Incentivizing learners motivates them to stay engaged and committed to their studies. This starts with enhancing supports to assist learners transitioning from high school to post-secondary education, ensuring they are well-prepared and confident in their next steps. Sharing information on regional labour market opportunities, with an emphasis on emerging skills and careers, helps learners make better informed decisions about their educational and career paths and increases the likelihood that they will pursue programs through to completion.

In general, traditional bursary and grant options for learners focus on supporting them upon entry to, or during, a program. These are important; however, there is also an opportunity to increase the nature and type of supports offered to learners so they may continue to the next level in their education journey, leading to higher educational attainment. The Accord heard from stakeholders about how crucial this will be as labour market pressures grow and employers are motivated to lessen educational requirements for jobs. These strategies collectively contribute to a more supportive and effective education system that empowers learners to reach their full potential.

4.4-76 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.4-76.a Incentivize learners to move on to advanced educational options through scholarships, bursaries, and grants.
- 4.4-76.b Develop and disseminate regional labour market profiles with emphasis on emerging skills and careers.
- 4.4-76.c Enhance academic and non-academic supports to assist learners' transition from high school to post-secondary.



Call to Transformation 4.4-77:

Modernize assessment and credentialing systems to be competency-based with a focus on transferable skills.

Background

Shifting towards competency-based assessments can ensure that learners are evaluated on their ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world scenarios. This approach also supports the development of transferable skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication. Numerous stakeholders highlighted the importance of post-secondary and adult literacy systems in the development of these skills. Researchers, employers, instructors and faculty noted that learners, now more than ever, are moving into changing work environments where content knowledge is no longer sufficient as workers will be increasingly called upon to critically assess, problem solve, and demonstrate learning agility as workplaces and technologies advance. Implementing these modernized systems enhances the relevance and effectiveness of education and provides learners with credentials that accurately reflect their capabilities and readiness for diverse career opportunities.

4.4-77 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.4-77.a** Restructure assessment methods, as required, to include an assessment of critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration skills.
- 4.4-77.b** Identify and implement options to more broadly recognize courses and competencies from previous work experience and other educational environments, e.g., credit transfer, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR).



- 4.4-77.c** Explore ways to expand access to modular and stackable skills education (e.g., micro-credentials) that align with labour market demands and enable learners to engage in continuous learning throughout their careers.



Call to Transformation 4.4-78:

Establish and implement a Learning System Model for the post-secondary education system.

Background

A Learning System Model aims to create a cohesive framework that integrates various components, such as data collection and quality processes, with defined metrics for positive learner and labour market outcomes. Establishing and implementing a comprehensive Learning System Model for the post-secondary education system aims to enhance the overall quality and effectiveness of higher education. The importance of data and measurement when implementing change and when evaluating the quality and effectiveness of programs and services was discussed.

Across Newfoundland and Labrador's post-secondary and adult literacy systems, several operational data processes and data management systems exist, such as the LEAN Management Process at the CNA (College of North Atlantic, 2020). However, there are significant opportunities to develop more horizontal, collaborative higher-level data processes focused on learner success. These processes are crucial for informing higher-level decisions as systems evolve. Currently, there is no cross-institutional data collected to inform decisions on various aspects of education, such as the quality of education received by learners, learner success in progressing through educational levels, the rate and reasons for attrition, learner well-being, and gaps in delivery causing learners to leave. These considerations are vital for developing long-term strategies and improving the well-being and success of individuals in educational environments.

4.4-78 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.4-78.a Establish a formal Learning System Model with defined educational outcomes for learners and pathways to support continuous improvement.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 4.4-78.b Incorporate and adapt existing data collection and quality processes, as appropriate, into a Learning System Model with defined metrics for learner outcomes.
- 4.4-78.c Develop and implement the governance, leadership, training, and reporting measures required to support the model.
- 4.4-78.d Develop new data collection processes and systems necessary to address the gaps in outcome-related data with a specific focus on tracking learner progress and labour market outcomes for graduates of post-secondary institutions in the province.

Theme 4.5: Modernized Systems and Processes

Learner characteristics, their communities, future work environments, and the societal, cultural, and economic factors influencing their lives are constantly evolving. These dynamics affect educational environments, as well as the programs, services, and supports they offer.

Throughout the engagement process, the Accord heard from post-secondary institutions and other stakeholders about the importance of recognizing the changes occurring in society and our economy and the critical need to modernize our systems to respond to these changes. Stakeholders, for example, discussed the impact of the pandemic on the

workforce, the emergence of more hybrid and online learning delivery models, and the current and anticipated impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) on the way students learn, educators teach, and workplaces operate.

The Accord also heard from learners and other stakeholders on the importance of system support for equity, diversity, and inclusion, noting that in modern learning contexts, all learners should have an equitable opportunity for success. “Everyone deserves the opportunity to learn and reach their full potential” (Key informant).

Discussions focused on how technology and the use of technological learning aids, such as AI-driven learning/tutoring assistants, can reduce the administrative burden on educators, provide individualized supports to learners and real-time feedback to educators on learner progress. While it was acknowledged that technological advancements can be costly and do require increased PL, it was noted that advancements over the next ten years in generative AI will likely make these aids more available and present in all learning environments.

Through the recent Adult Literacy Program Review, stakeholders and learners identified both the opportunities and challenges present in the system moving forward (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2024a). As an example, online and hybrid delivery methods can be readily expanded to better meet the needs of remote learners and those with accessibility challenges, while ensuring quality learning in these modalities will be important. Modern education systems and processes that are responsive to the needs of learners and society are essential if post-secondary and adult literacy providers are to fulfill their obligation to the people of the province.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 4.5-79:

Implement measures to modernize learning environments by supporting flexibility and inclusion.

Background

By embracing innovative approaches and technologies, the education ecosystem can create adaptable learning spaces that cater to diverse needs and learning preferences. This includes offering flexible scheduling, personalized learning paths, modern equipment and infrastructure, and accessible resources, thus ensuring all learners, regardless of their background or abilities, can thrive.

Accord and Pillar Committee members reviewed presentations and recent research, which highlight the growing need for more interdisciplinary graduates as future worker roles evolve. For example, future doctors and health professionals will need better training on the social determinants of health, while engineers will require education on advanced technologies. To address this need, professionals will require up-to-date programs and personalized, interdisciplinary learning paths. There are opportunities to rethink rigid program and certification pathways, and to explore ways to expand course options across schools and faculties. This flexibility can also support diverse learners who need additional accommodations to succeed.

Up-to-date education programs are often dependent on modern equipment and infrastructure, which can be costly to purchase and maintain. Accord and Pillar Committee members were advised of the role that augmented reality and virtual reality tools can play in assisting institutions in offering modern learning experiences. Discussion also focused on the support industry can provide in supporting the acquisition of physical equipment and infrastructure. Financial and infrastructure donations from industry have supported education programming in the past, and there are opportunities to expand this support in ways that benefit institutions, learners, and industry.

4.5-79 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.5-79.a** Increase the flexibility of the system where learning can take place in bite-sized pieces (e.g., micro-credentials), increasing accessibility for learners.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 4.5-79.b** Modernize instructional processes to eliminate barriers that exclude learners (e.g., irrelevant and outdated curriculum, and/or outdated evaluation techniques).
- 4.5-79.c** Explore partnership options with industry/employers to financially support modernization and maintenance of equipment and technology.
- 4.5-79.d** Develop new programs that promote cross-training between faculties and schools to reflect the interdisciplinary skills anticipated in the future workforce.



Call to Transformation 4.5-80:

Modernize and streamline systems and processes, incorporating technology to better support and reduce burdens on learners and educators.

Background

Accord members discussed the role of modern systems and technology in assisting learners to be successful in the classroom and educators in removing tasks that divert their attention away from learners and the learning environment. As noted in the previous Call to Transformation, technology will play an important role in the way that modern learning environments can support learners through flexibility, personalized learning pathways, and modernized instructional processes. In addition, technology can help in streamlining processes and reducing the administrative demands on learners related to applications, forms, ability assessments, and support services.

The increasing demands on, and changing roles of, educators were identified by instructors and faculty throughout the engagement process. Discussions often centred around the:

- skills gaps of new learners and the increased work on educators in getting new post-secondary students ready for post-secondary programming,
- changing expectations related to flexibility and accommodation,
- need for PL opportunities to support the diverse needs of learners,
- new instructional methods and demands driven by technology,
- requirements within programs to do more with less, and
- growing amount of administrative responsibility that is taking time away from teaching and learning.

By leveraging advanced technological tools and platforms, more efficient and user-friendly systems can be created that simplify administrative tasks, improve communication between educators and learners, and support learners in ways that reduce educator workload. This approach allows educators to focus more on teaching and mentoring, while learners benefit from a more engaging and accessible learning environment.

4.5-80 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.5-80.a** Remove unnecessary documentation requirements for learners availing of supports and accommodations (e.g., proof of reassessment, doctor's note outlining disability, etc.).

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 4.5-80.b** Maximize the use of technology to increase individualized supports to learners.
- 4.5-80.c** Maximize the use of technology to reduce unnecessary administrative burden on educators.



Call to Transformation 4.5-81:

Redesign Adult Basic Education (ABE) delivery models to better meet the needs of learners.

Background

ABE is currently available at 36 locations run by 10 unique providers (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2025a). In 2023-24, 1,250 learners were enrolled in ABE programs, which is about 1,000 fewer than when the current system was first developed. Some rural sites have seen significant enrollment declines, with fewer than 10 learners per year.

The current delivery model includes 16 market demand-based locations, 14 government-tendered locations, and six grant-funded sites. The Department of Jobs, Immigration and Growth supports ABE learners, including funding for wraparound supports for those eligible for Employment Insurance. Providers are funded on a per-learner, per-day basis, with general expectations for participant progress. Concerns about the sustainability of the ABE program, particularly its financial model, led to a review in 2023-24. Officials gathered data from providers, instructors, learners, and the public through focus groups, surveys, and written submissions.

The review found high awareness and good support for those in the program, but the current delivery and financial models are insufficient for long-term sustainability. Stakeholders recommend a model that is more responsive to the diverse needs of learners, changing demographics, and delivery costs. Emphasis should be placed on vulnerable populations, such as incarcerated individuals, to remove participation barriers. A refreshed approach to adult literacy aims to create an inclusive and effective education system that empowers all adults to succeed.

4.5-81 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.5-81.a** Expand ABE and adult literacy program data collection measures to better inform ABE and literacy needs.
- 4.5-81.b** Transition the current ABE delivery model to a new model for the province that:
- is more responsive to the diverse needs of learners engaged in the programming,
 - Simplifies and streamlines funding and delivery models,
 - Removes barriers for vulnerable populations, and
 - Effectively responds to changing demographics and rural distributions throughout the province.

Theme 4.6: Maximizing Research, Innovation and Sustainability

Post-secondary institutions in Newfoundland and Labrador are highly regarded for their research programs. In December 2024, Research Infosource ranked Memorial University among Canada’s top 20 research universities, and first for AI publications among Canadian universities with medical schools (Marketing and Communications, 2024). Similarly, CNA was ranked 8th in Canada among research colleges, breaking into the top 10 for the first time (College of the North Atlantic, 2024).

Throughout the province, post-secondary institutions are advancing knowledge in areas important locally, nationally, and globally. They collaborate with communities, industries, and other stakeholders to translate and mobilize knowledge into new products and practices that benefit culture, society, and the economy.

During the engagement process, the critical role of research and innovation in shaping the province's future was highlighted. The Accord explored how research can address specific technical challenges within industries and tackle complex issues like climate change and sustainability. Stakeholders highlighted the opportunities to increase learner participation in research programs and the significant ways research can support people, communities, and emerging industries in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Additionally, the engagement process emphasized the financial pressures on the post-secondary ecosystem. These systems face inflationary costs, rising service delivery and operational expenses, and stagnant or decreasing revenue streams. These challenges come at a time of increasing infrastructure demands and the need for learner support services. The systems must develop financial models that are responsive to current and future demands to ensure sustainability.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 4.6-82:

Continue to advance the development of progressive research and innovation programming that is responsive to the evolving needs of learners, institutions, and the province.

Background

Many contributors to the Accord acknowledged the importance of the research strategies (both formal and informal) employed by our institutions and strongly advocate for continued support and expansion in this area. The Accord commends the national recognition our institutions have received and emphasizes the momentum this brings for future growth and development.

Aligning with the vision of the Accord, programs, policies, and practices need to reflect inclusivity, collaboration, and responsiveness. Key priorities should include providing flexibility and removing barriers for learners advancing in research, building research capacity in high-impact areas for the province, and enhancing research collaboration across disciplines and institutions to improve learner outcomes. The CNA's Workforce Innovation Centre may be able to play a role here in advancing research and innovation.

4.6-82 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.6-82.a Increase opportunities for learners to engage in research and innovation to expand their knowledge and skills, with particular emphasis on Indigenous learners and learners from other diverse groups.
- 4.6-82.b Explore opportunities to offer research programs in new areas to support learners' laddering and articulating between post-secondary providers (e.g., Master's in Early Learning).
- 4.6-82.c Explore and implement increased options for interdisciplinary research programs to meet the needs of future learners and society (e.g., programs that span social and science faculties).
- 4.6-82.d Expand opportunities to capitalize on industry and government funding mechanisms to grow research capacity and focus on high-impact priorities for the province.
- 4.6-82.e Advance increased research collaboration opportunities across post-secondary providers to realize potential efficiencies in common areas of interest, with a focus on improved learner experiences and outcomes.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 4.6-82.f Increase flexibility in graduate program parameters to allow employed learners to meet graduation requirements while carrying out applied research in the employment setting.



Call to Transformation 4.6-83:

Advance the development of a modern and sustainable funding structure for public post-secondary education.

Background

Public post-secondary operations and adult literacy programs in NL are funded primarily through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD). Memorial University and CNA receive operational grant funding from Government on an annual basis as part of the provincial budget process. Institutions in this province, however, like many other sectors, have been experiencing increased financial pressures. Concerns were expressed by stakeholders, including the inflationary costs impacting the sector, the downward trends of government operational funding, the impact of long-term tuition freezes in the province, the importance of maintaining reasonable tuition rates for learners, growing maintenance and information technology costs, and the impacts of recent federal government decisions regarding caps on international students.

The changing financial landscape for post-secondary education locally, nationally, and globally is challenging. Institutions and sectors are looking to the levers they have to enhance financial sustainability into the future. In general, recommendations in post-secondary environments are centred around:

- Cost management: operational efficiency, budgeting and forecasting;
- Strengthening and diversifying revenue streams;
- Strategic planning: long-term financial planning and risk management;
- Stakeholder engagement: transparent communication and collaboration;
- Research: growing research revenues and other revenue streams through entrepreneurship and commercialization; and
- Innovation and adaptation: technology to improve efficiencies and adaptation to change.

With many initiatives already in progress, there are opportunities to increase collaboration and support the long-term financial sustainability of the public post-secondary sector. Following legislative changes in November 2021, which repealed section 38(1) of the Memorial University Act, efforts are underway to grant the Auditor General unrestricted access to Memorial University. At the public college level, work is ongoing in terms of

financial planning and risk management to help CNA address both current and future financial challenges. There have been advancements in governance capacities at the institutional levels, improvements in performance measurement systems, and increased revenue generation by public post-secondary institutions through research and innovation funding. The ongoing work by the Auditor General and across institutions is expected to inform the development of a modernized public post-secondary funding framework.

4.6-83 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.6-83.a Continue to implement Auditor General performance recommendations to support increased operational and cost management efficiencies.
- 4.6-83.b Establish a modernized public post-secondary funding framework.
- 4.6-83.c Optimize federal government engagement and funding opportunities.
- 4.6-83.d Post-secondary institutions work collaboratively with industry to increase industry partnership and sponsorship.
- 4.6-83.e Further advance general revenue diversification opportunities (e.g., fundraising, global education opportunities, research and innovation partnerships, partnerships with industry for Innovation Hubs).
- 4.6-83.f Establish strategic infrastructure strategies to modernize footprints.
- 4.6-83.g Post-secondary institutions increase partnerships to optimize access to/leveraging for funding with particular emphasis on programs supporting vulnerable populations.
- 4.6-83.h Post-secondary institutions increase global education and collaboration efforts to increase revenue options and grow research and innovation capacity.

Theme 4.7: Increasing Educational Opportunities for Older Adults

Increasing educational opportunities for older adults is essential in today's rapidly evolving world. By raising awareness and delivering relevant and practical programming tailored to their needs, we can empower older adults to stay engaged and active in their communities and in a changing labour market.

The Accord heard from Seniors concerned about the number of older workers being phased out of the workforce and those choosing to re-enter the labour market, often with a skills deficit. Concerns were also expressed about the lack of recognition of the role older workers can play in meeting upcoming labour force demands. Examples were provided on how older workers retiring from a career in the fishing industry could transition to the tourism industry in their local area if appropriate and accessible training and supports were available.

During the engagement process, several people indicated that older workers, needing reskilling or upskilling, may become the largest group of registrants in provincial post-secondary institutions. Other concerns were raised about the entrance requirements for post-secondary programs and the barriers older workers encounter in recognizing prior learning. The potential of micro-credentials for upskilling without leaving current jobs was discussed, along with the need for flexibility and hybrid learning models, as many older learners cannot leave their communities for regional education centers. For older residents not continuing to work, there is an increasing need for training in digital and financial literacy to access online services and protect themselves from online fraud and scams.

Overall, older individuals were identified as a key demographic for post-secondary education providers, helping meet future labour market challenges. Enhancing the accessibility and flexibility of course options, and providing necessary support systems, ensures older learners can achieve their educational goals. Promoting lifelong learning fosters continuous growth and supports sustainable labour market planning, benefiting individuals, communities, and the workforce.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 4.7-84:

Increase awareness and delivery of relevant and practical programming for older adults.

Background

Increasing awareness and delivery of relevant and practical educational programming for older adults is an important step in supporting their continued education. By identifying the intentions of older adults to continue working beyond 60–65 years of age and uncovering any educational barriers and opportunities that need attention, the education ecosystem can enhance and expand program offerings focused on upskilling or reskilling to help older adults remain in or re-enter the workforce.

Strengthening partnerships between government, academia, and industry will enable the development of labour forecasts specific to older workers seeking to extend their careers and align training options with regional needs.

4.7-84 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

4.7-84.a Survey workers currently in the 50–64 age group in the province to identify their intentions to continue working beyond 60–65 years of age, and any educational barriers and opportunities that require consideration.

4.7-84.b Increase offerings to support essential skills and foundational literacy skills (digital, financial, etc.).



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 4.7-84.c** Increase program offerings for older adults, specifically focused on upskilling or reskilling to remain in, or re-enter, the workforce.
- 4.7-84.d** Increase opportunities for assessment and recognition of prior learning gained through experience to adjust programs/requirements for completion/certification.
- 4.7-84.e** Increase partnerships among government, academia, and businesses to develop labour forecasts specific for older workers and to align the development and delivery of training options—i.e., focused on regional levels with identification of targeted transition options for workers (e.g., fishery to aquaculture or tourism).
- 4.7-84.f** Integrate health and wellness education (ergonomics, stress management, mental health, etc.) into training programs to support older workers as they upskill or reskill to stay in the workforce longer.



Call to Transformation 4-7.85:

Increase the accessibility and flexibility of course options with the supports necessary to successfully meet learning outcomes.

Background

Increasing the accessibility and flexibility of course options, along with the necessary supports, is also essential in helping older adults to successfully meet their learning outcomes. Allowing older individuals to participate in upskilling programs without having to leave their jobs or communities can increase the number of individuals willing to extend

their careers. It can also support increased income levels as older workers get the skills they need to stay relevant or advance in their work environment.

Rapid technological advancements over the next ten years will undoubtedly increase demands from employers for work-based upskilling, particularly for older workers, presenting an opportunity for post-secondary providers in the province willing to offer contract-based technology training in the work environment.

For retired seniors, lifelong learning opportunities will be key in maintaining the knowledge and skills required to manage daily life activities. At the community level, there are opportunities to bring knowledge and resources to seniors gathering in fifty plus groups, municipally-led seniors programs, and community social events.

By offering a variety of flexible learning options, we can accommodate the diverse needs of older adults seeking to reskill or upskill as they seek to stay in the workforce longer and ensure that older residents have the skills they need to live more safely and independently in their communities.

4.7-85 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.7-85.a Ensure that learning materials are available in accessible formats (online, audio, etc.).
- 4.7-85.b Increase partnerships with senior and community-based organizations to bring foundational literacy learning opportunities to older adults.
- 4.7-85.c Develop flexible and ongoing technology training options to support older workers in staying competitive in the workplace.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 4.7-85.d Increase flexible learning options (e.g., micro-credentials, bridging programs, part-time courses, synchronous online formats) to support flexibility in learning for older adults wanting to reskill/upskill.



Call to Transformation 4.7-86:

Increase options for, and promotion of, learning across the lifespan.

Background

Research clearly identifies the benefits of lifelong learning in the overall well-being of individuals (Fang & Sim, 2024; Waller et al., 2021). Decreased risks of dementia, increased rates of living independently into old age, reduction in social isolation, increased confidence and self-esteem, and overall increases in healthy behaviours are all benefits that accrue when individuals actively engage in lifelong learning activities.

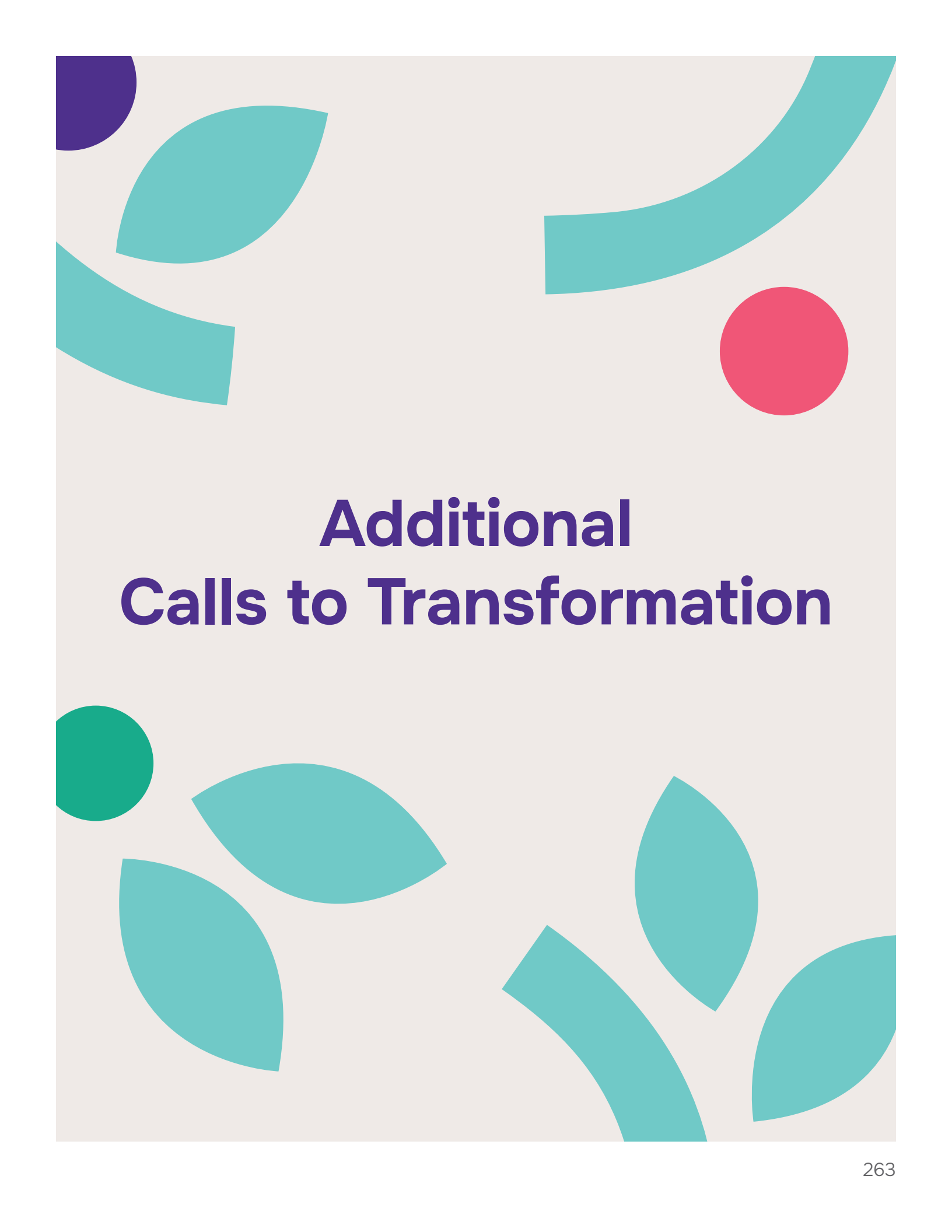
The Accord heard from stakeholders who expressed concerns about the nature and variety of learning options specifically targeted to older individuals and the barriers that often prevent these individuals from participation. Stakeholders stressed the importance of the availability of accessible formats and bringing the learning opportunities to the community level, where learners already gather. Options to support intergenerational learning were also encouraged, particularly focused on ways designed to grow appreciation for the strengths that seniors have and reduce the myths that drive ageism. “Creating pathways for intergenerational knowledge exchange is essential to improving an individual’s health and well-being as they age” (Stakeholder comment).

Promoting and expanding options for lifelong learning is vital in fostering a culture of continuous personal and PL. By encouraging individuals to engage in learning at all stages of life, we can help them adapt to a changing world and evolving job markets, pursue new interests, and maintain overall health.

4.7-86 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 4.7-86.a Identify and address barriers to increased participation of older individuals in lifelong learning.
 - 4.7-86.b Increase programming designed to ensure that older individuals have the skills/knowledge necessary to continue essential life functions—e.g., book appointments, online banking, etc.
 - 4.7-86.c Develop resources (e.g., web page, pamphlets, etc.) that provide a summary of programs and delivery options available, including career paths for those looking to reskill.
 - 4.7-86.d Develop programs that facilitate learning between different generations, including mentorship options.
 - 4.7-86.e Deliver learning opportunities through social and community activities, where possible, to keep older individuals connected and engaged.
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The background is a light beige color. It features several abstract shapes: a small purple semi-circle in the top left, a teal semi-circle in the top right, a teal semi-circle in the middle left, a pink circle in the middle right, a teal circle in the bottom left, and several teal leaf-like shapes and semi-circles in the bottom right.

Additional Calls to Transformation

Calls to Transformation from the Education Accord NL Co-Chairs

Introduction

The Education Accord NL represents a pivotal 10-year initiative by the provincial government, serving as a transformative roadmap to address the evolving educational needs of the province. This landmark plan emphasizes Calls to Transformation and Pathways to Action, creating a robust framework that supports individual growth and societal progress over the next decade and beyond. This plan highlights transformative initiatives and actionable strategies designed to establish a solid foundation for personal development and societal advancement over the next ten years and beyond. By focusing on educational achievement, lifelong learning, and overall well-being, the Accord aims to enrich the social and economic lives of children, youth, and adult learners, preparing them to succeed in an evolving society and a competitive global landscape.

Central to this initiative were the guiding lenses that provided a framework to align efforts, decision-making processes, and values. These included Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; Sustainability; Transformation and Responsiveness; Integration; Stakeholder and Community Collaboration; Active Professional Learning and Engagement; and Digital Literacy. These lenses provided clarity and direction throughout the engagement process, ensuring a cohesive approach.

The Calls to Transformation in this section are issued by the Accord Co-Chairs and further expand on key priorities, including equity, diversity, and inclusion; collaboration and alignment; community partnerships; health and well-being in educational contexts; early learning and child development; educational engagement and transformation within K-12; and post-secondary learning across the lifespan. These Calls to Transformation build on the work of the Pillar Committees, reflect feedback to the Co-chairs from extensive partners and stakeholders, and reinforce the Accord's commitment to collaboration, innovation, and sustainable development in education. The Education Accord Advisory Team, alongside

Pillar Committees, leveraged multiple engagement streams—dialogue, consultations, focus groups, symposia, public surveys, and written submissions—to gather insights from content experts, educators, families/caregivers, learners, and community partners. This inclusive, broad approach highlights the critical role of collaboration and shared effort in building consensus.

Through its comprehensive 10-year outlook, the Education Accord NL sets the stage for transformative change, ensuring that the education system meets the diverse and dynamic needs of learners and communities. By fostering inclusivity, collaboration, and resilience, the Accord paves the way for a brighter, more equitable future for all.

Calls to Transformation



Call to Transformation 5-87:

Integrate Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and ways of being as foundational elements in the delivery of education across early childhood, K-12, and post-secondary systems.

Background

Incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and perspectives into instructional practices and learning opportunities is crucial for several reasons. By learning about Indigenous cultures, languages, traditions, and worldviews, learners develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the diversity that exists within society, thus promoting inclusion and breaking down barriers. It is also necessary for learners to understand the history and contributions of the Indigenous peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador, ensuring accurate representation and acknowledgment. Through Indigenous ways of knowing and being, valuable insights into many fields such as science, medicine, governance, and philosophy can be shared.

Furthermore, having Indigenous perspectives as part of learning opportunities is a step towards reconciliation and healing, acknowledging past injustices, and demonstrating a commitment to valuing and preserving Indigenous cultures and knowledge. This recognition can empower Indigenous learners, helping them to see their identities and heritage reflected and respected in their educational journey.

By valuing and integrating diverse ways of knowing, learning becomes more inclusive and representative of Indigenous learners' experiences. This approach supports the educational success and well-being of Indigenous learners and fosters a learning environment where every learner feels valued and respected.

Sub-Calls to Transformation 5-87:

5-87.1: Well-Being

Prioritize mental health and wellness as a foundational element of education, beginning in early childhood. This includes recognizing and incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing to provide culturally responsive, strengths-based mental health supports that reflect the needs of Indigenous learners and communities. Continued investment in providing accessible, affordable, community-based childcare that supports Indigenous families/caregivers and promotes culturally relevant early learning opportunities.

5-87.1 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-87.1.a** Create professional learning (PL) opportunities for educators that focus on culturally responsive teaching and mental health and well-being.
- 5-87.1.b** Collaborate with Indigenous communities to integrate elders and traditional knowledge holders into schools, offering mentorship, cultural support, and guidance for both learners and educators.
- 5-87.1.c** Pilot culturally informed initiatives that incorporate Indigenous values such as community healing, respect, and shared responsibility, including restitution and restorative justice practices.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-87.1.d Enhance the use of technology to support remote learning in Indigenous and rural communities, ensuring equitable access to educational resources and PL opportunities.
- 5-87.1.e Develop collaborative partnerships with Indigenous communities to co-create relevant, culturally responsive teaching materials that reflect the unique needs and cultures of the community, emphasizing practical skills, land-based learning, and cultural traditions that align with both provincial and local needs.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-87.1.f Integrate a comprehensive, province-wide framework for mental health and wellness that incorporates Indigenous-centered approaches, restorative practices, and community-based support services.
- 5-87.1.g Establish ongoing partnerships between schools, Indigenous communities, and mental health organizations to ensure that mental health supports are sustainable, culturally informed, and accessible across all schools in the province.

5-87.2: Strengthen Indigenous Representation and Culture in Education

Recruiting Indigenous educators in Newfoundland and Labrador’s education system is essential to ensure that Indigenous learners see themselves reflected in their educators and the curriculum. It also enhances the educational experience for all learners by fostering a deeper understanding of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives. By prioritizing the recruitment, retention, and PL of Indigenous educators, we can create a more culturally responsive environment that honours Indigenous ways of knowing and being. This approach will equip educators with the tools to provide a supportive and relevant learning environment for learners. As one school administrator noted, “NL schools need to provide culturally responsive resources and support led by the community to new teachers in coastal areas to help them acclimatize to teaching in Labrador.”



5-87.2 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-87.2.a Identify barriers and opportunities for increasing the recruitment and retention of Indigenous educators in both urban, rural and remote schools across Newfoundland and Labrador and within the Faculty of Education.
- 5-87.2.b Partner with Indigenous communities to create mentorship programs that connect Indigenous educators with those in training, supporting their development and retention.
- 5-87.2.c Collaborate with Indigenous communities across Newfoundland and Labrador to redesign and expand Indigenous Education courses within the Teacher Education programs at Memorial University, ensuring these courses are rooted in Indigenous perspectives and knowledge.
- 5-87.2.d Strengthen collaborations with the Faculty of Education, Indigenous Elders, and knowledge keepers to support the Indigenization of the teacher education curriculum, ensuring it is culturally relevant, respectful, and meaningful.
- 5-87.2.e Re-introduce an Indigenous Education Advisory body within the Faculty of Education to support ongoing Indigenization efforts.
- 5-87.2.f Collaborate with Indigenous organizations, Memorial University, and other educational institutions to curate a repository of Indigenous-focused resources and courses for educators across the province.
- 5-87.2.g Partner with Memorial University to promote the Indigenous Studies certificate program and incentivize educators to enroll.



Medium-Term 2–5 years

- 5-87.2.h Partner with local Indigenous communities to create culturally responsive teaching practices that reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and being, ensuring that all educators feel supported in their work.
- 5-87.2.i Build a comprehensive, accessible online repository with modules on Indigenous knowledge, pedagogies, and culturally responsive teaching practices.
- 5-87.2.j Expand the scope of the certificate program to include advanced courses for educators seeking deeper expertise in Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-87.2.k Promote the Indigenous education repository as a central part of ongoing PL for all educators in the province.
- 5-87.2.l Expand the repository to include not just courses but also case studies, research, and tools for implementing culturally responsive teaching across all subjects and grade levels.
- 5-87.2.m Make the Indigenous Studies certificate program a central component of ongoing PL for educators, ensuring that all educators across the province have access to high-quality, culturally relevant resources.

5-87.3: Curriculum

The development of curriculum that authentically represents the histories, cultures, and contributions of Indigenous peoples is essential, particularly within the context of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). This involves collaborating with local Indigenous communities to co-create educational content that respects and honours their values, traditions, and knowledge systems. In addition to recognizing the distinct cultural heritage of the Indigenous peoples of NL, it is crucial to integrate Indigenous perspectives into

various subject areas—such as history, science, language arts, and social studies—across the entire curriculum. This approach not only enhances cultural literacy but also promotes deeper respect and understanding among all learners. By aligning with the NL curriculum, these efforts will ensure that Indigenous learners are better supported in their educational journeys while equipping all learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to a more just, inclusive, and culturally aware society.

5-87.3 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-87.3.a** Establish a formal process for collaborating with Indigenous groups to revise and update content, ensuring that their input is integral in creating accurate, respectful, and culturally informed educational resources.
- 5-87.3.b** Provide PL for educators on Indigenous land-based learning methods and how to incorporate them into existing curricula.
- 5-87.3.c** Launch pilot projects that integrate land-based learning into the curriculum, emphasizing the central role of the land in Indigenous cultures and its vital connection to knowledge transmission.
- 5-87.3.d** Identify gaps and challenges in current early childhood education programs, particularly in Indigenous communities, to ensure they are culturally responsive and inclusive of Indigenous languages, traditions, and ways of knowing.
- 5-87.3.e** Pilot culturally responsive early learning programs in Indigenous communities that integrate language, art, and traditions, fostering meaningful participation by Indigenous children and families/caregivers.
- 5-87.3.f** Develop community-based initiatives that engage learners in Indigenous-led projects such as land-based education, language preservation, and cultural activities, strengthening their connections to community and culture while promoting a deeper understanding of Indigenous ways of life.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-87.3.g Formalize Indigenous consultation processes for ongoing curriculum development, ensuring that Indigenous groups have a meaningful role in shaping the educational materials that reflect their communities' histories and values.
- 5-87.3.h Work with Indigenous groups to co-create supplementary materials, such as Indigenous-authored texts and multimedia resources, that provide accurate representations of Indigenous experiences, cultures, and knowledge.
- 5-87.3.i Develop a comprehensive framework for land-based learning that integrates Indigenous teachings with provincial curriculum objectives, providing all educators with the tools and resources to incorporate this practice into their classrooms.
- 5-87.3.j Foster partnerships with Indigenous communities to ensure that the curriculum reflects local knowledge, languages, and traditions while providing opportunities for learners to apply what they've learned in real-world settings.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-87.3.k Promote the inclusion of Indigenous voices in all stages of curriculum development, ensuring that the process is continuous, reflective of evolving cultural knowledge, and aligned with community needs.
- 5-87.3.l Ensure that Indigenous representation and cultural understanding are core components of the curriculum at all grade levels, making it a standard educational practice across Newfoundland and Labrador.
- 5-87.3.m Ensure that all early childhood education programs across the province provide culturally responsive environments that incorporate Indigenous languages, cultural practices, and family/caregiver engagement as core elements.



5-87.3.n Create long-term, sustainable partnerships between schools and Indigenous communities, ensuring that Indigenous knowledge, culture, and practices are embedded throughout the curriculum.



Call to Transformation 5-88:

Create a full-time facilitator position at the 7-12 level that works across 7-12 and in collaboration with guidance counsellors to empower youth to make informed decisions about their futures.

Background

During engagement meetings, stakeholders consistently highlighted the need to better support learners and families/caregivers in navigating complex educational pathways. In response, there is a clear need for a dedicated provincial facilitator who will work directly with guidance counsellors in schools serving grades 7-12.

This single provincial facilitator will collaborate closely with school-based guidance counsellors to enhance support for learners during these critical high school years. Their role will focus on helping learners make informed decisions about course selection, academic planning, and post-secondary or career pathways.

The facilitator will also help equip guidance counsellors with up-to-date resources and best practices, while providing targeted assistance to learners when needed. This includes connecting learners to key supports such as financial aid, mental health services, and employment opportunities. Additionally, the facilitator will contribute to assist guidance counsellors with setting and refining academic and career goals with learners, advocating for learners facing systemic or individual barriers.

By centralizing this expertise at the provincial level, the facilitator will serve as a bridge between policy and practice, ensuring consistent, personalized, and equitable guidance is available across all secondary schools.

5-88 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-88.a** Provide professional learning for guidance counsellors in schools with grades 7-12 on the post-secondary transition process, to ensure they have the knowledge, tools, and resources to effectively support learners with post-secondary planning. Key areas of focus include navigating the application process, exploring career pathways, and understanding financial planning for post-secondary education.
- 5-88.b** Review and update current course selection sheets to ensure they are clear, accessible, and aligned with post-secondary entrance requirements for all NL-based institutions, including technical, college, and university programs.

Long-Term 5–10 years

- 5-88.c** Foster a system that engages learners in post-secondary planning before starting high school, ensuring they develop a comprehensive understanding of the connections between their high school education and future post-secondary options.
- 5-88.d** Create a seamless integration between high school course selection and post-secondary admission requirements, ensuring that learners are prepared for various pathways from an early stage in their education.



Call to Transformation 5-89:

Establish formal mechanisms such as formal agreements, memoranda of understanding, collaborative governance structures, and communication protocols to ensure the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), the Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador (CSFP), and Indigenous-led schools work collaboratively to ensure achieved shared goals.

Background

Through ongoing engagement with educators and educational leaders, it has become evident that there is a strong and consistent call for more systematic and sustained collaboration among EECD, CSFP, and Indigenous-led schools. Stakeholders emphasized that deeper collaboration is essential to align policies and programs, share resources, and take joint responsibility for improving learner outcomes.

To respond to this need, establishing formal mechanisms—such as memoranda of understanding (MOUs), collaborative governance structures, and clear communication protocols—is critical. These structures will not only support consistent and transparent communication, but also foster trust, enable the co-development of shared goals, and strengthen alignment across the education system.

Such formalized collaboration will also allow for the coordinated delivery of professional learning (PL), the exchange of best practices, and the strategic sharing and analysis of data to drive continuous improvement. By embedding these mechanisms into the fabric of the education system, we can support the creation of a more effective, equitable, and unified learning ecosystem that benefits all learners in the province.

5-89 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-89.a Establish formal agreements, such as MOUs, between EECD, CSFP, and Indigenous-led schools, outlining mutual goals for collaboration and shared responsibility.
- 5-89.b Develop a collaborative governance structure that includes representatives from each educational institution to oversee and ensure the alignment of goals and priorities.
- 5-89.c Begin joint PL opportunities for educators across these institutions, such as cross-sector workshops, webinars, and conferences, to ensure that best practices are shared and educators are learning from one another.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-89.d Expand the formal agreements to include comprehensive shared resources, such as digital curricula and assessment tools, ensuring that educators across the province have access to materials and strategies that meet diverse learner needs.
- 5-89.e Foster ongoing communication protocols between EECD, CSFP, and Indigenous-led schools to enable frequent exchange of information, ideas, and educational insights.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-89.f Create long-term partnerships in which all educational institutions regularly collaborate to ensure continuous improvement in educational practices, curriculum innovation, and resource sharing.



5-89.g Ensure that PL is not only shared but also consistently evaluated for effectiveness, with educators from all sectors working together to adapt to emerging needs and trends in education.



Call to Transformation 5-90:

Adopt deliberate strategies to ensure learner engagement in the development and revision of curriculum in K-12 and post-secondary education.

Background

Adopting deliberate strategies to ensure learner engagement in curriculum revision and development is essential for maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of education. When learners are involved in the process, the curriculum can better reflect their needs, interests, and future aspirations. This relevance makes learning more meaningful and directly applicable to real-world scenarios, fostering a deeper connection between learners and their studies.

Learner engagement in curriculum development also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards their education. When learners have a voice in shaping what they learn, they become more invested in their educational journey. This increased motivation can lead to higher levels of engagement, participation, and academic success. Additionally, involving learners in the process helps them develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills, which are essential for their personal and professional growth. These experiences empower learners to become proactive, self-directed learners who are better prepared to navigate future challenges.

Lastly, engaging learners in curriculum revision creates a valuable feedback loop that can drive continuous improvement in the education system. Learners can provide unique insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the current curriculum, helping educators identify areas for enhancement.

5-90 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-90.a** Create advisory groups across grades 7-12 and post-secondary education that are representative of diverse learner populations, including learners from various socio-economic backgrounds, cultural communities, and academic disciplines.
- 5-90.b** Hold structured consultations through surveys, focus groups, and town halls to gather learner feedback from learners in grades 3-12 on current curriculum offerings, identifying areas that need to be updated or improved.
- 5-90.c** Initiate partnerships with student unions, student government bodies, and youth councils to ensure a broad and inclusive range of learner voices is heard in the curriculum development process.
- 5-90.d** Begin incorporating student representatives into policy development processes, particularly in areas related to curriculum design, to ensure that learners' needs and aspirations are reflected in educational policies.
- 5-90.e** Establish a system where learner feedback is reviewed regularly, and actions are taken to address concerns and suggestions, demonstrating that learner input has a meaningful impact on curriculum development.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-90.f** Create formal pathways for learner involvement in grades 4-12 curriculum planning, development, and feedback and embed continuous feedback mechanisms to sustain learner engagement in the curriculum revision process.
- 5-90.g** Establish cross-sector committees with learners, educators, and administrators to align the curriculum with learner needs and educational standards.
- 5-90.h** Use feedback data to monitor the effectiveness of curriculum changes and adjust strategies to improve alignment with learner needs and interests.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-90.i** Prioritize learner involvement in curriculum development through formal policies, ensuring that each educational institution regularly integrates learner participation in curriculum planning and revision at all stages.
- 5-90.j** Make learner engagement in curriculum development and revision a core element of educator and faculty professional learning, ensuring that educators are equipped to facilitate learner involvement in meaningful ways.
- 5-90.k** Foster a culture of continuous improvement through regular student-led reviews of educational practices, ensuring that the curriculum remains responsive to changing learner needs and societal demands.
- 5-90.l** Create structures for feedback loops that enable learners to track the impact of their input on curriculum revisions, helping to reinforce the value of their engagement in the educational process.



Call to Transformation 5-91:

Enhance and expand Horizon Academy (Alternate School) through strengthened collaboration with the Department of Justice and Public Safety (JPS) and the Department of Families and Affordability (FAMA) to better support youth involved in the justice system. This improved hybrid, transitional model will offer trauma-informed, flexible learning pathways that integrate restorative practices, wraparound mental health supports, and life-skills development. Programming will be tailored to each learner's needs, supporting both reintegration into the public school system and smooth transitions to post-secondary education, training, or the workforce.

Background

Horizon Academy currently serves youth facing significant barriers to educational success, many of whom are involved with the justice system. These learners often experience disrupted schooling, trauma, and systemic challenges that require more than traditional educational responses. To meet their complex needs, Horizon Academy must evolve into a fully integrated, trauma-informed transitional school model that strengthens collaboration with JPS and FAMA.

Research shows that promotion, prevention, and early intervention strategies in youth mental health and addictions lead to improved academic and life outcomes (School Mental Health Ontario, 2024). A school model rooted in restorative practices and mental health care provides a structured, stigma-free environment where learners can build resilience while receiving wraparound supports, including counselling, therapy, and life skills training. Embedding these services into the daily school experience ensures consistent, holistic care and greater continuity than external or fragmented supports (National Association of School Psychologists, 2020).

By deepening its integration with justice and social services, Horizon Academy can become a critical bridge between custody or supervision and a learner's successful return to a mainstream school environment, post-secondary education, or the workforce. Programming must be flexible and individualized, focusing on personal growth, accountability, and long-term stability. Through this transformation, Horizon Academy can play a vital role in interrupting cycles of justice involvement and empowering youth to rebuild their educational and life trajectories.

5-91 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-91.a** Formalize partnerships with JPS and FAMA through MOUs outlining shared goals, roles, and protocols for youth referrals, case management, and data sharing.
- 5-91.b** Conduct a comprehensive program review of current practices at Horizon Academy to identify gaps and opportunities for trauma-informed and restorative-based practices.
- 5-91.c** Introduce on-site mental health and social work supports, including access to counselling, crisis intervention, and clinical consultation embedded in daily programming.
- 5-91.d** Provide professional learning to all staff working at Horizon Academy in trauma-informed approaches, restorative practices, and cultural responsiveness.
- 5-91.e** Pilot flexible, individualized learning plans for learners transitioning from justice settings, incorporating academic, therapeutic, and vocational goals.
- 5-91.f** Develop early transition planning protocols for reintegration into mainstream schools, post-secondary institutions, or employment pathways, starting upon learner entry at Horizon Academy.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-91.g** Create a multi-disciplinary support team (educators, clinicians, justice liaisons, social workers) embedded within Horizon Academy for ongoing care coordination.
- 5-91.h** Develop formal re-entry pathways to mainstream, community schools, including phased reintegration, peer mentoring, and joint support planning between Horizon Academy and receiving schools.



- 5-91.i Establish partnerships with local employers and training providers to build real-world workforce exposure and transitional employment opportunities.
- 5-91.j Introduce learner voice and family/caregiver engagement strategies, ensuring youth and caregivers are central to planning and decision-making.
- 5-91.k Evaluate outcomes through metrics such as academic progress, reduction in justice involvement, attendance, and learner well-being.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-91.l Position Horizon Academy as a provincial model for trauma-informed, justice-connected alternative education, with research-informed practices guiding replication elsewhere.
- 5-91.m Advocate for policy alignment and sustainable funding, ensuring ongoing collaboration across education, justice, and social services sectors.
- 5-91.n Develop an integrated digital case management system for real-time information sharing and collaborative planning between agencies.
- 5-91.o Establish a post-secondary and employment transition hub, coordinating support for learners up to two years after leaving Horizon Academy.
- 5-91.p Embed Horizon Academy in provincial youth justice reform efforts, emphasizing prevention, education continuity, and reintegration.
- 5-91.q Contribute to national and international dialogue on alternative education models that reduce recidivism and promote educational equity for justice-involved youth.



Call to Transformation 5-92:

Review and redesign the roles and responsibilities within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)—including the K-12 Programs and Services Division, Student Services, and all school-based support positions—to ensure consistent, inclusive, and responsive support for all K-12 learners.

Background

In recent years, Newfoundland and Labrador’s education system has undergone significant structural changes aimed at improving collaboration, efficiency, and educational outcomes. A key milestone in this transformation is the integration of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) into the provincial Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD). This process is designed to create a more cohesive, transparent, and accountable education system—one that is better positioned to meet the diverse and evolving needs of learners, educators, and families/caregivers across the province.

As part of this integration, there is an urgent need to review and redefine roles and responsibilities across EECD, including all positions in the K-12 Programs and Services Division, Student Services, and those working directly with educators and learners in K-12 schools. A realignment of departmental functions and school-based supports can help ensure better use of funding, human and physical resources, infrastructure, and evidence-based decision-making. It also offers an opportunity to build a culture of innovation and responsiveness, guided by data and best practices.

One critical area requiring focused attention within this broader transformation is the role of English as an Additional Language (EAL) professionals, including EAL Itinerants, Coaches, and Guidance Counsellors. As the linguistic and cultural diversity of the learner population continues to grow, these professionals have become vital to creating inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive learning environments. They support multilingual learners in developing the language and academic skills needed for success, while also working closely with educators and families/caregivers to foster engagement and belonging.

Currently, EAL personnel are deployed across schools to provide direct language instruction, consultative support, and family/caregiver engagement services. However, their structure, qualifications, and integration with school-based support teams vary, creating inconsistency in service delivery. Given the increasing complexity of multilingual learners' needs, there is a pressing need to review and clarify how EAL professionals work alongside reading specialists, instructional resource teachers, student success teachers, student services teaching and learning assistants, and school counsellors.

A comprehensive review of the qualifications, roles, deployment, and impact of EAL personnel will ensure these professionals are positioned to support the academic, linguistic, and social-emotional development of multilingual learners. This work is essential for fostering inclusive learning environments that reflect the province's diversity and align with broader departmental goals for system-wide coherence, innovation, and learner success.

5-92 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-92.a Launch a comprehensive review of roles and responsibilities across EECD in the K-12 Programs and Services Division, and positions in Student Services that provide support to K-12.
- 5-92.b Map current collaboration structures between provincial personnel and school-based teams to assess effectiveness and inform realignment.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-92.c Redefine qualifications, responsibilities, and collaboration protocols for all restructured roles, ensuring they align with learner needs and inclusive education goals.
- 5-92.d Develop a framework that aligns K-12 positions in EECD with inclusive, learner-centred priorities across all levels in the system.



- 5-92.e** Implement deployment models that ensure equitable access to specialized services—including EAL and learner support—across all K-12 school contexts.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-92.f** Fully implement an integrated framework that aligns K-12 positions in EECD with inclusive, learner-centred priorities across all levels in the system.
- 5-92.g** Monitor and evaluate long-term impacts on learner achievement, well-being, and system-wide collaboration to inform ongoing refinements.



Call to Transformation 5-93:

Reimagine the design and construction of new schools and public education buildings by prioritizing sustainable physical structures, spaces, and infrastructure that support long-term environmental, social, and educational goals.

Background

Based on feedback from many stakeholders at all levels of education, from early learning to post-secondary education, a clear theme emerged about the need to have new and existing learning spaces be accessible, usable, and inclusive of all learners, regardless of abilities or disabilities*. Universal design is one approach that aims to create environments that can be used by everyone to the greatest extent possible without the need for adaptation

**Disabilities refer to a range of visible and invisible conditions that, in interaction with barriers, may limit full and equal participation in society. It includes physical, sensory, intellectual, mental health, and other impairments, and is shaped by social and environmental factors, not just medical diagnoses. (See glossary [p.389] for full definition).*

or specialized design. This approach helps eliminate barriers that might prevent some learners from fully participating in educational activities, promoting equal opportunities for learning and engagement.

Implementing universal design in physical learning spaces also enhances the overall functionality and comfort of the environment. By considering diverse needs and preferences, UD principles ensure that spaces are flexible and adaptable, accommodating a wide range of users. Moreover, following universal design principles in building designs aligns with best practices in architecture and construction, promoting sustainability and long-term usability. By designing spaces that are accessible and adaptable from the outset, schools and institutions can avoid costly retrofits and modifications in the future. This proactive approach ensures that educational facilities remain functional and relevant as the needs of the learner population evolve over time. This Call to Transformation aligns with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report on school accessibility and universal design (UNESCO, 2020).

5-93 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-93.a** Begin incorporating UD principles in the planning stages of new school constructions, ensuring spaces are accessible and adaptable for all learners.
- 5-93.b** Establish guidelines for accessible, inclusive school building designs that accommodate a wide range of abilities and needs, while enhancing well-being and fostering a positive educational atmosphere.
- 5-93.c** Develop guidelines for culturally responsive design that reflect the diversity of the communities schools serve.
- 5-93.d** Begin integrating design elements that support physical and mental well-being, such as flexible learning spaces, quiet zones, and open areas for collaboration and social interaction.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-93.e Fully integrate UD principles in all new construction projects and renovation plans for educational facilities.
- 5-93.f Prioritize the integration of well-being principles in all educational facility designs, ensuring that every new school or renovation prioritizes the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of both learners and educators.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-93.g Expand the use of sustainable, eco-friendly materials in school construction by prioritizing energy-efficient designs, incorporating green spaces, natural lighting, and renewable energy sources in new buildings and major renovations, while regularly assessing the cultural responsiveness of these spaces to meet the diverse needs of learners and staff.



Call to Transformation 5-94:

Strengthen transition programs for learners with School Achievement Certificates to better equip them for success in post-secondary education, employment, and independent living, ensuring a seamless pathway to adulthood and personal growth.

Background

A learner who does not meet minimum graduation requirements, but who does meet the goals and objectives outlined in his/her Individual Education Plan (IEP), as determined by the Program Planning Team, is eligible for a School Achievement Certificate. Students

with School Achievement Certificates may face unique challenges when transitioning to jobs and post-secondary institutions from high school. These learners would have had individualized education plans (IEPs) that provided tailored support to meet their specific learning needs. As they move beyond high school, it is crucial to continue providing program supports to ensure their successful transition to life beyond high school. Research has shown that a number of in-school activities or supports, such as career technical education, inclusion in general education, life skills instruction, paid employment/work experience, self-determination skill instruction, are predictors of success in terms of education, employment, and independent living (Mazzotti et.al., 2021; Vermeire et al., 2022).

One of the primary reasons for providing program supports is to bridge the gap between the structured support systems in high school and the more independent nature of post-secondary education and the workforce. For example, some strategies to support transition may include creating detailed transition portfolios, hosting transition fairs to help learners prepare for post-secondary education, providing career counselling and job placement services, and offering skill-building workshops. These initiatives help learners understand their strengths and needs, explore potential pathways, and develop the skills necessary for success in new settings. By offering tailored support, educators and program providers can help learners with school leaving certificates achieve their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

5-94 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-94.a Develop and implement structured transition programs that offer career counselling, job placement services, and skill-building workshops, while partnering with industry and community organizations to create work placements, internships, and job shadowing opportunities for learners during high school.
- 5-94.b Begin pilot programs that focus on building employability skills, self-determination, and independence, with a focus on inclusive practices for learners with disabilities and other distinct challenges.
- 5-94.c Explore post-secondary programming for individuals with diverse cognitive abilities.



- 5-94.d** At the beginning of high school, provide families/caregivers with informational resources outlining post-graduation pathways for learners with School Achievement Certificates (employment, post-secondary, independent living), along with clear guidelines and step-by-step navigation tools to support the transition process.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-94.e** Expand the transition programs to include personalized support plans for each learner, based on their individual goals and IEPs.
- 5-94.f** Create a centralized, online platform where caregivers can access up-to-date resources, transition tools, and information on programs available to learners with School Achievement Certificates.
- 5-94.g** Create a system that connects learners with local resources for continued learning opportunities, such as workshops, certifications, or part-time courses that build skills for post-graduation life.
- 5-94.h** Strengthen partnerships with post-secondary institutions to offer opportunities for continued learning, such as dual-enrollment programs or vocational training aligned with career paths.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-94.i** Embed comprehensive transition programs to ensure all learners with School Achievement Certificates have access to career readiness resources, post-secondary counselling, and job placement support, preparing them with work experience and established pathways for ongoing education through apprenticeships, vocational programs, or post-secondary enrollment by graduation.
- 5-94.j** Continuously evaluate and refine transition programs based on feedback from learners, caregivers, and employers to ensure that the programs remain relevant and effective.



Call to Transformation 5-95:

Address the growing need for technology in K-12 schools, post-secondary institutions, and communities by developing a comprehensive approach that focuses on equitable access and long-term sustainability.

Background

Throughout the Accord engagement sessions, many stakeholders noted the need for learners to have access to up-to-date technology to enhance learning and empower them to adapt to rapidly changing living and work contexts. Recognizing the increasing necessity of technology in schools, post-secondary institutions, and communities by implementing a comprehensive strategy that emphasizes equitable access and long-term sustainability is essential for many reasons. Firstly, technology plays a crucial role in enhancing the learning experience and preparing learners for the digital age. By ensuring that all learners have access to necessary technology, educational institutions can bridge the digital divide, offering equal opportunities for learning and development. Providing equitable access to technology allows learners from diverse backgrounds to develop vital digital skills, engage with interactive learning resources, and participate in virtual collaboration.

A sustainable, long-term approach to incorporating technology in education and communities ensures that investments in technological infrastructure are not only effective but also durable. This involves considering the lifecycle of devices, maintenance, and support, along with training educators and community members to use technology effectively. By prioritizing sustainability, educational institutions can create resilient systems that adapt to evolving technological advancements and continue to meet the needs of future generations. This approach also encourages responsible resource use, reducing the environmental impact of technological waste and ensuring that technological progress contributes positively to the overall well-being of society.

5-95 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-95.a** Initiate programs to provide equitable access to technology in K-12 schools, post-secondary institutions, and the community.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-95.b** Expand access to necessary technology devices, ensuring every learner in K-12 schools has access to a computer or tablet and reliable internet connectivity.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-95.c** Establish a province-wide program that guarantees equitable access to technology for all learners, regardless of socioeconomic background or geographical location.



Call to Transformation 5-96:

Strengthen the role of public libraries to enhance their capacity to provide access to technology, support local artists and culture, connect to schools and other community groups, and promote learning across the lifespan.

Background

The libraries sector in Newfoundland and Labrador plays a critical role in fostering literacy across all age groups and learning levels, from early childhood experiences at Newfoundland and Labrador Public Libraries (NLPL), through K-12 school library learning commons, to the pivotal postsecondary libraries at Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic (CNA). This collaborative, integrated approach ensures that libraries support lifelong learning, continuing to be a vital resource that empowers individuals at every stage of their educational journey. A key focus of this ongoing effort is the delivery of digital multiliteracy tools, which are transformative, cost-effective resources that enhance literacy in our province.

Public libraries, in particular, are indispensable in bridging the digital divide by providing free access to technology and digital literacy programs. These services include connectivity, technology equipment, and facilities, alongside digital literacy training and support. By offering these resources, libraries ensure that individuals from diverse backgrounds have the opportunity to develop essential digital skills, access interactive learning materials, and collaborate within their communities. These services also play a crucial role in promoting social inclusion and empowering residents to participate fully in the digital world (Ashikuzzaman, 2024).

Moreover, public libraries are key hubs for local artists and cultural activities, offering spaces for exhibitions, performances, and workshops. By supporting these initiatives, libraries help preserve and celebrate diverse artistic expressions, enriching the cultural fabric of communities. The Canadian Urban Institute underscores the importance of libraries in fostering creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship, while also enhancing civic and community engagement (Canadian Urban Institute, 2023). By supporting local artists and cultural initiatives, libraries contribute to the cultural enrichment of their communities and help preserve and celebrate diverse artistic expressions.

Libraries also serve as vital connectors between schools and community groups, promoting collaboration and resource sharing. These partnerships are essential for strengthening community engagement, supporting educational growth, and enhancing the overall well-being of neighbourhoods (Ashikuzzaman, 2024). Public libraries' focus on lifelong learning through educational programs, workshops, and resources for all ages further solidifies their role in nurturing curiosity, critical thinking, and exploration (Häggström, 2004).

Strengthening the role of public libraries to enhance their capacity to provide access to technology, support local artists and culture, connect schools and other community groups, and promote learning across the lifespan is crucial to ensuring a vibrant, inclusive, and empowered community. Libraries remain essential spaces for creativity, education, and connection, offering transformative resources that meet the needs of all individuals throughout their lives.

5-96 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-96.a** Create a hub equipped with the necessary resources, technologies, and services, and develop targeted professional learning opportunities for educators and librarians to ensure the effective use of these resources, aligned with educational goals and needs.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-96.b** Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the hub’s resources and services.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-96.c** Incorporate continuous input from librarians, multiliteracy experts, and educational stakeholders to refine and improve the hub, ensuring its long-term success and relevance.



Call to Transformation 5-97:

Implement mandatory professional learning linked to teacher certification, with an annual renewal requirement, ensuring educators continuously develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to effectively address the evolving needs of learners and schools.

Background

Mandatory, needs-based professional learning for K-12 educators is essential to ensure that they remain current with the latest teaching and assessment approaches, educational technologies, and subject matter knowledge. Continuous professional learning helps educators adapt to the evolving educational landscape and meet the diverse needs of their learners. By engaging in ongoing learning, educators can enhance their instructional practices, improve learner outcomes, and contribute to a culture of continuous improvement within their schools. Research supports the notion that effective professional learning positively impacts educator performance and learner achievement, highlighting the importance of mandatory professional learning for educators (Carter & Richmond, 2019; Guskey, 2021; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2020). Comparing this to other professions, mandatory professional learning is a common requirement in fields such as health care, law, and engineering. The same principle applies to K-12 educators, as their ongoing professional learning is crucial for delivering high-quality education and fostering learner success. In addition, this will support and provide opportunities for educators to choose the direction they wish to take in terms of their own learning and needs.

5-97 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-97.a** Create a foundational professional learning framework that is aligned with K-12 educators' certification requirements and incorporates essential topics like inclusive teaching practices, educational technology, and subject-specific content knowledge.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-97.b** Introduce and implement the requirement for annual renewal of professional learning as a condition for teacher certification, ensuring that educators stay current in their practice.
- 5-97.c** Begin collecting data to measure the impact of mandatory professional learning on both educator instructional practices and learner outcomes.



Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-97.d Make mandatory professional learning a fully integrated part of the education system, ensuring consistent and high-quality offerings that evolve with educational needs.
- 5-97.e Ensure that professional learning opportunities are accessible to all educators, regardless of geographic location or school resources, and are tailored to meet the needs of diverse learner populations.



Call to Transformation 5-98:

Strengthen the implementation of the existing daily physical activity policy in K-12 education by embedding movement and outdoor play into curriculum and daily instructional practice. Provide targeted professional learning for educators and support schools in making physical activity a consistent, meaningful part of the school day—promoting learner well-being, focus, and overall development.

Background

While Newfoundland and Labrador has a daily physical activity policy in place, its impact depends on meaningful implementation across all learning environments. For many schools, this policy is not yet fully embedded into curriculum or instructional practice, and educators often lack the support and professional learning needed to integrate movement into the school day consistently and effectively.

Healthy living and regular physical activity are essential to learners' physical, mental, and emotional development. Schools have a unique opportunity—and responsibility—to foster lifelong wellness by making movement and outdoor play a routine and valued part of the learning experience, not just during physical education classes.

Research shows that regular physical activity supports cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, and healthy weight management, while also boosting cognitive function, focus, emotional regulation, and mood. The World Health Organization (2020) underscores that movement is critical to the healthy growth of children and youth, and studies confirm its link to improved mental health and self-esteem (Biddle & Asare, 2011).

Outdoor play, in particular, helps learners build confidence, explore risk in healthy ways, and strengthen social connections. These active learning experiences also cultivate essential life skills like collaboration, communication, and resilience.

Educators and learners across the province have called for more focus on real-life skills and well-being in the school day. As one learner shared, “The system needs to include more things in education that can be used in real life, and focus on the future well-being of students.”

To truly support the policy’s goals, schools need both structured support and flexibility to embed physical activity meaningfully into daily routines—creating more engaging, inclusive, and balanced environments where all learners can thrive.

5-98 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-98.a** Deliver targeted professional learning for educators and school leaders on embedding physical activity into classroom routines and curriculum-linked instruction.
- 5-98.b** Assess and enhance school infrastructure to ensure all learners have equitable access to safe, inclusive, and engaging outdoor play and physical activity spaces.
- 5-98.c** Develop implementation guidelines that clarify expectations, provide flexibility by age group, and offer practical strategies tailored to early learning, elementary, and secondary contexts.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-98.d** Create curriculum-aligned resources that support movement-based learning and promote healthy habits across all subject areas.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-98.e** Embed healthy living indicators into school improvement planning and reporting processes, with regular review cycles to assess impact and identify areas for growth.



Call to Transformation 5-99:

Empower all learners—children, youth, educators, families/caregivers, and seniors—by providing comprehensive support in the development of digital literacy, ensuring that everyone has the skills and confidence to navigate and thrive in an increasingly digital world.

Background

A strong theme that emerged during engagement sessions with individuals and groups was the need for learners at all levels to develop high levels of digital literacy. Some comments from families/caregivers, who completed an Accord survey, reflect this need:

“Using digital tools for learning can help students progress quickly, especially in today’s technology-driven world” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024).

“Digital tools can adapt lessons to each student’s pace and needs, improving understanding and engagement” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024).

“Integrating technology in education teaches students how to use it responsibly, preparing them for future, tech-driven careers” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024).

“By embracing these tools, education can become more dynamic, flexible, and aligned with real-world needs” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024).

Embracing and developing digital literacy skills is crucial for learners of all ages—children, youth, and adults—as it equips them with the essential competencies needed to navigate and thrive in today’s digital world. Digital literacy encompasses a wide range of skills, including the ability to effectively and responsibly use digital tools, access and evaluate information, communicate and collaborate online, and create digital content. As technology continues to permeate various aspects of our lives, developing these skills is vital for personal, academic, and professional success.

For children and youth, digital literacy is essential for academic achievement and future career readiness. As classrooms increasingly integrate technology into the curriculum, learners who are proficient in digital literacy are better equipped to engage with digital learning resources, conduct research, and complete assignments. According to the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), digital literacy empowers learners to become active, informed, and responsible digital citizens who can navigate the complexities of the digital landscape (ISTE, 2016).

For adults, digital literacy is equally important for maintaining employability and participating fully in society. As workplaces continue to evolve with advancements in technology, adults must continually update their digital skills to remain competitive in the job market. Digital literacy also enables adults to access information and services online, engage in lifelong learning opportunities, and stay connected with others. By developing digital literacy skills, learners can enhance their academic, personal, and professional lives, ensuring they are well-prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of the digital age.

5-99 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-99.a** Conduct a province-wide needs assessment to determine the current state of digital literacy skills across all age groups and sectors.



- 5-99.b** Develop digital literacy programs in community centers, libraries, and senior care facilities to equip learners of all ages with essential digital skills.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-99.c** Ensure that digital literacy becomes a core component of the K-12 curriculum across all grade levels, emphasizing critical thinking, responsible digital citizenship, and the use of technology for learning.
- 5-99.d** Create targeted programs for adults and seniors, focusing on digital skills that enhance employability, enable lifelong learning, and facilitate online engagement.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-99.e** Establish a province-wide system of continuous learning opportunities that support digital literacy for all citizens, integrating technology and digital skills into ongoing adult education and career advancement programs.



Call to Transformation 5-100:

Develop a comprehensive and proactive approach to supporting mental health in K-12 schools, supported by well-being teams within each school. These teams should be made up of a multidisciplinary group of health care and educational professionals, including but not limited to the following roles: educational psychologists, social workers, school counsellors, behavior itinerants, youth outreach workers, school nurses, occupational therapists (OTs), student services teaching and learning assistants, Safe and Inclusive Schools itinerants, student success teachers, and school administrators.

Background

Creating a thorough and proactive strategy for supporting mental health in K-12 schools in Newfoundland and Labrador, backed by well-being teams within schools, is crucial for addressing the increasing mental health needs of learners. These teams, made up of various health care professionals, can offer specialized and effective support, ensuring learners' mental well-being and academic success. Research shows that school-based mental health services enhance access to care, allow for early detection and treatment of mental health issues, and result in better mental health outcomes for learners (Cavioni et al., 2020; Cefai et al., 2022). By incorporating mental health services into the school environment, learners can receive help in a familiar and easily accessible setting.

Well-being teams in schools may include professionals such as behaviour itinerants, psychologists, social workers, counsellors, OTs, and nurses, working together to meet the diverse mental health needs of learners. This collaborative, multidisciplinary approach ensures learners receive thorough care addressing emotional, social, and behavioural challenges. By establishing well-being teams, schools can create supportive spaces that foster positive mental health, helping learners progress and thrive.

Additionally, involving health care professionals in school-based mental health services helps reduce the stigma surrounding the use of mental health support. When these services are integrated into the school setting, learners are more likely to seek the help they need without fear of judgment or discrimination. A report from the Kids Mental Health Network (2020) emphasized the importance of school-community collaborations in transforming children's mental health care, noting that strong partnerships between schools and health care providers can lead to significant improvements in learner well-being. By adopting a comprehensive and proactive approach to mental health support, schools in Newfoundland and Labrador can ensure that all learners have the opportunity to be healthy, happy, and successful.

5-100 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-100.a** Implement mental health education as a mandatory part of the K-12 curriculum, focusing on emotional well-being, stress management, and self-care.



- 5-100.b Provide foundational training for all educators in trauma-informed practice, mental health first aid, culturally responsive care, and collaborative problem-solving.
- 5-100.c Establish a provincial framework for school well-being teams, clearly defining roles, core functions, and expectations for collaboration among team members (e.g., educational psychologists, social workers, counsellors, nurses, student success teachers, etc.).
- 5-100.d Develop pilot well-being teams in select schools or regions, representing a range of school sizes and contexts (urban, rural, remote) to test multidisciplinary collaboration models.
- 5-100.e Launch a public awareness and destigmatization campaign for school communities that highlights the importance and availability of school-based mental health supports.
- 5-100.f Establish protocols for early identification, referral, and care coordination across well-being teams and with external health providers and community services.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-100.g Scale the well-being team model to all schools, adapting team structures based on school population, complexity of learner needs, and regional context.
- 5-100.h Formalize collaboration protocols between the education and health sectors, ensuring timely access to assessment, treatment, and follow-up for learners requiring external care.
- 5-100.i Embed mental health supports and education into school routines, including regular check-ins, classroom-based social-emotional learning (SEL), and educator wellness initiatives.



Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-100.j Establish province-wide well-being teams as a core component of the education system, embedded in policy, school improvement planning, and resource allocation.
- 5-100.k Demonstrate long-term outcomes through ongoing research and evaluation—tracking improvements in learner mental health, attendance, academic achievement, and school climate.
- 5-100.l Maintain strong school-community-health partnerships, with formal agreements ensuring sustained service integration and shared responsibility for learner well-being.
- 5-100.m Implement ongoing professional learning to ensure well-being team members remain equipped with the latest tools, knowledge, and approaches in youth mental health.



Call to Transformation 5-101:

Establish an Education Advocate for K-12 schools to mediate conflict resolution, investigate complaints, champion equity, and recommend improvements to policies and practices.

Background

Education advocate positions in education exist at various levels in other Canadian provinces. For example, Ontario has an Ombudsperson office that “oversees more than 1,000 provincial ministries, boards, agencies and tribunals, taking complaints from the public and helping thousands of people cut through government bureaucracy and red tape to resolve serious problems every year” (Ombudsman Ontario, n.d.).



Typically, an education advocate resolves conflicts on behalf of learners, caregivers, and/or staff related to schools and institutions. Their primary role is to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability by investigating complaints, providing recommendations, and facilitating resolutions. Education advocates offer confidential spaces for individuals to voice concerns, they can identify patterns in complaints, and help institutions implement preventive measures and address systemic issues.

The creation of an education advocate for all educational issues in Newfoundland and Labrador would ensure learners and caregivers have a voice—and receive a response — in situations where the normal channels and procedures are insufficient. We especially want to emphasize the rights of a child. Every child and youth has rights, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status. The work of the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate is grounded in the rights-based approach of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC is the most complete statement of children’s rights ever produced, was ratified by Canada in 1991, and is the most widely endorsed human rights treaty in the world today. It provides a specific set of rights to which all children and youth are entitled and is anchored in the following core principles:

- The best interests of the child
- Non-discrimination
- Life, survival, and development
- Participation in decisions affecting them

With roles changing in EECD in a post-school district environment, it has been challenging for families/caregivers to navigate the new systems, particularly when in conflict with their child’s school. While the vast majority of issues can be addressed within the school, there are situations which require more complex and nuanced responses. Currently, those who are unsatisfied must appeal to their provincial Member or make a public case on social media. The presence of an objective education advocate would provide those cases with a reasoned and productive way to resolve persistent problems. They would be empowered to listen to concerns and complaints, offer options and facilitate resolutions, investigate complaints, make recommendations, identify systemic problems, and contribute to quality assurance and overall confidence in our education systems. Having an education advocate position aligns with the UNESCO rights of the child by promoting equitable access to quality education, addressing barriers to learning, and ensuring that educational environments support the holistic development of every child.

5-101 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-101.a Conduct a comprehensive review of existing education advocate models in other Canadian provinces, such as Ontario’s Ombudsman office, to identify best practices and lessons learned.
- 5-101.b Create a proposal that outlines the responsibilities, scope, and operational structure for an Education Advocate for K-12 schools in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- 5-101.c Launch a public awareness campaign to inform families/caregivers, learners, and education stakeholders about the creation of the education advocate role, its benefits, and how to access services.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-101.d Establish the Education Advocate role across Newfoundland and Labrador K-12 schools.
- 5-101.e Establish mechanisms for identifying and tracking patterns in complaints or conflicts, ensuring that systemic issues are addressed and recommendations are made to improve school policies and practices.
- 5-101.f Implement an ongoing evaluation system to assess the effectiveness of the Education Advocate position, collecting feedback from stakeholders and making adjustments as necessary.
- 5-101.g Ensure that the role aligns with international standards such as the UNESCO rights of the child, advocating for equitable access to education and supporting holistic child development.



Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-101.h** Broaden the scope of the Education Advocate to include post-secondary education, providing comprehensive support for all learners in the education system.



Call to Transformation 5-102:

Expand the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) to offer Advanced Placement (AP) courses, micro-credentials, and dual-credit opportunities in partnership with post-secondary institutions, industry, and community organizations. This expansion will give all learners in grades 10-12 equitable access to advanced academics, career-focused skills, and real-world experiences, thus preparing them for post-secondary education, skilled trades, and in-demand industries like digital media, film, and design.

Background

In today's dynamic economy, learners need a blend of academic excellence, practical skills, and career exposure to thrive. Yet, many high school-aged youth in Newfoundland and Labrador—particularly those in rural or remote communities—lack access to enriched academic courses or pathways to emerging careers.

Expanding AP courses through CDLI gives learners the opportunity to pursue college-level academics while still in high school, strengthening their university applications and allowing them to earn credit in advance. Micro-credentials, in turn, offer short, skills-based certifications aligned with industry demands—from digital tools and communications to safety training and software use—providing learners with job-ready skills and a competitive advantage.

At the same time, dual credit and experiential learning programs provide learners with early access to college-level courses and hands-on experience in creative and technical fields. Industries such as film, graphic design, animation, and digital media are rapidly growing, but learners often face barriers to exploring these fields due to limited access or awareness.

Aligning programming with core competencies—such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication—ensures that learners are not only prepared for academic and career success but also adaptable to future changes in the workforce.

Partnerships with Memorial University, CNA, privately operated centres, local employers, and community organizations will strengthen these offerings, making it easier for learners to navigate clear and supported pathways from high school to higher education and meaningful employment.

5-102 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

5-102.a Launch a CDLI pilot program in select schools that offers:

- 1–2 AP courses in high-demand academic subjects.
- A limited selection of micro-credentials co-designed with post-secondary and industry partners (e.g., digital tools, workplace safety, creative software).

5-102.b Implement pilot dual credit programs in partnership with Memorial University and CNA, focused on fields like film, design, animation, and digital media.

5-102.c Host regional consultations with educators, learners, industry, and post-secondary leaders to identify learner needs and align offerings with workforce demands.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

5-102.d Grow dual credit and experiential learning access in more high schools, including rural areas, in partnership with Memorial University, CNA, and industry partners.



- 5-102.e** Create a provincial framework for dual credit and micro-credential recognition, with clearly mapped pathways into post-secondary programs and in-demand careers.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-102.f** Ensure equitable access to AP, micro-credentials, and dual credit programs for all learners in grades 10-12 through an integrated CDLI and school-based delivery model.
- 5-102.g** Build a feedback and accountability system that collects data on learner participation, engagement, academic outcomes, post-secondary transitions, and workforce entry.



Call to Transformation 5-103:

Create an Educator Professional Council to oversee and enhance the teaching profession by setting and maintaining high standards of practice, ensuring accountability, providing ongoing professional learning (PL), and advocating for the needs and rights of educators.

Background

Establishing an Educator Professional Council in Newfoundland and Labrador would significantly enhance the education system by improving teaching quality and learner progress experiences. This Council would act as a regulatory and supportive entity, ensuring that educators adhere to professional standards, are accountable for their actions, and receive the guidance and advocacy required to succeed. Other provinces in Canada also have such regulatory bodies with the role of ensuring educators meet high

professional standards, thereby safeguarding the public interest and maintaining trust in the education system (Ontario College of Teachers, 2025; STPRB, n.d.).

One key advantage would be the implementation of a standardized certification process, guaranteeing that educators meet the qualifications and competencies necessary to deliver high-quality education. This would bolster the credibility of the teaching profession and enhance public trust. Additionally, the Council would oversee ongoing PL, helping educators stay informed about the latest educational practices, research, and technologies.

Accountability is another crucial benefit. By establishing and enforcing codes of conduct and ethical standards, the Council would promote professionalism and transparency, addressing instances of misconduct and protecting learners' interests. Moreover, the Council would offer professional guidance through mentorship programs, collaborative learning communities, and accessible resources, fostering a culture of growth and continuous improvement among educators.

Advocacy is equally important. The Council would serve as a collective voice for educators, representing their interests in discussions with policymakers and stakeholders. This representation could help shape policies that address issues like workload, resource allocation, and working conditions, ultimately empowering educators and enriching the broader educational community.

An Educator Professional Council would elevate the teaching profession by ensuring certification, accountability, professional growth, and advocacy. These measures would contribute to a stronger education system and long-lasting benefits for learners, educators, and communities alike.

5-103 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-103.a** Form a committee composed of key educational stakeholders, including representatives from EECD, CSFP, Faculty of Education, Memorial University, NLTA, educational leaders and policymakers. The committee will be tasked with defining the scope, functions, and structure of the Educator Professional Council, including its role in certification, accountability, professional learning, and advocacy.



- 5-103.b Begin the drafting of necessary legislation and regulations to formally establish the Educator Professional Council as a legal entity.
- 5-103.c Establish a governance structure for the Council, defining leadership roles, decision-making processes, and stakeholder involvement. Develop an operational plan that outlines the responsibilities of Council members, staff, and committees.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-103.d Develop and implement accountability frameworks, including codes of conduct, ethical standards, and procedures for addressing educator misconduct.
- 5-103.e Establish an advocacy framework within the Council to represent educators' interests in policy discussions, including workload concerns, working conditions, and resources. This framework will ensure that educators have a collective voice in shaping education policies.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-103.f Establish a comprehensive system to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the Educator Professional Council in achieving its goals. Continuously refine and improve the certification process and professional learning opportunities, ensuring they evolve with emerging educational practices and technologies.
 - 5-103.g Enhance public awareness of the Educator Professional Council's role and responsibilities through targeted communication campaigns.
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Call to Transformation 5-104:

Reduce chronic absenteeism by prioritizing learner safety, trust, and strong relationships with families/caregivers and their care networks. Move beyond automated messages toward proactive, personalized communication that gets to the root causes of absenteeism. Equip school staff to connect with families/caregivers in ways that build trust and offer meaningful support, helping learners feel safe, valued, and ready to learn.

Background

Chronic absenteeism continues to be a serious challenge in schools, affecting learner achievement, well-being, and long-term outcomes. Research shows that missing even a few days per month can set learners back academically and increase the risk of dropping out (Bergman & Riddick, 2024). However, addressing absenteeism is not just about improving attendance numbers—it’s about understanding and responding to why learners are missing school in the first place.

A 2019 report by Newfoundland and Labrador’s Child and Youth Advocate emphasizes that chronic absenteeism is often a symptom of more complex challenges. These may include mental health issues, neglect, family or school-based violence, learning difficulties, or disengagement from school. As the report notes, “Children’s absences are often the symptom of a deeper issue, and insisting a child show up to school will not address any of these underlying needs” (Child and Youth Advocate NL, 2019).

Traditional methods—like automated phone calls or standard attendance alerts—may notify families/caregivers of absences, but they rarely help address the root causes. These approaches often lack the warmth, trust, and support needed to engage families/caregivers who are already facing significant challenges. Research shows that families/caregivers are more likely to respond positively when schools reach out personally and with empathy (Cohen et al., 2016).

In fact, personalized communication—through individual phone calls, messages, or in-person meetings—can significantly reduce absenteeism. It allows educators to understand the specific challenges families/caregivers are facing and partner with them to create solutions (Deslandes, 2019; WestEd, 2024). Building these personal connections also strengthens trust, encourages open dialogue, and fosters a sense of shared responsibility for learner success.



As Cohen and colleagues (2016) explain, schools that invest in two-way communication are better able to support family/caregiver involvement and reduce absenteeism over time. Personalized, real-time tools and relationship-driven strategies are more effective than one-size-fits-all approaches.

5-104 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-104.a Develop policies that require schools to follow up on chronic absenteeism through trauma-informed and relationship-focused communication.
- 5-104.b Pilot new family/caregiver engagement strategies in select schools, prioritizing personal outreach by trusted school staff over automated messaging systems.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-104.c Scale the personal engagement model province-wide, adapting based on feedback from pilot schools and communities.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-104.d Use data and digital tools proactively, not just to monitor attendance but to identify at-risk learners early and connect them to supports.
- 5-104.e Deepen partnerships with community organizations, health care providers, and family service agencies to ensure a coordinated response to chronic absenteeism.



Call to Transformation 5-105:

Revitalize and reimagine arts spaces in K-12 education, ensuring dedicated teaching and support for the Arts, with a focus on intergenerational programming for younger learners. Expand this initiative to include comprehensive community arts programs, supported across government departments, that integrate schools, local organizations, and artists.

Background

Over the past decade, schools have increasingly emphasized literacy, mathematics, science, and technology to prepare learners for a competitive world. While these core subjects are crucial, the Arts—comprising theatre, music, dance, and visual arts—are equally vital. The growing focus on standardized outcomes has overshadowed the Arts, which offer invaluable opportunities for learners to explore self-identity, foster creativity, empathy, and critical thinking, and address global challenges like climate change and social inequalities. Arts education equips learners with both imagination and technical skills, empowering them to tackle real-world issues and contribute to society.

Research, including UNESCO's 2006 Road Map for Arts Education, highlights the transformative impact of arts education, which enhances academic achievement, creativity, classroom behaviour, and learner perseverance. Arts education also supports cultural preservation and promotes ecological awareness, tolerance, and social equity. It provides a space for counter-narratives, fostering diverse knowledge systems and challenging dominant perspectives.

The arts are crucial to Newfoundland and Labrador's cultural identity and economy, with the province contributing disproportionately to Canada's creative landscape. Ensuring today's learners have access to the same creative opportunities as previous generations is essential for preserving and expanding this legacy.

5-105 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-105.a Conduct a comprehensive review of current K-12 arts education programs in schools and communities to evaluate their effectiveness, resources, and areas for improvement. This process should actively involve feedback from educators, learners, families/caregivers, and community stakeholders to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for enhancement.
- 5-105.b Engage in discussions with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, and community and post-secondary institutions to consider how current Arts spaces could be revitalized or reimagined to be used by children, youth, and seniors.
- 5-105.c Foster partnerships between post-secondary, K-12 schools and local artists or arts organizations to offer workshops, performances, and arts-based learning experiences for learners.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-105.d Expand multi-arts programming beyond schools by reimagining existing arts spaces to create inclusive opportunities for the broader community to engage. Partner with local organizations and municipalities to offer after-school and summer arts programs, fostering participation and collaboration among learners and community members alike.
- 5-105.e Work with community partners, government and local businesses to establish scholarships or financial aid programs that help learners access private arts instruction, specialized equipment, or travel to arts-related events.
- 5-105.f Promote the role of arts education in the local economy and workforce development to ensure that the arts remain a valued and thriving part of Newfoundland and Labrador's future.



Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-105.g** Advocate for long-term funding and investment in arts education at the provincial level, ensuring that arts programs and a range of Youth Arts festivals remain an integral part of the school system.
- 5-105.h** Develop a comprehensive provincial framework for arts education, aligning school curricula with the broader goals of preserving Newfoundland and Labrador’s cultural heritage and supporting its growing arts economy.



Call to Transformation 5-106:

Revise the existing Teacher Secondment program within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) to offer an initial one-year term, with the option for a one-year renewal based on a comprehensive review of performance, project outcomes, and alignment with departmental priorities. The total duration of the secondment will be capped at two years, providing opportunities for educators to contribute their classroom expertise to system-level initiatives while maintaining a regular influx of fresh perspectives and ensuring continued relevance to evolving educational contexts.

Background

As part of our commitment to enhancing the quality and effectiveness of education in Newfoundland and Labrador, it is essential to ensure that the voices of educators are deeply integrated into policy development and educational planning. Educators bring invaluable firsthand experience and insights that can drive meaningful, informed change within our education system.

We recommend that teacher secondments to EECD be established with an initial one-year term, followed by the option for a one-year renewal after a performance review. The total duration of a secondment should not exceed two years, providing teachers the opportunity to contribute their expertise while also ensuring fresh perspectives and continued alignment with classroom realities.

To be eligible for a secondment, educators must have a minimum of five years of teaching experience. This requirement ensures that seconded teachers possess the necessary depth of knowledge and experience to make meaningful contributions to educational policy and initiatives.

This model will create a dynamic and flexible system that not only supports the professional learning of educators but also strengthens the connection between classroom practice and policy decisions. Educators will have the chance to influence systemic change, while EECD will benefit from their expertise in creating more relevant, impactful policies. Through this initiative, we will build a more responsive and collaborative education system, one that integrates the voices of those who work directly with learners every day.

5-106 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-106.a Develop clear, comprehensive guidelines for the revised secondment process, outlining eligibility criteria, performance review procedures, and secondment durations. Ensure these guidelines are closely aligned with the department's goals and strategic objectives to maximize impact and effectiveness.
- 5-106.b Launch an informational campaign to increase awareness of the revised secondment process among educators and educational leaders, outlining its benefits, eligibility, and application process.



Medium-Term 2–5 Years

5-106.c Implement a consistent, transparent process for selecting educators eligible for one-year renewals of secondments, incorporating performance reviews that assess the impact of secondments on driving policy change and aligning with classroom needs. This process will ensure that secondments are effective and contribute to continuous improvement in educational practices.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

5-106.d Monitor long-term outcomes of the secondment process, including the influence on policy, improvements in teaching practices, and the overall effectiveness in aligning education policy with classroom needs.



Call to Transformation 5-107:

Integrate dedicated occupational therapy (OT) services into early learning environments and primary schools to support learners' physical, cognitive, and emotional development by prioritizing efficient resource allocation and innovative service delivery models.

Background

Occupational Therapy (OT) is a health care field focused on enabling individuals to participate in daily activities, such as self-care, work, and leisure, by addressing challenges caused by disabilities or illnesses. Participation in meaningful activities is considered vital for health and well-being (Law, 2006). OT interventions aim to enhance independence using task analysis, adaptive strategies, and environmental modifications. For example,

OTs may suggest using technology, such as computers, for children who face difficulties with handwriting. OT services for children focus on building social skills, encouraging school participation, improving hygiene, and fostering independence or preparation for higher education.

Childhood is viewed by OTs as a sequence of distinct developmental stages, where lack of support can result in long-term challenges. Early identification and intervention are essential for promoting healthy outcomes, as timely OT access can significantly boost participation and functional abilities. Research highlights the benefits of OT in schools, helping learners achieve educational goals and develop foundational skills (MSOT, 2017). While most provinces in Canada incorporate OTs into their education systems, Newfoundland and Labrador is the exception, as it lacks school-based OT services. The Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Occupational Therapists (NLAOT) has advocated for these services since 1974.

Integrating OTs into schools could better address the needs of learners with conditions like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or sensory processing disorders by providing tailored interventions, environmental adaptations, and training for families/ caregivers and educators. However, OT-led interventions in Newfoundland and Labrador schools are rare. Instead, general programs, like movement activities, are implemented without consistent OT involvement. The Health Accord NL (2022) emphasizes addressing service gaps by connecting schools with community teams for year-round learner support. Early intervention and collaboration are equally crucial in daycare and early learning settings.

5-107 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-107.a** Establish pilot OT programs in select early learning centers and primary schools to evaluate the effectiveness and demand for integrated services.



- 5-107.b** Develop partnerships between EECD, the Department of Health and Community Services, and NLAOT to coordinate resources and establish a framework for OT services within educational settings.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-107.c** Expand the pilot OT programs to include more early learning environments and primary schools across the province, focusing on areas with the highest demand for services.
- 5-107.d** Establish a standardized occupational therapy (OT) service delivery model across primary schools to ensure equitable and consistent access for all learners, particularly those with disabilities, including ADHD, sensory processing disorders, and other developmental or neurodivergent conditions.
- 5-107.e** Set up a system for evaluating the impact of OT services in early learning settings and primary schools, including tracking learner outcomes related to academic achievement, social-emotional development, and functional independence.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-107.f** Make OT services an integral part of early learning environments and primary schools, ensuring access to dedicated OT professionals who can address learners' physical, cognitive, and emotional needs.
- 5-107.g** Develop provincial policies that require early learning environments and primary schools to provide OT services, ensuring long-term sustainability and integration of OT within the education system.



Call to Transformation 5-108:

Empower educators by offering professional learning and certification programs that equip them with the qualifications needed to conduct comprehensive assessments, ensuring that every learner receives timely, accurate evaluations and the necessary support to thrive.

Background

A comprehensive assessment approach for neurodiverse learners or those with disabilities and other distinct challenges is essential for capturing a full understanding of their unique learning needs. This approach examines a range of factors affecting the learner's education, combining formal assessments such as standardized tests to evaluate cognitive abilities, academic performance, and learning challenges, alongside informal methods like educator observations, analysis of classroom work, and discussions with the learners and their families/caregivers. It also draws on the expertise of a multidisciplinary team, which may include guidance counsellors, instructional resource teachers, educational psychologists, and speech language pathologists. Moreover, environmental and social-emotional factors are considered to provide a holistic view of the learner's educational experience. By identifying both strengths and areas requiring support, this comprehensive approach enables educators to develop tailored and effective interventions.

Empowering educators with the qualifications necessary to conduct these comprehensive assessments is crucial. Offering professional learning and certification programs equips educators with the knowledge and skills to carry out thorough evaluations and respond to the diverse needs of their learners. Early and proactive intervention is key, as addressing challenges promptly can prevent them from becoming more ingrained, thereby reducing the risk of frustration, disengagement, and widening learning gaps (Neil & Liesemer, 2023; Smythe et al., 2020; Tollan et al., 2023). Timely action ensures learners have access to the appropriate resources and support without disruptions to their education, maximizing their potential during critical developmental periods. Ultimately, empowering educators through professional learning and timely, accurate assessments not only addresses learners' immediate learning needs but also supports long-term success and confidence.

5-108 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-108.a Re-examine existing policies and practices related to student support services to ensure they align with best practices and provide optimal accommodations for learners.
- 5-108.b Develop a plan for increasing the number of qualified educators who can conduct comprehensive assessments, reducing waiting times and backlogs.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-108.c Provide professional learning and certification programs to enable educators to earn the qualifications necessary to conduct comprehensive assessments.
- 5-108.d Implement a streamlined referral and assessment process to ensure learners receive timely and appropriate evaluations for accommodations and support, while establishing a system of continuous monitoring to assess the effectiveness of these accommodations and interventions, making adjustments as needed to support learner success.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-108.e Cultivate a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach to learner support, including guidance counsellors, instructional resource teachers, educational psychologists, and therapists, to ensure all aspects of learner development are addressed comprehensively.



Call to Transformation 5-109:

Enhance and strengthen communication pathways between the Early Learning, Inclusion and Student Services Division, the K-12 Programs and Services Division and NLSchools Operations Division within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), ensuring that the integration of NLSchools with the Department maintains accountability, responsiveness, and transparency with learners, families/caregivers, and the broader community.

Background

In the fall of 2024, the provincial government completed the integration of the NLESD with EECD, aiming to streamline bureaucracy and enhance financial efficiency (VOCM, 2021).

Although the new system is now operational, many families/caregivers, and educators have raised concerns about communication and accountability, concerns that have been heightened by the removal of NLESD. There is a growing fear that important decisions regarding curriculum, assessment, class size, school closures, and other critical issues will be made by EECD without sufficient input or oversight from front-line educators, families/caregivers, or learners. As one respondent expressed, “Many teachers in the province are uncertain about who is responsible for decision-making within the department, which could lead to feelings of disengagement between staff and department officials” (Thought Exchange Survey, 2024).

In her submission to the accord, the Dean of Memorial University’s Faculty of Education explained the concern succinctly: “The importance of public voice in public education cannot be understated. Some jurisdictions eliminated school boards only to re-establish them again. Ensuring that public input remains a vital component of the education system will contribute to a model of education that is responsive, transparent, and aligned with the needs of students and communities” (Dean of Education, 2025).

The Accord has heard from many parties who worry that there is no independent body representing the interests of learners and families/caregivers who have direct input into the Department’s policies and procedures. As one respondent said, “The involvement of parents, School Councils and communities in education is crucial for student success. However, a lack of engagement and communication between schools, families, and local

communities, particularly in areas facing economic hardship or where school closures have disrupted long-standing relationships...can lead to increased skepticism in the system and lack of support for new programs and policies” (Accord respondent).

Improving all manners of communication between EECD, school staff, School Councils, and families/caregivers will require a multi-faceted approach that includes clear communication channels, regular dialogue, transparency, and active collaboration.

By implementing these strategies, the provincial government can better support schools, ensure that educational policies are effectively implemented, and address challenges more quickly and efficiently. Ultimately, these efforts will help create a more cohesive and responsive education system that benefits learners, educators, and communities.

5-109 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-109.a Develop and implement a centralized, accessible platform for communication between EECD, Early Learning environments, K-12 schools, educators, families/caregivers, and communities, ensuring that all stakeholders can easily share feedback and receive timely updates.
- 5-109.b Create clear communication regarding roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes within EECD, ensuring educators and families/caregivers understand who is responsible for specific issues like curriculum, assessments, and school closures.

Medium-Term 2–5 Years

- 5-109.c Strengthen Collaboration and Input Mechanisms: Establish formal, ongoing communication structures, such as advisory committees or working groups, that include educators, families/caregivers, and school councils to review and provide input on educational policies, curriculum changes, and other key decisions.



- 5-109.d** Implement a process for gathering and acting on feedback regarding new policies, programs, and changes. This ensures that stakeholders' voices are heard—and their concerns addressed—to increase trust and engagement in the system.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-109.e** Embed public consultation and community involvement as a permanent feature of decision-making processes within EECD. This could involve school councils, families/caregivers, and advisory committees to provide consistent and representative input on education policies.
- 5-109.f** Conduct ongoing evaluations of communication strategies, engagement practices, and the effectiveness of transparency initiatives. Use findings to continuously refine and improve communication practices within the education system.
- 5-109.g** Create a sustainable culture of collaboration between EECD, early learning environments, K-12 schools, and communities, ensuring that education policies and decisions reflect the diverse needs and priorities of learners, families/caregivers, and educators across the province.



Call to Transformation 5-110:

Create a detailed blueprint and strategic plan for effectively implementing the transformative actions outlined in the Education Accord NL.

Background

A blueprint provides a clear, structured, and comprehensive plan that outlines the necessary steps, resources, and timelines for implementing the Calls to Transformation. It serves as a roadmap that helps policymakers understand the practical implications of the calls and the specific actions required to achieve the desired outcomes.

By developing a blueprint, it will ensure that the Calls to Transformation are actionable and realistic. It breaks down complex ideas into manageable components, detailing the specific initiatives, programs, and policies that need to be implemented. By providing a step-by-step plan, the blueprint helps to identify potential challenges and obstacles, allowing for proactive problem-solving and resource allocation. This level of detail is essential for gaining the support and commitment of government officials. Moreover, a blueprint fosters accountability and transparency in the implementation process. A well-structured blueprint facilitates collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies, educational institutions, community organizations, and families/caregivers. It provides a common framework for understanding and addressing the needs of different educational levels, promoting a more cohesive and integrated approach to education reform.

5-110 Pathways to Action

Short-Term 1–2 Years

- 5-110.a** Establish a task force to oversee the blueprint's development, ensuring collaboration across all sectors.
- 5-110.b** Develop a communication strategy to regularly update stakeholders on progress and challenges.

Long-Term 5–10 Years

- 5-110.c** Continuously monitor and evaluate the implementation of the blueprint, making necessary adjustments to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of educational reforms.



Conclusion: Our Vision Our Future

**“There needs to be a real commitment and action
to improve teaching and learning conditions.
This is a foundation that needs to be solid.”**

(Survey Participant)

Our Vision Our Future

This Accord was written in a time of political and cultural upheaval. Having lived through a pandemic that affected every aspect of our lives, we are now faced with a long period of economic chaos that is dominating every aspect of our economy and culture. Within Newfoundland and Labrador, we are struggling with a number of economic challenges, such as high unemployment rates, trade barriers, and a declining and aging population, all of which impact our education systems. This Accord called upon us to respond to these changes and envision education systems that would do better—for learners of all ages, throughout their lives.

As the leaders of this Accord, it has been an honour to speak and listen to so many educators, learners, administrators, academics, and community leaders. Each and every one of them has a profound interest and passion for education in this province, and every single one of them shared ideas and insights about our education and how it could support the success of all learners, regardless of where they were born, their abilities, or their challenges.

We were also lucky to speak with hundreds of families/caregivers, and hear the enthusiasm, excitement, and hope they have for their children’s educational journey and future. While we have heard about many problems and challenges, we also heard much that inspired us, and our hopes for future generations of learners have never been brighter.

A crucial factor for the Accord’s success in supporting learners is the creation of a blueprint for implementation, supported by the commitment of all stakeholders to establish a clear and detailed plan. The implementation process should be thorough and multifaceted,



specifying key actions such as timelines, resource allocation, and the formation of dedicated implementation teams. Clearly defining these components ensures a shared understanding among stakeholders, enabling efficient and coordinated efforts to achieve the intended outcomes.

Once the **Blueprint** is in place, forming dedicated implementation teams is crucial. These teams, comprised of educators, administrators, policymakers, and community representatives, will oversee the implementation of the Calls to Transformation. Regular communication and collaboration among team members are essential to address any challenges that may arise and to ensure that the Calls to Transformation are being implemented as intended.

To effectively monitor progress and evaluate the impact of the Calls to Transformation, a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework must be established. This framework should encompass key performance indicators and data collection methods to track progress and measure outcomes. Regular assessments, surveys, and observations can yield valuable insights into the effectiveness of the Calls to Transformations and identify areas needing improvement. Formative assessments will allow for ongoing adjustments, while summative assessments will provide a thorough evaluation of the overall success of the Calls to Transformation.

Involving stakeholders in the implementation and evaluation process is crucial for maintaining transparency and accountability. Engaging learners, families/caregivers, educators, and community members in evaluations brings diverse perspectives and fosters trust in the effectiveness of the proposed transformations. Consistent reporting and communication of findings ensure stakeholders remain informed about progress and outcomes, strengthening their sense of ownership and commitment to the Accord's objectives. Additionally, prioritizing the sustainability of these transformations is vital for achieving long-term success.

Throughout the engagement process, we have gathered insights into numerous issues, challenges, concerns, and opportunities. Through our Calls to Transformation and Pathways to Action, we have proposed practical, scalable solutions and transformative steps aimed at driving meaningful and positive change. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador possess many admirable qualities, with resilience and imagination being among their greatest strengths. The Education Accord invites all stakeholders in the education system—governments, administrators, educators, academics, colleges, and more—to reflect on and reassess policies, procedures, curricula, and teaching practices. It encourages exploration of innovative ways to enhance education for every learner. This Accord represents a commitment to the **Learners** of today and tomorrow, ensuring they experience the enriching and successful education they deserve. They hold our future in their hands.



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Appendices

Appendix A: The Announcement

Provincial Government Announces the Creation of Education Accord NL

Education

January 25, 2024

Today, the Honourable Krista Lynn Howell, Minister of Education, announced the creation of Education Accord NL. Education Accord NL, which will be co-chaired by Dr. Anne Burke and Dr. Karen Goodnough, will develop a targeted approach to transforming and modernizing Newfoundland and Labrador's education system.

Minister Howell will be available to media to discuss the Education Accord today (Thursday, January 25) at 1:00 p.m. in the NLSchools board room at 95 Elizabeth Avenue, St. John's. Minister Howell will be joined Dr. Burke and Dr. Goodnough, Co-Chairs of the Education Accord NL Advisory Team.

Dedicated to supporting a modern educational experience for all students in Newfoundland and Labrador, Education Accord NL will reimagine the education system to ensure students and learners at all levels receive the educational services they need in the classroom, are prepared for the modern global economy, and develop strong decision-making skills to foster positive health and well-being.

The Accord aims to create better outcomes for students and learners while also supporting the Provincial Government's goal of becoming one of Canada's healthiest provinces by 2031.

Education Accord NL will focus on four pillars:

- Early learning and childhood development;
- Education engagement and transformation;
- Health and well-being in education environments; and,
- Post-secondary education and learning across the lifespan.

The Accord will be developed in consultation with stakeholders and will incorporate research garnered through the extensive engagement and consultation process of Health Accord NL. Education Accord NL will focus on delivering a 10-Year Education Accord with short, medium, and long-term goals for an education system that better meets the needs of students and learners in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Accord will be delivered to government by December 31, 2024.

Appendix B: Membership

Advisory Board Membership	
Tracy King	Deputy Minister, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Dr. Patrick Parfrey, MD	Chief Executive Officer, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services
John McGrath	Deputy Minister, Health and Community Services, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Alan Doody	Deputy Minister, Families and Affordability, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; Chief Executive Officer (Interim), Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation
Karen Stone	Deputy Minister, Justice and Public Safety, and Deputy Attorney General of Newfoundland and Labrador, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Sharlene Jones	Deputy Minister, Jobs, Immigration and Growth, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Dr. Rob Greenwood	Deputy Minister, Rural and Regional Development, and Engagement and Chief Economic Development Officer, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Jodie Lane	Indigenous Education Advisory Committee Co-Chair; Director of Education for the Nunatsiavut Government, Department of Education and Economic Development
Trent Langdon	President, NL Teachers Association
Trevor King	Executive Officer, NAPE
Dr. Jennifer Lokash	Provost and Vice-President (Academic) pro tempore, Memorial University
Dr. Pamela Osmond-Johnson	Dean of the Faculty of Education, Memorial University

Lisa Lovelady	Vice-President Academic and Chief Operating Officer, Academy Canada and Eastern Academy; President, Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Career Colleges
Ron Taylor	Director of Strategy and Development, Connections for Seniors
Don Coombs	President, NL Federation of School Councils
Katie Spurrell	High School Student, NLSchools
Krista Brown	Primary/Elementary School Administrator, NLSchools
Carolyn Janes	Intermediate School Parent Representative, St. Anthony, NL
April Bowne Stone	Senior High School Parent Representative, Grand Falls-Windsor, NL
Dr. Peggy Tuttle, MD	Primary/Elementary School Parent Representative, Clarks Beach, NL
Charmayne Rumbolt	Primary/Elementary School Administrator, NLSchools
Dr. Angie Clarke	Associate Vice-President, Academic and Student Affairs, Marine Institute
Hasan Hai	Vice President of Canadian Operations, Carnegie Learning; K-12 EdTech; TedX Speaker
Elizabeth Winney	President and Chief Executive Officer, College of the North Atlantic
Dr. Jennifer Browne	Director of Student Life, Memorial University
Lisa Baker-Worthman	Pillar Committee Co-Chair; Assistant Deputy Minister, Early Learning, Inclusion and Child Development Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Skye Taylor	Pillar Committee Co-Chair; Director, Association of Early Childhood Educators, Newfoundland and Labrador
Tanya Noseworthy	Pillar Committee Co-Chair; Assistant Deputy Minister, Post-Secondary Education Branch, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Shirley Woodward	Pillar Committee Co-Chair; Associate Vice President, Campus Operations (Interim), College of the North Atlantic

Dr. Donna Hardy-Cox	Pillar Committee Co-Chair; Full Professor, School of Social Work, Cross-Appointment Faculty of Education, Associate Vice-President (Academic), Dean of Students (currently on research leave), Memorial University
Dr. Scott Linehan	Pillar Committee Co-Chair; Assistant Deputy Minister, K-12 Education Branch, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Lynn Taylor	Pillar Committee Co-Chair; Assistant Deputy Minister of Well-Being, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Dr. Greg O'Leary	Pillar Committee Co-Chair; Deputy Minister, Education Transformation Branch, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Yvonne Barry	Pillar Committee Co-Chair; Program Development Specialist, Education Transformation Branch, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Tom Mugford	Indigenous Education Advisory Committee Co-Chair; Program Development Specialist Indigenous Education K-12, K-12 Education Branch, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Marcella Cormier	Directrice générale adjointe de l'Éducation, Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador
Denise Pike	Executive Director, NL Federation of School Councils
Advisory Board Membership	
Dr. Anne Burke	Co-Chair, Education Accord NL; Professor in Literacy Education, Memorial University
Dr. Karen Goodnough	Co-Chair, Education Accord NL; Former Dean of the Faculty of Education, Memorial University
Katrina Moores	Senior Advisor, Education Accord NL, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Health and Well-Being in Education Environments Committee Membership

Co-Chairs	
Dr. Scott Linehan	Committee Co-Chair; Assistant Deputy Minister, K-12 Education Branch, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Lynn Taylor	Committee Co-Chair; Assistant Deputy Minister, Well-Being, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Committee Members	
Gina Ash	Senior Director, Provincial Public Health, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services
Dr. Kellie Baker	Program and Services Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Jennifer Crowe	Executive Director, Choices for Youth
Alison Elliott	Safe and Inclusive Programs Itinerant, Student Services, Early Learning, Inclusion and Child Development Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Trevor Finlay	Principal, Corner Brook Regional High School, NLSchools
Dr. Janice Fitzgerald, MD	Chief Medical Officer of Health, Department of Health and Community Services, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Jason Geary	Manager, Accessibility Services (Blundon Centre), Student Life, Memorial University, St. John's Campus
Aisling Gogan	Assistant Deputy Minister, Prevention and Early Intervention, Department of Families and Affordability, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Dr. Denise King	Retired Manager, Student Services, Early Learning, Inclusion and Child Development Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Rhonda McKinnon	Retired Comprehensive School Health Program Specialist (Provincial), Early Learning, Inclusion and Child Development Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Andrea Pearce	Seniors Policy, Planning and Research Analyst, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Dr. Carolyn Stacey	Intermediate School Administrator, NLSchools
Jennifer Tucker	Program Specialist K-12, Student Services, Early Learning, Inclusion and Child Development Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Gregory Woolgar	Retired Safe and Inclusive Schools Itinerant, Early Learning, Inclusion and Child Development Division, Department of Education, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Early Learning and Childhood Development Committee Membership

Co-Chairs	
Lisa Baker-Worthman	Committee Co-Chair; Assistant Deputy Minister, Early Learning, Inclusion and Child Development Division, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
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Appendix C: Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Pillar Committees and their Co-Chairs, as well as the Advisory Board, for their time, expertise, and unwavering commitment to the creation of the Education Accord NL. Their collaborative efforts have been invaluable in shaping the direction of this work, and their insights have been instrumental in identifying transformative pathways for education in Newfoundland and Labrador. These contributions have played a central role in the development and success of the Accord.

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Thank you to all who have dedicated their time and effort to this important work.

Appendix D: Evidence Archive

The Evidence Archive serves as the foundational resource for informed decision-making by capturing the collective insights, data, and contributions that shaped the Education Accord NL. It brings together a diverse range of qualitative and quantitative materials—from public survey responses, written submissions, and focus group discussions to academic research, expert commentary, and policy reports. This comprehensive collection of evidence documents the Accord engagement process and grounds the Accord’s recommendations in lived experience, scholarly input, and public sentiment.

Beyond affirming the Accord’s evidence-based Calls to Transformation, the Archive underscores the value of inclusive consultation and open exchange. Led by the Co-Chairs in partnership with the Pillar Committees and Advisory Board, the engagement process was thorough and transparent, involving a wide range of stakeholders. Through expert forums, community gatherings, symposia, and various feedback channels, the Archive captures a shared vision to reimagine education. It reflects a shared commitment to reimagining NL education in ways that promote lifelong well-being—enabling individuals to flourish physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. It is, in essence, both a record of participation and a blueprint for change.

A library of the Evidence Archive is available at:

<https://educationaccordnl.ca/resources/evidence-library/>



Appendix E: List of Calls to Transformation

Health and Well-Being in Education Environments Pillar

Social Determinants of Learning

1.1-1:

Adopt a social determinants of learning (SDOL) approach in all education environments that acknowledges the social factors outside the education system that impact learning, and is proactive in supporting individuals and families/caregivers throughout their educational journey. This includes but is not limited to:

- Working across departments, agencies, sectors, and organizations to enhance programs and services that stabilize learners and families/caregivers, recognizing that factors such as nutritious food, stable housing, health care, supportive relationships, safe communities, and opportunities for physical and mental well-being are essential foundations for enhanced educational outcomes.
- Improving public transportation and/or transportation systems to enable access to early learning and post-secondary environments.
- Developing an approach for accessible and affordable child care for adult learners that is supportive of continuous lifelong learning.

Sense of Belonging

1.2-2:

Develop comprehensive guidelines to embed a culture of belonging within education environments with programs that may be implemented consistently across education environments that position education as a pathway for social connection.

1.2-3:

Develop a comprehensive strategy to welcome newcomers into education environments that includes:

- ensuring access to mental health resources, trauma-informed practices, and social support services tailored to the diverse needs of newcomers;

- providing administrators, educators, and staff with comprehensive training to foster understanding, value, and respect for diverse cultures, languages, and experiences of newcomers;
- partnering with settlement and community organizations and cultural groups to facilitate smooth transitions for newcomer families/caregivers, and provide mentorship opportunities; and
- incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum that reflects and values the diversity of the learners, educators, administrators, and staff.

Chronic Absenteeism

1.3-4:

Reduce chronic absenteeism in the K-12 education environment with a focus on the early years (K-3) through:

- Supportive attendance policies delivered consistently across education environments.
- Data-informed interventions focused on vulnerable children, youth, and families/caregivers.
- Education for learners and families/caregivers on the importance of consistent attendance and the value of education starting in early learning programs (i.e., Kinderstart).
- The development of strong home-school communication channels and processes to discuss attendance concerns proactively.

Professional Learning for Educators, Administrators, and Staff

1.4-5:

Develop an approach for mandatory and iterative, continuous professional learning (PL) for educators, administrators, and staff that includes:

- Enhancing knowledge and expertise about the social factors influencing education.



- Increasing awareness of the interventions that are available across sectors to ensure learners can thrive.
- Developing a mentorship program for new educators and educators transitioning to a new role that supports the practical application of evidence-based pedagogies (e.g., curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment and evaluation) and proven practice to support the real-life circumstances presented within education environments.

Curriculum for Learners

1.5-6:

Integrate opportunities into existing curriculum to emphasize skills and competencies that support lifelong well-being, including but not limited to learning related to daily physical activity, social-emotional learning (SEL), mental health and addictions, sexual health, home repair, personal finance and economics, first aid and survival basics, environmental adaptation and mitigation, and social connection and relationship building.

Connections with Health and Social Programs

1.6-7:

Expand the Healthy Students Healthy Schools (HSHS) Program in K-12 environments to connect every school in the province to a School Health Promotion Liaison Consultant (SHPLC) to deliver programs and services that are broad in scope and support holistic well-being and the social determinants of learning (SDOL)—the factors beyond the educational system that influence learning.

1.6-8:

Support the implementation of a Child and Youth Community Health Model and teams to create appropriate health and social connections and to facilitate the delivery of timely, wraparound care for learners and families/caregivers.

1.6-9:

Improve consistent access to mental health and health supports for learners transitioning from high school to post-secondary with a focus on peer counselling opportunities.

1.6-10:

Enhance collaboration with Provincial Public Health to provide enhanced opportunities for public health nurses and professionals to work at their full scope of practice to support the health and well-being of learners and families/caregivers.

Connections with Community

1.7-11:

Establish formal partnerships between community organizations and educational settings to facilitate the delivery of programs and services in specialized areas of well-being, such as mental health and addictions, family/caregiver supports, sexual health, inclusion, trauma, diversity, and others.

1.7-12:

Expand the role of Family Resource Centres (FRCs) to include the delivery of programs and services for all families/caregivers to improve the social support required for holistic well-being, appropriately connecting FRCs to all education environments.

1.7-13:

Expand social navigation in education environments to focus on the social determinants of learning (SDOL), building positive relationships, and making meaningful community connections to enable early intervention and prevention to improve learner and family/caregiver well-being.

1.7-14:

Integrate educational systems into the community by leveraging educational infrastructure as a natural gathering place for families and communities to offer accessible social, health, and well-being programs and services including physical activity, music, and a broad range of other activities.

Connections with Justice and Public Safety

1.8-15:

Expand opportunities to integrate the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC) as trusted and essential partners in supporting the holistic well-being of learners, families/caregivers, administrators, educators, and staff.

1.8-16:

Develop a strategy for delivering education and training to learners in youth and adult correctional facilities that considers the distinct needs of learners as residents of the facilities and as individuals preparing to reintegrate into society.

Data and Data Utilization

1.9-17:

Establish policies and processes that enable learning cycles that regularly utilize data to identify trends, gaps, and opportunities for improvement and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions at defined intervals to inform decision-making in education environments.

1.9-18:

Facilitate population-based data collection by consistently administering the Early Development Instrument (EDI), the Middle Development Instrument (MDI), and the Youth Development Instrument (YDI) in all education environments throughout the province to assess the developmental health and well-being of learners across the province.

Early Learning and Childhood Development

Quality Early Learning and Child Care Programs

2.1-19:

Establish a culture of quality. Maximize developmental opportunities and establish indicators and accountability mechanisms which measure and track quality. Initiate public education campaigns so that the public can recognize and participate in child care quality initiatives.

2.1-20:

Establish welcoming, positive, responsive, and long-lasting relationships among early learning professionals, children, families/caregivers, communities and the regulatory authorities.

2.1-21:

Promote a research-informed culture in early learning and child care (ELCC) environments.

2.1-22:

Establish Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in all early learning and child care (ELCC) environments.

2.1-23:

Recognize that post-secondary institutions, certification requirements, professional associations, and other related organizations play an important role in promoting quality.

Early Learning and Child Care Workforce Challenges and Requirements

2.2-24:

Professionalize and stabilize the early learning and child care (ELCC) workforce.

2.2-25:

Align compensation and benefits, scope of work, and level of education for all early childhood educators (ECEs).

2.2-26:

Provide access to practice-based competency development and mentorship opportunities.

2.2-27:

Create positive and supportive workplace conditions with clearly outlined requirements for all early learning and child care (ELCC) environments.

Inclusive Early Learning and Child Care Programs

2.3-28:

Provide continuity of care/supports to address the needs of all children and establish clear assessment strategies that include observation and documentation for children and their early learning and child care (ELCC) environments.

2.3-29:

Create systematic approaches to address inequities experienced by vulnerable populations. Ensure all children can participate in early learning and child care (ELCC) environments in a meaningful and safe way.

2.3-30:

Ensure early learning professionals are supported in developing competence and confidence in their inclusive practices.

Family Connections and Engagement in the Early Years

2.4-31:

Ensure respectful and responsive engagement opportunities with all families/caregivers, especially priority populations, and streamline service provision of prenatal and postnatal supports that integrate with early learning services.



Transitions Between Early Learning Environments

2.5-32:

Formalize structures that facilitate collaboration, communication, and engagement between early learning, the K-12 system, and families/caregivers throughout transitions.

Education Engagement and Transformation in K-12

Transforming Education With a Unified Approach to Competency-Based Education

3.1-33:

Implement a comprehensive vision of learning for the province in consultation with K-12 transformation groups and the findings of the Accord that defines desired educational outcomes, emphasizing future readiness, lifelong learning, and the skills required to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

3.1-34:

Develop a Portrait of a Learner, which outlines the competencies, literacies, and proficiencies of learners in the province.

3.1-35:

Explicitly integrate the Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) Key Competencies into the curriculum by writing competencies in context directly into curriculum indicators, highlighting the interplay between competencies and indicators across all subject areas.

3.1-36:

Prioritize application-based learning language and opportunities within and alongside indicators in curriculum guides, equipping learners with both practical, real-world skills and commensurate problem-solving abilities for future success in an increasingly complex and unpredictable world.

3.1-37:

Redesign classroom infrastructure and plan new school builds to prioritize flexible, real-world learning environments. Incorporate modular spaces, industry-aligned labs, and collaborative work areas to promote hands-on experimentation, interdisciplinary problem-solving, and creativity.

3.1-38:

Address curriculum overload by focusing on essential competencies, eliminating redundant or non-essential learning outcomes, and ensuring the number of outcomes in each subject aligns with the allocated instructional time.

3.1-39:

Develop a Learning Alignment Framework to align curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment and evaluation practices with the unified vision of learning and key competencies, ensuring all components work together to support learner success and future readiness.

3.1-40:

Enhance foundational reading skills and instructional practices to improve literacy rates and reading outcomes while strengthening science and mathematics to achieve measurable improvements in provincial, national, and international evaluations across all areas.

Transforming Assessment – Building a Balanced, Competency-Based Framework for Student Success

3.2-41:

Develop an assessment and evaluation framework to ensure alignment across school-based assessment and provincial large-scale evaluation.

3.2-42:

Reframe school-based assessments to better integrate higher-order thinking skills by balancing application-based and content learning, as well as formative and summative assessments, emphasizing a system-wide, coordinated and intentional focus on creative thinking, problem-solving, and real-world application of learned content.

3.2-43:

Improve assessment and reporting mechanisms that provide clear and detailed communication of learners' progress with individual course indicators.

3.2-44:

Establish system-wide communication about provincial, national, and international evaluations by providing ongoing professional learning (PL) for educators and context on what the scores mean in accessible language for families/caregivers and learners.

Building and Strengthening Educator Capacity for Transformative Student Learning and Engagement

3.3-45:

Establish a dedicated professional learning (PL) team to support early childhood education and K-12 education in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD).



3.3-46:

Ensure all future professional learning (PL) is designed with an awareness of the impacts on, and alignment of, the major domains of learning, namely curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment and evaluation.

3.3-47:

Develop a Professional Learning Framework that offers system-required professional learning (PL) linked to professionalization and certification, as well as personalized PL opportunities for educators.

3.3-48:

Create professional learning (PL) opportunities that are focused on equipping all educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively implement application-based learning classrooms.

3.3-49:

Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the learning environment, ensuring that resources are appropriately allocated to increase learner engagement and attendance. This should include the implementation of dynamic, inclusive pedagogies that foster active learner involvement, provide opportunities for learner choice and voice, and create a sense of belonging, ultimately promoting learner success.

Transforming High School Graduation Pathways – Empowering Learners for Success

3.4-50:

Evaluate and modernize high school graduation requirements, create multiple pathways to graduation, and modernize course offerings in areas such as financial literacy, climate action, film and media studies, artificial intelligence (AI), and emerging fields.

3.4-51:

Re-envision the physical structure of learning whereby school-based learning is complemented by learning opportunities in the community and workspaces, for the intermediate and secondary school levels.

3.4-52:

Create a vocational training pathway at the intermediate and secondary school levels that integrates additional skilled trades, cooperative education, and modular experiential learning in school and community.

Transforming Education Through Equitable Access for All Learners

3.5-53:

Establish and expand multicultural policies and protocols for addressing systemic racism in K-12 schools, including educational tools, reporting mechanisms, and support for educators and learners.

3.5-54:

Create an educational environment where 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals are affirmed, valued, and empowered to thrive academically and personally, while continuously monitoring and addressing systemic barriers to inclusion.

3.5-55:

Embed Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing in curriculum guides and resources, teaching and learning strategies, assessment and evaluation practices, and school culture.

3.5-56:

Provide required prescribed curriculum (Literacy Enrichment and Readiness for Newcomers [LEARN]) and programming (English as an Additional Language [EAL]) for newcomer students.

3.5-57:

Improve inclusive practices in K-12 classrooms to enable meaningful participation from all learners—neurotypical and neurodiverse learners and those with disabilities and distinct challenges—by ensuring that optimal learning environments are varied and responsive to create flexible, learner-centred spaces where all learners can thrive.

3.5-58:

Ensure access to the necessary resources, technology, and supports for all learners, recognizing and accommodating the diverse abilities and required needs of neurotypical and neurodiverse learners, those with disabilities and distinct challenges.

3.5-59:

Continue investment in the expansion of the eNLighTenED platform to develop a centralized portal for aligning curriculum indicators, assessment tools, teaching and learning strategies, and professional learning (PL) resources.

3.5-60:

Expand the mandate of the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) as a hybrid and flexible learning platform that integrates both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities, meeting the diverse needs of learners.



Transforming Education with Artificial Intelligence: Enhancing Learning, Empowering Educators, and Preparing Students for the Future

3.6-61:

Provide learners and educators with essential AI knowledge, including ethics, data privacy, and responsible technology use.

3.6-62:

Transform learning experiences for all learners by modernizing school systems to enable seamless integration and usage of adaptive artificial intelligence (AI) tools tailored to individual learner needs.

Post-Secondary Education and Learning Across the Lifespan

Ecosystem Approach

4.1-63:

Support successful transitions from K-12 to post-secondary.

4.1-64:

Formalize structures to increase collaboration between post-secondary and adult education partners to support higher-level education planning, continuous learning, and skill development.

4.1-65:

Streamline general functions, within and between institutions, to enhance consistency and efficiency, improve learner experience, and reduce administrative burden.

4.1-66:

Increase laddering and articulation opportunities across the post-secondary system.

4.1-67:

Improve transitions from post-secondary and other adult learning programs to the workforce.

Learner-Centric Systems and Processes

4.2-68:

Implement a responsive system that supports personalized learning options that adapt to individual learner needs and goals.

4.2-69:

Create a system committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

4.2-70:

Develop and implement a consistent model for Universal Design across the K-12 and post-secondary systems.

4.2-71:

Transition governance, policy, and delivery models to be learner-centric.

4.2-72:

Ensure a fulsome learner-centric approach to Indigenous education.

Learner and Educator Well-Being

4.3-73:

Prioritize the mental and physical well-being of educators and learners to create supportive and safe learning environments.

4.3-74:

Institutions take a 'Whole Person' approach to supporting successful learner outcomes, considering how external social, cultural, economic, and societal factors impact mental health and well-being.

Improved Learner Outcomes

4.4-75:

Expand alternative methods of learning and opportunities for learners.

4.4-76:

Provide additional supports to increase learner completion rates and high levels of attainment.

4.4-77:

Modernize assessment and credentialing systems to be competency-based with a focus on transferable skills.

4.4-78:

Establish and implement a Learning System Model for the post-secondary education system.



Modernized Systems and Processes

4.5-79:

Implement measures to modernize learning environments by supporting flexibility and inclusion.

4.5-80:

Modernize and streamline systems and processes, incorporating technology to better support and reduce burdens on learners and educators.

4.5-81:

Redesign Adult Basic Education (ABE) delivery models to better meet the needs of learners.

Maximizing Research, Innovation and Sustainability

4.6-82:

Continue to advance the development of progressive research and innovation programming that is responsive to the evolving needs of learners, institutions, and the province.

4.6-83:

Advance the development of a modern and sustainable funding structure for public post-secondary education.

Increasing Educational Opportunities for Older Adults

4.7-84:

Increase awareness and delivery of relevant and practical programming for older adults.

4.7-85:

Increase the accessibility and flexibility of course options with the supports necessary to successfully meet learning outcomes.

4.7-86:

Increase options for, and promotion of, learning across the lifespan.

Calls to Transformation from the Education Accord NL Co-Chairs

5-87:

Integrate Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and ways of being as foundational elements in the delivery of education across early childhood, K-12, and post-secondary systems.

5-88:

Create a full-time facilitator position at the 7-12 level that works across 7-12 and in collaboration with guidance counsellors to empower youth to make informed decisions about their futures.

5-89:

Establish formal mechanisms such as formal agreements, memoranda of understanding, collaborative governance structures, and communication protocols to ensure the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), the Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador (CSFP), and Indigenous-led schools work collaboratively to ensure achieved shared goals.

5-90:

Adopt deliberate strategies to ensure learner engagement in the development and revision of curriculum in K-12 and post-secondary education.

5-91:

Enhance and expand Horizon Academy (Alternate School) through strengthened collaboration with the Department of Justice and Public Safety (JPS) and the Department of Families and Affordability (FAMA) to better support youth involved in the justice system. This improved hybrid, transitional model will offer trauma-informed, flexible learning pathways that integrate restorative practices, wraparound mental health supports, and life-skills development. Programming will be tailored to each learner's needs, supporting both reintegration into the public school system and smooth transitions to post-secondary education, training, or the workforce.

5-92:

Review and redesign the roles and responsibilities within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD)—including the K-12 Programs and Services Division, Student Services, and all school-based support positions—to ensure consistent, inclusive, and responsive support for all K-12 learners.

5-93:

Reimagine the design and construction of new schools and public education buildings by prioritizing sustainable physical structures, spaces, and infrastructure that support long-term environmental, social, and educational goals.

5-94:

Strengthen transition programs for learners with School Achievement Certificates to better equip them for success in post-secondary education, employment, and independent living, ensuring a seamless pathway to adulthood and personal growth.



5-95:

Address the growing need for technology in K-12 schools, post-secondary institutions, and communities by developing a comprehensive approach that focuses on equitable access and long-term sustainability.

5-96:

Strengthen the role of public libraries to enhance their capacity to provide access to technology, support local artists and culture, connect to schools and other community groups, and promote learning across the lifespan.

5-97:

Implement mandatory professional learning linked to teacher certification, with an annual renewal requirement, ensuring educators continuously develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to effectively address the evolving needs of learners and schools.

5-98:

Strengthen the implementation of the existing daily physical activity policy in K-12 education by embedding movement and outdoor play into curriculum and daily instructional practice. Provide targeted professional learning for educators and support schools in making physical activity a consistent, meaningful part of the school day—promoting learner well-being, focus, and overall development.

5-99:

Empower all learners—children, youth, educators, families/caregivers, and seniors—by providing comprehensive support in the development of digital literacy, ensuring that everyone has the skills and confidence to navigate and thrive in an increasingly digital world.

5-100:

Develop a comprehensive and proactive approach to supporting mental health in K-12 schools, supported by well-being teams within each school. These teams should be made up of a multidisciplinary group of health care and educational professionals, including but not limited to the following roles: educational psychologists, social workers, school counsellors, behavior itinerants, youth outreach workers, school nurses, occupational therapists (OTs), student services teaching and learning assistants, Safe and Inclusive Schools itinerants, student success teachers, and school administrators.

5-101:

Establish an Education Advocate for K-12 schools to mediate conflict resolution, investigate complaints, champion equity, and recommend improvements to policies and practices.

5-102:

Expand the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI) to offer Advanced Placement (AP) courses, micro-credentials, and dual-credit opportunities in partnership with post-secondary institutions, industry, and community organizations. This expansion will give all learners in grades 10-12 equitable access to advanced academics, career-focused skills, and real-world experiences, thus preparing them for post-secondary education, skilled trades, and in-demand industries like digital media, film, and design.

5-103:

Create an Educator Professional Council to oversee and enhance the teaching profession by setting and maintaining high standards of practice, ensuring accountability, providing ongoing professional learning (PL), and advocating for the needs and rights of educators.

5-104:

Reduce chronic absenteeism by prioritizing learner safety, trust, and strong relationships with families/caregivers and their care networks. Move beyond automated messages toward proactive, personalized communication that gets to the root causes of absenteeism. Equip school staff to connect with families/caregivers in ways that build trust and offer meaningful support, helping learners feel safe, valued, and ready to learn.

5-105:

Revitalize and reimagine arts spaces in K-12 education, ensuring dedicated teaching and support for the Arts, with a focus on intergenerational programming for younger learners. Expand this initiative to include comprehensive community arts programs, supported across government departments, that integrate schools, local organizations, and artists.

5-106:

Revise the existing Teacher Secondment program within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) to offer an initial one-year term, with the option for a one-year renewal based on a comprehensive review of performance, project outcomes, and alignment with departmental priorities. The total duration of the secondment will be capped at two years, providing opportunities for educators to contribute their classroom expertise to system-level initiatives while maintaining a regular influx of fresh perspectives and ensuring continued relevance to evolving educational contexts.

5-107:

Integrate dedicated occupational therapy (OT) services into early learning environments and primary schools to support learners' physical, cognitive, and emotional development by prioritizing efficient resource allocation and innovative service delivery models.



5-108:

Empower educators by offering professional learning and certification programs that equip them with the qualifications needed to conduct comprehensive assessments, ensuring that every learner receives timely, accurate evaluations and the necessary support to thrive.

5-109:

Enhance and strengthen communication pathways between the Early Learning, Inclusion and Student Services Division, the K-12 Programs and Services Division and NLSchools Operations Division within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), ensuring that the integration of NLSchools with the Department maintains accountability, responsiveness, and transparency with learners, families/caregivers, and the broader community.

5-110:

Create a detailed blueprint and strategic plan for effectively implementing the transformative actions outlined in the Education Accord NL.

Appendix F: Glossary of Terms

A

Accountability Measures: The processes and criteria used to assess and ensure that educational systems, institutions, and individuals meet established standards of performance and responsibility.

Aligned Resources: Educational materials, tools, and supports that are purposefully curated and structured to seamlessly align with curriculum objectives, instructional strategies, and the diverse needs of learners. These resources are designed to enhance learning outcomes, ensure consistency across teaching practices, and provide targeted support to meet the specific needs of learners.

Alternative Schooling: Educational pathways that offer non-traditional methods of learning, instruction, and support, designed to cater to the diverse needs of learners who may not flourish in conventional school settings. These programs provide flexible, innovative approaches to education, focusing on personalized learning, individualized support, and fostering a positive, engaging environment where learners can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Assessment and Evaluation: The ongoing processes of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to measure learner progress and educational outcomes. These insights inform decision-making, drive improvements in teaching practices, and support the development of targeted strategies to enhance learner achievement and overall educational effectiveness.

B

Belonging: The deep sense of acceptance, respect, and value that learners experience within a community or educational environment. This feeling of connection not only strengthens learner engagement and participation, but also nurtures their emotional well-being, fostering a positive and inclusive atmosphere where all learners can thrive.

C

Central Hub: A centralized location, either physical or virtual, that serves as a key resource or focal point for coordination, information, and access to services within the education system.

Check Mark Culture: A culture in education where actions or assessments are focused on completing tasks or meeting criteria without genuinely engaging with the deeper purpose of learning and development.

Civic Engagement: Actively empowering and inspiring learners to engage in their communities and society by fostering a sense of responsibility, participation, and social consciousness. This approach encourages learners to become informed, active citizens who contribute to meaningful change, advocate for social justice, and take leadership in addressing community challenges.

Class Composition: The structure and arrangement of learners within a classroom, considering factors such as academic ability, learning needs, social dynamics, and demographic diversity. In an educational context, class composition plays a critical role in shaping instructional strategies, learner engagement, and overall learning outcomes. Effective class composition ensures an inclusive and supportive learning environment that meets the diverse needs of all learners.

Competency-Based Education: A forward-thinking educational model that centers on learners mastering essential skills and knowledge at their own pace, prioritizing deep understanding and practical application over traditional content-heavy, rote memorization. This approach fosters progressive, skills-based learning, empowering learners to demonstrate proficiency and readiness for real-world challenges.

Core Competencies: The foundational skills and capabilities that learners must develop to thrive as successful, adaptable learners. These competencies include critical thinking, effective communication, problem-solving, collaboration, and the ability to apply knowledge in diverse contexts, all of which are essential for navigating academic challenges and preparing for lifelong success in an ever-changing world.

Curriculum Outcomes: The specific knowledge, skills, and competencies that learners are expected to achieve through engagement with the curriculum at various grade levels.

D

Data: Quantitative or qualitative information collected to assess, measure, and improve various aspects of the educational process, from learner progress to school performance.

Data Driven: A process where decisions and educational practices are guided primarily by data and measurable outcomes, ensuring that decisions are based on objective evidence.

Disability: A broad and evolving concept that encompasses intellectual, neurological, physical, psychological (including mental health), sensory, communication, and invisible conditions or impairments—whether permanent, temporary, episodic, or fluctuating—that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder an individual’s full and equal participation in society.

Disability is not solely defined by a medical diagnosis but also by the social, environmental, and attitudinal barriers that limit inclusion, access, and opportunity. It includes both visible and non-visible disabilities and recognizes the diverse ways people experience and identify with disability.

Diversity: The presence of a wide range of differences among individuals, including but not limited to race, culture, gender, socioeconomic status, and learning needs, in the educational environment.

Dysregulation: Disruptions or challenges in emotional, cognitive, or behavioural control that may interfere with a individual’s ability to learn and engage effectively in the classroom.

E

Ecosystem Approach: A holistic framework that recognizes the interconnectedness of individuals, organizations, resources, and processes within the education system. This approach fosters collaboration and synergy, ensuring that all elements work together to create a sustainable, resilient, and thriving learning environment that supports learner success.

Educational Infrastructure: The physical and organizational structures, such as schools, technology, curricula, and student services, that support and enable learning within the education system.

Equity: Ensuring that every learner has access to the resources and opportunities they need to succeed, addressing individual needs and barriers to learning rather than treating all learners the same.

Evidence-Informed: A decision-making approach in education that integrates data, research, and relevant insights to shape policies and practices. By drawing on proven strategies and real-world evidence, this approach ensures that actions are effective, targeted, and aligned with best practices to support learner success.

Equity-Deserving: Refers to individuals or groups who have historically experienced systemic barriers to access, opportunity, and resources due to factors such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or other forms of marginalization. These groups are not defined by disadvantage, but by the systemic inequities they face, and the need for intentional efforts to ensure fair treatment, representation, and outcomes within educational systems and society at large.

F

Family Resource Centres (FRCs): Community-based hubs that offer a wide range of services and support to families/caregivers, with a strong focus on early childhood development, education, and family/caregiver well-being. These centres provide valuable resources, guidance, and programs that empower families/caregivers, strengthen parental engagement, and foster a nurturing environment for children's growth and learning. They play a key role in building strong, resilient communities by connecting families/caregivers with the tools and support they need to thrive.

Framework: A structured approach that outlines key principles, processes, and guidelines for addressing educational challenges or implementing initiatives, providing a basis for consistency and coordination.

G

Graduation Pathways: A range of flexible, personalized routes and supports designed to help learners successfully navigate their educational journey and achieve graduation. Whether through traditional or alternative programs, these pathways provide targeted resources, guidance, and opportunities that ensure learners are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to thrive in post-secondary education, the workforce, and life beyond school.

H

Holistic Approach: An educational approach that considers the full spectrum of a learner's development, including cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and ethical dimensions, aiming for well-rounded growth.

I

Inclusion: Ensuring all learners, regardless of their background, abilities, or needs, have access to equal educational opportunities and are supported in their learning journey.

Inclusive Education: An approach to teaching and learning that accommodates the diverse needs of all learners, including those with complex needs or other learning challenges, ensuring they participate in a shared, collaborative educational experience.

Indigenization: The intentional and respectful integration of Indigenous perspectives, cultures, histories, languages, and worldviews into the fabric of the education system, ensuring that all learners engage with and honour the richness of Indigenous knowledge and heritage.

Instructional Practices: The teaching methods, strategies, and techniques used by educators to facilitate learner progress and engagement in the classroom.

Integrated Supports: A coordinated system of services and resources that work together to address the diverse needs of learners, ensuring that academic, social, emotional, and behavioural supports are provided in a seamless and holistic manner. This approach involves collaboration across various sectors, such as education, health, and community services, to create a comprehensive support network that promotes learner well-being and success.

Inter-Agency Collaboration: A coordinated and strategic process in which multiple organizations or agencies work together to achieve shared goals and tackle common challenges. By pooling resources, expertise, and efforts, this collaboration ensures comprehensive, holistic support for learners, addressing their diverse needs across education, health, social services, and beyond, to create a more integrated and effective support system.

L

Learner-Centric: An educational approach that places the learner at the heart of the experience, ensuring that their unique needs, interests, and strengths drive the design and delivery of teaching and learning. This approach fosters personalized, engaging, and meaningful learning, empowering learners to take ownership of their educational journey.

Learner Engagement: The active participation of learners in the learning process, demonstrating interest, motivation, and a sense of ownership over their education.

Learner Outcomes: The specific knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competencies that learners are expected to demonstrate as a result of their educational experience.



Learning Environment: The physical, social, and emotional spaces in which learning occurs, including classrooms, online platforms, and the overall culture of the school or educational institution.

Learning Oriented Approach: A method of education that prioritizes meaningful learning outcomes by connecting content with real-world application. It emphasizes the development of skills, knowledge, and abilities through effective teaching strategies designed to enhance learner engagement, understanding, and long-term retention. This approach ensures that learning is not just about acquiring information but about applying it in practical, relevant ways to foster deeper comprehension and lifelong learning.

Learning Oriented Support: Systems and services that are designed to provide targeted assistance to learners, helping them achieve their learning goals and addressing specific challenges they may face.

Literacy: The ability to read, write, and understand text, as well as the broader skill of making sense of information, solving problems, and communicating effectively in various contexts.

Lived Experience: The personal knowledge, perspectives, and understanding gained through direct, firsthand engagement with educational challenges, opportunities, and systems.

M

Mechanisms: The structures, processes, or systems put in place to achieve specific educational goals, such as assessment frameworks, support systems, or policy enforcement.

Mentorship: A dynamic, supportive relationship in which experienced individuals (mentors) offer guidance, encouragement, and expertise to help less experienced individuals (mentees) navigate challenges, develop their skills, and reach their personal and professional potential. This process fosters growth, confidence, and resilience while cultivating a culture of continuous learning and mutual support.

Modernization: A strategic overhaul of educational systems, practices, and infrastructure to integrate cutting-edge technologies, innovative methodologies, and forward-thinking educational demands, driving excellence in teaching and learning while ensuring the system is future-ready.

Multiculturalism: An inclusive approach that acknowledges, celebrates, and integrates diverse cultural backgrounds, perspectives, and traditions into the educational experience. By fostering an environment of respect, understanding, and appreciation, this approach enriches learning, promotes cross-cultural dialogue, and ensures all learners feel valued and included.

N

Navigator: A dedicated professional or system that provides personalized guidance and support to individuals as they navigate their educational pathways. By helping learners and families/caregivers make informed decisions, access essential resources, and overcome barriers, navigators ensure a smoother, more successful journey through education, fostering opportunities for growth, achievement, and long-term success.

O

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development): An influential international organization dedicated to promoting policies that enhance the economic and social well-being of individuals globally. The OECD works across a broad range of sectors, including education, to foster sustainable development, improve living standards, and support effective governance by providing evidence-based research, policy recommendations, and fostering international collaboration.

P

Personalized Learning: Tailoring educational experiences to meet the individual needs, preferences, and strengths of each learner, enabling them to progress in ways that suit their pace and style.

PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies): A comprehensive global survey conducted to assess the skills and competencies of adults, focusing on key areas such as literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving. PIAAC provides valuable insights into the capabilities of adult populations across different countries, helping to inform policies and strategies aimed at improving lifelong learning, workforce development, and social participation in an increasingly complex and dynamic world.

PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment): A globally recognized assessment administered by the OECD that evaluates the knowledge, skills, and competencies of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics, and science. PISA provides valuable insights into how well learners are prepared for life beyond school by measuring their ability to apply learning in real-world contexts, while also offering a comparative analysis of educational systems across diverse countries to inform policy and practice improvements.

Portrait of a Learner: A comprehensive representation of the attributes, skills, and characteristics that define a well-rounded and capable learner, reflecting the diverse competencies expected from learners in Newfoundland and Labrador.



Proactive Approach: An approach to addressing challenges in education by anticipating and addressing potential issues before they become problems, aiming for prevention rather than reaction.

Professional Learning: A continuous process of growth and development for educators, designed to deepen their knowledge, refine their skills, and enhance their teaching and leadership practices, all with the goal of fostering improved learner outcomes and creating a dynamic learning environment.

Professional Training: Targeted learning experiences designed to enhance the skills and competencies of educators and school staff, enabling them to better serve learners' needs.

Professionalization: The continuous process of elevating the skills, qualifications, and ethical standards of individuals within the education system. This process ensures that educators and staff meet rigorous professional and accountability standards, fostering a culture of excellence, integrity, and continuous growth that directly benefits learner progress and well-being.

R

Responsiveness: The ability of the education system, educators, and institutions to adapt and react to the changing needs, interests, and challenges of learners, families/caregivers, and communities.

Root Cause: The underlying factor or issue that contributes to a problem in the education system, rather than merely addressing the symptoms or immediate effects of that problem.

S

Social Determinants of Health: The social, economic and environmental factors in which people are born, live, grow, eat, exercise, learn, work, play, and age.

Social Determinants of Learning: The contextual conditions that influence a learner's ability to engage with and succeed in their education. These factors extend beyond the traditional classroom setting and encompass various social, economic, and environmental influences. They can significantly impact a learner's academic performance, well-being, and overall educational experience.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): A comprehensive process through which learners acquire the essential skills to recognize and manage their emotions, build meaningful and respectful relationships, demonstrate empathy, and make responsible, well-informed decisions. SEL fosters resilience, emotional intelligence, and self-awareness, creating a strong foundation for personal well-being, academic success, and positive engagement in both school and broader society.

Social Inclusion: The process of ensuring that all learners, regardless of their background or challenges, feel welcomed, respected, and valued within the educational system.

Student Apathy: A lack of interest, enthusiasm, or emotional investment in learning, often leading to disengagement and a decline in academic performance.

Student Engagement: The level of interest, motivation, and participation that learners demonstrate in their learning, both inside and outside the classroom.

Sustainability: The ability of the education system to maintain and improve its effectiveness over time, ensuring long-term benefits for learners, educators, and communities.

Systemic Approach: A comprehensive method for tackling challenges or achieving goals within education that examines the entire system. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of all components—policies, practices, partnerships, and resources—ensuring that solutions are holistic, coordinated, and sustainable across all levels of the education system.

T

Transformation: A bold and decisive process of fundamentally reshaping education through innovative teaching methods, inclusive policies, and systemic reforms. It aims to enhance the effectiveness of learning, ensure equitable access for all learners, and align education with the evolving needs of society. By fostering critical thinking, adaptability, and lifelong learning, transformation prepares learners to navigate and contribute meaningfully to the challenges of today and the opportunities of tomorrow.

Transitions: The process of moving from one educational stage to another, such as from early learning centres to primary school, from primary to elementary school and to secondary school, or from high school to post-secondary education or employment, requiring careful support and planning.

Trauma-Informed Practices: Educational approaches and strategies that recognize and address the impact of trauma on learners' learning, providing safe and supportive environments that facilitate healing and academic success.

U

Universal Access: Ensuring that all learners, regardless of their background, abilities, or circumstances, have equitable access to high-quality education and learning opportunities.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): An educational framework for designing curriculum, lesson plans, learning environments, and assessments to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all learners. By applying these principles of universal design for learning, educators build flexibility to support all learners to successfully access information, engage with information, and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

W

Well-Being: The overall state of physical, emotional, mental, and social health and stability of learners, which is essential for effective learning and personal growth.

Wraparound Services: A holistic, learner-centred approach that involves the coordination of a wide range of support services, including academic, behavioural, mental health, and family services, to address the comprehensive needs of learners. These services are tailored to each individual, providing continuous, flexible, and collaborative support that helps learners overcome barriers to learning and thrive both academically and personally.



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