

A Vision for Student Success

There are four initiatives underway in education right now, all with the same goal – to support student success. Each piece, while separate initiatives, are part of a “bigger picture” to ensure our system, and the actions we take within it, are 100 per cent focused on preparing our children and students to be successful beyond high school.

Pre-Primary: a free program for four-year-olds that ensures all Nova Scotia families have the same opportunity to access quality early learning before their child starts school. It also helps to identify – earlier – any special supports that may be needed in advance of their school years.

Council to Improve Classroom Conditions: this is a group of 14, including 9 classroom teachers plus a guidance counsellor, a parent and student that meet for three days every month. The council has direct influence on policy decisions that improve classroom conditions. Members consult with and share decisions with teachers and administrators in their own school boards. Their decisions reflect what their colleagues are telling them are the biggest issues they face in the classroom.

To date, the Council has helped to:

- Set limits on class sizes for junior and senior high. Nova Scotia now has class caps from P-12.
- Introduce a first-ever province-wide attendance policy and a pilot program of attendance support workers who will help students and their families work through any issues preventing regular attendance.
- Bring 139 new teachers into the system to accommodate smaller class sizes
- Tackle data entry issues – a concern teachers identified as taking time away from teaching.

Next, the Council plans to simplify report cards and advise on a new assessment policy dealing with deadlines, use of zeroes and existing “no fail” practices.

The Commission on Inclusive Education: three members of the Commission – one appointed by the NSTU, one appointed by government, and a chair and subject matter expert – Dr. Sarah Shea – are looking at the issue of inclusion in the classroom. How to appropriately address the needs of children who require special supports has long been of great concern for teachers, as well as parents. The Commission was tasked with consulting with stakeholders and producing recommendations for consideration. That work is ongoing. The report is due March 2018.

Education System Administrative Review: Dr. Avis Glaze, a world-renowned Education consultant, was asked to look at the structure of administration and governance in education. The goal is to improve the foundation of the education system, so that the changes coming from the Council and the Commission are being introduced into an environment where there are clear reporting relationships, consistent implementation of policies and procedures and where the people who make up the system are organized around improving student success.

For more information go to novascotia.ca/educationsystem