Accountability Report 2020–21

Education and Early Childhood Development

NOVA SCOTIA

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Accountability Report 2020–2021

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for the year ended March 31, 2021, is prepared pursuant to the Finance Act and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Business Plan for the fiscal year that just ended. The reporting of the department outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments, and opinions by department management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the department's 2020-21 Business Plan.

Hon. Becky Druhan
Minister

Cathy Montreuil
Deputy Minister

Message from the Minister

It is with pleasure that I present the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's (EECD) 2020-21 Accountability Report. This document reports on the department's activities as outlined in EECD's 2020-21 Business Plan.

Through this difficult year, the *Back to School Plan*, developed by EECD, Public Health and the IWK, in consultation with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU), Public School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia, and educational support unions, helped to keep students in school. As we continue through the pandemic, this approach will continue, with Public Health leading the way.

Nova Scotia is also a leader in inclusive education and in September 2020, implementation of the provincial *Inclusive Education Policy* began. One of the goals of this policy is that all students should feel they belong; that they are accepted, safe and valued. This approach has guided decisions through the pandemic and will continue to be a focus for EECD and the education system.

For the 2021-22 school year we will continue to support our students, teachers, and the school community. I am confident that by working together and listening to many different perspectives, we will continue to make a positive difference in the lives of all students while supporting student achievement and well-being. I look forward to working closely with the Regional Centres for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, Public Schools Administrators Association, communities and all education partners, including unions, to ensure all students and children succeed.

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Hon. Becky Druhan
Minister, Education and Early Childhood Development

Introduction and Structure

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2020-21 Accountability Report provides information on performance measures and finances identified in the 2020-21 Business Plan.

Student Assessments as Performance Measures

Performance measures related to student assessments are reported as the percentage of students performing at or above provincial expectations (Level 3 or 4) in reading, writing, and mathematics. The reporting years stated for all assessment results presented in this report refer to the academic year (September to June), rather than the fiscal year.

The department continues to review the Public School Program and is focused on providing relevant and renewed curriculum and programs in the public education system. Ongoing improvements to student assessment and evaluation are a priority for the department.

Financial Results

2020-21 Accountability Report: Financial Table

	2020-21 Estimate	2020-21 Actual	2020-21 Variance
Program and Service Area	($ thousands)		
Departmental Expenses:			
Senior Management	$1,194	$1,087	($107)
Strategic Policy, RCE Liaison and Research	$3,815	$3,847	$32
Early Learning	$53,225	$58,579	$5,354
Childcare and Licensing	$78,244	$90,312	$12,068
Centre for Equity in Achievement and Well-Being	$3,834	$2,433	($1,401)
Education Innovation Programs and Services	$15,569	$15,368	($201)
Student Services and Equity	$2,220	$2,041	($179)
African Canadian Services	$5,981	$6,061	$80
Mi'kmaq Services	$1,093	$983	($110)
French Programs and Services	$10,187	$12,980	$2,793
Corporate Services	$4,531	$4,836	$305
Public Education Funding	$1,133,483	$1,172,386	$38,903
Teachers' Pension	$92,063	$90,063	($2,000)
School Capital Amortization	$73,863	$75,054	$1,191
Total: Departmental Expenses	**$1,479,302**	**$1,536,030**	**$56,728**
Additional Information:			
Ordinary Revenue	$0	($2,200)	($2,200)
Fees and Other Charges	($2,406)	($1,872)	$534
Ordinary Recoveries	($24,514)	($31,794)	($7,280)
Total: Revenue, Fees and Recoveries	**($26,920)**	**($35,866)**	**($8,946)**
TCA Purchase Requirements	$271,529	$267,763	($3,766)
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	207.8	189.8	(18)

Departmental Expenses Variance Explanation:

EECD expenses exceeded budget by $57 million in 2020-21. This was primarily due to $39.6M relating to the safe re-opening of schools as well as $22.3M in operating support grants provided to the childcare sector during the closures/decreased enrollment period associated with Covid-19. Also contributing to the increase is $4.3M for PPE provided to the childcare sector and schools, $3.1M in additional technology (chromebooks/laptop) purchases to support online learning, $1.2M in amortization primarily as a result of pre-primary capital not budgeted for, $1.3M relating to cost of 210 Council NSTU positions, $556K in the teachers' salary accrual related to wage increases, $2.8M increase in French Programs Services as a result of the agreement with Feds ($586K fully recoverable + additional $586K province matching) as well as approved complementary funding ($1.7M).

These are partially offset by a decrease of $3.5M related to reduced spending on new inclusive education initiatives and a $1.3M reduction in action plan spending, both a result of Covid; $2.1M reduction in the pre-primary program; a decrease in employer matching contributions for Teachers' Pension of $2M, decrease in Student Assessments as a result of cancellation of assessments during 20-21 fiscal year ($1.1M), $819K savings in NSTU rate premiums, $2.5M reduction in subsidy grants, $1.1M reduction in QIG/PSF funding to the childcare sector, $2M reduction in credit allocation, and decreases throughout the department as a result of covid ($2M), primarily in the areas of travel, training, and meeting expenses..

Revenue, Fees, and Recoveries Variance Explanation:

EECD revenue exceeded budget by $2.2 million, due to revenue relating to TCA project funding that was approved mid-year.

EECD recoveries exceeded budget by $7.3 million, primarily due to a recovery related to NSTU medical/dental plan savings resulting from decreased plan usage related to Covid ($4.4M), an increase in federal funding agreement for French Programs Services branch and approval for complementary projects ($2.7M), and an increase in Early Years ($800K) as a result of a portion of the 2019-20 ELCCA budget deferred into 2020-21. These are partially offset by a reduction in credit allocation ($300K) resulting from decrease in international schools cash sales.

EECD fees were $534 thousand less than budget, primarily due to reduction in fees collected in international schools as a result of Covid.

TCA Purchase Requirements Variance Explanation:

TCA was less than budget as a result of shifts in cash flow to out years relating to new school projects, offset partially by an increase in school bus purchases, pre-primary capital, and stimulus projects that were not budgeted.

Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs) Variance Explanation:

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

NOTE:

For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2

For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1

Measuring Our Performance

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's (EECD) 2020-21 Business Plan identified several priority initiatives to advance improvements to the early years and public education systems in Nova Scotia.

Outcome: Improve Early Childhood and P-12 Education

Performance Measures

The Department administers the Program of Learning Assessment for Nova Scotia (PLANS), which includes provincial, national and international assessments, in English and French.

The following changes have occurred to the Program of Learning Assessment for Nova Scotia:

- Reading and Writing in Grade 3 (RW3), Évaluation de la Nouvelle- Écosse: lecture et écriture en 3e année and Mathematics/Mathématiques in Grade 4 (M4) assessments were not administered in 2017–2018. They were re-introduced in 2018–19 as the Nova Scotia Assessment: Literacy and Mathematics in Grade 3 (LM3) and Évaluation de la Nouvelle-Écosse: littératie et mathématiques en 3e année (LM3-FR) and were administered in spring 2019.

Nova Scotia Assessments: Mathematics

The percentage of grades 3 and 6 students performing at or above provincial expectations in mathematics is one of the measures for a desired outcome of increased student learning and achievement in mathematics.

Results from these assessments are used to make broader decisions relating to curriculum, programming, and intervention strategies. Teachers and parents are provided with individual student reports that can be used to inform programming for students.

Reporting on 2020-21

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic only Grade 6 assessments were completed for 2019-20, no other provincial assessments or examinations were fully completed.

Percentage of Students Meeting Math Expectations					
Nova Scotia Assessment: Mathematics					
	2015-16*	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Grade 3	N/A	N/A	N/A	72%	N/A
Grade 4	76%	77%*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Grade 6	68%	70%	70%	71%	70%
Grade 8	62%	N/A	56%	57%	N/A

***** Baseline **N/A**: Mathematics in Grade 4/Mathématiques en 4e année was discontinued in 2017-18 and replaced with Mathematics in Grade 3/Mathématiques en 3e année in 2018-19.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

EECD has placed a strong focus on building the foundations of math and literacy for grades primary to 3, ensuring the supports are in place to address the full range of students' learning

strengths and needs. EECD continues to review supports for mathematics and to consult with experts in this area. A new online program will be introduced to support mathematics at home and school.

Students and families will continue to have access to the Nova Scotia Homework Hub that provides free online tutoring in the evenings and resources anytime. Mathematics pathways in high school will be reviewed as part of the updating of the Public School Program (PSP) for grades 9-12.

Mathematics education is being supported by a new pilot program for online math supports. The program will be accessible in class or at home. The new program includes:

- Online Mathematics resource for grades 3-10, which will be used as an additional tool to increase time and practice for students by strategically focusing on specific areas in math that an individual student requires.
- Professional learning for teachers.

The department continues to review supports for mathematics and to consult with experts in this area. The development of Mathematics strategies inform better classroom practice to support increased achievement in mathematics for all students, to focus on mathematics essentials and to provide teachers with resources and approaches to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in the learning process. Mathematics outcomes P-12 have been reviewed to determine the foundational outcomes that are critical for the discipline at all levels. This was in response to the pandemic but will provide a solid base for renewal of mathematics outcomes and pathways.

EECD, through the African Canadian Services Branch, provides Math and Literacy Grants to Regional Centres for Education (RCEs) and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) in support of the increased achievement of our African Nova Scotian learners in the areas of Math and Literacy. These designated funds are provided to the Regional Coordinators of African Canadian Education Services to be used to provide targeted and focused instruction to learners who require enhanced instruction to meet and exceed learning outcomes.

Nova Scotia Assessments: Reading and Writing

The percentage of grades 3, 6, and 8 students performing at or above provincial expectations in reading and/or writing is measured for a desired outcome of increased student learning and achievement in literacy.

These assessments measure students' reading and writing ability in grades 3, 6, and 8. The assessment results are used to make broader decisions relating to curriculum, programming, and intervention strategies. Teachers and parents are provided with individual student reports that can be used to inform programming for students.

In addition to the French-language provincial assessments in reading and writing in grades 3, 6, and 8 students in the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) participate in the English-language provincial assessments in reading and writing in grades 6 and 8.

Reporting on 2020-21

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic only Grade 6 assessments were completed for 2019-20.

Results for the English-language Nova Scotia Assessment in Reading and Writing in grades 3, 6, and 8 have remained consistent since the baseline year of 2015-16. EECD continues to prioritize literacy with a focus on improving outcomes in this area.

Assessments in literacy at the grade 3 level were not administered in 2017-18. This assessment was re-introduced in 2018–19 as the Nova Scotia Assessment: Literacy and Mathematics in Grade 3 (LM3) and Évaluation de la Nouvelle-Écosse: littératie et mathématiques en 3e année (LM3-FR) which was administered in spring 2019.

New supports for early literacy were developed and distributed to teachers, literacy leads and literacy mentors for classroom use in 2020/21. Most are publicly available on the curriculum website and a few resources exclusive to educators are on the password protected site. These include assessing literacy, responsive literacy instruction, writing exemplars, phonics and phonemic awareness continuum, high leverage practices in literacy and other supports to promote all students as readers, speakers and writers. In addition, new online provincial supports are being introduced for all learners in P-6 to support reading and writing.

Percentage of Students Meeting Reading Expectations					
Nova Scotia Assessment: Reading					
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Grade 3*	67%	68%	N/A	70%	N/A
Grade 6	73%	73%	74%	74%	74%
Grade 8	74%	N/A	75%	74%	N/A
L'Évaluation de la Nouvelle-Écosse : lecture (Conseil scolaire acadien provincial)					
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Grade 3*	70%	68%	N/A	67%	N/A
Grade 6	72%	71%	69%	73%	71%
Grade 8	72%	N/A	74%	74%	N/A

Baseline *N/A: The fall Reading and Writing in Grade 3 and Lecture et écriture en 3e année were discontinued in 2017-18. A new assessment, Literacy in Grade 3/Littératie en 3e was administered in spring 2018-19.

Percentage of Students Meeting Writing Expectations						
Nova Scotia Assessment: Writing						
	2014–15*	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Grade 3*						
Ideas	76%	73%	73%	*N/A*	66%	N/A
Organization	60%	59%	58%	*N/A*	51%	N/A
Language Use	64%	63%	63%	*N/A*	55%	N/A
Conventions	53%	51%	53%	*N/A*	43%	N/A
Grade 6						
Ideas	76%	78%	72%	74%	70%	71%
Organization	61%	62%	57%	59%	55%	56%
Language Use	66%	67%	63%	64%	59%	62%
Conventions	58%	61%	53%	57%	53%	53%
Grade 8						
Ideas	*N/A*	89%	*N/A*	89%	78%	N/A
Organization	*N/A*	77%	*N/A*	80%	66%	N/A
Language Use	*N/A*	80%	*N/A*	82%	70%	N/A
Conventions	*N/A*	69%	*N/A*	71%	59%	N/A

L'Évaluation de la Nouvelle-Écosse : écriture						
	2014–15*	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Grade 3*						
Ideas	65%	67%	68%	*N/A*	66%	N/A
Organization	60%	59%	58%	*N/A*	50%	N/A
Language Use	64%	63%	63%	*N/A*	47%	N/A
Conventions	53%	51%	53%	*N/A*	37%	N/A
Grade 6						
Ideas	71%	75%	73%	72%	69%	66%
Organization	59%	67%	59%	65%	56%	50%
Language Use	56%	61%	60%	59%	51%	49%
Conventions	43%	47%	44%	42%	38%	40%
Grade 8						
Ideas	*N/A*	70%	*N/A*	67%	79%	N/A
Organization	*N/A*	63%	*N/A*	58%	71%	N/A
Language Use	*N/A*	57%	*N/A*	55%	67%	N/A
Conventions	*N/A*	50%	*N/A*	40%	45%	N/A

*Baseline *N/A*: The fall Reading and Writing in Grade 3 and Lecture et écriture en 3e année were discontinued in 2017-18. A new assessment, Literacy in Grade 3/Littératie en 3e was administered in spring 2018-19.

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

Student outcomes in literacy achievement show that our entire education system needs to focus on strategies and supports for our students and their teachers particularly in Pre-primary to Grade 3. The goal of the Nova Scotia Provincial Literacy Strategy is for students to achieve a high level of literacy so that they can thrive in school and beyond. By 2022, the target goal for reading and writing will be an increase of 8% in the number of students who perform at or above expectations, measured by provincial assessments.

Literacy education is being supported by new pilot programs for online literacy supports. The programs will be accessible in class or at home. The new programs include:

- Online Literacy resource for grades Primary-3 to help focus on certain aspects of learning to read based on the areas the individual student requires.
- Online Writing resource for grades 4-6 to provide another way to support students in writing, including prompting and encouraging reluctant writers, enhancing skills of all student writers, and helping to support them through the writing process.
- Professional learning for teachers will be part of the implementation of these programs.

EECD has developed the Power to Read Program. an academic and wellness program that will nurture and inspire students in Pre-primary-2. EECD staff will work with community partners, schools, and regional staff to close and/or eliminate the reading opportunity gap for Black Nova Scotian children, this includes the collection, monitoring, and analysis of data to support students in meeting year-end reading benchmarks. A key component of this program will be intentional opportunities to engage with parents/guardians, provide them with necessary information and tools as they seek to inspire their child's education.

EECD continued to invest in the literacy strategy in 2020/21, to increase support for students and teachers to strengthen literacy learning in all subjects and grades. This will increase support for services to be offered in French. Literacy will continue to be a priority area for public education in 2020-21 and beyond.

Reading Recovery

In 2017-18 there were 192 schools with Reading Recovery. In 2018-19, 247 schools had Reading Recovery programs. The target of this measure was to have access to Reading Recovery reinstated in all elementary schools with grade 1 by the 2019-20 school year. This target has been met.

In 2020-2021, all elementary schools with grade 1 students in English or French First language programs have access to Reading Recovery. In 2021-2022, the updated target is for Reading Recovery to be implemented in 9 French Immersion elementary schools with grade 1.

Teaching Positions	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Total
Reading Recovery Teachers	13	32	18	36.5	24.5	10	0	124
Reading Recovery Teacher Leader	9	0	0	3	3	0	0	15

Nova Scotia Reading Recovery Outcomes

All Reading Recovery students make progress because of responsive teaching. In Canada there are three possible outcomes for Reading Recovery students who complete their series of lessons: Accelerated progress, Substantial progress, and limited progress. Reading Recovery outcomes in Nova Scotia are trending positively with students making accelerated and substantial progress in reading and writing. This means that because of Reading Recovery, more children in Nova Scotia are benefitting from classroom instruction without the need for additional individual support.

Nova Scotia Examinations

In 2019-20, Nova Scotia Examinations were not administered due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nova Scotia Examinations (NSE) are normally administered in the following courses: English 10, Mathematics 10 and Français 10 (CSAP). NSEs are designed to evaluate student achievement in relation to selected curriculum outcomes for each course. The examination results contribute 20% to students' final course mark. The target for these measures is to maintain or increase the percentage of students meeting expectations over the baseline year.

Mathematics 10

Percentage of Students Meeting Mathematics Expectations					
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
	71%	*Not administered*	71%	70%	*Not administered*

English 10

Percentage of Students Meeting Reading Expectations					
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
	76%	*Not administered*	75%	75%	*Not administered*

Français 10

Percentage of Students Meeting Reading Expectations					
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
	80%	*Not administered*	73%	73%	*Not administered*

Examination: Writing

Percentage of Students Meeting Writing Expectations					
Nova Scotia Examinations: Writing					
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Ideas	66%	*NA*	75%	69%	N/A
Organization	61%	*NA*	65%	58%	N/A
Language Use	62%	*NA*	67%	61%	N/A
Conventions	59%	*NA*	62%	56%	N/A
Examen de la Nouvelle-Écosse: écriture					
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Idées	78%	*NA*	85%	78%	N/A
Structure du texte	83%	*NA*	81%	69%	N/A
Style	74%	*NA*	69%	63%	N/A
Conventions de l'écrit	49%	*NA*	46%	42%	N/A

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

EECD has prioritized streamlining and renewing the curriculum to ensure students have the competencies, skills, and knowledge they need to be successful as they move forward in learning and life. The province has placed a strong focus on building the foundations of mathematics and literacy in the early grades, which will lead to greater student success in the later grades.

To support student assessment, evaluation, and reporting, the department will refocus on 'assessment for learning' in all subjects, integrate student assessment into all revised curricula, and provide ongoing professional learning to teachers and administrators in the use of assessment for student programming and intervention. EECD will further ensure an equity lens is used and that our work is grounded in the principles of the Inclusive Education Policy.

International and National Assessments

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a well-respected international instrument sponsored by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), with over 60 countries participating. Canada has participated in PISA since its inception.

PISA is conducted every three years, providing reliable measures of the performance of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics, and science and allows for comparison across jurisdictions. The PISA assessment is one of the measures for a desired outcome of increased student learning and achievement in literacy and mathematics.

Each assessment includes questions from all three subject areas with a primary focus on one subject area each time the assessment is administered.

Reporting on 2020-21

The 2018 PISA results are the most current data available, and indicate that statistically, in comparison to 2009, the average performance of students in Nova Scotia did not change by a significant amount in the areas of reading and science but were lower for mathematics at a statistically significant level.

The PISA 2021 assessment was postponed until 2022 and the PISA 2024 assessment to 2025 to reflect post-COVID difficulties. PISA 2022 will focus on mathematics, with an additional test of creative thinking.

PISA Results												
	Reading				Math				Science			
	2009	2012	2015	2018	2009	2012	2015	2018	2009	2012	2015	2018
NS Average	516	508	517	516	512	497	497	494	523	516	517	508
Canadian Average	524	523	527	520	527	518	516	512	529	525	528	518
OECD Average	493	496	493	487	496	494	490	489	501	501	493	489

Compared to the OECD average, in 2018 Nova Scotia was performing on par in mathematics, and at a higher level for reading and science. Compared to the Canadian Average, Nova Scotia scored on par in reading and science and below average in mathematics.

Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP)

The Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) is an assessment instrument developed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). It is administered every three years and provides reliable measures of student performance in reading, mathematics, and science. The target population is students in grade 8. The average score for Canada is 500.

The PCAP assessment is one of the measures for a desired outcome of increased student learning and achievement in reading, science and mathematics. The results from the PCAP 2019 assessment will be released in Fall 2021.

Reporting on 2020-21

There have been no updated assessment results for PCAP in 2020-21. Based on previous assessments, Nova Scotia has seen an improvement in the 2016 assessment results over the 2010 baseline. We have seen three years of upward trending in the areas of math and science. Nova Scotia continues to perform below the Canadian average in all three subject areas.

PCAP Results	2007 Results		2010 Results*		2013 Results		2016 Results	
	NS Average	Canadian Average	NS Average	Canadian Average	NS Average	Canadian Average	NS Average	Canadian Average
Reading	483	500	489	500	488	508	498	507
Math	N/A	N/A	474	500	488	507	497	511
Science	N/A	N/A	489	500	492	500	499	508

*adjusted baseline

SchoolsPlus Expansion

As of the 2019-20 school year, there is SchoolsPlus coverage for all schools in the province. Work related to SchoolsPlus will continue to focus on maintaining or enhancing services. In 2020-21, SchoolsPlus supported 370 schools through 57 hub sites, with 43 Facilitators (social workers) and 87 Community Outreach Workers.

SchoolsPlus brings a range of services together, including mental health, social work, after school programing, homework support, recreational and justice services into schools and community settings where students and families can easily access them. SchoolsPlus has several service

components and supports, which may vary depending on the area of the province, availability of resources, and the needs of a particular community.

SchoolsPlus Mental Health Clinicians are an important part of the work SchoolsPlus does in schools and communities. There are 54 FTE positions for SchoolsPlus Mental Health Clinicians who are employed by either the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) or the IWK and co-located in schools.

SchoolsPlus has been a key resource in supporting families throughout the pandemic by continuing services to those families that require it most.

SchoolsPlus Stats at a Glance: April 2020-March 2021	
Total Number of Reports	423 reports received, out of 492 reports, rate of 86% reporting[1]
Total New referrals	1432
Short term interventions; navigation to another service/short -term intervention	482
Intensive wraparound services based on new referrals	718
Total Active cases at Month End [2]	14, 437 total running case numbers (Cumulative) Average cases served per month is 1,394
Average Case load	34 per SP Facilitator
Total of Parents in groups	2, 282
Total of student[3] in groups	27, 515

1. Based on 86% of SchoolsPlus Facilitators reporting. We anticipate some update on this by Sept, but due to attrition, short term vacancies, we are unlikely to achieve 100% reporting in any given year.
2. Running total month over month. This is an average of 34 cases per SchoolsPlus Facilitator per month and 1,394 active cases over the 2020-21 year in 86% of the reports.
3. Parents and students may attend multiple groups, thereby may be counted more than once.

Note: SP Facilitators also support local Regional Advisory Committees and implement regional, provincial and national strategies within their geographic area.

Early Learning and Child Care Agreement

In January 2018, Nova Scotia signed the three-year, $35-million Early Learning and Child Care agreement (ELCCA) with the Government of Canada to strengthen the early years system across the province. This agreement came to an end in March 2020.

Significant accomplishments from this agreement include making child care more affordable for families with enhancements in subsidy, providing advanced training and upskilling to hundreds of early childhood educators and those interested in pursuing a career in early childhood education, creating more child care spaces in communities that needed them and supporting inclusion in child care, to name a few.

In 2020-21, EECD entered into a one-year extension to the ELCCA to ensure continued federal funding of $11.6 million in a year of transition, so a new Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care

Framework could be negotiated between the Federal Government and all provinces and territories. The extension helped to support more children and families, and further strengthen the regulated child care sector in Nova Scotia, especially during COVID-19, through offering more subsidy to families, protecting child care spaces while children remained at home during the COVID-19 closure and supporting early childhood educators with increased training opportunities.

Reporting on 2020-21

There are several measures to show progress in priority areas, these are shown in the table below. The baseline has been set as 2017-18, with targets of increasing over the baseline data for each measure.

Affordability, Accessibility, Quality and Inclusion in Child Care				
	2017-18*	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Increase in number of licensed spaces	17,250	17,356	17,009	16,680[1]
Increase number of new family home day care sites	254	281	216	184[2]
Increase number of children benefitting from maximum subsidy rates	2551	3255	3724	3784
Increase number of staff working in licensed child care who are engaging in course work towards a credential (Continuing Education)	145	155	196	153
Increase number of licensed child care centres accessing funding to build capacity for inclusion	220	264	274	272
Increase ECEs in licensed child care receiving inclusion training in the Pyramid Model	200	150	756	57[3]
Increase in individuals receiving ECE training grants/bursaries from under-represented populations (Acadian/Francophone, African Nova Scotian, Indigenous, Immigrant and Newcomer)	0	32	69	N/A[4]

* baseline

[1] This number varies over the year due to closures and openings of child care centres. Child care centres close for a number of converging factors, such as operators retiring, declining populations in communities, ongoing financial challenges related to operating a small business, as well as unforeseen circumstances like COVID-19.

[2] This includes 21 new homes which opened since April 2020. Fluctuations in the number of homes may relate to COVID-19 primarily, as well as personal circumstances of the home provider.

[3] Most educators at implementation sites were trained in previous years. This number represents the staff who missed previous sessions or who are new to the centres.

[4] This program ended in 2019-20.

Pre-primary Program

The Pre-primary Program was implemented in the 2017-18 school year. This program is available to 4-year olds the year before they enter school and provides a quality play-based experience based on Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework.

The Pre-primary Program was fully implemented in September 2020. A total of 252 school communities offered Pre-primary in the 2020-21 school year with over 6,100 children enrolled. In 2020-21, busing was available for all eligible Pre-primary children in accordance with student transportation policies.

To date, over 14,500 children have participated in pre-primary since its implementation.

Pre-primary Program (100% implementation over 4 years)				
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
# of school communities with access to the Pre-primary Program (cumulative)	46	145	205	252*
% of total school communities	18%	57%	81%	100%

*during the 4 year implementation period, one school closed which changed the total number of schools from 253 to 252

Where do we want to go/be in the future?

EECD continues to place a strong focus on supporting young children and their families. Universal early learning opportunities like the Pre-primary Program, have the ability to improve child development outcomes, support families to participate in the labour market and reduce inequities overall. The department is committed to ensuring that all four year olds have access to a supportive environment in which every child can thrive and successfully transition to school.

Every four-year-old in Nova Scotia now has access to the Pre-primary Program. Enrollment in the Pre-primary Program in 2020-21 was over 6,100 children in 365 classes in 252 school communities across Nova Scotia. The percentage of eligible children who participated in pre-primary in 2020-21 was 75%.

The Nova Scotia Before and After Program (NS-BAP) is a fee-based program and is delivered on-site by approved childcare, municipal recreation or recognized non-profit recreation providers. It is delivered on-site at the school, so children and students have a seamless day. Created to remove a barrier to participation in the Pre-primary Program, Pre-primary children have the first option to register and if space is available, other children, up to age 12, may register. A total of 28 NS-BAP sites were maintained during the 2020-21 school year with 637 children enrolled.

Early Development Instrument (EDI)

The department collects data using in the Early Development Instrument (EDI) which is a teacher-completed questionnaire, that measures developmental health in populations of young children at school entry in five domains. EDI is considered a reliable predictor of school success, adult health, and social outcomes. Schools, school regions, government, researchers, and community partners can use this data together with other indicators to identify vulnerable populations of children and mobilize resources to support young children and their families as well, to inform planning to support populations of children as they progress through school. Nova Scotia has four cycles of EDI data – 2013, 2015, 2018 and 2020.

Children who score in the lowest 10th percentile on a domain are considered “vulnerable”. Vulnerability cannot be attributed to a single cause. Healthy early development is complex and

influenced by many factors. The target is to reduce the percentage of children who are vulnerable in each of the EDI domains, recognizing that our department alone cannot accomplish this goal.

Percentage of Nova Scotia Children Vulnerable by EDI Domain				
	2012*	2015	2018	2020
Physical Health and Well-Being	10.3%	9.8%	11.3%	9.5%
Social Competence	9.9%	9.1%	11.2%	9.4%
Emotional maturity	9.7%	9.0%	10.5%	9.5%
Language and Cognitive Development	10.4%	10.8%	11.8%	11.2%
Communication Skills and General Knowledge	10.7%	10.6%	11.7%	10.4%
Vulnerable on one or more domains	25.5%	25.5%	28.8%	25.5%

Note: Data is collected approximately every 2-3 years.
*Nova Scotia Baseline

Responding to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a number of challenges for early learning and care and the public education system. In response to these challenges, the system acted quickly to support families and child care centres and to pivot to a learning at-home model in the Spring of 2020. Resources and supports were made available to families throughout in-person learning. Regional and Department staff worked closely with teachers and other school staff to ensure they had the supports needed to deliver services and lessons in a new on-line environment as the province adjusted to the changes happening locally and worldwide.

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

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

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

To ensure the ongoing safety of students and staff it is important to keep schools and buses clean. This included the purchase of new cleaning supplies and the additional work time required

for cleaning of schools and for bus drivers to clean their buses. In addition to cleaning and sanitizing, personal protective equipment (PPE) was provided to keep students and staff safe.

In advance of the start of school in Fall 2020, RCEs/CSAP assessed the ventilation system in every school to ensure it was working properly and routine maintenance was performed. Three additional assessments were undertaken this school year to ensure systems were performing at optimal capacity.

To ensure additional supports were available for students who may need to catch up on any unfinished learning outcomes as a result of the disruption to in-school learning in Spring 2020, the department allocated $4 million to pilot three programs for the next 3 years that have a proven track record of assisting students with both math and literacy. These programs are delivered using technology, which will make them especially useful and effective if the province moves to either a blended or at-home learning model.

During the Spring 2020 at-home learning period, access to food was a significant issue for some students and families. Early feedback from schools suggests increased demand for food programs and increased food insecurity. The department added $500,000 to the School Healthy Eating Program (SHEP) to stock school food pantries, provide additional school lunches and increase food offerings. To be ready for a potential at-home learning scenario, the department created an Emergency Food Response Fund by investing $1 million to ensure funds would be available to quickly respond to the food needs of students with schools closed.

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

Together, these steps to address the impact of COVID-19 are aimed at supporting children, families, and staff to ensure ongoing safety and wellbeing and the best learning and care environments possible.

Key and Interesting Facts/Initiatives

Inclusive Education: Investments have been made over the past three years to support inclusive education. These investments have helped create 364 inclusive education support staff positions. New supports, such as autism specialists and child and youth practitioners, are helping our students succeed every day. We have also hired more staff for Alternative Education Sites, more African Nova Scotia and Mi'kmaq support workers, more SchoolsPlus facilitators, and are providing more funding for professional development for teachers.

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

recognizes the inherent worth of all learners and strengthens the importance of well-being and achievement, inclusive of all students in our classrooms, schools, and communities.

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

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

In 2019-20, Government achieved that goal, and a further 5 new Skilled Trades Centres were announced. Two additional schools have received centres by nature of being a new build, bringing the total to 32 by 2023. Three of these new centres will open in 2021-22: North Nova Education Centre, Liverpool Regional High School, and École secondaire de Par-en-Bas. In 2020-21 there were 26 Skilled Trades Centres in Nova Scotia.

The department will continue to work to:

- Increase the number and diversity of students participating in skilled trades learning
- Increase the number of schools offering skilled trades courses
- Expand offerings in the suite of skilled trades courses
- Explore a certificate in skilled trades learning.

Student Supports and Transitions: Education and Early Childhood Development works closely with other departments, agencies, and organizations to provide supports to students, to ensure they have timely access to a wide range of services, including mental health and physical well-being. Priorities related to student supports and transitions include:

- Enhancing SchoolsPlus services through collaboration with our partners.
- Continue to operate ACHIEVE sites (post-secondary transition year programs for graduating high school students with special needs).
- Supporting children through key transition phases, for example using Early Intervention Behavioural Intervention data to help children transition into primary.
- Enhanced staffing to support students from traditionally underrepresented groups, for example through the student support worker program.
- Networking and strengthening relationships with community based educational partners and stakeholders.
- Growing the understanding of schools as culturally safe spaces.

Appendix 1—Disclosures of Wrongdoing received by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for the fiscal year 2020-21.

Department of Education – Disclosures of Wrongdoing	
Information Required under Section 18 of the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act	Fiscal Year 2020-21
Number of disclosures received	0
Number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrong doing	N/A