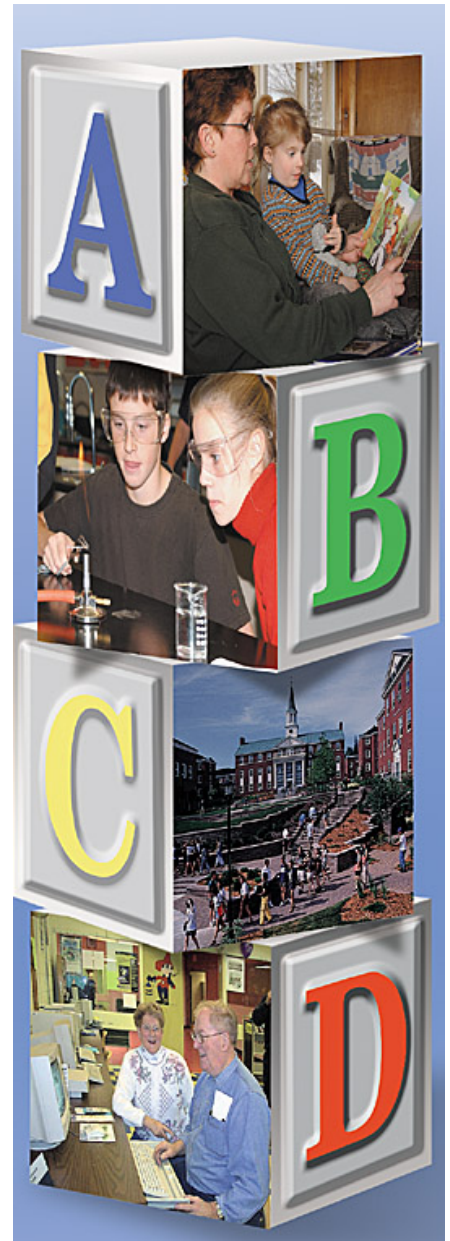




ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF
DISTRICT EDUCATION COUNCILS
AND THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION



June 2004



MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Roles and Responsibilities of District Education Councils and the Minister of Education has been prepared to highlight the policy governance model and our respective roles and responsibilities. As a new term of office for District Education Councils (DECs) begins, this is an opportune time to share this document with you.

The *Education Act*, regulations and provincial policies are designed to reflect the policy governance model, as is the governance structure that we established in 2001. Under this model, DECs develop district policies and delegate the day-to-day decision-making to their superintendent, who is accountable to the DEC for the overall management of the school district. As such the *Education Act* states that the operation of schools is the responsibility of DECs, *through* their superintendent:

3(1) A District Education Council shall, in accordance with this Act and through the superintendent of the school district, operate all schools established by the District Education Council...

In keeping with the intent of the legislation, it is my expectation that all DECs will function using the policy governance model. I remain confident that you will find that the policy governance model is an effective leadership tool.

This document also provides a brief overview of our legislated responsibilities and policy development roles. I encourage you to use this as a quick reference, but to also familiarize yourself with our legislative and policy framework.

I look forward to working closely with each of you, in a spirit of partnership.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Madeleine Dubé
Minister
June 2004



SHARED ROLES ...

In exploring the roles and responsibilities of District Education Councils and the Minister of Education, it is useful to reflect on the basics of the accountability structure that has been established within the current governance structure.

The Minister sets provincial parameters and direction in education. The *Quality Learning Agenda* is Government's strategic improvement plan for education, designed to support a world-class public education system that aspires to excellence and achievement at all times. As part of the QLA, a comprehensive K-12 policy statement *Quality Schools, High Results* was released in April 2003. *Quality Schools, High Results* outlines ten-year targets and objectives for the public school system. An overall goal has been set of ensuring New Brunswick is among the top three provinces in Canada for academic achievement, high school graduation rates, and participation in post-secondary learning.

Through the Department of Education, the Minister:

- *maintains* an environment that supports learning;
- *provides* money and other resources as required;
- *provides* an appropriate legislative and policy framework;
- *identifies* and *reflects*, in the provincial education program, the social and economic needs and desires of New Brunswickers;
- *identifies* and *communicates* provincial expectations to DEC's, district staff, parents and students; and
- *encourages* and *enables* the work of dedicated education professionals.

The Minister has a responsibility to ensure that some basic standards are in place across New Brunswick. The DEC's have flexibility to make decisions and set policy on a wide range of issues as long as these basic provincial standards are met. These standards define the level of service that New Brunswickers expect from their education system, and ensure that fundamental curriculum, safety and service requirements are met.



Examples of these standards can be found in legislation and Department of Education documents. For instance, under the *Education Act* children enter school during the year in which they turn five. This is the provincial standard. Once a child has been admitted to school, in accordance with Policy 301 - *Admission to and Placement in Kindergarten*, the superintendent and his/her staff make the day-to-day placement decisions on behalf of the DEC. The school district determines the appropriate grade, class, program, service and school placement in keeping with the needs of their students and the resources of their district.

The DEC's are responsible for local decision-making in the operation of schools in their district. The policy governance model is ideally suited to their role. Under this model, the DEC's develop high-level policy and delegate the day-to-day decision-making to their superintendent. In so doing, the superintendent is accountable to the DEC for the management of programs and resources, for the quality of learning and for the implementation of the district education plan and district expenditure plan.

At the district level, the DEC's develop broad policies and their superintendents make almost all decisions within these policies regarding the organization and operation of the schools, placement of students, management of school property, staffing of the schools and spending of the district budget. They decide on things like bus routes and storm-day closures. And teachers make the most important decisions, at the local level, on how to manage their classrooms and how to personalize the delivery of the provincial curriculum for each student in their classrooms.

As the central body, the Department of Education serves as the logical center for the coordination of common services and as a source of information and resources. In those areas, the Province provides common services designed to augment functions that are undertaken at the school district level. Some examples of this delineation of roles include:

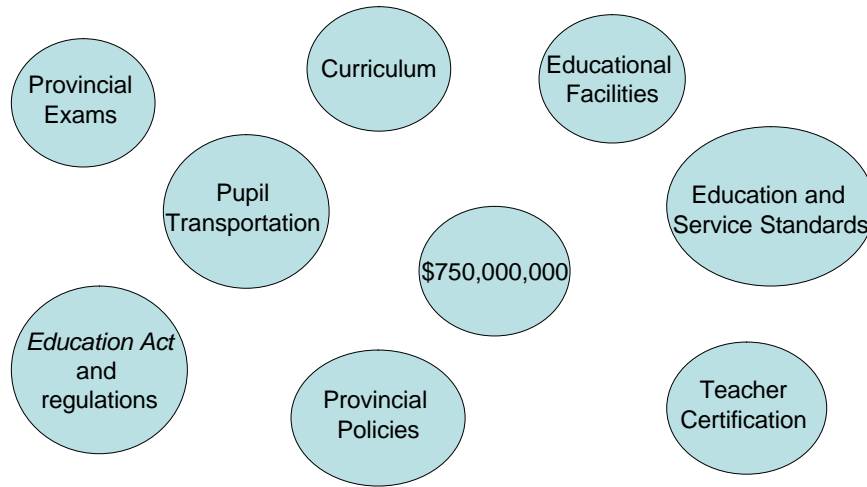
- *negotiation of collective agreements* (the Office of Human Resources leads negotiations, with input from DoE and school districts);
- *teacher education and certification* (NB universities are contracted to provide teacher education, DoE handles certification issues);
- *professional development* (district provides local PD opportunities/DoE organizes summer institutes);
- *information systems support* (DoE identifies major common IS systems/district provides for other IS requirements);



- *human resources services* (district hires all staff/DoE assists in the interpretation of collective agreements);
- *budgeting and accounting services* (district decides what to buy and keeps accounts/DoE provides the budget amount and works with districts to identify ways of reducing costs);
- *capital infrastructure* (district looks after minor repairs/DoE looks after major building and renovations); and
- *transportation* (DoE sets safety framework and approves purchase of new school buses according to the needs of the district/district establishes routing and determines busing needs).



Minister's Responsibilities (K-12)



THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION'S LEGISLATED RESPONSIBILITIES ...

The Minister's role is defined broadly in section 6 of the *Education Act*:

6 The Minister

(a) shall establish educational goals and standards and service goals and standards for public education in each of the education sectors established under subsection 4(1),

...

(b.2) may establish provincial policies and guidelines related to public education within the scope of this Act,

Section 6 states that the Minister will establish educational goals and standards and service goals and standards. The terms "goals" and "standards" are meant to be interpreted in the broadest sense. Together with the prescription of the instructional program, the legislative and policy framework, and the provincial education plan, these goals and standards will frame out the Minister's expectations respecting how the education system will operate and what will be accomplished.



PROVINCIAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT ...

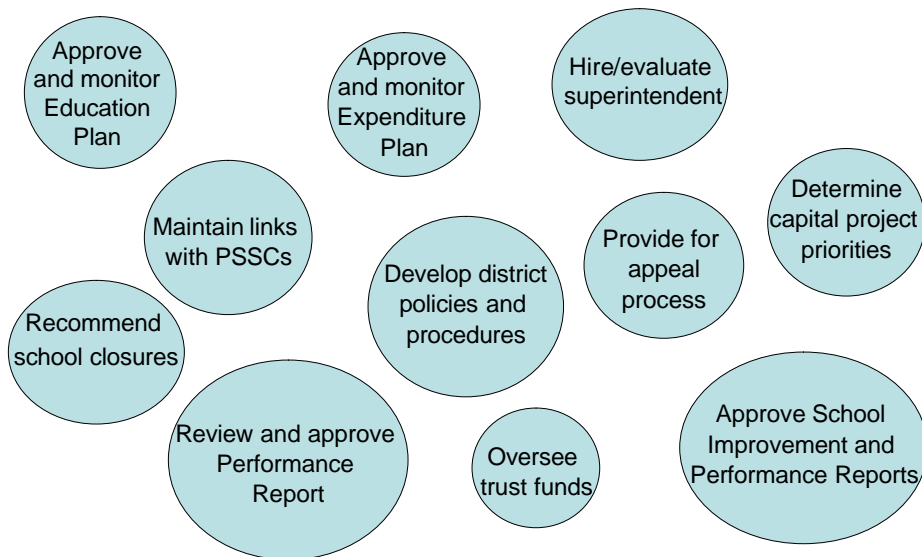
The Department of Education develops provincial policies, but they are few in number given the vast number of decisions made daily in the schools, by the staff who are ultimately accountable to the superintendent and the DEC.

Provincial policy is far-reaching and high level. During the policy development process, much thought is given to determine whether or not there is a provincial interest in establishing a standard or requirement in a specific area. If there is not significant provincial interest, a standard is not articulated or it is placed in the policy as a recommendation. For example, Policy 705 – *School and School District Crisis Planning* says “each school district must have a plan for responding to traumatic events within the district, and a team of resource people able to provide defusing and debriefing for students and staff.” It sets out some basic requirements for consultation and annual updates, but leaves all of the detail to the school districts.

In setting provincial policy, the Department consults with school districts throughout the development process. Teams are often formed with broad departmental and district representation so that policies are as relevant and responsive as possible. Provincial Forums are held a minimum of twice a year, which provide a scheduled opportunity for input and discussion between the Minister and District Education Council chairs. And, at all times, an open environment is fostered where ideas and viewpoints are shared.



DEC Responsibilities



THE DISTRICT EDUCATION COUNCIL'S LEGISLATED RESPONSIBILITIES ...

The DEC's broadest responsibility is set out in section 3 of the *Education Act*:

3(1) A District Education Council shall, in accordance with this Act and through the superintendent of the school district, operate all schools...

Furthermore, the DEC's policymaking role is included among its duties, set out in section 36.9:

36.9(5) A District Education Council shall

(a) develop school district policies and procedures, not inconsistent with provincial policies and procedures, in matters relating to the authority given to the District Education Council, or the superintendent of the school district, under this Act and the regulations ...



DISTRICT POLICY DEVELOPMENT ...

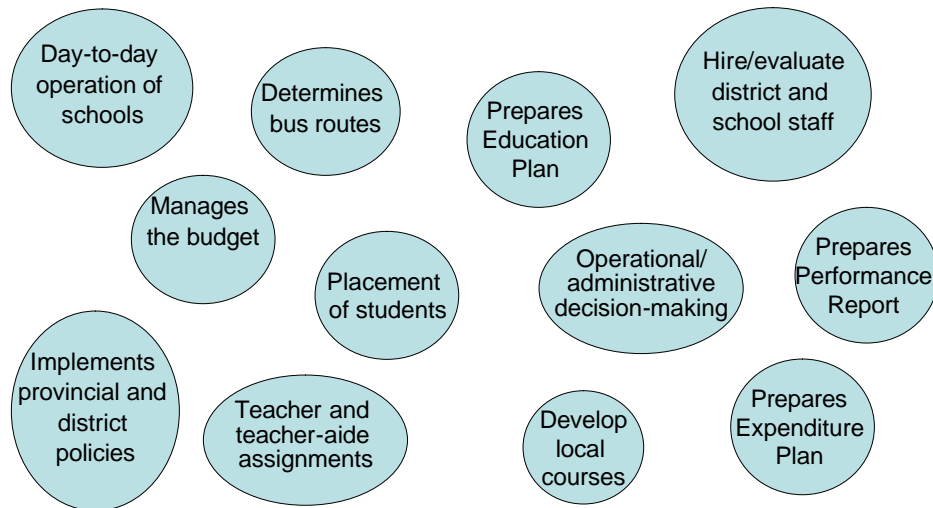
The policy governance model has been adopted by District Education Councils as a leadership tool in their operations. DEC's are able to develop policy in matters within their authority or the authority of the superintendent under the *Education Act*.

Pupil transportation provides excellent examples of these legislated authorities. Superintendents are required to make arrangements for the transportation of students who live beyond 2 ⁴/₁₀ km from school. This is the minimum service standard guaranteed to all New Brunswick students. However, the superintendent may, by district policy and taking into consideration the added costs of offering this service, transport students living less than 2 ⁴/₁₀ km from school. This is completely within the discretion of the superintendent, who would in turn be accountable to the DEC for the decision. Districts could also develop policies on busing issues such as location and number of bus stops, routing and discipline.

The DEC's have full authority to set district policy within the broad confines of the provincial policy. For example, Policy 409 – *Closure of Schools* requires DEC's to establish policy outlining steps to be followed when a school closure is proposed. The provincial interest is that school closures occur in a manner which respects the principles of procedural fairness but the district is given the authority to determine how that goal is achieved in their district. Another area in which DEC's have taken an interest in developing policy is student achievement, setting long-term targets and introducing initiatives to meet these targets. This focus on learning is well-suited to their leadership role in the community.



Superintendent Responsibilities



THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

The superintendent is the Chief Executive Officer of the school district. As such, the superintendent is accountable to the District Education Council for the management of programs and resources, the quality of learning and the implementation of the district education plan and district expenditure plan. Under the policy governance model, the superintendent is the sole direct employee of the DEC.

The superintendent's decisions are made on behalf of and subject to any policies of the DEC. The superintendent is responsible for hiring district staff and makes the operational and administrative decisions affecting the district and schools. This includes placement of students, storm day closures, organization of schools and signing of agreements. All staff report to the superintendent, who, in turn, reports to the DEC.

The superintendent attends all DEC meetings and is responsible for preparing a variety of reports, such as the district education plan, district expenditure plan and district performance report. The DEC discusses, approves and monitors these plans, using the superintendent as their liaison. The superintendent plays a crucial role as the district's educational and operational leader.



PARTNERS IN EDUCATION ...

The Minister (through the Department of Education), District Education Councils, Parent School Support Committees, parents, teachers, district and school staff, and especially our students are all partners in education. As partners, we are working together toward the *Quality Learning Agenda* goal of a world-class public education system that aspires to excellence and achievement at all times.

A Snapshot of the Roles and Responsibilities of the Minister of Education and District Education Councils

TOPIC	THE MINISTER ...	THE DEC / SCHOOL DISTRICT ...
Establishment and naming of schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approves establishment of a new school (as holder of the capital budget), makes official announcements Names schools, in consultation with the DEC and local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepares proposal for a new school and determines general location Participates in consultation process regarding the naming of schools
Operation of schools, school property, community use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All school property is vested in the Minister Determines sites of schools, district offices and other buildings Assesses priority capital construction priorities of districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operates schools, has management, care and control of school property Prepares annually a capital construction priorities report To extent practicable, makes school property available for use by community groups, other persons, or organizations as considered appropriate by DEC
Closure of schools	Approves closure of a school	Makes recommendation to close a school (consults community, assesses district budget)
Education planning	Establishes educational goals and standards, service goals and standards	Establishes, implements and monitors a 3-yr district education plan
Local programs and services	Approves locally developed courses	Provide for development and delivery of instructional programs, services, courses unique to character and economy
School privileges and placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides free schooling to residents between the ages of 5 and 21 (who have not graduated) Establishes placement policy for specific learner groups (kindergarten, special needs, international) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admits students and records student enrollment Determines placement of pupils in classes, grades, programs, services and schools according to needs of pupils and resources of district (subject to DEC policy)
Discipline and pupil appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes policy in areas of provincial interest (e.g. 703-Positive Learning Environment Policy) Establishes authorities, responsibilities, broad detail regarding appeals committees and process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEC provides for settlement of disputes arising in connection with school matters between any parent/pupil and any member of school personnel (appeals process) DEC serves as district appeals committee or appoints a committee (decision is final)
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides safety framework Approves purchase of new buses, based on district needs; DOT provides bus maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Superintendent makes arrangements for conveyance of pupils (bus routing, location of bus stops) Ensures regulations and policies are followed (daily inspections, etc)
Teacher education and PD	Provides system of teacher education and certification; oversees professional development	Provide training modules and professional development opportunities
Subdistrict boundaries	May alter the number and boundaries of subdistricts and combine two or more subdistricts into an electoral zone, after consultation with DEC	Consulted on alteration of boundaries of subdistricts and makes recommendations
District staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approves initial appointment of superintendent Authorizes plan of establishment of district office staffing Board of Management negotiates contracts with unions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEC selects and directs superintendent Superintendent selects, appoints, directs, suspends, dismisses, disciplines personnel (on behalf of and subject to any policies or directives of DEC)
Financial administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divides education budget on an equitable basis between sectors to assure an equivalent standard of education taking into account needs and particular circumstances Provides annually to each DEC a budget for operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expends budget in accordance with guidelines Establishes, implements and monitors a district expenditure plan