

What's ahead for education in Nova Scotia?

Nova Scotia's education plan, *Learning for Life II: Brighter Futures Together*, is celebrating its first anniversary. Successes of the past year included more books and resources to schools, smaller class sizes, more math and literacy help for students, and the introduction of a pre-primary pilot in schools.

Now we're going to build on those successes and invest another \$20.2 million to continue to improve the quality of education for students. Here are some highlights:

- ✓ New books and other resources in mathematics and language arts, including additional mentors to help more teachers support more students.
- ✓ The launch of the International Baccalaureate program, one of the most respected diploma programs, at 11 high schools next September, plus the introduction of advanced courses in physics, music, and visual arts.
- ✓ Expanding the Options and Opportunities Program (O2) to 26 more schools. For more information about this innovative program, read the article "Putting Education to Work."
- ✓ More support to help African Nova Scotian students succeed, including a new transition program at the NSCC to help students 19 and older get their high school graduation diploma, plus an expansion of post-secondary scholarships to three years.

- ✓ Additional support for Mi'kmaw students, including a revised grade 8 Mi'kmaw curriculum, more learning resources, and a home-school liaison worker pilot to help keep families engaged in their child's learning.

- ✓ Hiring more resource teachers, speech language pathologists, and school psychologists.

- ✓ Increasing the number of qualified guidance counsellors.

- ✓ Expanding school library collections and hiring more library technicians.

- ✓ A new Food and Nutrition Policy. See the article "Healthier School Menus" for more details.

- ✓ Working with school boards to establish a minimum 30 minutes of phys ed per day in all elementary schools. Also continuing to add qualified physical education teachers and other resources.

- ✓ Expanding the Positive Effective Behaviour Supports program (PEBS) to more schools. This major initiative helps address a range of unacceptable behaviours, including bullying.

- ✓ Expanding class-size reduction by capping grades primary to 3 at 25 students.

You can view the Learning for Life plan for 2006-07, and after mid-September, the first annual report card, at www.ednet.ns.ca.



It's a date

First day of school	Wednesday, September 6, 2006
Thanksgiving Day	Monday, October 9, 2006
Remembrance Day holiday	Monday, November 13, 2006
Christmas Vacation begins	Thursday, December 21, 2006
Schools re-open	Wednesday, January 3, 2007
Provincial Exams	January 29–31, 2007
March Break	March 12–16, 2007
Good Friday	Friday, April 6, 2007
Easter Monday	Monday, April 9, 2007
Education Week	April 15–21, 2007
Victoria Day	Monday, May 21, 2007
Provincial Exams	June 19–21, 2007
Last day of school	Friday, June 29, 2007

Important dates also posted at www.ednet.ns.ca

Key contacts

Nova Scotia Department of Education
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www.ednet.ns.ca
Minister: The Honourable Karen Casey
Deputy Minister: Dennis Cochrane

Nova Scotia Health Promotion & Protection
Tel: (902) 424-4807
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Minister: The Honourable Barry Barnett
Deputy Minister: Robert Fowler

Nova Scotia School Boards Association (NSSBA)
Tel: (902) 491-2888
www.nssba.ednet.ns.ca
President: Elliott Payzant
Executive Director: Ken Meech

Annapolis Valley Regional School Board
Tel: 1-800-850-3887
www.avrsb.ednet.ns.ca
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Chair: Lavinia Parrish-Zwicker

Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board
Tel: (902) 564-8293
www.cbv.ns.ca
Superintendent: Ed Davis
Chair: Darlene Morrison

Chignecto-Central Regional School Board
Tel: 1-800-770-0008
www.ccrsb.ednet.ns.ca
Superintendent: Noel Hurlley
Chair: Trudy Thompson

Conseil scolaire acadien provincial
Tel: 1-888-533-2727
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Superintendent: Darrell Samson
Chair: Ken Gaudet

Halifax Regional School Board
Tel: (902) 464-2000
www.hrsb.ns.ca
Superintendent: Carole Olsen
Chair: Gary O'Hara

South Shore Regional School Board
Tel: 1-888-252-2217
www.srsb.ca
Superintendent (interim): James A. Gunn
Chair: Wanda J. Broome

Strait Regional School Board
Tel: 1-800-650-4448
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Superintendent: Phonse Gillis
Chair: George Kehoe

Tri-County Regional School Board
Tel: 1-800-915-0113
www.tcrsb.ca
Superintendent: Phillip Landry
Chair: Faye Haley

momsanddads.ca

Children are going back to school. Vacations are over. The busy season means extra challenges for parents. How can you prepare healthy, yet quick meals? How can you keep your kids physically active when the cold winds start to blow?

That's why the Department of Health Promotion and Protection created momsanddads.ca. It's filled with healthy recipes, advice on breastfeeding, simple ideas to keep your children active, tips on proper car seat usage, as well as facts about second-hand smoke and steps to make your home smoke free. Plus it has links to many other helpful sites with information to keep your family healthy, safe, and happy.

Click on momsanddads.ca today.

Brighter Futures

together

HELPING STUDENTS TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL AND IN LIFE

FALL 2006



Healthy schools, healthy students

Physical activity and healthy eating result in healthy children who are better prepared to learn.

That's why those activities are the focus of Nova Scotia's Health Promoting Schools program. Through this program, children enjoy everything from physical education and physical activity – before, during, and after school – to nutrition bins, fitness equipment, skipping clubs, healthy food taste-testing, and after-school cooking classes.

It's designed to help make both the students – and the places where they live, learn, and play – healthier.

This innovative program is the result of a partnership between the Department of Health Promotion and Protection and the Department of Education, as well as school boards and District Health Authorities across the province.

Making college or university affordable

Studies show that college or university graduates can earn significantly more money during their lifetime. But you may wonder if you can afford a college or university education for your child.

The good news is that a higher education is affordable for most Nova Scotians.

Did you know that the amount of money you are expected to contribute to your child's higher education has been lowered twice in the past two years? Plus there are many programs to help students from low-income families, students with a disability, and students from other under-represented groups get a higher education.

This means your child probably can qualify for a government loan. But it does not always mean a mountain of debt after graduation. In fact, thanks to many provincial and federal programs, your child may only have to pay back a portion of the amount borrowed.

Here's how: By applying for the Debt Reduction Program immediately after graduating from college or university, your child can have up to 30 per cent of their Nova Scotia student loan forgiven. Then, if they meet certain work and payment requirements in the three years after graduation, they can apply for another 20 per cent reduction. They can also use a new tax credit during those three years to reduce their provincial income tax by up to \$1,000.

Canadian Millennium Foundation Scholarships and the government's plan to reduce tuition in Nova Scotia's universities can also reduce the amount borrowed.

Find out more about financing a higher education at <http://studentloans.ednet.ns.ca> and www.canlearn.ca. Or talk to a guidance counsellor, or college and university financial assistance staff.

Fact: More than 90% of Nova Scotia student loan applications are submitted online. This translates into fewer incomplete applications and faster turnaround.

Putting education to work



Would you be surprised to know that 58 per cent of Nova Scotia's high school graduates enter the workforce directly, without any post-secondary education?

That's why it's so important for students to connect skills they learn in high school to post-secondary programs and work.

This year, 27 high schools will offer a new program called Options and Opportunities (O2). It's specially designed for students who may not be meeting their academic potential because they don't connect with traditional school programs.

O2 matches them with qualified employers so they gain real experience in a real workplace. The students will see how education prepares them for the labour market. As a result, they'll earn their high school diploma, and graduate with workplace skills and a plan for their career.

O2 students focus on one or more of the following sectors:

- arts, culture, and recreation
- business
- health and human services
- hospitality and tourism
- information technology
- trades and technologies

For more information, visit www.ednet.ns.ca/O2.

New workshop just for you

Helping young people make smart career decisions is a challenge faced by many parents. If your child is enrolled in the O2 program and you would like to learn how to be a better career coach, participate in a Parents a Career Coaches workshop, starting in October 2006.

We want to hear from you

Please tell us if you found this school newsletter helpful.
E-mail us at BrighterFuturesTogether@gov.ns.ca or call us at 1-902-424-3757



Education
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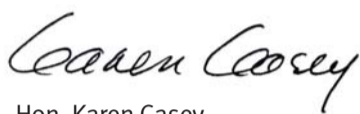
Welcome back to school!

Last year we introduced the new plan for education in Nova Scotia, *Learning for Life II: Brighter Futures Together*. We're keeping you posted on what we accomplished in 2005-06, and the next steps for 2006-07. In a nutshell: government is investing to give our children the healthiest and brightest possible futures.

The next steps focus on the fundamentals, further reduce class sizes, expand support for students with special needs, and offer more advanced courses for gifted students. More textbooks, resources, and core professionals mean a stronger education system. Our children will be better-equipped to find success.

Our departments are working together to introduce healthier school menus and continue the Health Promoting Schools program. More physical activity and healthy eating will result in healthier children who are better prepared to learn.

Read on and find out details of the next steps, as well as how you can help your child succeed today and in the future.



Hon. Karen Casey
Minister of Education



Hon. Barry Barnett
Minister of Health Promotion and Protection

Selecting the right courses

Success in the right course will open doors for your child. You can tell if a course is the right one because it will challenge the student's abilities, without exceeding them. It should also help the student grow and fit with the student's future plans.

For example: if your child has been very successful in prior mathematics courses, has a strong work ethic, and an interest in going deeper into mathematical concepts, advanced math may be the right choice. Otherwise, academic or graduation-level math may be a better choice.

Talk with the teachers or a guidance counsellor about what may be best for your child.



Supporting a child with special needs

If you have a student with special needs, you'll want to get a copy of this new guide, *The Program Planning Process: A Guide for Parents*.

In order for some students to succeed at school, a team approach to planning an appropriate education is necessary. This guide outlines the entire planning process, including transition planning to help your child move from grade to grade, and from school to community. Resources and ways to minimize and resolve conflicts are also listed.

This guide helps you to better understand the rights, roles, and responsibilities of every member of the program planning team – including you. Get your copy from your local school, the Department of Education, or online at www.ednet.ns.ca.

Students invited to P.A.R.T.Y.

A realistic and sometimes graphic picture of injury is available to high school students with a new resource called P.A.R.T.Y. – Prevent Alcohol and Risk-Related Trauma in Youth.

P.A.R.T.Y. takes students on a journey from the scene of a mock car crash, through the emergency department and intensive care unit, and into rehabilitation. A DVD, interactive exercises, testimonials from people affected by injury and trained facilitators bring the experience to life.

Getting students thinking and talking about injury is the first step to keeping them safe, and teens are also encouraged to talk with their parents afterwards about what they've learned. Nova Scotia is the first province to have P.A.R.T.Y. approved as a resource for high schools. More than 30 high schools staged P.A.R.T.Y. last year. Ask your principal to bring it to your school.

Find out more by contacting party@gov.ns.ca

Their future is now

A recent national poll showed that 89 per cent of parents expect their children to attend a college or university. Yet only 60 per cent are saving for it.

It's never too early or late to start, and it's easier than you think...

If you put \$1.50 a day – the same price as a pop – into a Registered Education Saving Plan (RESP), you could save almost \$550 a year. In 17 years, that would add up to \$12,000, assuming a 3 per cent interest rate! Other federal programs, such as the Canada Education Savings Grant and the Canada Learning Bond, will also kick in, helping your savings grow faster.

For more information check out www.canlearn.ca. Or talk to your bank or financial advisor.

But do it soon!

How are our students doing?

You want to know that your children are receiving a high standard of education so they'll be prepared for their futures. You also want to know that if your child needs help to reach that standard, he or she will get it. That's what assessments are all about.

of the provincial assessments in the annual *Minister's Report to Parents*. For more information, visit plans.ednet.ns.ca.



Mark These Dates

Elementary Literacy Assessment (Grade 6)
October 10–13, 2006

Junior High Literacy Assessment (Grade 9)
May 28–31, 2007

Early Elementary Mathematical Literacy
Assessment (Grade 3)
June 5–7, 2007

Give safety a boost

Why do you drive your children to school? Because you want them to arrive safely, of course. That's why you should always use a booster seat – it makes the ride even safer by reducing the risk of severe injury or death in case of collision.

child is nine years old, or until the child is 145 cm/4 feet 9 inches tall.

For more information, call 1-866-288-1388 or visit www.childsafetylink.ca.



As of January 1, 2007, the law in Nova Scotia will require all children 18 kg/40 lb or over be properly secured in a booster seat in motor vehicles until the

New standards for schools



marks, along with the input of parents, students, and teachers.

Then, the school sets goals for improvement and drafts a plan to meet those goals. An external team of educators will review the plan and help the school refine it.

Every school's goals may be different but the objective will be the same: improving student achievement. Some schools may decide to concentrate on math and language arts, others may decide to put extra emphasis on communications with parents. Still others may feel they need to address healthy lifestyles and physical education issues.

School improvement also encompasses improvements to the learning climate to boost a school's overall performance. More than 60 schools now have school improvement plans and the experience has been so positive that the program is being expanded to include all schools in the province by 2010.

The program works this way:

First, the school assesses how effectively it delivers programs and services. This includes analyzing student

Healthier school menus

Beginning in January, deep-fried foods, chocolate bars, ice cream, and soft drinks will be off school menus and out of the vending machines as Nova Scotia introduces its new healthy foods in schools policy. Those low-nutrition foods and beverages will be replaced with healthier – but still delicious and affordable – options.

We have a duty to make schools safe and healthy places that help children learn their best. That means losing the fatty, salty, and sugary foods that are associated with poor nutrition and the dramatic rise in type-2 diabetes, hypertension, and other nutrition-related diseases in children.

Other highlights include:

- ✓ Only 100 per cent juice, water, and milk (or nutritional milk alternative) will be served or sold in schools beginning in January 2007
- ✓ School fundraising can only involve non-food items or food and beverages from the Maximum and Moderate Nutrition list, beginning September 2007 (Subject to review)
- ✓ Donairs, hot dogs, pepperoni pizza, and other mixed foods and beverages from the Minimum Nutrition list will not be available after June 2008

Some foods from the Minimum Nutrition list will still be served along with healthy foods at special in-school functions, such as Halloween and Christmas parties. For more information, click on www.ednet.ns.ca.

Students have their say

Does your child have an opinion about what goes on in school? Students in grades 10-12 on the Provincial Student Education Council (PSEC) get to advise the Minister of Education on public school matters. PSEC students also develop leadership and problem-solving skills; skills that help with their transition from high school to post-secondary education, training, and work. To get your child involved, visit youth.ednet.ns.ca.

What does a school board do?

Every four years during municipal elections, you are asked to vote for a school board member. But who is a school board member and what is his or her role?

In short, school boards are advocates for students. Whenever the board meets to discuss a school issue, or to approve a school policy, they ask themselves, "Will this help students?" That's their role.

You can help your local school board continue to improve education for all learners. Get to know the members. Don't hesitate to ask questions. Your school board depends on your participation and wants to hear from you.

Other school board facts:

- ✓ There are eight school boards in Nova Scotia: seven regional English-language boards and one provincial Acadian board.
- ✓ An African Nova Scotian representative is elected to each of the regional boards. After consultation with the Mi'kmaq community and the school board, the Minister of Education may appoint a Mi'kmaq representative to each regional school board.
- ✓ School board members receive an annual stipend of \$8,200 in recognition of their time commitment.

For more information about the role of school boards, visit www.nssba.ednet.ns.ca

NSSBA
Nova Scotia School Boards Association

Your most valuable school supply

Where else can you find the resources to get school projects done, pick up your favourite movies, bestselling CDs, and many cool books and magazines? Plus get High-Speed Internet access and join in fun programs? All for free?

Only at your local library.

You don't even have to go to the library to use its resources. Just type your card's barcode into the library's website and surf World Book Online, an electronic encyclopedia, or research thousands of magazine articles.

So don't forget your public library card as you pack your school knapsack this fall.

Visit publiclibraries.ns.ca to learn more.

Career planning with your child

It's never too early to help your child start planning for that big question: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Your support and interest in your child's future are critical. As a parent, you are the single greatest influence on your child's career decision-making.

This list of resources will help you and your child learn more about careers and their requirements. Explore them together, and help your child take full advantage of the opportunities Nova Scotia has to offer.

✓ **Career Options** – www.novascotiacaareeroptions.ca – contains information on 315 occupations and their education requirements. Grade 9 students will receive the Nova Scotia Career Guide this year.

✓ **Options and Opportunities (O2)** – www.ednet.ns.ca/O2 – helps students understand how the lessons they're learning in school connect to post-secondary education and training for a career.

✓ **Co-operative Education** – matches students with employers for practical, hands-on experience in a real workplace.

✓ **Youth Apprenticeship** – www.workitns.ca – students can begin on-the-job training for apprenticeship, while working part-time (after school and/or weekends) for an employer in the skilled trades. Students must complete high school before moving on to the technical training stage of their apprenticeship.

✓ **Youth Pathways and Transitions** – lifework.ednet.ns.ca – helps smooth the transition from junior to senior high school, and then on to post-secondary destinations. It helps students choose the right courses and gives them access to guidance counselling and career resource development.

