



Student Achievement Action Plan *Progress Report*

November 2006

A report on progress to implement the recommendations of the Task Force On Student Achievement

The Premier's Task Force On Student Achievement was established in January 2005 to recommend ways to improve student achievement in Prince Edward Island. After consulting extensively with educators and the public, the task force released its final report in January 2006. It contained 20 recommendations.

In the April 2006 budget, the provincial government committed \$9 million over three years to implement recommendations in priority areas. Government agreed to report regularly on its progress. This is its first report.

Planning to improve student achievement is overseen by an Educational Leadership Team which includes the three school board superintendents, the Deputy Minister of Education and the two senior directors of the Department of Education.

Their work has been organized into five priority areas: Early Learning and Literacy, Curriculum and Assessment, Student Engagement, Parent Engagement and Leadership. This document highlights progress to date in each of these areas. It is also available on the Department of Education and school board websites.



Early learning and literacy



The task force recommended that kindergarten programs be strengthened, that students should read by grade 3, and that children at risk for social and academic development be

identified and assisted as early as possible.

Progress to date:

- An Early Learning and Literacy Committee, formed in June, developed a comprehensive framework that outlines the work to be done and the required resources to ensure that students are reading at a grade 3 level by the end of grade 3.
- Three Early Literacy Mentors were hired and another is being recruited. They are working with elementary schools to help them improve early literacy among grades 1 to 3 students. More mentors will be hired next year and the following year.
- Training is being provided to all elementary school teachers to use reading records. This will provide teachers with a standard tool to use in determining student reading levels.
- New kindergarten policy was introduced in 2006 to extend the minimum length of the kindergarten year to 9 months.
- A new Early Childhood Team is working to improve curriculum, program delivery and parent engagement in early childhood and kindergarten programs. The team includes people from Education, Social Services, the Early Childhood Development Association and other professionals who work with young children.
- A Kindergarten Curriculum Writing Committee has been established to develop integrated kindergarten curriculum that identifies learning outcomes and benchmarks in language arts, math, social studies, science, health and the arts.

- A provincial Learning Disabilities Strategy Committee, established in April, includes representatives from Health, Education, Social Services, Attorney General, the Learning Disabilities Association and the Literacy Alliance. The committee is now drafting a strategic plan for Deputy Ministers. It will outline initiatives to be taken in the coming year to improve outcomes for children with learning disabilities.
- Three school psychologists were hired to assess children at risk for learning disabilities and to assist with the Learning Disabilities Strategy.
- A committee has reviewed several intensive early literacy interventions. Two programs are now being tested in three schools to help determine what works best in PEI.
- \$225,000 was provided for school library books and resources.

Curriculum and assessment



The task force recommended that curriculum be fully developed in order to identify learning outcomes and guide teaching practices. This should include the development of standards to identify

expectations for students, benchmarks to measure performance, and assessment tools to inform decision making. It was suggested that teachers be actively involved in creating these tools and they should receive adequate training to use them. All curricula should be supported with the appropriate textbooks and resources.

Progress to date:

- Standards for math and language arts in grades 1 to 9 are now being developed in collaboration with the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education (CAMET). It is expected that Island teachers will be able to review the draft standards in the new year. They will be ready to implement in September 2007.
- Standards and benchmarks are being developed for Grade 10 English language arts curriculum.
- A new common curriculum is being developed for automotive technology. Similar curricula will also be developed in welding and carpentry.
- A social studies consultant was recruited to lead the development of new high school social studies curriculum.
- A new multi-media course has been funded for nine high schools.
- A language arts assessment specialist, a math assessment specialist and a bilingual assessment specialist have been hired.
- Plans are in place to assess the performance of all students this year in grade 3 language arts and grade 9 math.
- \$40,000 was allocated to update grade one language arts materials.
- \$15,000 was allocated to purchase resources for students with special needs.

Student engagement



The task force recommended that more effective high school scheduling models be investigated and strategies be developed

to further engage students in learning, especially at the intermediate and high school levels.

Progress to date:

- A provincial committee has been formed to review the current high school scheduling model and make recommendations by the fall of 2007. A chair has been named and the terms of reference have been developed. The committee will examine the hour value of high school credits and how the current model might be changed to offer more time for math and language arts and more options for students. They will also explore the introduction of career/life skills programs and ways to improve student teacher contact and mentoring relationships in high school.
- A steering committee is being established to improve the delivery of courses in French First Language and French Immersion schools. Some recommendations will be in place by September 2007.
- Distance learning tools are being evaluated to deliver courses from school to school in the Commission scolaire de langue française. Equipment will be purchased and a pilot course implemented this year.
- New cross-curricular reading strategies are being implemented to improve the reading skills and comprehension of intermediate school students. Training was provided to 23 intermediate school teachers and 20 more will be trained this year.

- \$216,000 was provided this year for four new English-as-a-Second-Language teachers, tutors, textbooks and resources for new immigrant students.
- A steering committee has been established to develop a new management model to improve Aboriginal education.
- Many School Development initiatives are now taking place at the school level to improve student engagement in learning and success at learning. These initiatives are meeting with very positive results.
- New software such as *StudentsAchieve* and *Tell Them From Me* have been introduced to improve communication and monitor student and parent satisfaction.

Parent engagement



The task force felt that parents play a major role in their children's achievement. They recommended that parents be actively involved in the new School Development process, that family literacy initiatives

be expanded, and that resources be provided to enable parents to organize effectively to identify family and community educational needs.

Progress to date:

- Ten schools piloted the new School Development planning model last year and 42 schools are involved this year. One of the three major goals of the model is to improve student achievement through increased parent involvement. The department is providing substantial support to the School Development process, including resources to develop and interpret student and parent surveys that will continuously inform planning and evaluation.
- The Home and School Federation was asked by the Minister of Education to lead the development of a provincial parent engagement strategy that will improve

communication with parents and identify ways to engage more parents in learning. Their proposal is expected in November.

- \$15,000 was allocated for family literacy grants. These grants will support kindergartens, schools, and groups to work together to increase the capacity of parents to help their children with literacy, numeracy and learning.
- A social marketing campaign is underway with Magic 93 and CFCY to increase awareness and engage Islanders in literacy and learning activities. The campaign theme is: *It is never too early or too late to learn.*

Leadership



The task force suggested that resources should be available for teaching and learning as well as the many other factors that influence student achievement such as professional development, policy and planning.

Progress to date:

- School board staff are now working with vice-principals to develop leadership goals and activities.
- More than 50 full-time teaching positions have been maintained and added this year, even though student enrolment declined.
- The provincial Professional Development Committee is reviewing requests and will soon recommend PD priorities for the coming year to the Educational Leadership Team.
- Funding has been provided to enable special education teachers to take courses in Level B assessment from UPEI.
- The Department of Education hired a new Director of Student Support Services.