

# New Brunswick Public Education: A Shared Responsibility

## Vision for the Education system...

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*When kids come first* is government's vision for building the best education system in the country.

It has three goals that reflect the three fundamental stages children will pass through on their journey into, and through, the K-12 education system.

1. Every child will arrive at kindergarten ready to learn.
2. Every child will leave Grade 5 having mastered the tools to learn - reading, writing and numeracy.
3. Every child will graduate from high school having had the opportunity to discover their personal strengths and to find something they love doing.

The plan focuses on eight commitments with over 140 specific actions that will move New Brunswick toward becoming a leader in education:

- To Ensure School Readiness
- To Work Urgently on Literacy, Numeracy and Science
- To Help Children Develop a Passion for Learning
- To Give Educators the tools to Innovate and Lead
- To Live Up to the Promise of Inclusion
- To Engage Communities and Partners in Improving Schools

- To Promote Cultural Identity and Linguistic Growth

- To Create Healthy and Safe Schools

District Education Councils (DECs) are critical partners in realizing these goals and commitments. This document serves to clarify the roles and responsibilities of DECs, school districts and the Minister of Education.



## Governance Structure...

In exploring the roles and responsibilities of the DECs and the Minister of Education, it is useful to reflect on the accountability structure within the governance structure.

The Minister has a responsibility to ensure that appropriate standards are in place across New Brunswick. The DECs have flexibility to make decisions and set policy on a wide range of issues within the framework es-

tablished by the Minister.

These standards define the level of service that New Brunswickers expect from their education system, and ensure that fundamental curriculum, programs, health and safety and service requirements are met.

Since 2001, education governance in New Brunswick has taken the form of District Education Councils. The bulk of de-

cision-making at the school district level is undertaken by DECs, in consort with the superintendent, who is responsible for the operational oversight of the school district.

At the school level, Parent School Support Committees (PSSC) operate in an advisory capacity to the principal.

## The Minister's role...



The Minister sets provincial parameters and direction in education. Through the Department of Education, the Minister:

- *maintains* an environment that supports learning;
- *provides* funding and other resources as required;
- *establishes* a 3-year provincial education plan
- *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 meets formally with the DEC chairs through bi-annual provincial forums. This provides the opportunity to discuss major issues, reflect on policy direction and share information.

In addition, the Minister and Department staff are in regular contact with DEC's in order to consult on policy development, capital issues, and other business.

## The DEC's role...

*The DEC's are responsible for local decision-making in the operation of schools in their districts.*

The DEC's are responsible for local decision-making in the operation of schools in their district. How?

At the district level, DEC's develop broad policies and their superintendents make day-to-day decisions within these policies .

In so doing, the superintendent is accountable to the DEC for the management of services, programs and resources, for the quality of learning and for the implementation of the annual district education plan and district expenditure plan.

In the classroom, teachers make the most important decisions, at the local level, on how to manage their classrooms and personalize the delivery of the provincial curriculum for each student in their classroom.

## The Department of Education's role ...

As the central body, the Department serves as the centre for the coordination of common services and as a source of information and resources.

Some examples include:

*negotiation of collective agreements* (the Office of Human Resources leads negotiations, with input from ED and school districts);

*teacher education and certification* (NB universities are contracted to provide teacher education, ED han-

dles certification);

*professional development* (ED organizes provincial PD/district provides local PD opportunities);

*information systems support* ( identifies major common IS systems/district provides for other IS requirements);

*human resources services* (ED assists in the interpretation of collective agreements/district hires all staff);

*budgeting and accounting services* (ED provides the budget to districts and

works with districts to identify ways of reducing costs);

*capital infrastructure* (ED looks after major building and renovations/district looks after minor repairs); and

*transportation* (ED sets safety framework and approves purchase of new school buses according to the needs of the district/district establishes routing, bussing needs, etc.).



## The Minister'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.

The terms "goals" and "standards" are meant to be interpreted in the broadest sense.

*The Education Act and regulations online:*

[www.gnb.ca/0062/acts/acts-e.asp](http://www.gnb.ca/0062/acts/acts-e.asp)

## Section 6 of the *Education Act*...

Together with the instructional program, the legislative and policy framework, and *When kids come first*, these *goals* and *standards* frame out the Minister's expectations respecting how the education system will operate and what will be accomplished. The Minister has responsibility for:

- Provincial exams
- Curriculum
- Pupil Transportation
- Educational Facilities
- Educational Service and Standards
- Budget
- Education Act and regulations
- Provincial Policies
- Teacher certification



## Provincial Policy Development...

The Department develops provincial policies. These policies are far-reaching and high level. They establish the minimum standards for a particular issue and are applied evenly across the province.

Why minimum standards? Because it is important to allow local school districts the flexibility to address certain issues in a way that reflects the local experience.

As such, DEC's can establish district-level policy that is more prescriptive or comprehensive than a provincial policy, while still consistent with the minimum standards established by the Depart-

ment.

In setting provincial policy, the Department consults with school districts throughout the development process as well as other relevant stakeholders. Teams are often formed with broad departmental and district representation so that policies are as relevant and responsive as possible. An open environment is fostered where ideas and viewpoints are shared.

### **An example of a provincial policy:**

Policy 705 – *School and School District Crisis Planning* states that "each school district must have a plan for responding to

traumatic events within the district, and a team of resource people able to provide support and assistance to students and staff."

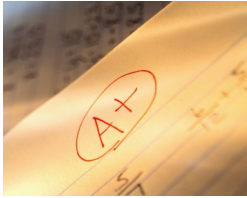
Policy 705 sets out basic requirements for consultation and annual updates, but leaves the detail to the school districts. A DEC can take Policy 705 and establish a district-level policy that requires additional standards as need be for their district.

*Department of Education policies online:*

<http://www.gnb.ca/0000/policies.asp>

*Provincial policy is far-reaching and high level, based on the Minister's authority in the Education Act.*

## The DEC'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 ...*

*The DEC's have full authority to set district policy within the broad parameters of provincial policy.*

## Education Act and Regulation 2001-48...

The *Education Act* and *Regulation 2001-48* establish in legislation the duties of the DEC's. In addition to the sections mentioned above, the Act and Regulation provide authority for the DEC's to oversee the following:

- Approve and monitor the district education plan
- Approve and monitor the district expenditure plan
- Maintain links with the PSSCs
- Develop district policies and procedures
- Provide for an appeal process
- Determine capital project priorities
- Recommend school closures
- Review and approve performance report
- Oversee trust funds
- Approve school improvement and performance reports
- Hire and evaluate the district superintendent

## District Policy Development...



A policy governance model has been adopted by DEC's 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*.

The DEC's have the mandate to set district policy within the broad confines of the provincial policy.

For example, under the *Education Act* children enter school during the year in which they turn five. This is

the provincial standard set in the legislation. Once a child has been admitted to school, in accordance with provincial Policy 301 - *Admission to and Placement in Kindergarten*, the superintendent and staff make the day-to-day placement decisions on behalf of the DEC.

The school district determines, based on policy and practice, the appropriate grade, class, program, service and school placement in keeping with the needs of their students and the resources of their district.

Appeals to this process are addressed at the local district level.

This reflects the local decision-making authority of the DEC's. They can direct their school districts in the most appropriate way to address the needs of the school community within the resources available to the school district.

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## 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.

As described in legislation, the superintendent is the sole direct employee of the DEC. The DEC hires and evaluates the performance of the superintendent. The superintendent's decisions are made on behalf of and subject to any policies of the DEC.



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## Superintendent's Responsibilities...

The superintendent makes the operational and administrative decisions affecting the district and schools. 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. Specifically, the Superintendent is responsible for:

- Day-to-day operation of schools
- Determining bus routes
- Preparing the district education plan
- Preparing the district performance report
- Preparing the district expenditure plan
- Hiring/evaluating district and school staff
- Managing of budget
- Operational/administrative decision-making
- Placing students
- Implementing provincial and district policies
- Teacher and teacher-aid assignments
- Developing local courses
- Storm day closures
- Signing agreements

*The superintendent's decisions are made on behalf of and subject to any policies of the DEC*

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## Parent School Support Committees...

At the local school-level, Parent School Support Committees play an important advisory role to the principal of the school.

Any eligible New Brunswick citizen of voting age who meets the residency requirement can run or vote in a DEC election. PSSCs, however, are made up primarily of parents of students attending the school for which the PSSC operates.

The responsibilities of the PSSCs are outlined in section 33 of the *Education Act*.

PSSCs are not decision-making bodies but rather provide advice and feedback on the direction and decisions undertaken by the school administration. PSSCs serve an important role in terms of providing advice to the principal regarding school policies, strategies for partnerships within the community, ways

of maintaining a positive climate within the school and support for the language and culture of the school, among other duties.

The PSSC communicates regularly with its DEC and a DEC member may attend PSSC meetings for information purposes.



## Partners in education...



When kids come first establishes the vision and goals for the public education system in New Brunswick over the next five years.

New Brunswick has a unique education governance model and it relies

heavily on a cooperative and coordinated effort between locally elected decision-makers and the provincial government.

Fourteen District Education Councils, comprising locally elected volunteers, have important responsibilities and offer strategic leadership at the local level. This leadership is critical in meeting provincial targets and realizing the vision that we can build the best education system.

The Minister, 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 and are working together in the best interests of our kids.

*All partners working together to ensure the success of our students.*

## Contact information...

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*Ce document est également disponible en français.*

The information provided in this document is for illustration purposes and should not be interpreted as an exhaustive description of the responsibilities of each party involved in education governance. A full description of the authority and responsibilities of the Minister, the Department, the DECs and the Superintendents is found in the *Education Act* and its regulations.