



La communauté,
au cœur de
l'Éducation!

Community is
the heart of
Education!

Reflecting on Good Governance for Schools

Situation: The Minister of Education and Early Childhood has undertaken consultation to propose a reform of education governance in New Brunswick in 2022. There are important questions to be considered before undertaking changes to an important democratic right. Current District Education Councils would like parents, community members and politicians to consider the following factors when evaluating the options proposed by the Department of Education.

Democracy - Education is everyone's business and local governance decisions can impact the entire community.

Elected school boards have been one of the oldest forms of democracy in Canada, starting in 1816, and gives community the right to choose the superintendent responsible for the education of their children and to ensure public education reflects local culture, values and priorities.

Will the minister's proposed school governance model allow everyone the right to vote or will it limit local voice to parents with children in school? Will the rights be the same for French and English?

Districts and Zones - What are the proposed changes to school districts and/or "regional zones"?

How will the size of the districts influence decision-making?

Are there benefits to having more localized decision-making?

Will the size of the district or area increase participation or limit power to those who can travel to meetings?

Participation in school governance - How will the proposed model increase opportunities for more New Brunswickers to participate in local governance?

Will positions in school governance be limited to parents or open to all taxpayers as owners and beneficiaries of the education system?

Decision-making authority or advisory role - What specific powers will each body have in the proposed model?

Are there more groups of citizens but less power?

Does the authority to make education decisions stay in the region or is it centralized?

Do community representatives have the authority to issue directives to the district, to choose community priorities, to set regional budgets, to evaluate the performance of the superintendent and the district?

Who will have responsibility for the location of new schools and school closures?

Opportunity to object - Does the proposed model give locally elected organizations the autonomy to challenge, oppose decisions of the minister or educate the public about decisions and situations that are considered not to be in the best interests of students and the community?

Who will have the opportunity to speak publicly about infrastructure issues, insufficient funding, or to push for local priorities such as student mental health?

Communication and respect for regional voice - On what topics and in what ways will the minister be required to hear the aspirations, preferences and concerns of regional communities?

Superintendent - In the proposed model, is the superintendent accountable to the community or the minister?

Will there be an elected body that will mediate between the school district and the minister when there are concerns about the impact of department decisions on the community, students and staff?

The current model gives community the right to elect representatives who hire, direct and evaluate the superintendent. Will a new model require the superintendent to manage the district according to community values and local priorities?

Accountability - Will proposed changes make the public education system more accountable to the communities or does the model centralize responsibilities making schools and districts more accountable to the ministry?

How will changes increase public education accountability to the public they serve?

Governance Support - How will a new governance structure be supported?

Does the plan include training and support to help elected representatives become strong leaders in the education system?

Beyond the costs of researching and implementing reform, has the government provided structures and budgets to support recruitment, training, and ongoing administrative and governance support?

Timeline - Is the timeline for consultation and development reasonable?

With the ongoing pandemic, can anyone really give the time and attention needed to create a well-planned and sustained governance change?

Some provinces, including New Brunswick, have made big changes only to reverse course a few years later. Is 6 months enough time to engage with stakeholders, design a governance model, gather feedback from the public and the education system and develop an implementation plan? What is the urgency?

Stability - Are changes to the governance structure more important than stability at this time?

The 10 year provincial education plan, teachers, parents, administrators, DECs, and the Auditor General of New Brunswick have all called for a period of stability in the education system, long before the pandemic.

Even if changes will improve the governance structure, it will be a distraction from student success and generally take years to fully implement. Is this the best time to introduce changes to the way districts are governed?

Duality - Do the proposed changes respect the linguistic duality of the education system?

Are they the same for Francophones and Anglophones?

Does the model respect Francophone rights to education governance under section 23 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*?

News Release

Education and Early Childhood Development

Partners across education system to be engaged on governance reform

08 December 2021

FREDERICTON (GNB) –Stakeholders across the education system will work together over the coming months to change decision-making processes, including how district education councils are composed and organized, and to improve community engagement.

"Open discussion is the best way to identify and resolve challenges," said Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Dominic Cardy. "When we launched *Succeeding at Home: A green paper on education in New Brunswick*, we committed to reviewing structures to better support principals, teachers, students and parents. By engaging partners across the system, we will deepen our understanding of how we can build a progressive educational culture that empowers educators."

Discussions will take place through early winter with the intent of having recommendations by late spring on:

- how to enable alignment and stability throughout the entire system;
- how to support consistent student-centred decisions;
- where relationships within the education system can be strengthened; and
- how to increase democratic participation.

Cardy said the goal is to develop mechanisms to ensure local leadership is empowered to improve the learning environment and to be actively involved in their communities.

The new governance model is expected to begin implementation by the end of 2022.

"We want to ensure stability within the education system, but there are opportunities to develop mechanisms that foster innovation and make sure our educators have the tools and freedom to share their experiences and knowledge to engage students and support learning," said Cardy. "We have a dual education system and we are committed to ensuring it remains protected under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* with a new structure based on democratic principles."

The anglophone and francophone sectors will focus on the ways their individual structures can better reflect their own identities to better serve students and communities, said Cardy. The intent is to look at structures, processes and connections to improve services, rather than looking at how learning is delivered within the classroom, curricula or other educational approaches.

This past spring, the department re-started discussions with district education councils, district staff, teachers and families that began through the [*Politique d'aménagement linguistique et culturel en éducation*](#), the [*10-year education plans*](#) and [*Succeeding at Home: A green paper on education in New Brunswick*](#). These initial discussions helped in the development of a stakeholder consultation plan which will help the department gain feedback and insights to inform future decision-making.

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Working Together to Empower our Public Education System



RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF TEACHERS AND LEARNERS THROUGH A RENEWED GOVERNANCE MODEL (ANGLOPHONE SECTOR)

The world we live in is constantly changing and our system needs to be flexible to adapt to emerging technological, social, and economic trends.

Education continues to be a top priority for our government. Through recent consultation, feedback has highlighted areas where New Brunswick is leading and other areas where we must work together to better align efforts to ensure our system meets the needs of our learners. That is why we are exploring ways to renew the governance model of the education system.

BY RENEWING OUR GOVERNANCE MODEL, WE CAN:



Enable strategic alignment and stability across the system and ensure consistent student-centred decisions that begin in the classroom.



Provide opportunity for more meaningful and effective local engagement, including the engagement of local governments.



Clarify and align roles and responsibilities throughout the system.



Address waning public participation on elected bodies and Parent School Support Committee (PSSC), enhance the democratic engagement and better enable parents to be active partners in their child's education.

NEXT STEPS

The review of the current governance model was launched in the spring of 2021 with consultations involving more than 2260 stakeholders. A collaborative design process with key stakeholders has recently begun and will continue throughout the winter of 2022. It is anticipated that recommendations will be brought forward in the spring of 2022.

