

Strategic Plan

2026-2029

Education and
Early Childhood
Development





MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, and in accordance with my responsibilities under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, I am pleased to present the 2026-2029 Strategic Plan for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development covering the period of April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2029.

As a Category 1 Provincial Government entity, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for achieving outcomes across early learning and child care, the K-12 education system, the apprenticeship system and the post-secondary education system. The goals and objectives set out in this Strategic Plan were developed in alignment with the strategic directions outlined in Annex A.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has identified three strategic issues that will guide work over the planning period: improving numeracy and literacy, inclusion for all of us, and skilled trades. I look forward to working with departmental staff and the entities that report through me to the House of Assembly in implementing these initiatives over the three-year planning period.

My signature below indicates my accountability for the preparation of this plan and the achievement of the identified goals and objectives.

Sincerely,

Hon. Paul Dinn
Minister

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Overview

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is established under the **Executive Council Act**. The Department is responsible for achieving outcomes with respect to early learning and child development, the K-12 education system, post-secondary education, and apprenticeship and trades.

Location

The main offices of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development are located on the third and fourth floors of the Confederation Building, West Block, 100 Prince Philip Drive, St. John's.

The Learning Resources Distribution Centre is in Building 909, Pleasantville, St. John's, and Student Financial Services is located at 95 Elizabeth Avenue in St. John's.

Early learning and child care services are delivered throughout the province in offices located in Whitbourne, Harbour Grace, Clarenville, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Springdale, Corner Brook, Stephenville, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador City, and St. John's.

The Department operates kindergarten to grade 12 English language public schools in the province under the banner of NLSchools and as of the 2025-26 school year is responsible for approximately 255 Kindergarten to grade 12 English language public schools, including 6 alternative sites.

The headquarters for NLSchools and the Avalon Region office is located on the third floor of the Confederation Building, West Block in St. John's with regional offices located in Gander (Central Region), Corner Brook (Western Region), and Happy Valley-Goose Bay (Labrador Region).

Apprenticeship and trades programs and services are provided through regional offices in Mount Pearl, Clarenville, Grand Falls-Windsor, Corner Brook, Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Wabush.

For more information on the Department, see <https://www.gov.nl.ca/education/>.

Staff Complement and Budget

Branch	Employees	Budget
Executive Services*	17	\$2,009,900
Corporate Services	26	\$21,542,400
Early Learning, Inclusion and Child Development	139	\$209,792,400
K-12 Education	229	\$28,207,100
Education Operations**	6,704	\$742,531,100
Post-Secondary Education	53	\$455,261,900
Apprenticeship and Trades	45	\$11,695,100
Total Budget		\$1,471,039,600

* This number includes communications and executive support staff

** Education Operations includes NLSchools employees except those who work in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure and the Public Procurement Agency

Mandate

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and Minister of Advanced Education and Skills is responsible for providing a high-quality educational system, from early learning and child care to K-12 education, apprenticeship and trades, and post-secondary education.

The mandate for the Department is established under Departmental Notice under the **Executive Council Act**, and under other supporting legislation as follows:

- **Apprenticeship and Certification Act**
- **Child Care Act**
- **College Act, 1996**
- **Council on Higher Education Act**
- **Degree Granting Act**
- **Memorial University Act**
- **Memorial University Pensions Act**
- **Private Training Institutions Act**
- **Public Libraries Act**
- **Schools Act, 1997**
- **Student Financial Assistance Act, 2019**
- **Teacher Training Act**
- **Teachers' Association Act**

Lines of Business

Our programs and services foster a high-quality learning environment that spans early childhood education, K-12 schooling, and advanced education and skills development. The Department is committed to ensuring through the broad education system that every Newfoundlander and Labradorian has a strong start in life, ongoing opportunities to keep learning, and clear pathways to careers in the skilled trades. The Department also funds and supports the province's Francophone school district and public libraries.

Departmental Branches:

Early Learning, Inclusion and Child Development has four divisions: Early Learning, Inclusion, and Childhood Development; K-12 Inclusion; Regional Services; and Accountability and Reporting. The branch develops and monitors legislation, policies, and funding for early learning and child care spaces, programming, and services, as well as Family Resource Centres. The branch supports children with diverse needs, oversees licensing and inspections, and evaluates system performance. The branch also facilitates transitions to K-12 education, provides parent resources, promotes early literacy through public libraries, and leads student services and safe school initiatives within the K-12 education system.

K-12 Education has three divisions: Evaluation and Research, Program Implementation, and Programs and Services. The branch oversees K-12 education curricula, policies and resources in English and French. It supports distance education, curriculum development and implementation, student assessment, and teacher certification. The branch monitors performance of the educational system and collaborates across branches to enhance learning outcomes.

Education Operations has seven divisions operating under the NLSchools banner: School Operations, School Services, Human Resources (HR), Financial Services, Information Technology (IT), School Food, and Communications. The branch

supports assessment in schools, school policies, and teacher professional learning. The branch provides guidance and counselling, supports extracurricular activities, and ensures safe, healthy learning environments through effective resource management. It is also responsible for corporate services functions for the school system in HR, IT, and Finance.

Apprenticeship and Trades includes the Apprenticeship and Trades Certification division, with the branch also hosting the Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization Partnership office. The branch is responsible for overseeing apprenticeship training and certification in the province, supporting individuals pursuing a career in the skilled trades, and working with institutions delivering training in skilled trades.

Post-Secondary Education has two divisions: Literacy and Institutional Services and Student Financial Services. The branch is responsible for supporting the delivery of post-secondary education in the province through Memorial University of Newfoundland, College of the North Atlantic, and private training institutions. The branch is also responsible for adult learning and literacy, and the provision of financial assistance to post-secondary education students.

Corporate Services consists of two divisions: Financial Services, and Policy and Information Management. On behalf of the Department as a whole, the branch manages and coordinates budget preparation and monitoring, financial services, information management, policy development and other corporate services, strategic planning and annual reporting, and other accountability requirements.

Primary Clients

The Department's primary clients include child care service providers and early learning professionals; learners, their families, student assistants, and educators; the Conseil Scolaire Francophone Provincial; private schools; Indigenous schools; post-secondary educational institutions; and those engaged in or supporting skilled trade pathways

including apprentices, journeyperson, trade qualifiers, and other individuals or employers.

Vision

A Department that delivers an accessible, high-quality education and skills system that empowers individuals, strengthens communities, and drives economic growth, ensuring every learner in Newfoundland and Labrador gains the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed throughout life.

Strategic Issues

Strategic Issue 1: Improving Numeracy and Literacy

Foundational skills in literacy and numeracy are essential for success in all areas of learning, as well as for participation in further education, training, and employment. Strengthening reading, writing, and mathematics skills requires early assessment, targeted supports to meet individual needs, and evidence-based instruction. The Department is dedicated to strengthening individual capabilities by focusing on reading, writing, mathematics, science, and digital competencies.

The Department will focus on enhancing early identification and intervention, strengthening the use of data to inform decision-making, and improving teaching and learning practices. This includes supporting educators through professional learning, implementing evidence-based approaches to instruction and assessment, and ensuring consistent monitoring of outcomes across the system. These efforts aim to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes and better support overall academic achievement, engagement, and long-term success for students.

Goal

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have strengthened the K-12 education system to improve students' engagement and success in numeracy, literacy, and digital technology.

Goal Indicators

- Improved supports for K-12 students and educational professionals in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and digital competency

Objective 2026-27

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have enhanced student engagement in academic achievement.

Objective Indicators

- Introduced early intervention strategies and assessors in early primary (K-1) to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes
- Implement instructional and assessment practices to promote student achievement in literacy and numeracy

Objective 2027-28

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have continued supporting student engagement in academic achievement.

Objective 2028-29

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have evaluated results and will have continued to strengthen supports for student academic achievement.

Strategic Issue 2: Inclusion for All of Us

The increasing complexity of learner needs at every level impacts participation and outcomes across the education continuum. Identifying evidence-based interventions enables the Department to select and implement supports that improve outcomes, ensuring that services are timely, targeted, and effective. The Department is committed to strengthening inclusive education with individualized supports in early learning, K-12, and in post-secondary education.

To achieve this, the Department will focus on increasing quality, inclusion, and system accountability in early learning and child care; enhancing social and emotional supports in K-12; and improving programming, cultural relevance, and system responsiveness across K-12, and post-secondary education, including apprenticeship and trades.

This focus includes expanding flexible programming and learning options, strengthening Indigenous cultural and traditional programming, and supporting pathways that enable people to build skills and access education and training throughout their lives.

Goal 1: Early Learning Quality, Inclusion, and System Accountability

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have strengthened system accountability and quality and inclusion supports across regulated child care providers and Family Resource Centres.

Goal Indicators

- Improved Quality, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (QIDEA) policy and related supports to families and child care providers

Objective 2026-27

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have improved quality, inclusion, and accountability in child care services.

Objective Indicators

- Initiated quality improvement approaches in regulated services, including the Assessment for Quality Improvement (AQI)
- Integrated Early Learning Gateway functionality to support licencing, inclusion supports, case management, and subsidy applications, enabling real-time data collection and reduced administrative burden

Objective 2027-28

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have expanded quality and inclusion initiatives and will have strengthened system accountability across early learning and child care.

Objective 2028-29

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have quality, inclusion, and accountability standards in child care and family resource centers.

Goal 2: Social and Emotional Support

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have enhanced support for students' social and emotional learning in the K-12 school system.

Goal Indicators

- Implemented evidence-based tools to identify earlier students' social and emotional learning needs
- Applied early evidence-based interventions and coordinated deployment of staff to support students' identified social and emotional learning needs

Objective 2026-27

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have supported and evaluated enhancement of students' social and emotional learning in selected schools (Phase 1)

Objective Indicators

- Implemented evidence-based screening and assessment tools to identify students with social and emotional learning needs

- Used assessment findings to identify evidence-based interventions
- Improved staff deployment to better coordinate services to support students

Objective 2027-28

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have continued to support Phase 1 and will have expanded into Phase 2 enhancement of students' social and emotional learning to additional selected schools.

Objective 2028-29

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have continued to support Phase 1 and Phase 2 will have expanded into Phase 3 enhancement of students' social and emotional learning to remaining schools.

Goal 3: Improved Supports for Learners

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have supported learners with more Indigenous cultural programming in K-12; and will have enhanced programs in post-secondary education and apprenticeship systems to support stronger outcomes for learners.

Goal Indicators

- Increased Indigenous traditional and cultural programming in K-12 education
- Strengthened collaboration with post-secondary institutions to improve learner outcomes
- Implemented an outcome-focused and accountable Adult Basic Education program that enables learners to build essential skills, achieve high-school equivalency, or transition successfully into further education, training, or employment
- Continued to improve targeted supports and services for priority groups and youth in apprenticeship programs

Objective 2026-27

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have improved programming and services for learners.

Objective Indicators

- Updated K-12 curriculum to include more Indigenous traditions, culture, and ways of knowing
- Strengthened partnerships with Indigenous communities
- Collaborated with post-secondary institutions to improve student pathways, better align programs, and support stronger system planning
- Redesigned agreement and oversight processes for Adult Basic Education service providers, enhancing accountability, performance monitoring, and consistency of learner outcomes across delivery partners
- Improved support focused on priority groups and youth participation in apprenticeship

Objective 2027-28

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have expanded programming and services for all learners.

Objective 2028-29

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have strengthened programming and services for all learners.

Strategic Issue 3: Skilled Trades

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will work to expand access for high school students to experiential and skill-based learning opportunities that help build practical skills and enable exploration of pathways to employment,

training, and apprenticeship. The Department will provide training, support, and services to apprentices, journeypersons, trade qualifiers, employers, training providers and industry partners. An innovative and flexible apprenticeship system is essential to ensuring apprentices have the supports needed to obtain certification and contribute to the growth of the provincial labour market. The Department is committed to prioritizing a successful apprenticeship system through continuous renewal and diversification.

Goal

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have focused on growing the workforce through pre-apprenticeship programming for high school students and modernization of skilled trade apprenticeship programming.

Goal Indicators

- Expanded access to skilled trades, experiential learning, and career-connected pathways for high school students
- Provided expanded and flexible access to apprenticeship training.
- Increased employer engagement
- Continued implementation of apprenticeship system improvements

Objective 2026-27

By March 31, 2027, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have developed pre-apprenticeship programming for high school students and will have continued implementation of apprenticeship system review recommendations.

Objective Indicators

- Expanded access to experiential learning and skill-based training opportunities to more high schools and through the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation
- Investigated the availability of flexible or alternative training delivery options for apprentices

- Increased opportunities for employer participation in engagement, consultations, or partnership activities

Objective 2027-28

By March 31, 2028, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have expanded experiential learning and pre-apprenticeship training opportunities and will have continued implementation of flexible and accessible training and support for apprentices and employers.

Objective 2028-29

By March 31, 2029, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have continued expanding experiential learning and pre-apprenticeship training opportunities and will have improved services and navigation of the Apprenticeship Management and Certification System for apprentices and employers.

Annex A: Strategic Directions

Strategic directions set out the physical, social, or economic outcomes that generally require collaboration among multiple government entities. These directions are commonly communicated through platform documents, throne and budget speeches, and policy documents. Government entities are expected to consider these themes, as appropriate, in the development of their plans. In accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, strategic directions shall be considered in performance-based planning, supporting coordinated government action and progress on shared priorities.

The Department has identified strategic directions of Government applicable to the Department for the 2026-2029 planning cycle. These include strengthening equity, safety, and belonging; setting children and youth up for success; rebuilding a stronger economy; and supporting rural and regional communities.

These priorities have been considered in the development of the Department's 2026-2029 Strategic Plan. Through this work, the Department will support children, youth, families, and adults in accessing meaningful child care, education and training opportunities that promote development, well-being, and participation in the workforce. By supporting families, students and educators, the Department contributes to stronger communities, improved social outcomes, and a more resilient and diversified provincial economy.

