Strategic Plan

2025-2026

Education and Early Childhood Development

Newfoundland & Labrador

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and in accordance with my responsibilities under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, I am pleased to present the 2025-2026 Strategic Plan for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development covering April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026. While this plan covers April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026, it serves as an updated continuation of the 2023–26 plan. With Apprenticeship and Trades Branch joining the department in October 2025, this update ensures accurate reporting for activities from October 29, 2025 through the remainder of the planning period.

As a category one Provincial Government entity, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for outcomes respecting early childhood development, the K-12 education system, the post-secondary education system, and the apprenticeship system. The goals and objectives included in this Strategic Plan were prepared in consideration of the strategic directions detailed in Annex A.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has identified four strategic issues that will guide its work over the planning period: Early Learning and Child Care, K-12 Education, Post-Secondary Education, and Apprenticeship and Trades. I look forward to working with the department's staff and entities to implement these initiatives over the 2025-26 planning period.

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

Sincerely,

Hon. Paul Dinn
Minister of Education and Early Childhood Education

Newfoundland & Labrador

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Overview

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development was established under the **Executive Council Act**. It is a category one Provincial Government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act** and 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.

The programs and services are provided through six branches of the department:

Corporate Services Branch
This branch includes the divisions of: Financial Services; and Policy and Information Management.

Early Learning, Inclusion and Child Development Branch
This branch includes the divisions of: Early Learning, Inclusion, and Childhood Development; K-12 Inclusion; Regional Services; and Accountability and Reporting.

Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Branch
This branch includes the divisions of: Evaluation and Research; Program Implementation; and Programs and Services.

Education Operations Branch
This branch includes the divisions of: School Operations; School Services – NLSchools: Human Resources; Financial Services; Information Technology; School Food; and Communications.

Post-Secondary Education Branch
This branch includes the divisions of: Literacy and Institutional Services; and Student Financial Services.

Apprenticeship and Trades Branch

This branch includes the division of: Apprenticeship and Trades Certification. The branch also hosts the Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization Partnership office.

The main offices of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development are located on the 3rd and 4th floor in the West Block of the Confederation Building on 100 Prince Philip Dr. in St. John's.

The Learning Resources Distribution Centre is in Building 909, Pleasantville, St. John's, and Student Aid Offices are located at 95 Elizabeth Ave in St. John's.

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

NLSchools identifies the operations of the Kindergarten to grade 12 English language public schools in the province and as of September 2024 is responsible for approximately 249 Kindergarten to grade 12 English language public schools.

The headquarters for NLSchools and the Avalon Region office is located on the 3rd floor of 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 Labrador West.

The Provincial Apprenticeship and Certification Board also reports directly to the Department (see Annex B: Public Entities for details).

Additional information on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development can be found at https://www.gov.nl.ca/education/.

Staff Complement and Budget

Branch	# of Employees	Budget
Executive Services*	15	$1,670,400
Corporate Services	25	$20,586,700
Early Learning, Inclusion and Child Development	99	$72,174,700
K-12 Education**	6,933	$701,052,100
Post-Secondary Education	42	$432,385,800
Apprenticeship and Trades	46	4,932,000
Total	**7,160**	**$1,232,801,700**

* This number includes communications and executive support staff.

** This number includes Education Operation staff.

Mandate

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for all matters relating to a high-quality educational system in the province, from early learning and child care to K-12 education, post-secondary education, and apprenticeship and trades.

The mandate for the department is primarily established under the Departmental Notices under the **Executive Council Act**, and other pieces of legislation that support the mandate are 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;** and
- **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. We are committed to ensuring 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.

What we do:

Early Learning, Inclusion and Child Development Branch develops and monitors legislation, policies, and funding for licensed child care and early learning programs. It supports children with diverse needs, oversees licensing and inspections, and evaluates system performance. This branch also facilitates transitions to K-12, provides parent resources, promotes early literacy through public libraries, and leads student services and safe school initiatives.

K-12 Education Branch oversees K-12 education policies, curricula, and resources in English and French. It supports distance education, curriculum development, student assessment, and teacher certification. This branch monitors system performance and collaborates across branches to enhance learning outcomes. Funds and support public libraries.

Education Operations Branch manages and supports the delivery of curriculum , assessment in schools, placement, and teacher professional learning. It provides guidance and counselling, supports extracurricular activities, and ensures safe, healthy learning environments through effective resource management.

Post-Secondary Education Branch regulates public and private post-secondary institutions, including Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic. It

administers student financial assistance, supports adult learning programs, and works with the Council on Higher Education to advance post-secondary education.

Apprenticeship and Trades 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 skilled trades training. The branch also hosts the Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization Partnership Office.

Primary Clients

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's primary clients are child care service providers, early learning professionals, educators, learners and their families, conseil scolaire, private schools, post-secondary educational institutions, apprentices, journeypersons, trade qualifiers, employers, power engineers, blasters, and other departments/agencies.

Vision

To provide accessible, high-quality education and practical skills development that empower individuals, strengthen communities, and drive economic growth, ensuring every learner in Newfoundland and Labrador gains the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed throughout life and contribute to a thriving society.

Strategic Issues

Strategic Issue 1 - Early Learning and Child Care

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for supporting children's learning from birth through school leaving. The department is dedicated to promoting early learning and child care throughout the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This goal is accomplished by implementing significant measures to improve early learning, supporting the developmental potential of children, supporting parents/caregivers and early learning professionals, supporting child care operations and family resource centres, providing more available and affordable regulated childcare services, and facilitating a seamless transition into the K-12 education system.

The experiences that children have in their early years can significantly influence their lifelong learning journey. The department continues to devote itself to making progress on initiatives related to high-quality early learning and child care programs and services.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have an accessible, high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive early learning and child care system.

Goal Indicator

- Increased capacity for families to access child care spaces with flexible times.
- Responsive, play-based learning opportunities in inclusive environments provided to children by qualified early learning professionals.

- Families and communities are provided resources and support to develop optimal learning environments for children.

Objective 2025-2026

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have increased resources and support to improve access to regulated child care services and to create more early learning opportunities for children.

Objective Indicator

- Continued implementation of actions from the Federal and Provincial Early Learning and Child Care Action Plans.
- Continued implementation of recommendations from the Family Resource Centres Review Report.
- Developed a competency-based approach to certify early childhood educators with a plan for implementation.
- Continued implementation of the Pre-Kindergarten Program, including space creation and development of curriculum.

Strategic Issue 2 - K-12 Education

One of the top priorities for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is to ensure that every child in Newfoundland and Labrador has access to a safe, inclusive and healthy school environment and an education system that is responsive to students' strengths and needs. Modernizing the K-12 education programs and services will enhance support to assist students in their learning journey, prepare them for future education and career prospects, and encourage their involvement in their communities and society.

Changes are ongoing within the K-12 education system to further the integration of the former English school district into the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is dedicated to supporting the ongoing transformation of our K-12 education system and collaborating with its stakeholders to pursue a seamless transition for students, teachers, services and systems.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will modernize the K-12 system, with a focus on curriculum renewal, program enhancement, and student supports that contribute to improved learning outcomes.

Goal Indicator

- Enhanced educational programs.
- Enhanced assessment measurements for K-12.
- Updated the **Schools Act, 1997.**
- Continued support of Responsive Teaching and Learning.

Objective 2025-2026

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have commenced implementation of an interactive and integrated curriculum platform.

Objective Indicator

- Implemented full access to the new curriculum digital portal eNLightenED by September 2025.
- Continued gathering user feedback to support the curriculum platform enhancements.
- Introduced additional features to improve the curriculum platform accessibility and user experience.

Strategic Issue 3 - Post-Secondary Education

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is focused on the development of a high-quality, relevant, accountable and sustainable post-secondary education system. The department is committed to supporting students and collaborating with post-secondary institutions and other partners to establish a brighter future and a stronger economic foundation for Newfoundland and Labrador. Through modernization, the post-secondary education system will be better positioned to align with changing provincial needs, including increasing access to responsive programming, microcredentials and life-long learning opportunities that will directly contribute towards meeting labour market demands, increasing innovation and achieving better social and economic outcomes.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have supported the development of a robust and responsive post-secondary system that is foundational to economic diversity and innovation.

Goal Indicator

- Increased collaboration with post-secondary institutions on provincial priorities for social and economic development.
- Improved accountability and evaluation mechanisms for post-secondary education.
- Increased services to targeted adult literacy groups.
- Improved the responsiveness of the Student Financial Assistance Program to support access to post-secondary education.
- Initiated development of a data system to better monitor outcomes for students and graduates of post-secondary institutions in the province.

Objective 2025-2026

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have strengthened the foundations of the post-secondary education system.

Objective Indicator

- Continued work to enhance student financial assistance programming.
- Continued modernization of oversight for the Adult Basic Education Program.
- Continued enhancing and expanding the Adult Foundational Literacy programming.

Strategic Issue 4 - Apprenticeship and Trades

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is focused on strengthening the apprenticeship system in Newfoundland and Labrador by providing training, supports and services to apprentices, journeypersons, trade qualifiers, employers, training providers and industry partners. Apprenticeship is a comprehensive workforce training strategy to provide individuals with a high-quality education that encourages attachment to the labour force. Given the current status of the economy, the evolution of education systems, and our own demographic trends, 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, 2026, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have undertaken initiatives to strengthen the overall effectiveness, sustainability, governance and accessibility of our provincial apprenticeship system to optimize opportunities to achieve certification.

Goal Indicator

- Completed a comprehensive review of apprenticeship and trades certification programs and policies and implemented appropriate recommendations to enhance program delivery and supports to stakeholders.
- Maintained a red seal pass rate above the national average.
- Maintained a percentage of female apprentices in non-traditional trades above the national average.
- Supported the completion of an independent review of the Office for Indigenous and Northern Skilled Trades with a view to ensuring the office is

maximizing resources over the 2023-2026 fiscal years to support Indigenous people seeking training and employment in the skilled trades.

Objective 2025-2026

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will have continued implementation of the findings of the review of the apprenticeship system to strengthen the overall effectiveness, sustainability, governance and accessibility of our provincial apprenticeship system to optimize opportunities to achieve certification.

Objective Indicator

- Continued implementation of all appropriate recommendations from the comprehensive review of the apprenticeship system.

Annex A: Strategic Directions

Strategic directions are the articulation of desired physical, social, or economic outcomes that normally require action by, or involvement of, more than one government entity. Provincial Government generally communicates these directions through platform documents, throne and budget speeches, and policy documents. These themes should be considered, as appropriate and applicable, to each government entity in the development of the entity's plan. The **Transparency and Accountability Act** requires government entities to consider these strategic directions in the preparation of their performance-based plans. This facilitates the integration of planning practices across Government and ensures entities are moving forward on key commitments.

The strategic directions related to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development are identified for the 2025-2026 planning cycle.

Strategic Direction #1: Early Learning and Child Care

Outcome: Accessible and sustainable early learning and child care environment throughout the province.

This outcome supports the policy direction of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and will require focus in the following areas:

- Accessible and sustainable early learning and child care programming.
- Development of Pre-Kindergarten programming.
- Sustainable child care funding model.
- Stability of early childhood educator workforce.
- Inclusive early learning and child care model.

Strategic Direction #2: K-12 Education

Outcome: Modernization of the K-12 education system towards improved learning outcomes for students.

This outcome supports the policy direction of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and will require focus in the following areas:

- Assessment and evaluation practices.
- Responsive teaching and learning support.
- Interactive and inclusive curriculums.
- Learning environment that supports student health and wellness.

Strategic Direction #3: Post-Secondary Education

Outcome: Optimized contribution that the post-secondary system makes to the social, cultural, and economic development of the province.

This outcome supports the policy direction of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and will require focus in the following areas:

- Modernize legislative and regulatory structures for post-secondary institutions in the province.
- Responsive student financial aid programming.
- Innovation and technology development.
- Responsive programming.
- Evidence-based and responsive adult literacy programming that addresses needs of vulnerable groups.

Strategic Direction #4: Apprenticeship and Trades

Outcome: Ensure training programs and service delivery models continue to meet the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; and foster innovation, flexibility and accessibility in the province's apprenticeship system.

This outcome supports the policy direction of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and will require focus in the following areas:

- Inclusive and responsive supports and services.
- Continued engagement with industry partners.
- Support for underrepresented groups in achieving trades certification.

Newfoundland & Labrador