

SECTION IV

GOVERNMENT

1. ACCOUNTABILITY PRINCIPLES

The NSTU believes in the accountability of public education. Any accountability model must adhere to the following principles:

- A. An effective accountability model:
 - I. recognizes that each partner (government, regional centre for education, school board, teachers and administrators, parents/guardians, and students) has a responsibility to be accountable for those aspects of education over which it has control and jurisdiction. They also have a responsibility for working collaboratively so that the system as a whole operates well.
 - II. acknowledges that the public has a right to know how well the education system is meeting its goals. Parents/guardians have a right to comprehensive information about their child's progress.
 - III. fosters trust in the education system and promotes improvement.
 - IV. acknowledges that there is a standard of practice for both conduct and competence.
 - V. respects the autonomy of professionals to establish and uphold professional standards of conduct and competence.
 - VI. accepts the central role of quality classroom-based assessment using a broad range of indicators to demonstrate student learning.
- B. Within this model of educational accountability, teachers are responsible for knowledge, decisions, working collaboratively, maintaining currency, and engaging in ongoing professional learning.
- C. Within this model of educational accountability teacher organizations are responsible for developing programs to assist teachers in pursuing their professional learning, establishing, and promoting standards of professional practice, and responding to concerns relating to teacher competency.
- D. Within this model of educational accountability, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, the Government, and Regional Centres for Education/School Boards are responsible for developing programs to assist teachers in pursuing their professional learning, establishing, and promoting standards of professional practice and responding to concerns relating to teacher competency.

Reference: Resolution 2004-121, Reaffirmed February 2011, Amended 2017-19

2. CLOSURE (OR RESTRUCTURE) OF EDUCATIONAL SITES

- A. The Nova Scotia Teachers Union recognizes that the closure or restructure of a school within a community is a matter of such consequence to that community that the closest cooperation between school authorities and the community is necessary. Alternatively, the Nova Scotia Teachers Union recognizes that the reorganization of school districts is necessary to promote the efficient instruction of pupils.
- B. The Nova Scotia Teachers Union recommends the following principles to be considered when an educational site(s) is considered for closure (or restructure).
 - I. The school is an essential part of the identity of a community.
 - II. The sense of belonging to a local community is an important part of the quality of life

- in the province of Nova Scotia.
- III. Schools should not be declared surplus solely on the basis of declining enrollment.
 - IV. It should be recognized that excess capacity may be temporary, given that changes in school enrollment patterns can be anticipated in the future.
 - V. The utilization of surplus schools for additional educational purposes should be given serious consideration.
 - VI. Schools with excess capacity could be modified to accommodate appropriate community needs and purposes.
 - VII. Modification of excess educational facilities should be temporary in design to allow for ready reconversion to school purposes.
 - VIII. Municipal authorities and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should actively cooperate with other government departments such as the Department of Health and Wellness and the Department of Business for the conversion of excess school capacity.
 - IX. When the closing of a school is being considered, public notice of the projected closing should be given at least two years in advance.
 - X. Both past and projected enrolment patterns should be examined.
 - XI. Provide necessary support to the school and its programs during the period of review.
 - XII. Consider the effects of closure (or restructure) on programs.
 - XIII. Consider the effects of closure (or restructure) on the distance students must travel to get to school.
 - XIV. Regular communication should be made with all stakeholders throughout the school review process.
 - XV. Teachers should be provided with adequate time and support to transition from a closing school to a receiving school.

Reference: Resolution 2001-100, Amended 2004-75, 2009-82, 2015-59

3. EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The NSTU believes early childhood development is an essential component of the social services that should be provided to all Nova Scotians. Effective Early Childhood programming improves the life chances of children in the areas of health, wellness, education, and economic outcomes. Further, well-designed Early Childhood Development services promotes health, advances women's equality, addresses child and family poverty, deepens social inclusion, and grows the economy. Early Childhood Development services should be:

- A. publicly funded, high-quality, equitable, universal, inclusive, and accessible;
- B. inclusive of the time from a child's birth to school entry;
- C. inclusive of prenatal counselling for families;
- D. play-based, discovery-based, experiential, and interactive;
- E. delivered by qualified professionals in early childhood development; and,
- F. appropriately funded to allow for early diagnosis and treatment of physical, behavioural, and learning disabilities.

Reference: Resolution 2009-NB2, Reaffirmed January 2015, Amended 2018-63

4. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The NSTU believes that early childhood education is a vital component of a quality, universal, public education system. Well-designed early childhood education programs enrich young

children's lives and create a foundation for their growth and development throughout their education. Early Childhood Education programs should:

- A. be part of a high-quality, equitable, universal, inclusive, and accessible public education system from pre-primary (four-year old as of December 31 of the school year) to grade 12 and returning graduates;
- B. fall under the jurisdiction of Regional Centres for Education/School Board;
- C. be appropriate developmentally in terms of:
 - I. following well-developed play-based, discovery-based, experiential, and interactive curricula,
 - II. meeting the children's needs academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviourally,
 - III. responding to a range of individual developmental needs and learning styles, and
 - IV. responding to cultural diversity;
- D. be appropriately funded to provide for:
 - I. early diagnosis and treatment of physical, behavioural, and learning disabilities,
 - II. teacher education programs for early years at both the preservice and inservice levels,
 - III. program supports such as library, guidance, and other student services,
 - IV. adequate physical resources to ensure a safe and healthy learning and teaching environment, and
 - V. appropriate staffing to accommodate all of the students' health and wellness requirements; and
- E. be delivered by qualified teachers.

Reference: Resolution 2018-64

5. EDUCATION POLICY – TEACHER INPUT

The NSTU believes that teachers' professional voice is an essential component in the formation of meaningful educational policy created by Regional Centres for Education/Boards, governmental departments, and government.

Reference: Resolution 2000-84, Amended 2003-82, 2007-95, 2019-40

6. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF SCHOOLS – PUBLIC RECORD

The NSTU believes that Regional Centres for Education/School Board should require all schools to prepare financial statements according to generally accepted accounting principles and make them available to the public.

Reference: Resolution 1999-157, Amended 2004-80, Reaffirmed 2009-87, January 2015

7. FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

It is the position of the NSTU that fully funded public education is a fundamental right of every Nova Scotian; moreover, funding should be program-based, founded on quality educational principles and universal accessibility. To this end, the NSTU believes that our public school system should be fully funded by the Nova Scotia Government to:

- A. supply necessary resources, materials, infrastructure, and equipment (including technology) equitably throughout the province; and,
- B. allow for appropriate and timely in-servicing during the implementation of new programs, assessment tools, reporting practices, or curricula.

Further, the NSTU believes that no public funds or tax incentives should be used to help finance charter or private schools, or in student-voucher schemes.

Reference: Resolution 2019-41

8. FUNDING OF INSERVICING

The cost of inservicing Members necessitated by the introduction of new programs should be borne by the provincial government and the Regional Centres for Education/School Board and not through Professional Development Fund clauses in the *Teachers' Provincial Agreement*.
Reference: Resolution 1990-35, Reaffirmed 1995, 1999-128, Amended 2003-83, Reaffirmed 2007-96, March 2019

9. INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

The NSTU endorses the Council of Atlantic Provinces and Territory Teachers' Organizations' (CAPTTO) Policy on Inclusion. Further, the NSTU holds the following beliefs:

- A. children with exceptional physical, intellectual, or emotional needs benefit from learning in the most enabling environment;
- B. regular classroom placement may best serve most children; however, self-contained classrooms or other environments may best serve some exceptional children;
- C. teachers working in integrated classrooms require support services;
- D. teachers working in integrated classrooms require appropriate embedded time to plan for, set up, and assess each Individual Program Plan and complete necessary documentation;
- E. integration should ensure the rights of all children to an appropriate education and an equitable distribution of resources among all students; and,
- F. school sites should be barrier free.

Reference: Resolution 2001-43, Amended 2002-45, 2004-105, 2011-23, Reaffirmed March 2017, Amended 2021-60, 2024-12

10. MINORITY LANGUAGE EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS

The NSTU recognizes and supports Article 23 – Minority Language Educational Rights of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which promotes the two official languages of Canada as well as the cultures represented by minority language communities by ensuring primary and secondary minority language educational facilities for families. In Nova Scotia, Article 23 of the *Charter* preserves and promotes the French language and French language education.
Reference: Reaffirmed 2001-47, Amended 2004-108, Reaffirmed February 2011, March 2017, Amended 2023-39

11. PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

The NSTU supports the principle of having appropriate professional staff support at all school levels.

Reference: Resolution 2003-35, Amended 2004-116, Reaffirmed February 2011, Amended 2017-25

12. PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS (P3)

The NSTU believes that P3 schools must:

- A. remain subject to the policies of Regional Centres of Education/School Board, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and all applicable legislation;
- B. have educational services delivered by certified teachers as defined by the *Education Act*;
- C. respect all collective agreements and the legislation on which they are founded;

- D. ensure the use of school facilities is under the sole jurisdiction of the school's administration;
 - E. respect the collegial atmosphere of the school; and,
 - F. limit the interests of the private partner to construction and/or maintenance functions.
- Further, the NSTU believes a fair and transparent process exists only if public disclosure includes, but is not limited to:
- G. justification that the P3 model is preferred in a particular instance;
 - H. clear roles and responsibilities of all partners;
 - I. clear definition and assignment of risk including guarantees such as performance bonds;
 - J. public involvement on the site selection committee;
 - K. transparency in choosing a private partner or consortium; and,
 - L. signing leases before construction begins.

Reference: Resolution 2000-77, Reaffirmed 2003-84, Amended 2007-97, 2013-80, 2019-44

13. RE-CERTIFICATION

The NSTU is opposed to any attempt to require Members to undergo mandatory periodic re-certification.

Reference: Reaffirmed 1999-142, 2002-113, 2005-55, 2008-54, November 2013, January 2020

14. SCENT-SENSITIVE SCHOOL/EDUCATIONAL SITES

Nova Scotia public schools/educational sites must be scent-sensitive places of learning and working.

Reference: Resolution 1998-62, Reaffirmed 2003-86, 2007-99, Amended 2013-81, Reaffirmed January 2019

15. SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS

Because the development of School Advisory Councils has had and will continue to have a significant impact on the management of schools and teachers' working conditions, the NSTU believes that:

- A. School Advisory Councils should be advisory in nature in accordance with the *Education Act*;
- B. the NSTU should continue to keep its Members thoroughly informed on issues relating to School Advisory Councils. Professional development activities must be created, and tailored to respond to needs arising from the implementation of School Advisory Councils;
- C. the NSTU must continue to monitor the impact of School Advisory Councils on contractual issues and teachers' working conditions; and,
- D. the NSTU should continue to work with other recognized partners in education including the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Nova Scotia Federation of Home and School Associations Inc., the Association of Nova Scotia Educational Administrators, the NSTU's Professional Associations, and other community organizations to ensure the efficient, effective, and supportive implementation of School Advisory Councils.

Reference: Resolution 2001-113, Reaffirmed 2004-90, Amended 2009-96, Reaffirmed January 2015

16. STAFFING OF SMALL HIGH SCHOOLS

- A. Staffing in small schools should not be based on the number of students but rather on the courses that must be offered for high school graduation.

- B. The NSTU believes in the following principle: all schools should be able to offer a program sufficient to ensure specific student outcomes under all categories of the Public School Program (PSP) Essential Graduation Learnings (i.e., Aesthetic Expression, Citizenship, Communication, Personal Development, Problem-solving, and Technological Competence).
- C. The NSTU believes the following three areas must be respected in staffing small high schools: Program Integrity, Expectations and Support for Members.

I. Program Integrity

- a. Small high schools need to be staffed adequately to provide all the essential programs and services as per the PSP.
- b. Special consideration must be given to combined schools (e.g., P-9, 7-12) because of the large number of cross-over Members and less flexible scheduling.
- c. Schools must provide a balance of advanced, academic, and graduation credits, including required courses and adequate options for all students (e.g., university-preparatory, college-preparatory, work-bound, special needs).
- d. Schedules should be developed to allow students to complete more than the minimum 18 credits required to graduate.
- e. Academic or advanced courses to meet the needs of gifted and talented students should be provided (Challenge for Excellence, EECD).
- f. Multiple options for compulsory credits should be provided (e.g., choice of Fine Arts and Canadian History courses).
- g. Schools should offer a range and balance of courses to include the humanities and the arts, as well as science, math, and technology.
- h. Students should have access to technology, labs, and equipment that are essential for particular programs.
- i. Single-section courses should be scheduled separately.
- j. Schools should avoid multi-grade and/or multi-course classrooms.

II. Expectations for Members

- a. The demands of multi-grade and/or multi-course classrooms and the range of student abilities should be recognized in determining teaching assignments.
- b. Members should be scheduled with appropriate preparation time during both semesters.
- c. Additional prep time should be given:
 - i. if multi-grade classrooms have been necessitated;
 - ii. for IPP and program planning; and,
 - iii. to coordinate, monitor, and mentor students through their correspondence, distance, and independent studies.
- d. Actual class size and climate, as opposed to only FTE student teacher ratios, should be considered in scheduling teaching assignments.
- e. Members teaching outside their specialty areas should have access to appropriate resources and professional development.

III. Support for Members

All small high schools should have:

- a. one full-time non-teaching principal to provide educational leadership and support to Members;
- b. one full-time guidance counsellor as per Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program recommendations;
- c. appropriate and equitable computer technology, maintenance, and technical services;

- d. appropriate and equitable library, secretarial, and custodial services;
- e. recognition of fixed costs within operating budgets;
- f. policies, procedures, and professional development to guide the planning for, and delivery of, instruction in classrooms which are multi-graded due to PSP requirements and/or small enrolment in particular courses; and,
- g. appropriate and equitable resource and special education services.

Reference: Resolution 2005-63, 2007-55, Reaffirmed 2009-99, 2009-100, Amended 2015-65

17. STUDENT ATTENDANCE

School attendance is critically important for student success, as such the NSTU believes:

- A. Regional Centres for Education/School Board shall have student attendance policies which:
 - I. delineate procedures for data entry, identification, intervention and follow-up;
 - II. consider a spectrum of educational programs to serve as interventions;
 - III. deals with chronic absenteeism by specialized regional personnel; and,
 - IV. consider the use of community-based teams (e.g., academic, social service, medical, legal, ethnic) to address student attendance issues.
- B. Individual schools shall have practices which provide for:
 - I. consistent and accurate monitoring of student attendance;
 - II. the immediate attention by site-based administrators where a pattern of absenteeism is noticed; and,
 - III. ongoing discussions among school staff, parent groups, and community agencies which allow for cooperative approaches for addressing student attendance problems.

Reference: Resolution 2000-82, Amended 2003-81, 2007-94, 2019-47

18. TEACHER-LIBRARIANS

- A. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has recognized the importance of lifelong learning.
- B. The Essential Graduation Learnings identify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that graduates will acquire in the course of their education.
- C. Technological Competence is one of these learnings. The outcomes identified place an emphasis on a graduate's ability to locate, evaluate, adapt, create, and share information using a variety of sources and technologies. Through the other learnings it is clear that graduates must be able to acquire, process and interpret information critically to make informed decisions.
- D. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has also engaged in many initiatives as part of the funding allocated for the Information Technology Initiatives.
- E. Taking into consideration the importance accorded to literacy and technological competency in the public school programs, it is our belief that the library should become a site for the acquisition of these skills. Librarians, in the past, have demonstrated and continued to provide leadership in these areas.
- F. Our recognition of the important role that librarians play in our information technology society leads us to articulate the following principle:
 - I. The NSTU believes the library is a specialized classroom and must be staffed with a teacher-librarian who possesses appropriate teaching certification and the necessary professional training, up to and including, a Master of Library Science.

Reference: Resolution 2000-39, Amended 2001-39, Reaffirmed 2003-55, 2006-82, Amended 2018-50