

Supports for EAL and FAL Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will examine the initial framework developed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) and the supports currently available and further required for teachers to support newcomer students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) or French is an additional language (FAL) of instruction in English or Francophone schools, respectively.

THE HISTORY OF EAL AND FAL SUPPORTS IN NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOLS

On October 11, 2017, the Government of Stephen McNeil commissioned international education advisor, Avis Glaze to conduct an administrative review of the education system in Nova Scotia. Through what Glaze describes as consultations with ninety-one groups and the receipt of fifteen hundred surveys, the report, titled, *Raising the Bar* was compiled and released in January of 2018.¹

The mandate of this report, which followed the terms of reference of the review, was to provide recommendations requested by the Government in four main areas:

1. Roles, responsibilities, and administrative structure within the education system including governing school boards, school board central office administration, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
2. Processes and management structure in all areas of administration and operations (e.g. human resources, finance, transportation, programs) to ensure effective and efficient use of resources.
3. Increased accountability, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency in decision making including budgetary decisions and resource allocation.
4. Strengthening interagency service delivery for children, youth, and their families.

Glaze also added the following after noting these recommendations: *“The Review will also consider the cultural, linguistic and geographic contexts of the Nova Scotia education system and current government priorities for public education.”*

Of the twenty-two recommendations contained within the Glaze report, recommendation seventeen, outlines the supports needed for students for whom English was an additional language as the primary language of instruction in their School. The recommendation from the report:

“Establish a dedicated unit in the Department, in collaboration with the Office of Immigration, for emerging immigrant communities in schools, with supports for students, teachers and parents.”

According to the *English as an Additional Language and French as an Additional Language Strategy Framework*² (June 2021), prepared by Student Equity and Support Services of the EECD, an EAL and FAL Advisory Work Group was established in 2018, with representatives from Regional Centres for Education (RCEs) and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), the Nova Scotia International Student Program, YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth–YMCA Centre for Immigrant Programs, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), Immigration Francophone, newcomer parents, Office of Immigration, and the EECD. This working group was formed in response to the recommendation noted from the *Raising the Bar* report.

According to data collected for this strategy framework, the number of newcomers to Nova Scotia increased from approximately 2500 in 2013 to 7580 in 2019. These numbers reflect an influx of Syrian Refugees in 2016 and an addition of 6,900 newcomers during the 2019-20 school year, including, permanent residents, temporary residents, refugee claimants, and Nova Scotia International Student Program fee-paying students and exchange students.

The number of students requiring additional language support between the years of 2017 and 2020 were as follows:

2017-2018 School Year: 1577

2018-2019 School Year: 2260

2019-2020 School Year: 2727

This marks an increase of approximately 72.91% over the three-year period.

The strategy framework report noted that 37 students whose first language was neither English nor French required FAL support. These students are referred to using the term, “*allophone*” in the CSAP.

In the Commission on Inclusive Education report, *Students First*³ (Njie, Shea, and Williams 2018), the authors note that, “*Integration and retention of newcomers are crucial to ensuring that this increase will be sustained. Adequate settlement support and welcoming communities have been identified as key factors. Safe, welcoming, culturally and linguistically responsive schools are a key settlement support*”.

EAL AND FAL SUPPORT BENCHMARKS

The Strategy for supporting EAL and FAL students is described as taking a “*proactive approach to address the well-being and achievement needs of additional language learners that incorporates their strengths and challenges. The strategy recognizes the linguistic and cultural diversity of learners: increased immigration, particularly in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) but also in rural areas newcomers of refugee or war-affected origins and newcomers with interrupted schooling*”.

A three-year implementation period beginning in 2020 and ending in 2023 was proposed and outlined both an ongoing and phase-specific approach to meeting the strategy goals, “*with a focus on “asset-based thinking” and a strengths-based, rather than deficit-approach.*”

The goals laid out in the Framework are as follows:

Goal/Definition	Implementation
<p>Human & Material Resources</p> <p>Establish the necessary human and material resources to support a growing number of additional language learners</p>	<p><u>Human Resources:</u></p> <p>Ongoing: Focus on recruitment, retention and post-secondary programming as well as expansion of programming through community partners.</p> <p>In the first year, the focus was to establish clear roles and responsibilities of EAL and FAL teachers.</p> <p>In the second year, the focus was the development of volunteer (recruitment) strategy to create a network of support.</p> <p><u>Material Resources:</u></p> <p>Ongoing: development of literacy programs at all grade levels, supports and strategies for classroom teachers.</p> <p>In the first year, families would be provided with information with regards to the Student Information System as well as activities aimed at developing their language skills in a social context through extra-curricular opportunities at schools.</p> <p>From a learning perspective, classrooms were cultivated as learning environments where newcomer students feel comfortable to share their culture.</p>
<p>Pre-service, In-service, and Professional Learning</p> <p>Create and implement a pre-service, in-service, and professional learning plan</p>	<p>Ongoing: Plan to deliver Professional Learning opportunities for staff at all grade levels, including early childhood education, including modalities important for supporting newcomer students such as culturally responsive and trauma-informed practices and language-rich classroom and the development of a Moodle site to support ongoing professional learning and sharing of high leverage teaching practices.</p> <p>The focus of the first year was to collaborate with Labour and Advanced Education to promote and advance post-secondary learning opportunities for teachers and administrators.</p> <p>The focus of the second year of this goal was to expand Additional Language programming into pre-primary programs.</p>

Goal/Definition	Implementation
<p>Communication and Engagement</p> <p>Ensure communication and engagement to support additional language learners and parents/guardians.</p>	<p>Ongoing: engage in research and development with the RCEs and CSAP programs for all grade levels focusing on students who experienced no, or interrupted schooling and to strengthen locally developed additional language courses and possible addition of an EAL Academic Language 11 course.</p> <p>In the first year of this goal, the focus was to provide information to newcomer families about the student information system and the language acquisition and socializing opportunities available and strengthened through participation in extra-curricular activities using various communication mediums in multiple languages.</p> <p>There was also a focus on Cultivating opportunities for newcomer students to share their knowledge and culture with peers and others in the school community to foster culture all appreciation and understanding in an inclusive and respectful learning environment.</p> <p>The second year focused on the development of provincial guidelines for interpretation and translation services and a review of how the Provincial Student Information System needed to be adapted to effectively communicate the learning of newcomer students with respect to processes in Gradebook, in the writing of report card comments and learner profiles.</p> <p>The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development did release a document of achievement benchmarks to aid in this process. The link can be found in the resources</p>
<p>Collaboration</p> <p>Continue collaboration among educators, with community partners, between government departments and other networks.</p>	<p>The ongoing aspect of this goal focused on collaboration and partnership among the teachers who support our additional language learners at the school level. At the government level, a collaboration among the Departments of Health and Wellness, Office of Immigration and Education and Early Childhood development to identify gaps in services for newcomer families.</p> <p>The first-year focus was to strengthen relationships between schools and community partners.</p>
<p>Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Schools</p> <p>Continue to develop culturally and linguistically responsive schools</p>	<p>The ongoing aspect for this goal is to provide strategies for language rich classrooms and opportunities for building of relationships among students and with newcomer families. Another ongoing aspect was through Professional Learning support at all levels, pre-primary through twelve, focused on validation, affirmation of culture by embedding it within curriculum and associated learning activities.</p> <p>The Early Learning Curriculum using the <i>Capable, Confident and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum</i>.⁴</p>
<p>Continuum of Community Supports</p> <p>Continue working with community partners to support a continuum of supports in the community.</p>	<p>The ongoing focus of this goal was to coordinate additional language learning opportunities at the high school level outside of regular school hours.</p> <p>The third year of this goal focussed on the idea of mentorship to support integration of newcomers' prior experience and learning.</p>

Further to these goals, *The English as an Additional Language and French as an Additional Language Strategy Framework* is based on three foundations. These foundations are:

1. EAL and FAL Guidelines
2. Additional Language Assessment Process
3. Additional Language Intake Protocol

The report references that these foundations would be implemented through the Multi-Tiered System of Support, based on a continuum of varying levels of individualized and specialized support. From Universal supports at Tier 1 achieved through whole group instructional practices, supports and interventions, through a more focused tier 2 approach focused on coordinating support for students in small groups, to a Tier 3, intensive support focusing on more individual and long-term support plans. Determining which tier of support is required for students is based on careful assessment of levels of language comprehension and abilities of, or barriers to acquisition and level of understanding.

SUPPORTS AVAILABLE AND REQUIRED – A Provincial scan

The following information regarding existing supports and those supports still required was provided by a selection of NSTU members whose assignments include English and French as an additional language support. These responses reflect both rural and urban perspectives for each of the stated goals from the strategy framework.

Human & Material Resources

Available Supports:

- Adult learning classes and tutoring;
- Dedicated personnel to provide assessment services RCEs and the CSAP;
- Telephone support for interpretation and translation; and
- Online resources in many RCEs as well as the EECD Homework Hub

Supports Still Required:

- Increased staffing, including more EAL specialists and resource teachers, to address the growing enrolment of newcomer students and reduce teacher-to-student ratios.
- The CSAP also requires support staff who can determine English language abilities with similar processes to those who conduct this service in French.

- Clarification is needed within CSAP in order to determine the responsibilities of teachers who support students whose first language is neither French or English and who do not understand the language of instruction.
- CSAP: Clarification is needed from the Board with regards to guidelines for students enrolled in French Language Arts for the Workplace. Newcomer students are enrolled as a pathway to support language acquisition, which can limit the spaces available for CSAP students who require this course due to their learner profile.
- Rural EAL teachers have a circuit of multiple schools in a large geographic area, up to five in all four counties. This needs to (Continue to) be a consideration with ratios.
- Dedicated mental health professionals trained in supporting newcomer students, with access to interpreters, and professional development for teachers on trauma-informed practices at all grade levels.
- Limited access to technology in some schools, both rural and urban as well as updated software applications and equipment.
- Need to be included in allocations to purchase materials from the EECD Approved List of Resources (ALR/Book Bureau) that are used in tier one interventions on topics relevant to our newcomer students, including, but not limited to, cultural celebrations, books in dual language.
- More languages need to be included in current resources.
- More access to dual language texts and EAL coursebooks/materials.
- Copyright issues — digitally translated textbooks need to be housed somewhere that is easily accessible — are Google drives allowed?
- Difficulty accessing a pdf of many textbooks to translate them.

Pre-service, In-service, and Professional Learning

Available Supports:

- Occasional workshops or PD sessions on EAL strategies and approaches.
- Funding opportunities through Article 60 for conferences, teacher-initiated professional development.

Supports Still Required:

- Consistent, ongoing professional development focused on teaching EAL students, and in-person training for teachers on using AI tools to support EAL instruction.
- More training for teachers at all levels, and staff support with the recently updated assessment (particularly math, science, and reading assessment) and the new reading assessment

Communication and Engagement

Available Supports:

- Buddy system for pairing newcomer students with English/French first language peers to assist with language acquisition and social development.

Supports Still Required:

- Access to work cellphones to ensure privacy and efficiency in contacting parents, schools, or translators, reducing reliance on personal devices.

Collaboration

Available Supports:

- Community activities and adult learning services.

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Schools

Available Supports:

- Dedicated workspace at home/base school only for circuit EAL/FAL staff.
- Some schools have dedicated Welcome Centres staffed with professionals to support the assessment and acquisition of language skills.

Supports Still Required:

- Review resource allocation to address overcrowding and ensure itinerant teachers have access to equitable, dedicated professional workspaces at each school to work with students for tier 2 or 3 supports and assessments with adequate seating and access to technology infrastructure.
- CSAP: Not all schools have a welcome centre, but this opportunity should be available in all schools. It is very challenging to support newcomer students with limited resources. Where a dedicated welcome centre is not possible, a (partial) FTE could be designated for this purpose.

Continuum of Community Supports

Supports Still Required:

- EAL Immersion classes for “New to English” students and transitional classes for different subjects at every family of schools (Currently available only in Citadel and Halifax West) for beginner EAL learners, along with structured integration programs, cultural orientation, and extracurricular activities promoting inclusivity.

COMMON THEMES

STAFFING AND LEARNING SPACES

To effectively continue to follow the EAL and FAL Framework, staffing numbers must meet the needs of our ever-increasing newcomer population. Within this category, questions of Teacher Certification and Qualifications for teachers coming from other jurisdictions must also be a consideration as any delay in these processes could impede providing sufficient EAL and FAL support.

An audit of current workspaces used by (itinerant) Additional Language teachers must be conducted to properly plan for designated workspaces, conducive to the proper planning and implementation of student learning experiences.

QUALITY AND TIMELY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND ACCESS TO UPDATED, RELEVANT MATERIALS

It is critically important to ensure that teachers who are providing English and French as an additional language support for our students receive quality and timely Professional Learning.

Age-appropriate, well-developed, play-based learning contributes to greater competencies in academic skills, social and emotional growth, and suitable behaviour; thereby presenting a holistic approach to student support; academic skills, social and emotional growth and strengthening the understanding of the connection between emotion and behaviour.

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES

For the Professional Learning to be effective, equitable access to quality resources in a variety of languages, in multiple formats is necessary to allow teachers to effectively plan to meet student needs.

SUFFICIENT STUDENT SUPPORT

Supporting newcomer students requires a multi-layered, wholistic approach to support their social-emotional and academic needs. This often requires a team approach among teaching staff, having considerable training in Trauma-Informed, Culturally Responsive Practices and with the additional consideration of language barriers for the student and their family for the support to be as effective as possible.

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

That the NSTU, through ongoing dialogue with appropriate EECD committees and departments, receive current information with regards to the progress of the goals outlined in the EAL and FAL framework and advocate for sincere and timely investment in the continuation of these goals.

The table below outlines specific NSTU recommendations associated with each goal.

Goal	Recommended Action(s)
Human & Material Resources	Conduct an audit of available supports, best practices and areas of need. From this information, implement the required changes as quickly as possible in order to provide equitable access across in each Regional Centre for Education and CSAP to support teachers and schools to provide appropriate workspaces and resources in order to effectively support the ever-increasing number additional language learners. Additionally, inquire with CSAP for an equivalent document to the EAL Proficiency Benchmarks.
Pre-service, In-service, and Professional Learning	Create and implement a comprehensive professional learning plan, including within Bachelor of Education programs, that meet the needs of our EAL and FAL teaching staff in each RCE and the CSAP informed by feedback from current teachers and which occurs during the instructional day. This can be achieved through various (a) synchronous and virtual/hybrid and in-person modalities in an effort to maximize the opportunity for (pre-service) teachers to engage and participate.
Communication and Engagement	Ensure effective and consistent communication to engage and support additional language learners and parents/guardians. This may include training on the use of the Safe Alert system as well as expanding current means of digital communication.
Collaboration	Continue collaboration among educators, with community partners, between government departments and other networks. This includes, but is not limited to, invitation to (host/participate in) Professional Development opportunities, organizing of cultural and social events and formation of ongoing focus groups for the assessment for and of newcomer experiences.
Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Schools	Continue to develop culturally and linguistically responsive schools by equipping teachers with appropriate and consistent resources and support in order to continue to cultivate learning spaces where students feel comfortable to share their respective culture and lived experience.
Continuum of Community Supports	Enhance relationships with community agencies who can support this goal through programming and ongoing dialogue to ensure a continuum of support in the community as above.

Further to the above Recommendations, the NSTU holds several beliefs as stated in the NSTU Guidebook⁵ as Policy Statements related to resources (human and material), curriculum, multi-cultural education, early childhood development and education, funding for public education, integration and inclusion, literacy education, member professional resources, and professional learning. Specifically, the NSTU has the following statements:

- Section II, Policy 5 – Comprehensive Materials for French Instruction
- Section II, Policy 7 – Curriculum Development, Implementation, and Review
- Section II, Policy 10 – Learning Resources
- Section II, Policy 11 – Multicultural Education
- Section VI, Policy 3 – Early Childhood Development

- Section VI, Policy 4 – Early Childhood Education
- Section VI, Policy 7 – Funding of Public Education
- Section VI, Policy 9 – Integration and Inclusion
- Section VI, Policy 10 – Minority Language Educational Rights
- Section V, Policy 1 – Literacy Education
- Section V, Policy 2 – Member Professional Resources
- Section V, Policy 5 – Professional Learning

CONCLUSION

The supports required by our EAL and FAL staff are clearly identified in this position paper. The Framework created by the EECD provides important guiding information for programming within the scope of its first three years. However, our members require, and our newcomer students deserve more. Through our ongoing work with various EECD committees, the NSTU is committed to advocating for meaningful and purposeful action to address significant gaps in programming and available human and material resources that are central to meeting the needs of our newcomer students. It continues to be embedded within the policies of the NSTU referenced in this document that our members be provided with the appropriate training and resources to ensure student success for their designated teaching assignment, which is, for the purposes of this paper, for EAL and FAL instruction.

REFERENCES

1. Glaze, Avis. 2018. *Raise the Bar*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia
<https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/raisethebar-en.pdf>
2. Nova Scotia Education and Early Childhood Development Department, Student Equity and Support Services Department, June 2021. *The English as an Additional Language and French as an Additional Language Strategy Framework*
<https://sites.google.com/gnspes.ca/inclusiveeducation-mtss-ns/home-en/responsive-equitable-practices-supports-and-interventions>
3. Njie, A., S. Shea, and M. Williams. 2018. *Students First: Inclusive Education that Supports Teaching Learning and the Success of All Nova Scotia Students*. Halifax, NS: Commission on Inclusive Education.
https://sites.google.com/gnspes.ca/inclusiveeducation-mtss-ns/home-en/responsive-equitable-practices-supports-and-interventions#h.p_uGpKjIylGePk
4. Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. 2018. Capable, Confident, and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework. Halifax, NS: Government of Nova Scotia.
www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/nsecurriculumframework.pdf
5. NSTU Guidebook – Constitution + Policy 2024-2025.
<https://nstu.ca/the-nstu/communications/nstu-publications/nstu-guidebook-and-operational-procedures>

RESOURCES

Nova Scotia Education and Early Childhood Development Department Curriculum Website <https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/multilingual-learners->

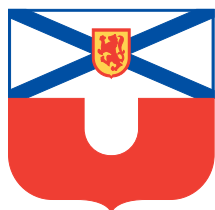
Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *English as an Additional Language (EAL) Proficiency Benchmarks (2023)* https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/EAL_Proficiency%20Benchmarks.pdf

Strait Regional Centre for Education Programs and Student Services Department https://www.srce.ca/programs_and_student_services/english_as_an_additional_language_e_a_l_

South Shore Regional Centre for Education EAL Website <https://sites.google.com/gnspes.ca/ealsrce/home>

Halifax Regional Centre for Education Approved EAL Teacher Resources <https://sites.google.com/gnspes.ca/hrce-teaching-and-learning-sit/english-as-additional-language/teacher-resources/approved-eal-websites> one recorded video from Jan 2023 and a list of general strategies.

Cape Breton Victoria Regional Centre for Education EAL Resource website:
<https://sites.google.com/gnspes.ca/ealcbvrce/home>



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