

NSTU seeks feedback on Nova Scotia Teaching Standards

By Anne Rodrigue

In September of 2016, the Education and Early Childhood Department launched, *Nova Scotia Teaching Standards, Excellence in Teaching and Learning, 2016*, as part of *Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education: the 3 R's: Renew, Refocus and Rebuild*. The stated rationale of the EECD in introducing Teaching Standards in Nova Scotia is to provide a framework for consistent, high-quality teaching and help us to reach our goal of increased student engagement and achievement.

The NSTU committed to respond to the launch of the Standards on behalf of our members and created a page on our website to provide our members with Standards documents, NSTU responses and posted a survey to get teacher feedback on the Standards. However, we didn't get too far on gathering feedback, because 2016-2017 was a turbulent year for education in Nova Scotia. It was a year of labour unrest during which NSTU members engaged in work to rule and a one day protest in support of education.

Subsequently, little work was done on the Standards, and in April the EECD informed the NSTU that the introduction and discussion of Teaching Standards would be moved to the 2017-2018 school year. The EECD also invited the NSTU to work collaboratively on the relaunch of the Standards to ensure that this year will truly be one of discussion and feedback on the Standards. The NSTU accepted the invitation to collaborate as we want to ensure that your voices are heard as we discuss the Standards and determine how they will eventually shape pre-service education, teaching, teacher certification, teacher professional learning, and teacher evaluation.

As the NSTU indicated to you last year many jurisdictions—nationally and internationally—have introduced Standards as a way to articulate good practice, advance the status of teaching, and also to ensure accountability. Teaching Standards can act as a catalyst for discussions on how to improve teaching and learning, if teachers play a major role in determining the Standards, defining professional capacity, and advocating for the conditions in which effective teaching and learning occur.

The NSTU and the EECD fully commit to listening to the voices of teachers as they discuss the Standards this year. We sincerely want to know how you perceive the Standards, identify the challenges inherent in their adoption, and believe the Standards will influence teaching and learning in Nova Scotia. You can help us



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frame the Standards so that they truly articulate our beliefs on what good teaching and learning look like.

We want you to have time to discuss the Standards with your colleagues at school. We have asked Superintendents to ensure that principals make time for teachers to discuss the Standards and we will ask principals to report back to us. We will be using the Teaching Standards page on our NSTU website to update you on our progress, and also to seek input from you on a regular basis. You can use the webpage to communicate directly to me or email me at arodrigue@staff.nstu.ca or you can communicate directly with Paula Hayden at Paula.Hayden@novascotia.ca at the EECD.

We also seek your input through surveys, emails, and focus groups etc. We absolutely need to hear from you. If you speak to us, we will respond to you by providing regular updates on what we are learning.

This month, you will receive a letter that explains how the EECD and NSTU will manage this discussion year.

The decision by the EECD to relaunch the Teaching Standards was a good one. It recognizes that teachers and their union, the NSTU, must engage in the discussion if Standards are to shape effective change in the Nova Scotian education system.

The NSTU continually lobbies for the inclusion of teacher voice in educational decision-making. You know what constitutes good teaching and learning. We need to hear from you so that the Teaching Standards we adopt articulate internally and externally our beliefs as professionals.

Anne Rodrigue is an NSTU staff officer working in the area of teaching standards