

Curriculum Committee
Year End Report 2014-15

Mandate

- i. The Curriculum Committee shall:
 - A. study the curriculum and all proposed changes in it
 - B. report its findings and make recommendations to the Provincial Executive
 - C. inform members of trends and developments in curriculum.
 - D. consider such resolutions as may be referred by Annual Council and make appropriate recommendations
 - E. participate as required in the NSTU Policy Review Process by providing recommendations for the Provincial Executive's consideration.
- ii. The Committee should divide its areas of activities into:
 - A. Curriculum Monitoring** – The NSTU Curriculum Committee must critically evaluate proposed changes in the curriculum and it must make recommendations to the Provincial Executive based upon its evaluations.
 - B. Development of Policy** – Basic curriculum policy should be a matter of continuing study by the Curriculum Committee and the Committee should be recommending policy on basic curriculum matters to the Provincial Executive of the NSTU.
 - C. Study and Research** – The Curriculum Committee should initiate from time to time special projects related to matters of current importance in the area of curriculum.
 - D. Communication** – It is essential that the Committee be aware of all significant activities being sponsored by the Department of Education, teachers and teacher organizations, school boards and universities so that members can be informed and so that the Committee can make recommendations with full knowledge of the situation. It is important for the Curriculum Committee to inform members of trends and developments in curriculum as well as specific programs.

Committee Members:

Marc Breugh – Chair
Kathy Fougere
Darlene Bereta
Jason Ralph
Sheri Scott
Keith Partridge
Dave MacFarlane
Jacinta Gracie – Provincial Executive Liaison
Debbie McIsaac – NSTU Staff liaison

Meeting Dates:

The standing Curriculum Committee of the NSTU met three times in 2014-2015; on October 10, February 20 and May 1.

Work of the Committee:

The first meeting of the Curriculum Committee, on October 10, was led by the Executive Director of Student Services, and was followed by several consultants from the DOEED.

The Director outlined the structural changes that have occurred at Education Program Services presenting the liaisons to elementary, junior high, and senior high.

Math consultants were on-hand to dispel some misconceptions surrounding the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) and to outline how the Department will support teachers as it completes the final transition to the WNCP curriculum, from grade 7 to 9 and grade 12 in September 2015.

Coordinator of Literacy Support gave an overview of *Learning Through Play*, and presented resources that have been made available on the ednet website through Learning Resources and Technology services. These resources will assist teachers to develop a plan to integrate play in a cross-curricular, or integrated, manner.

The second meeting, on February 20, was devoted to discussion of Minister Karen Casey's Action Plan, The 3 Rs: Renew, Refocus, Rebuild- Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education (January 2015). In Pillar One: A modern education system, the minister calls for systemic changes, to become more "student-centered, efficient, flexible, sustainable, and integrated with other government agencies."

There was also much discussion about the Minister's Forum for Teaching Excellence and its questions surrounding its mandate of support, opportunities for networking and teacher requested professional development. Committee members were concerned about their impact on current NSTU professional development opportunities as well as their potential impact on teacher autonomy and choice.

There was also concern expressed about the Business-Education Council and its influence on public education in Nova Scotia, particularly when such initiatives do not seem to be informed by the educators delivering the Public School Program. The integration of literacy and math in Primary to grade 3 was seen as a positive step but the rapid pace at which this change is occurring, by September 2015, was not looked favorably upon by the Committee. The increase from one to two credits in mathematics 11 is another area of curriculum change that was questioned by Committee members. In particular, concern was expressed that other curricular offerings for grade 11 students would be negatively impacted.

The third and final meeting of the Curriculum Committee, on May 1, was informative as several Department directors and consultants were on-hand to discuss the Minister's Action Plan for Education.

The Executive Director, Centre for Learning Excellence, spoke about the 3Rs and how it was influenced by the Ivany Report. The focus on math and literacy as well as increased career readiness certainly indicates clear values and priorities for the Public School System. Budgetary priorities, Department wide, are in support of the 3 Rs. An example of this is that Math mentors have been assigned to support teachers with implementation of math programs through targeted funding.

It was articulated that Department staff is working with teachers to develop curriculum and receive feedback on curricular changes. Despite these measures, the Curriculum Committee members were concerned about the fact that teacher voice was completely non-existent in the creation of the 3 Rs. Moreover, the pace of curricular change occurring from Primary to grade three by September 2015 was thought to be excessive. Three days (?) of professional development from the Department was seen as insufficient for teachers having to prepare for such sweeping curricular changes.

A presentation of the Provincial Code of Conduct by the Coordinator of Anti-bullying, focused on "Acceptable Standards of Behaviour" and "Unacceptable Standards of Behaviour" while advocating proactive and preventative approaches schools can use to help create and sustain such environments. Funding for the restorative schools pilot-project, led by Richard Derible, will continue through 2015-2016, and is based on this mandate. The additional expectation for staff is to now record incidences of "unacceptable behaviour" on Power School.

The meeting wrapped up with the recommendation of David MacFarlane to the position of 2015-2016 Chair. David graciously accepted the recommendation be sent to the Nominating Committee for consideration.

The budget for 2014-2015 was \$7200.00 and the actual spent was \$5,779.

Respectively submitted,
Marc Breugh, Chair