Inclusive Education Policy

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Effective Date: September 2020

1. Introduction

Inclusive education is a commitment to ensuring a high-quality, culturally and linguistically responsive and equitable education to support the well-being and achievement of every student. All students should feel that they belong in an inclusive school—accepted, safe, and valued—so they can best learn and succeed. Successful inclusive education requires

- safe, caring schools that welcome parents/guardians, families, and include the broader community as key partners in education. Parents/guardians are particularly important in identifying the strengths, interests, and challenges of their children and in working with teachers and others in the school to determine the best way to support all students.
- teaching and supports, based on evidence, that promote students' physical, social-emotional, and behavioural well-being and achievement.
- promoting the independence of every student and developing their resilience as they progress through school.
- a focus on equity by supporting success for students who are historically marginalized and racialized (African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw students) or who come from other groups that have been traditionally under-represented and under-served, including, but not limited to, students with special needs and those struggling with poverty
- stimulating and accessible learning opportunities to keep every student engaged, challenged, and inspired.
- ensuring that every student sees themselves reflected throughout their schools, learning resources, and within their learning experiences.
- everyone, including partners in the departments of Health and Wellness, Community Services, and Justice, working together to support students' strengths and help address their challenges in a culturally and linguistically responsive, accepting, respectful, and supportive manner that honours all students' cultural identities and values their experiences and world views.

2. Policy Statement

The *Inclusive Education Policy* reflects the importance of the well-being of all students and the impact it has on their achievements.

Inclusive schools are equitable, and culturally, linguistically, and socially responsive. They have structures, processes, and practices that are student-centred, appropriate, and collaborative.

3.   Policy Objective

The *Inclusive Education Policy* objective is to ensure every student has access to an equitable and high-quality education that is culturally and linguistically responsive, accepting, and respectful in supporting and valuing their learning and diverse abilities. To meet this objective, the policy provides clear, consistent direction with respect to inclusive education and equitable practices in public schools.

This policy will be supported by policies, guidelines, and procedures to assist in its implementation.

The *Inclusive Education Policy* provides a framework which will apply to all other policies, procedures, strategies, and initiatives.

4.   Guiding Principles

The guiding principles provide an overview of what education will look like when inclusive education practices are working well in classrooms and schools. They describe what all partners in education will achieve.

4.1   Every student can learn with enough time, practice and equitable and responsive teaching.

4.2   Every student, including those with special needs, should receive full-day instruction every day, with flexibility based on the student's individual strengths and challenges.

4.3   Every student should be taught within a common learning environment (e.g., a classroom) with students of similar age within the community school, with flexibility that is based on, and responsive to, the student's individual strengths and challenges.

4.4   Inclusive education values, draws upon, and includes student voices and choices to assist students in achieving their goals.

4.5   Every student deserves to belong (affirmed, validated, and nurtured),[1] be safe, and feel welcomed in all aspects of their daily experience.

4.6   Inclusive education is a commitment to honour and respect each student's cultural and linguistic identities and knowledge systems.

4.7   Inclusive education practices use evidence of students' strengths and challenges to determine a system of supports and monitor the effectiveness of those supports.

4.8   All partners are committed and empowered to work collectively to identify and eliminate barriers that interfere with students' well-being and achievement.

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1   **validate:** the intentional legitimatization of the home culture and language of the student.

affirm: the purposeful effort to reverse the negative stereotypes, images, and representations of marginalized cultures and languages.

nurture: to recognize and foster all aspects of students' being and knowing, including the spiritual, emotional, social, physical, and environmental; to honour all students and treat them with care, respect, and dignity.

5. Directives

5.1 As part of the Student Success Planning process, every school will use evidence, including disaggregated data, to monitor and evaluate how students are doing and will respond with appropriate, timely supports. These identified supports will be supported by the Teaching Support Team at each school.

> *The primary role of the Teaching Support Team is to strengthen the school's capacity to support student well-being and achievement by assisting teachers in developing strategies to meet the needs of their students. The team will focus on proactively building capacity among teaching staff, as well as supporting changes in teaching practices to meet students' needs and on identifying other needed supports as required.*

5.2 Classroom teachers are responsible for teaching all students. Teaching and interventions are expected to happen most often in a common learning environment, such as the classroom. Classroom teachers cannot do this alone.

5.3 Learning support teachers are experienced and skilled teachers who provide direct, collaborative support to classroom teachers and students. Examples include learning centre and resource teachers, mathematics mentors and coaches, and literacy specialists. Learning support teachers support classroom teachers by developing and implementing strategies to promote students' well-being and achievement. They may also work directly with individual or small groups of students.

> ***Learning support teachers:***
> *a broad category of experienced and skilled teachers who provide direct, collaborative support to classroom teachers and students. They may be any teacher or specialist that does not have a class assigned to them.*

5.4 Every school will establish a Teaching Support Team that will meet frequently to address immediate issues facing teachers and quickly identify resources, people, and strategies that can help those teachers more effectively support their students. The team, in collaboration with the classroom teacher, will monitor and evaluate the success of these supports and interventions. Principals or vice principals will lead the teams, which will also include learning support teachers. Teachers will attend if discussions involve their classroom, students, or teaching practices.

> *Regional centres for education (RCEs) and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) support staff, such as, but not limited to, school psychologists, speech language pathologists, African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw support staff, culturally responsive and SchoolsPlus teams, consultants, coordinators, and directors provide additional supports to Teaching Support Teams, teachers, students, and families. These professionals work with Teaching Support Teams to support teachers in improving their teaching practices and to provide individual supports to the students that need them.*

5.5   Schools will establish Student Planning Teams, as needed, to support the identified learning strengths and challenges and/or ongoing well-being and achievement of individual students.

Student Planning Teams will work to support the identified well-being and achievement of individual students. The student (if appropriate) and the parents/guardians are valued members of their Student Planning Team and will be supported and involved in decisions around additional programming and/or supports for the student. Please see Special Education Policy *(under review) and related guidelines for more details.*

5.6   The Teaching Support Team and Student Planning Teams will ensure that plans are flexible in terms of how and where programing and supports are delivered to best support well-being and achievement. Teams will be created in ways that make the most sense within the school.

5.7   Teaching practices as outlined in the *Public School Program* (*PSP*), including culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices, are foundational and necessary to support students, and therefore, will be implemented in every school and every classroom.

Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching: *teaching practices that connect students' social, cultural, family, and linguistic backgrounds to what they are learning and their sense of belonging.*

5.8   Every school will support student well-being and achievement through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

MTSS is a framework that ensures effective instruction, assessment, and support for all students with a focus on well-being and achievement. Please see the Multi-Tiered System of Supports *document for additional detail.*

5.9   Every employee will be accountable for adherence to the principles of inclusive education.

6.   Roles and Responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities provide specific direction to partners and individuals working in Nova Scotia's public education system with respect to the implementation of this policy and related guidelines.

Students

•   attend school and actively engage in their learning.

•   actively participate by communicating their preferred ways of learning, strengths, challenges, and interests.

•   actively work with teachers and other staff to communicate when they need help or support(s), or if there are barriers to their learning.

- promote student voice and choice by actively taking part in decisions with respect to their own learning and act as leaders within the school community.
- take part in Student Planning Teams, when appropriate.

Parents/Guardians and Families

- engage in and support their child's learning.
- support their child in attending school.
- maintain ongoing, regular contact with teachers about their child's well-being, including their strengths, challenges, and interests.
- will let the school staff know how they would like to be included in the discussion around their child's well-being and achievement.
- work with the teacher and the principal to seek clarification and collaborate on solutions when questions arise with respect to their child's education and to identify and eliminate barriers to their child's learning.
- promote and value student voice and choice and providing opportunities for them to speak to their strengths and challenges.
- act as active members of their child's Student Planning Team.

Employees of the Public Education System

- build meaningful relationships with students, parents/guardians, families, and other members of the school community to collectively support students' well-being and achievement.
- support the well-being and achievement of every student.
- act collectively to name, eliminate, and prevent systemic inequities and barriers within the classroom, schools, region, and system.
- create and support positive, accessible, and equitable learning environments where students feel welcome, safe, and can access and reach their academic potential.
- use evidence-informed strategies, resources, and/or collaborative practices that provide culturally and linguistically responsive and engaging instruction and support for students.
- recognize (affirm and validate) the variability of learning needs, social-emotional needs, and cultural backgrounds of the entire student population and the school community.
- recognize the strengths that greater diversity brings to every aspect of education, including but not limited to race, culture, disability, neurodiversity[1], heritage, linguistic background(s), community cultural knowledge, beliefs, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- work to understand and support the individual abilities, identities, and unique strengths and challenges of every student.
- monitor student progress frequently and provide timely interventions as required.
- ensure decisions are made and resources are allocated, aligned with this policy.

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1   **neurodiversity:** variations in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood, and other neurocognitive functions.

Teachers

- value student voice and choice and provide opportunities for them to speak to their strengths, challenges, and preferred ways of learning.
- work with parents/guardians to help them feel welcome in the school community and to empower them as essential decision-makers regarding programming and/or supports for their child, including, but not limited to, participating on Student Planning Teams.
- work with parents/guardians to understand their preferred ways of working with teachers, principals, and other staff, and make efforts to accommodate it.
- promote students' well-being and achievement in collaboration with other staff.
- work collectively with school-based and regional support staff, as appropriate, to deliver instruction and interventions to their students.
- are accountable for adherence to the principles of inclusive education.
- adhere to the principles of the teaching standards.
- communicate regularly with students, parents/guardians, and other teachers and school staff with respect to student progress.
- work with the Teaching Support Team to meet the strengths and challenges of the students in their classrooms.
- serve as members of the Student Planning Teams for their students; work with the Student Planning Team through the Program Planning Process as needed, and be responsive to students and parents/guardians.
- assess and evaluate the effectiveness of their instructional strategies.

Learning Support Teachers

- value student voice and choice and provide opportunities for them to speak to their strengths, challenges, and preferred ways of learning.
- work with parents/guardians to help them feel welcome in the school community and to empower them as essential decisionmakers regarding programming and/or supports for their child, including, but not limited to, participating on Student Planning Teams.
- work with parents/guardians to understand their preferred ways of working with teachers, principals, and other staff, and to accommodate it, as much as possible.
- provide direct support to classroom teachers to meet the identified needs of their students.
- promote students' well-being and achievement by developing and implementing strategies with teachers and other staff.
- provide specific interventions and support(s), primarily in classrooms or common learning environments, to individual students or small groups of students who may require additional supplemental and intensive interventions.
- work collectively with school-based and regional support staff, as appropriate, to support teachers in the delivery of instruction, assessment, and interventions to students.
- maintain regular communication with students, parents/guardians, and other teachers and school staff with respect to students' progress.

- are accountable for adherence to the principles of inclusive education.
- work with the Teaching Support Team to meet the needs of teachers and students.
- work with Student Planning Teams through the Program Planning Process for individual students as needed.
- assess and evaluate the effectiveness of their practices.

School Administrators (Principals and Vice Principals)

- value student voice and choice and provide opportunities for them to speak to their strengths, challenges, and preferred ways of learning.
- work with parents/guardians to help them feel welcome in the school community and to empower them as essential decision-makers regarding programming and/or supports for their child, including, but not limited to, participating on Student Planning Teams.
- work with parents/guardians to understand their preferred ways of working with teachers, principals, and other staff, and to accommodate it, as much as possible.
- work with teachers to support effective instructional strategies as evidenced by student growth socially, emotionally, and academically.
- ensure that teachers are following appropriate processes, as described in this policy and accompanying guidelines.
- ensure teachers and school staff have access to information and opportunities for professional learning that aligns with teachers' assessments of students' learning strengths and challenges.
- lead the Student Success Planning process in schools to gather data and set goals to improve student well-being and achievement.
- establish and lead the Teaching Support Team for their school.
- ensure that Student Planning Teams are put in place when required to initiate the Program Planning Process.
- are accountable for adherence to the principles of inclusive education.
- communicate this policy to students, staff, parents/guardians, and families.
- monitor and evaluate the implementation of this policy in their school.

Teaching Support Teams

- work with individual teachers to identify opportunities where additional interventions, professional learning, and/or resources may be needed to support student well-being and achievement.
- encourage and enhance collaboration among peers.
- strengthen the capacity to support student well-being and achievement by assisting teachers in developing strategies to meet the core, supplementary, and intensive needs of their students.
- create cultures where teachers feel comfortable seeking advice from their peers and from specialists on effective teaching practices to meet the needs of their students.
- identify opportunities, strategies, and resources to support all school staff in meeting the needs of students.

- work with teachers to determine when Student Planning Teams need to be formed to better support the strengths and challenges of individual students.
- monitor and evaluate the success of the supports and interventions and adjust as needed.

Student Planning Teams

- value student voice and choice and provide opportunities for them to speak to their strengths, challenges, and preferred ways of learning.
- work with parents/guardians to help them feel welcome in the school community and to empower them as essential decision-makers regarding programming and/or supports for their child.
- work with parents/guardians to understand their preferred ways of working with teachers, principals, and other staff, and to accommodate it, as much as possible.
- collaborate on decisions regarding instruction, interventions, and evaluation needed to best support individual students through the Program Planning Process, as well as the support(s) needed to assist the student's teachers in meeting the student's strengths and challenges.
- monitor and evaluate the success of the supports and interventions designed for individual students and adjust them as needed.

Regional Centres for Education and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial

- ensure that all students learn and grow socially, emotionally, and academically over time.
- work with partners in the departments of Health and Wellness, Community Services, and Justice to support students' strengths and help address their challenges.
- designate the responsibility for inclusive education at the Director level or higher.
- allocate appropriate resources to support the delivery of inclusive education in their schools in accordance with the *PSP*.
- provide principals and school staff with information and access to opportunities for professional development on inclusive education.
- lead the system improvement planning process to gather evidence and set goals to improve student well-being and achievement.
- guide the implementation of this policy and support interventions and strategies designed to improve student well-being and achievement.
- work with principals to ensure that each school establishes a Teaching Support Team and Student Planning Teams as needed.
- ensure every employee is accountable for adherence to the principles of inclusive education.
- communicate this policy to schools, parents/guardians, and school communities.
- monitor and evaluate the implementation of this policy in schools and ensure that the implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy and related guidelines in their schools is reviewed regularly.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

- collaborate with RCEs/CSAP and stakeholders to identify, provide, and maintain supports for instruction and interventions to ensure that every student is able to access educational programing.

- provide RCEs/CSAP with information and access to opportunities for professional development to support inclusive education.

- work with external partners that have a mandate to advocate for students, that provide supports to students, and/or that work with students and families from traditionally marginalized backgrounds.

- ensure decisions are made and resources are allocated and used, aligned with this policy.

- develop guidelines and other supporting materials for effective implementation of this policy.

- ensure every employee is accountable for adherence to the principles of inclusive education.

- communicate this policy clearly and broadly.

- monitor and update this policy and any supporting guidelines as required.

- evaluate the implementation of this policy.

7.   Monitoring

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development staff are responsible for reviewing this policy and its implementation in consultation with RCEs/CSAP, schools, partners, and external advisors when appropriate.

8.   Application

This policy applies to all P–12 students and employees of the Nova Scotia public education system.

Special Thanks

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- Black Educators Association
- Council to Improve Classroom Conditions
- Council on African Canadian Education (CACE)
- Council on Mi'kmaq Education (CME)
- Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP)
- Delmore "Buddy" Daye Learning Institute
- Education Consultative Forum (ECF)
- Education Program Committee (EPC)
- Education Standard Development Committee—Accessibility Directorate
- Mi'kmaw and Student Services Coordinators and Consultants
- Parents
- Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Provincial Lead Team
- Nova Scotia Teachers Union
- Principals' Forum
- Provincial Advisory Council on Education (PACE)
- Provincial Lead Team: Inclusive Education Policy
- Public School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia (PSAANS)
- Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding, and Human Rights (RCH) Coordinators
- Regional Assessment Coordinators
- Regional Centres for Education
- School Psychologists, Speech Language Pathologists, and Resource/Learning Centre Teachers
- Special Education Programs and Services (SEPS) Committee
- School Advisory Councils (SACs)
- Student Success Planning Coordinators
- Teachers

Student Assessment Policy

Release Date: September 2021
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1. Policy Statement

Student assessment and evaluation are core components of Nova Scotia's public education system. Assessment and evaluation provide evidence of learning and achievement to students, parents, and teachers. Teachers use assessment evidence to inform their decisions about instruction and student learning, monitor progress, and report on student achievement. Student assessment and evaluation also provide important data to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) and its partners in education, such as the regional centres for education (RCEs) and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), to inform the development and delivery of programs, services, and supports.

2. Definitions

assessment: the ongoing process of gathering evidence about student learning.

evaluation: the ongoing process of analyzing, reflecting upon, and summarizing assessment evidence to make professional judgements about student achievement.

fair assessment: all students are provided with equitable opportunities to demonstrate the extent of their learning. Fair assessment must consider access, equity, inclusion, and diversity.

feedback: information communicated to or by a student related to the defined criteria of what a student needs to know, what they need to show, what they need to be able to do, and where to go next.

final assessment: assesses students' understanding and application of the concepts and skills related to the expected learning outcomes for a subject or course. They can take many forms, including, but not limited to, presentations, portfolios, interviews, and examinations.

inclusive education: an educational commitment that uses principles and practices to affirm and validate all students in a school's community. It is anchored in a presumption of competence and high expectations, a culture of authentic belonging, and a shared accountability for students' well-being and achievement.

Nova Scotia Assessment (NSA): an assessment designed to evaluate student achievement related to selected curriculum outcomes in a subject area. NSA results do not contribute to students' final grades.

Nova Scotia Examination (NSE): exams designed to evaluate student achievement related to selected curriculum outcomes in a course. NSEs results account for 20 per cent of students' final grade in a course.

parent: includes parents, guardians, and people acting in the place of a parent (*loco parentis*).

Program Planning Process: an overarching term for the process to develop, implement, monitor, review, and update a number of possible programming options to most effectively support student success in the areas of wellbeing, academics, and behavior skill development.

professional judgement: judgement that is informed by professional knowledge, research, experiences, classroom context, and evidence of student learning.

provincial report card: a formal communication tool used by teachers to summarize and communicate information about individual students' achievement related to specific subjects and courses, as well as the Program Planning Process.

reliable assessment: an accurate assessment used to measure student learning that yields the same, consistent results each time it is administered.

valid assessment: an assessment that accurately reflects the expected learning outcomes that it is intended to measure. Inferences, conclusions, and decisions that are made and based on its results are appropriate and meaningful.

3. Policy Objectives

The objective of this policy is to provide clear, consistent direction with respect to assessment, evaluation, and reporting practices, focusing on enhancing all students' learning and achievement. As part of enhancing the learning and achievement of all students, this policy also supports inclusive and equitable practices related to student assessment, evaluation, reporting, and well-being.

This policy and any accompanying guidelines or procedures help inform effective practices respecting student assessment, evaluation, and reporting.

4. Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles are the foundation for student assessment in Nova Scotia's public education system. All assessments conducted at the classroom, school, regional, and provincial levels must adhere to these principles. Assessments

- contribute to student learning, achievement, and well-being.
- are valid, reliable, and fair.
- are planned, purposeful, inclusive, and equitable.
- are aligned with the expected learning outcomes, instructional approaches, and individual student learning needs (e.g., assistive technology, extra time).
- provide students with multiple opportunities and ways to demonstrate their understanding and application of concepts and skills related to the expected learning outcomes.
- provide ongoing information about student learning that is meaningful, accessible, and communicated to parents and students in a variety of ways.

5. Application

This policy applies to all primary to grade 12 students and everyone employed within Nova Scotia's public education system.

6. Policy Directives

Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation must

- have a clear purpose and defined criteria of what students need to know, show, and do, that are communicated to students in advance of the related learning.
- be aligned with the expected learning outcomes and classroom instruction.
- be ongoing, to provide students with multiple opportunities and ways to demonstrate their learning.
- provide students with frequent feedback as they are learning as well as periodic feedback on what they have learned. Feedback must be directly related to the defined criteria.
- provide students with opportunities to develop their self-assessment skills.
- not be used as a reward or punishment.

Evaluation must

- be based on evidence of individual students' achievement related to the expected learning outcomes and teachers' professional judgement.
- be based on criteria that is appropriate to the expected learning outcomes and the selected assessment method.
- summarize and report student achievement based on a sufficient body of evidence that accurately reflects a student's achievement of the expected learning outcomes at a given point in time.

Schools will have a process for students and parents to request a review of assessments and evaluations should they feel that the student's achievement is not accurately reflected.

Final Assessments

Final assessments (grades 9–12 only) are designed to assess students' understanding and application of the concepts and skills related to the expected learning outcomes for a subject or course. They can take a variety of forms, including presentations, portfolios, projects, and examinations.

If an examination is the chosen format for a final assessment, it must take place during the timeframe specified by EECD or a recognized outside examining agency (e.g., International Baccalaureate [IB] and Advanced Placement [AP]).

In courses that do not have an NSE, teachers determine the final assessment format for the course. They may provide students with alternative options or engage students in proposing options for the final assessment.

In grade 9, a final classroom assessment in a course will account for no more than 10 per cent of a student's final grade.

In grades 10–12, a final classroom assessment in a course will account for no more than 20 per cent of a student's final grade, with the exception of IB exams.

Regional, Provincial, National, and International Assessments

In addition to ongoing classroom assessment, students will participate in regional, provincial, national, and international large-scale assessments as determined by the department. These assessments provide feedback on student achievement, which provides regions and the province with evidence to measure the success of programs and initiatives, adjust policy direction as needed, and to report on the public education system.

Regional, provincial, national, and international assessments are not included in students' final grades.

In courses where the final assessment is an NSE, as prescribed by the department, the NSE accounts for 20 per cent of students' final grades.

Student Placement

Students in grades primary to 9 should be placed in the grade that is appropriate for their curricular, cognitive, social, and emotional learning needs.

Any decisions about a student's grade placement must consider the programming that best supports and extends the student's learning and well-being.
Note: Please see the *Student Grade Level Placement Procedures* for additional details.

Communication

A school communication plan must be provided to students and parents by the principal at the beginning of each school year. This plan will include information such as contact information for the principal, teachers, and other school staff, as well as for how to best reach them (e.g., email, online portal, app); school procedures; professional development calendar dates; and information for students and parents on the process to review an assessment or evaluation.

Teachers must also provide their own communication plan to students and parents at the beginning of the school year or semester.

Provincial Report Cards

Teachers will report on individual students' achievement on provincial report cards using grades, scales, and comments. If a student has a programming option under the Program Planning Process, it may be indicated on the report card, depending on the nature of the programming option.

Social skills, work habits, and behaviours are communicated in the Learner Profile section of the report card and are not included in students' academic grades.

The preparation and distribution of provincially authorized report cards occurs at set times throughout the school year, as determined by EECD.

Information provided in students' provincial report cards must align with information about individual students' learning that has previously been shared through ongoing communication between home and school.

Student transfers

In cases where a student transfers between public schools in Nova Scotia within three weeks of the end of the term or semester, the principal from the sending school will ensure that the sending school teacher(s) provide a completed provincial report card to the receiving school.

If a student is transferring from a school outside of Nova Scotia within three weeks of the end of the term or semester, and the principal at the receiving school is unable to obtain a report card from the sending school, the teacher(s) at the receiving school will use the code "insufficient evidence" on the student's provincial report card.

Course Change or Withdrawal

Students in grades 10–12 may change or withdraw from courses. To do this, they must meet with a school counsellor or administrator to determine if the course change or withdrawal request is possible.

If a student changes or withdraws from a course within two weeks of the start of the course, the course will not appear on the student's report card or transcript.

If a student withdraws from a course after the first two weeks and before the last day of class, the course will appear as a withdrawal on the student's report card but not on their transcript. The student's final grade for the course will be recorded as a withdrawal.

Due Dates

Teachers must ensure the process for setting due dates and negotiating extensions for assessments is consistent, equitable, and clearly communicated to all students. They must also communicate this information to parents.

Teachers must support students in building the skills they need to meet due dates and complete work on time. This work must be reflective of and appropriate for the age, grade level, and development of their students, and progressively build in more responsibility for students as they mature and advance.

Missing assessments may impact students' in-progress marks, final grades, or both.
Note: Please see the *Classroom Assessment Due Date and Extension Procedures*.

7.   Roles and Responsibilities

Students

Students are responsible for

- engaging in their learning and responding to feedback from their teacher(s) to improve their learning.
- meeting due dates for assessment and evaluation that have been clearly communicated to them by their teacher(s).
- taking on more responsibility for meeting due dates and requesting extensions based on their grade level and appropriate learning development:
  - grades P–6—students learn about due dates and develop some autonomy and responsibility when working toward due dates.

- grades 7–8—students continue to receive support (e.g., regular check-ins, work planning) when working toward due dates, and a greater expectation is placed on them to meet due dates and negotiate extensions.
- grades 9–12—students are expected to adhere to due dates with increasing independence. They are expected to negotiate extensions with teachers prior to the original due date, except in exceptional circumstances.

Parents

Parents are encouraged to

- engage in and support their child's learning.
- familiarize themselves with the school communication plan and teacher communication plans.
- maintain ongoing contact with teachers about their child's progress and achievement.
- attend parent-teacher meetings, program planning meetings (when necessary), and participate in discussions about appropriate student programming.
- seek clarification when questions arise regarding assessment, evaluation, reporting, and educational programming.

Teachers

Teachers are responsible for

- adhering to this policy.
- ensuring alignment between the expected learning outcomes, instructional approaches, student learning needs (e.g., assistive technology, extra time), and assessments.
- using a variety of assessment methods (e.g., observations, conversations, products) to gather information about individual student learning and using that evidence to inform and make decisions about their instruction.
- providing ongoing and timely feedback to students as they are learning, as well as periodic feedback on what they have learned.
- maintaining regular communication with students and parents regarding students' learning, progress, and well-being.
- communicating with students and parents on how to request a review of an assessment or evaluation.
- establishing high expectations for each student and supporting each student as they work to achieve success.
- ensuring assessment strategies are reviewed and adjusted as needed to best support student learning and achievement.
- accurately reporting on student achievement in relation to the expected learning outcomes.
- administering regional, provincial, national, and international assessments and examinations in accordance with the established protocols for each one.

Principals

Principals are responsible for

- adhering to this policy.
- ensuring teachers adhere to this policy and are supported in further developing their assessment knowledge and practice as it relates to this policy and any associated guidelines.
- ensuring that all teachers prepare and communicate provincial report cards to students and parents within the regular reporting periods.
- informing students and parents about this policy.
- ensuring that the practices for assessment, evaluation, and reporting student learning are reasonable, clear, and consistently applied at their school.
- providing teachers with feedback related to their assessment, evaluation, and reporting practices.
- providing teachers with access to opportunities for professional learning on effective assessment, evaluation, and communication practices to support student learning.
- monitoring the progress of all students.

Regional centers for education and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial

The RCEs and CSAP are responsible for

- monitoring implementation of this policy in schools.
- ensuring that the practices for assessment, evaluation, and communication for student learning are reasonable, clear, and consistently applied at their schools.
- providing administrators and teachers with access to opportunities for professional learning on effective assessment, evaluation, and reporting practices to support student learning.
- monitoring the tracking and recording of student progress.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

EECD is responsible for

- communicating this policy to the RCEs and CSAP.
- providing the RCEs and CSAP with information and access to opportunities for professional learning on effective assessment, evaluation, and reporting practices to support student learning for regional staff, school administrators, and teachers.
- leading provincial, national, and international large-scale assessments in collaboration with the RCEs and CSAP.
- collecting, analyzing, and sharing data on student achievement with the department's partners in education.
- setting reporting and assessment dates for Nova Scotia's public schools.

8. Monitoring

EECD staff are responsible for monitoring this policy which will be reviewed annually. As part of the review, department staff will recommend amendments to the policy, as needed.

9. References

Province of Nova Scotia. 2021. *Classroom Assessment Due Date and Extension Procedures*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Province of Nova Scotia.

Province of Nova Scotia. 2021. *Student Grade Level Placement Procedures*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Province of Nova Scotia.

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Acknowledgements

Student Grade Level Placement Procedures

Supplement to Student Assessment Policy

Effective Date: September 2022

1. Purpose

To clearly communicate the procedures that must be followed under the *Student Assessment Policy* when considering options related to the acceleration, promotion, or retention of a student.

These procedures should not be considered in isolation of the larger policy.

2. Definitions

acceleration: moving a student who may require additional challenges ahead a grade level before the rest of their peers.

advancement: moving a student at their current grade level to the next grade level. The student being advanced may be in good academic standing or may be struggling and require additional supports in the next grade level.

retention: holding a student who is struggling back a grade level.

3. Administrative Procedures

3.1   The student (if appropriate) and their parent(s) must be involved and supported when a student's grade level placement is being considered (i.e., acceleration or retention). Student grade level placement discussions should begin by the end of the second term or mid-semester.

3.2   Students should be placed in the grade that is most appropriate for their curricular, cognitive, social, and emotional learning needs.

3.3   The principal will make the final decision respecting the student's placement. The decision will be made in consultation with the student (if appropriate), teachers, parents, and other specialists, as needed.

4. Considerations

Decisions around student placement may have far-reaching implications for a student's success in school. Regardless of the decision, a plan for additional instruction and intervention to support the student's continued well-being and academic success is required.

5. Authority/Reference

Province of Nova Scotia. 2021. *Student Assessment Policy*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Province of Nova Scotia.

6. Monitoring

These procedures will be monitored and updated to align with the *Student Assessment Policy*.

Classroom Assessment Due Date and Extension Procedures

Supplement to Student Assessment Policy

Effective Date: September 2022

1. Purpose

To clearly communicate the procedures that must be followed under the *Student Assessment Policy* respecting due dates and extensions relating to student assessments.

These procedures should not be considered in isolation of the larger policy.

2. Definitions

assessment: the ongoing process of gathering evidence about student learning.

evaluation: the ongoing process of analyzing, reflecting upon, and summarizing assessment evidence to make professional judgements about student achievement.

fair assessment: all students are provided with equitable opportunities to demonstrate the extent of their learning. Fair assessment must consider access, equity, inclusion, and diversity.

feedback: information communicated to a student related to the defined criteria of what a student needs to know, what they need to show, and what they need to be able to do.

professional judgement: judgement that is informed by professional knowledge, research, experiences, classroom context, and evidence of student learning.

provincial report card: a formal communication tool used by teachers to summarize and communicate information about individual students' achievement related to specific subjects and courses, as well as the Program Planning Process.

reliable assessment: an accurate assessment used to measure student learning that yields the same, consistent results each time it is administered.

valid assessment: an assessment that accurately reflects the expected learning outcomes that it is intended to measure. Inferences, conclusions, and decisions that are made and based on its results are appropriate and meaningful.

3. Administrative Procedures

3.1   Teachers will work to ensure that the processes they put in place for setting due dates and negotiating extensions are consistent, equitable, and clearly communicated to all students.

3.2   Teachers will clearly communicate any process or procedure that students should follow when requesting an extension on an evaluation or assessment.

3.3   Teachers will ensure that the process for extensions is flexible enough to be responsive to the unique circumstances of the student.

3.4   Teachers should consider student input in both the process of setting due dates and requesting and negotiating extensions.

3.5   Teachers will work with students to build the skills needed to meet due dates and complete work on time. This work will be reflective of and appropriate for the age, grade level, and development of their students, and progressively build in more responsibility for students as they mature and advance.

3.6   Teachers will follow the process outlined in the *Process for Classroom Assessment Due Date and Extensions* flow chart below when assigning a mark to a late or missing assessment.

3.7   Teachers will ensure that the classroom assessment due date and extensions process is clearly communicated to students and parents through the teacher communication plan.

3.8   Teachers will provide a teacher communication plan to students and parents at the beginning of each school year or semester.

4. Authority/Reference
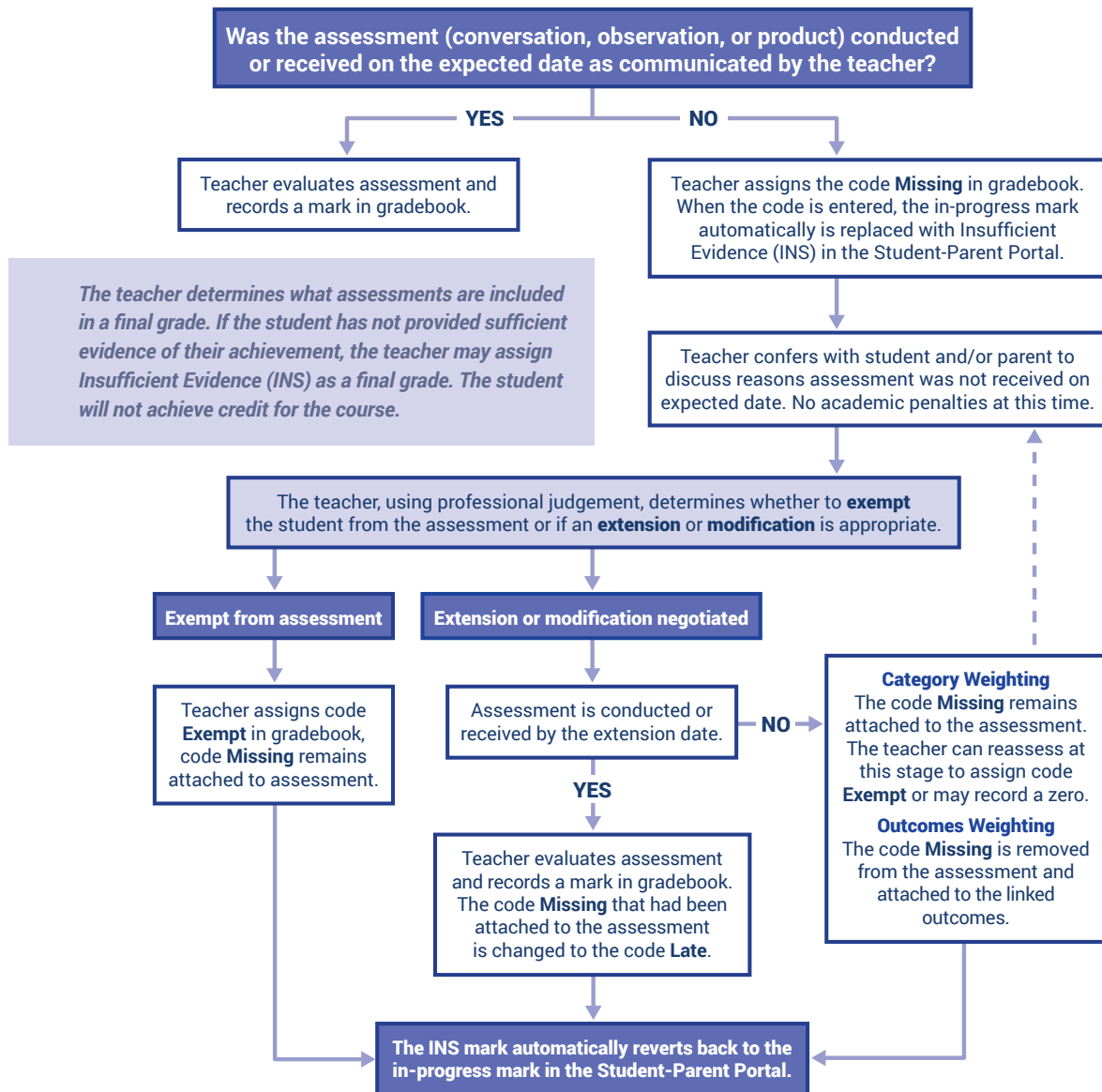
Province of Nova Scotia. 2021. *Student Assessment Policy*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Province of Nova Scotia.

5. Monitoring

These procedures will be monitored and updated to align with the *Student Assessment Policy*.

Process for Classroom Assessment **Due Dates** and **Extensions**

The teacher reviews student progress and achievement on an ongoing basis throughout the term/semester. If the student is not engaging in assessment (observations, conversations, or products) as expected, the teacher will communicate with the student and/ or parent(s) to discuss concerns and identify supports that may be required. The teacher and parent(s) may decide that they need to seek the advice of the Teaching Support Team.

Was the assessment (conversation, observation, or product) conducted or received on the expected date as communicated by the teacher?

YES → Teacher evaluates assessment and records a mark in gradebook.

NO → Teacher assigns the code **Missing** in gradebook. When the code is entered, the in-progress mark automatically is replaced with Insufficient Evidence (INS) in the Student-Parent Portal.

The teacher determines what assessments are included in a final grade. If the student has not provided sufficient evidence of their achievement, the teacher may assign Insufficient Evidence (INS) as a final grade. The student will not achieve credit for the course.

Teacher confers with student and/or parent to discuss reasons assessment was not received on expected date. No academic penalties at this time.

The teacher, using professional judgement, determines whether to **exempt** the student from the assessment or if an **extension** or **modification** is appropriate.

Exempt from assessment

Teacher assigns code **Exempt** in gradebook, code **Missing** remains attached to assessment.

Extension or modification negotiated

Assessment is conducted or received by the extension date.

NO →

Category Weighting
The code **Missing** remains attached to the assessment. The teacher can reassess at this stage to assign code **Exempt** or may record a zero.

Outcomes Weighting
The code **Missing** is removed from the assessment and attached to the linked outcomes.

YES

Teacher evaluates assessment and records a mark in gradebook. The code **Missing** that had been attached to the assessment is changed to the code **Late**.

The INS mark automatically reverts back to the in-progress mark in the Student-Parent Portal.

Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy

Approval Date: April 2025

Effective Date: September 2025

1. Policy Statement and Objective

The objective of the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy (Code of Conduct)* is to establish and maintain safe and inclusive learning and working environments in our school communities. The *Code of Conduct* establishes expectations for acceptable behaviour of children and students and provides guidance on how schools should respond to and accurately record incidents of unacceptable behaviour. The *Code of Conduct* supports well-being and achievement by promoting respect of the rights, property, and safety of all. It establishes predictable consequences and pathways for addressing unacceptable behaviour in schools, ensuring responses are clear, consistent, timely, restorative, and equitable.

2. Definitions

Behaviour Intervention Support Plan: A plan to support students in grades P to 12, focused on proactive and preventative strategies, interventions, and supports to address behaviours of concern.

minor misbehaviour: Infrequent acts or behaviours that are undesirable but do not meet the definition or severity of unacceptable behaviour.

parent: Defined in the *Education Act* (s. 3(p)) as "includes a guardian and a person acting in *loco parentis* to a child." *Loco parentis* refers to someone who is legally responsible for and has authority to make decisions for the child.

school community: Students and everyone whose roles or jobs place them in contact with students in school settings and school activities.

school setting: Includes all of the following:

- school property,
- property immediately adjacent to school grounds,
- any location hosting a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program,
- a school bus stop or on a school bus, or
- off school grounds, where a behaviour significantly disrupts the learning climate of the school (e.g., Over the weekend, a student threatens to hurt another student at school, making others feel unsafe and upsetting learning when they come back).

student information system: The information technology platform(s) on which all student records are updated and stored, including records of incidents of unacceptable behaviour by students.

Student Planning Team: A student-focused team that collaborates on decisions regarding instruction, interventions, and evaluations needed to best support individual students' programming.

unacceptable behaviour: Defined in the *Education Act* (s. 3 (zg)) as "behaviour that endangers the well-being of others, damages property or significantly disrupts the learning of others."

Unacceptable behaviours are categorized in the *Education Act* (s. 3 (zg) (i-xvi)) as follows:

- bullying/cyberbullying
- discriminatory behaviour
- illegal activity
- insubordination
- misuse of networks or online resources
- physical violence
- racist behaviour
- repeated use of tobacco or electronic cigarettes
- sexual assault
- sexual harassment
- sexual misconduct
- use or possession of alcohol, cannabis, drug-related paraphernalia, illegal drugs or weapons
- vandalism
- verbal abuse

For greater specificity in reporting and tracking, the follow categories of unacceptable behaviour have been added:

- inappropriate language
- interruption of the learning environment
- physical aggression
- threatening behaviour
- unapproved mobile device use

3. Guiding Principles

The *Code of Conduct* is founded on guiding principles that ensure a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for all members of the school community to learn and work. These principles—responsibility, equity, restorative and relationship-building, and clarity and consistency—guide how we promote positive behaviour and address unacceptable behaviours.

Responsibility

All members of the school community share a responsibility under the *Code of Conduct* to maintain physically safe, psychologically healthy, and supportive learning and working environments for children, students and staff by modelling and encouraging positive, acceptable behaviour and by responding promptly, consistently, and equitably to unacceptable behaviour. Children and students are responsible for their own conduct to the extent of their developmental capacity. Understanding that there are consequences for unacceptable behaviour is an important learning for children/students, and an important aspect of responsibility. Unacceptable behaviour will result in consequences as outlined in the *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours*.

Equity

Expectations and actions taken under the *Code of Conduct* will be fair and reasonable. Responses to unacceptable behaviour will be culturally and linguistically responsive and will be determined with consideration to children/students' developmental capacity.

Restorative and Relationship-Building

Unacceptable behaviour undermines the safety and effectiveness of the school environment and has a negative impact on members of the school community and their relationships. Effective responses to unacceptable behaviour seek to produce constructive behavioural changes and to preserve, repair, and restore relationships. Restorative processes must be sensitive to individuals who experience harm as a result of unacceptable behaviours.

Clarity and Consistency

Clear communication, and timely and consistent application of the *Code of Conduct* in all schools and classrooms, reinforces the expectation of acceptable behaviour and the credibility of the *Code of Conduct*.

4. Application

4.1   This *Code of Conduct* applies to all pre-primary to grade 12 students enrolled in a public school, as appropriate to their age and stage of development.

4.2   The directives outlined in this policy replace the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy* (2018) and any directives in existing policies addressing code of conduct in schools.

5. Policy Directives

Pre-primary

5.1   The provincial pre-primary program is delivered in schools and is part of the school community. All pre-primary programs will adhere to developmentally appropriate practices outlined in administrative procedures and Section 4 of the *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours*.

Communication

5.2   The expectations of acceptable behaviour and the consequences of unacceptable behaviour will be routinely communicated to the school community. Preventative and proactive behavioural support strategies will be implemented and communicated to ensure that school communities share a common understanding of acceptable behaviour in all school-related settings.

Acceptable Behaviour

5. 3   All members of the school community are expected to act in ways that promote a safe, caring, positive, and inclusive environment. This includes and is not limited to:

- following applicable laws, regulations, and policies
- following school policies and classroom routines
- demonstrating honesty, integrity, and respect for others
- treating everyone with dignity
- helping those in need and resolving conflicts peacefully and respectfully
- using positive language and supporting a productive learning environment

Minor Misbehaviours

5.4   Staff will routinely address minor misbehaviours without completing incident referrals. Repeated minor misbehaviours may reach the level of Unacceptable Behaviour if frequent in nature.

Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours

5.5   Unacceptable behaviours will be addressed promptly, consistently, and equitably.

5.6   When responding to unacceptable behaviours, staff will:

- prioritize the safety and security of students, staff, and other members of the school community
- take incidents of school violence seriously and respond in accordance with the *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours*
- respect the privacy and confidentiality of students and families
- refer to the *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours* and associated administrative procedures to identify and implement reasonable, equitable, and timely responses that
  - seek to produce constructive behavioural changes
  - support students in taking responsibility for their actions
  - assist students with developing new skills and strategies to reduce the reoccurrence of unacceptable behaviour
  - consider students' developmental capacity, the intent of the unacceptable behaviour and the impact of the unacceptable behaviour on the school, those that experience harm, and other students
  - are proportional and progressive, up to and including consequences that may include in-school or out-of-school suspensions
- accurately report the incident and response through the provincial student information system

- communicate with members of the school community impacted by the incident and provide reassurance that threats to school safety have been addressed without compromising privacy
- debrief members of the school community impacted by the incident

Suspensions (applies only to P–12 students, per the *Education Act*)

5.7   An administrator may consider suspending a student, out of school, for up to 10 school days, if the administrator believes the student has engaged in unacceptable behaviour while in a school setting. This policy's *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours* provides a matrix to determine which incidents merit suspension.

5.8   Where the severity of an incident merits, an administrator may recommend to their RCE/CSAP that a suspension be extended for a period greater than 10 days. Decisions regarding extended suspension must comply with the *Education Act* (s. 29).

5.9   The student or the student's parent(s) may request a review of the suspension by the RCE/CSAP within five school days of receiving the notice of suspension. The RCE/CSAP will then complete the procedural review in accordance with the process outlined in the *Education Act* (s. 30).

5.10   Any student who is suspended for more than five days will have a plan for re-entry into the school setting. This plan will be developed in collaboration with the student and their parent(s). As part of the re-entry process, relevant information will be shared as required, while respecting the privacy, dignity, and confidentiality of students and families.

Responses Specifically Forbidden

5.11   The following consequences are prohibited for all students:
- corporal punishment
- attributing collective responsibility, including group punishment
- reducing or not awarding marks or assigning extra schoolwork, projects, or assessments

Recording of Incidents

5.12   All unacceptable behaviours must be accurately recorded in the student information system.

5.13   At least quarterly, each RCE/CSAP will provide to the Minister a disaggregated statistical report on behavioural incidents that have occurred in schools within the RCE/CSAP over the past year.

Students who Require Intensive Behavioural Supports

5.14   When it has been determined that a student is not able to consistently demonstrate expected school behaviour, intensive supports will be identified, and a Behaviour Intervention Support Plan will be developed.

The plan will include the supports required and the most appropriate pathway(s), including possible alternative learning settings, or adapted schedules.

Programming and services will be individualized and provide for the duration and intensity required to support skills acquisition with flexible access to additional levels of support. Family, along with applicable interagency and community partners, will be essential participants during design, monitoring, and evaluation of any Behaviour Intervention Support Plan. Ongoing connection and engagement with the school will be incorporated into the Behaviour Intervention Support Plan.

Safety of students, staff, and the learning environment shall be considered in all plans.

5.15   When a Behaviour Intervention Support Plan is developed and implemented, Section 3 of the *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours* will provide guidance on where behaviours are reported and documented.

5.16   Behaviour Intervention Support Plan development may require Student Planning Teams to use alternative learning environments and/or adapted schedules to support safety, the student's well-being and achievement. These interventions will be time limited and will require regular monitoring and reporting in the student information system.

6.   Roles and Responsibilities

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

- establish and periodically review the *Code of Conduct* and associated procedures and guidelines in consultation with RCEs, CSAP, and school community
- monitor implementation and compliance with this policy in collaboration with RCEs and CSAP
- communicate the *Code of Conduct* and associated procedures and guidelines to RCEs and CSAP
- analyze disaggregated incident reporting data and share data with RCEs and CSAP on a quarterly basis
- identify trends and develop strategies to address systemic concerns related to unacceptable behaviour/school violence
- support RCEs and CSAP as needed with respect to professional development that aligns with this policy

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- establish a process that clearly communicates the *Code of Conduct* to all members of school communities.
- ensure consistent implementation of the *Code of Conduct* in all schools, including reinforcement of the importance of reporting incidents by all staff
- provide annual professional development on the *Code of Conduct* and preventative and proactive behavioural supports and interventions to prevent occurrences of unacceptable behaviour
- ensure staff are accurately recording, tracking, and reporting incidents of unacceptable behaviour in school settings
- at a minimum, report quarterly to the Minister, disaggregated data on incidents of unacceptable behaviours
- develop plans for addressing emerging issues or trends related to unacceptable behaviour/school violence
- monitor incidents of unacceptable behaviour in all schools through regular trend analysis of disaggregated incident reporting to identify areas requiring more attention and supports
- provide alternative arrangements for the education of any student who has been suspended for more than 10 school days

- provide strategies and resources to support plans for students in need of intensive behavioural supports
- provide training to school staff on how to accurately record incidents of unacceptable behaviour
- develop and provide professional development that aligns with this policy
- model acceptable behaviours

Administrators

- show care for the school community and commitment to well-being and student achievement in a safe, inclusive, and accepting learning and working environment
- implement the *Code of Conduct* at their school
- communicate the *Code of Conduct* regularly and meaningfully to children, students, staff, parents, and other members of the school community
- implement positive behavioural interventions and supports to establish clear school-wide expectations
- participate in professional development and be familiar with the *Code of Conduct* and positive behaviour interventions and supports
- monitor incidents of unacceptable behaviour/school violence at their school to identify areas requiring strategic response
- report, investigate, and accurately document incidents of unacceptable behaviour
- provide appropriate supports to those who experience harm as a result of unacceptable behaviour
- model acceptable behaviours

Teachers/Educators

- empower students to be positive, engaged members of their classroom, school, and community
- establish classroom routines and manage behaviours in a way that supports children and students with developing new behaviours and strategies to reduce unacceptable behaviour
- participate in professional development and be familiar with the *Code of Conduct*
- report and accurately document incidents of unacceptable behaviour
- address student behaviours in the course of their daily work and while supervising children and students in other areas of the school
- communicate regularly and meaningfully with parents
- be sensitive to those who experience harm as a result of unacceptable behaviour
- model acceptable behaviours

Support Staff

- empower students to be positive, engaged members of their classroom, school and community
- participate in professional development and be familiar with the *Code of Conduct*
- accurately report and record incidents of unacceptable behaviour

- address student behaviours in the course of their daily work and while supervising students in other areas of the school
- support behaviours within the scope of their role in a way that helps students develop new behaviours and strategies to reduce unacceptable behaviour
- be sensitive to those who experience harm as a result of unacceptable behaviour
- model acceptable behaviours

School Advisory Councils

- advise their school administrator(s) and RCE/CSAP on the *Code of Conduct* when reviewed
- review and advise their school administrator on summary reports of incidents of unacceptable behaviour at their school to identify areas requiring strategic response
- reinforce the importance of student voice as appropriate (e.g., Student Success Survey and student consultations)

Students

- be positive, engaged members of their classroom, school, and community
- show respect for the rights, property, and safety of themselves and others
- communicate needs and accept personal responsibility for their behaviour
- demonstrate appropriate behaviour for the school environment
- respect school policies and classroom routines

Parents

- maintain open, honest, and respectful communication with school staff
- support their child's teacher(s) in their efforts to provide an education for their child
- demonstrate respect for all members of the school community
- support the efforts of school staff in maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment
- become familiar with the *Code of Conduct*
- encourage and assist their child in following the *Code of Conduct*
- assist school staff in dealing with behaviour issues involving their child
- model acceptable behaviours

7. Procedures/Related Documents

- *Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours*

8. References

Nova Scotia. 2019. *Education Act*. SNS, c. 1.
https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/education.pdf.

Special Thanks

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) acknowledges the many public education and community partners across the province who have provided input on the *Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy*. To inform this draft policy, EECD visited schools across the province and conducted surveys with over 6,000 participants including SACs and staff, hosted an engagement session with nearly 800 participants at the SAC Provincial Conference, and gathered feedback on a discussion draft of the policy in October and November 2024. The thoughtful review and constructive feedback of participants have been essential. Special thanks are extended to:

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- Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union (NSGEU)
- Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
- Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
- Council on African Canadian Education (CACE)
- Council on Mi'Kmaq Education (CME)
- Education Council for Disability, Inclusion, and Accessibility (ECDIA)
- administrators, teachers, and school staff in Nova Scotia for their participation in school visits and engagement sessions
- School Advisory Councils
- Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) and Regional Centres for Education (RCEs)