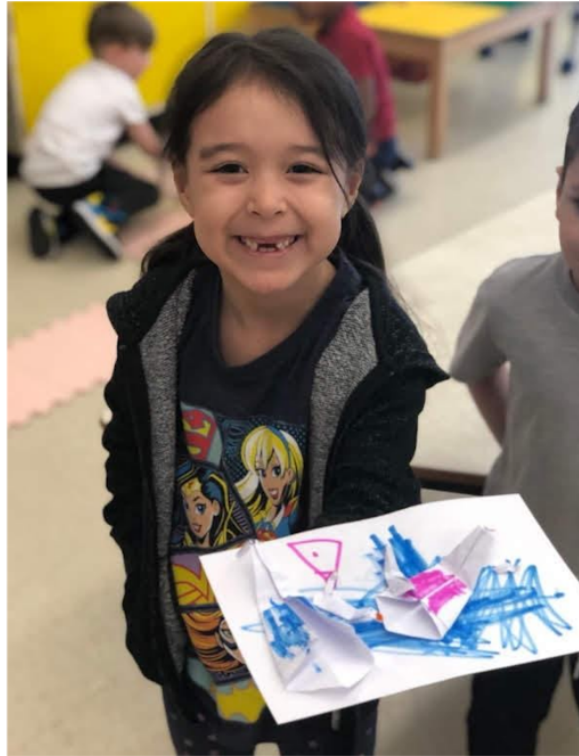


Newfoundland and Labrador English School Board

What We Heard



2020-2023 Strategic Planning Consultations

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Introduction

As required under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School Board is required to develop a three-year Strategic Plan. The current Strategic Plan ended June 2020 and the Board is required to have a plan in place for 2020-2023. Consultations on the three-year plan began in December 2019. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and resulting restrictions placed on gatherings at schools and elsewhere, the consultation process was adjusted and extended until the end of June 2020.

In preparation for the consultation process, the elected Board of Trustees determined the Strategic Plan's draft overarching areas of focus would be Student Engagement and Success; Health and Well-Being; and Organizational Effectiveness. The Board acknowledged the multi-year planning goals and objectives must fall within an approved budgetary framework - **i.e., initiatives requiring significant new financial resources could not be considered as part of the planning process.**

To help inform the Strategic Plan, a Discussion Guide was developed to focus on specific aspects of Student Engagement and Success, Health and Well-Being and Organizational Effectiveness (See Appendix A). The Discussion Guide reiterated that the Strategic Plan's goals and objectives must be within the Board's mandate and authority and be achievable within the existing budget allocation.

Regional in-person focus groups and discussions could not be held, so the District broadened its use of its online consultation tool (Thoughtexchange) to provide an opportunity for students, teachers and school-based staff, school councils, parents and others to engage in the consultation process. In addition, virtual meetings were held with representatives of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD), the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA), and the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils (NLFSC).

Executive Summary

The **What We Heard** document is a compilation of input and feedback from a variety of stakeholders on the development of the Strategic Plan (2020-2023). The Discussion Guide noted that input into the plan must fall within the Board's mandate and approved budgetary framework, but many comments and suggestions fell outside those parameters.

The majority of participants were teaching staff, and much of the feedback included thoughts and suggestions which would require additional allocation of resources. They could therefore not be directly included as part of the Strategic Plan. That said, thoughts expressed within all topic areas are valued and will inform the preparation of a final Strategic Plan. The exchange included 1,556 participants, 3,120 thoughts, and 118,368 ratings (see the Consultation Results for additional information). The Board of Trustees, as the District's governing body, completed a separate Thoughtexchange.

Major themes were generated based on the highest star rating of thoughts: Outside of District Authority/Mandate, Social and Emotional Learning, COVID-19 Related, Well-being, Engagement and Success, Literacy and Numeracy, Professional Learning, Diversity, and Other. Highest rated themes for stakeholder groups are noted below:

- District Management - Well-being; Engagement and Success
- Employees (District) - Engagement and Success; Social and Emotional Learning
- Employees (School) - Outside of District Authority/Mandate; Well-being
- Parents/Guardians - Outside of District Authority/Mandate; Engagement and Success
- School Council Members - Well-Being; and Engagement and Success
- Other (Community Member) - Engagement and Success; and Outside of District Authority/Mandate

As the consultation was conducted during the pandemic, it became apparent that equity of access to resources (technology and internet) was a barrier to many families. As a result the District's draft Strategic Plan will include Equity within its strategic directions.

We thank all those who have taken the time to participate in consultations to inform the development of the next three year 2020-2023 Strategic Plan.

Consultation Methods

To help inform the Strategic Plan (2020-2023), consultation was conducted through Thoughtexchange, an online consultation tool, between February and May 2020. Thoughtexchange enables participants to provide as many responses as they like to a question; explain each response (to allow others to determine if they agree), and rate the thoughts of other participants. There were limited opportunities for school-based consultations, as in-school instruction was suspended in mid-March 2020, as the result of COVID-19. Many administrators did, however, complete their school-based consultations and others participated through the online Thoughtexchange. Stakeholders included:

Board of Trustees

A separate presentation and exchange was provided to the Board of Trustees at its December 2019 Board Meeting. A summary report of the Board's responses is here: [Board of Trustees Thoughtexchange](#)

District Management/Program Specialists/Itinerant Teachers

Presentations were provided to District Management staff, program specialists and itinerant teachers, followed up with participation in the exchange.

Education Stakeholder Groups

The District consulted with representatives of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils.

School Councils, Staff, Students

Principals conducted presentations on the Strategic Planning exercise, followed by individual participation in the Thoughtexchange with:

- School Staff (custodians, teaching staff, secretaries)
- School Councils (School Council members for each school)
- Students (12-15 students from schools with Grades 7-12)

The Public

Consultation with the public was provided through engagement in the exchange. The opportunity to participate in the exchange was available via the District website that included a Discussion Guide, presentation, and a link to the exchange.

Participation by Group

The following chart outlines groups and number of participants.

Consultation	
Participant Groups	Participants
Students	162
Parents	89
School-based Employees (Principal, Teacher, TLA, Support Staff)	1,057
District Staff (program specialists, itinerants, corporate services)	65
District Management (including Directors of Schools)	36
School Councils Members	89
Board of Trustees	16
Community Members	5

Discussion Guide

The exchange included a Discussion Guide to help inform commentary and discussion. It outlined the potential for new strategic directions related to **Student Engagement and Success, Health and Well-Being, and Operational Effectiveness**. Each strategic direction included several focus areas for consideration.

Student Engagement and Success:

- Engagement
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Professional Learning for Teachers

Health and Well-Being:

- Diversity
- Equity
- Healthy Eating
- Inclusion
- Mental Health
- Online Safety
- Physical Activity
- Restorative Justice
- Social and Emotional Learning

Operational Effectiveness:

- Financial Management
- Human Resources
- Student Transportation

Consultation participants were advised the Board could not consider suggestions outside its authority and mandate, or those requiring new financial or human resources, as such decisions are made at the Provincial Government level.

The exchange was open from April 27, 2020 to May 15, 2020. Participants were asked to respond to the following question:

**What more can we do as a District
that will have the greatest impact on the success of our students?**

Consultation Results

Results of the exchange generated themes based on star-rating and highest number of thoughts. A Summary Report was generated that provides detailed information on top thoughts and themes.

View **Top Thoughts** by clicking on the “view” button in the Summary Report link below.

View **Top Themes** by clicking on the “view button. Then click each theme (coloured bar) in the Summary Report link below to read all stakeholder thoughts provided.

Read the Summary Report here: [Summary Report - Strategic Plan Consultation](#).

Top Themes Based on Star Rating (out of a possible 5.0)

Thoughtexchange Star Rated Themes	
Theme	Star Rating
Outside of District Authority/Mandate (e.g., class size, increased resources)	4.2
Inclusion	4.2
Social and Emotional Learning	4.2
COVID-19 Related	4.1
Well-Being	4.0
Engagement and Success	4.0
Literacy and Numeracy	4.0
Professional Learning	4.0
Technology	3.9
Diversity	3.8
Other	3.8

Chart 1: Themes - Highest to Lowest Star Rated Thoughts

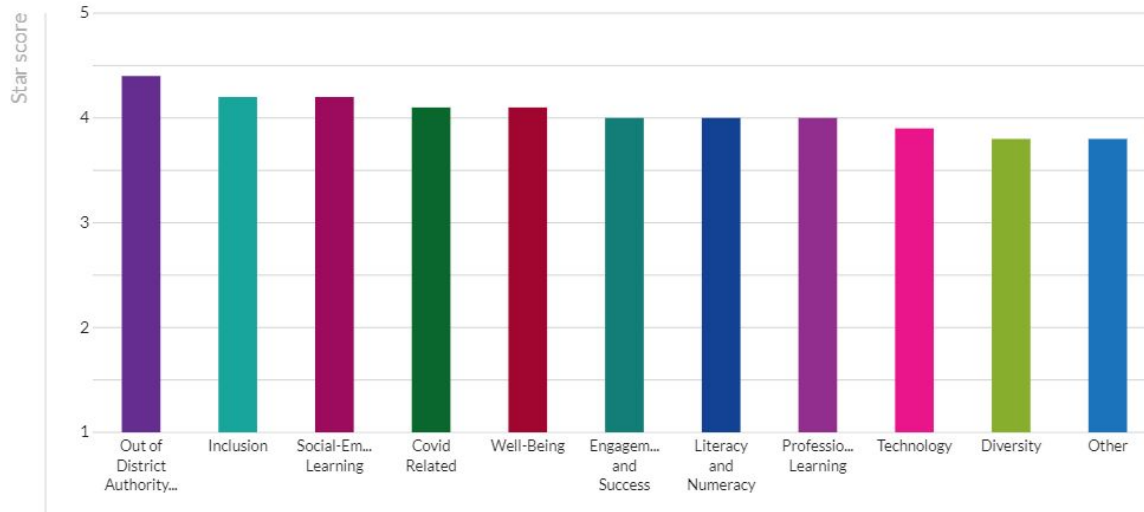


Chart 1

Themes in this chart are rated highest to lowest based on star ratings. The highest star rated thoughts were those that are outside of the District’s authority or mandate, and are categorized as such throughout this document. These include comments made with respect to reduced class size or decreased student-teacher ratios, increased human resources (e.g., administration, guidance counsellors, teachers, instructional resource teachers, student assistants) and cannot therefore be directly included in the Board’s Strategic Plan. The lowest rated thoughts were noted under ‘other’, and include thoughts on collaboration and more preparation time for teachers. Details on each theme area are discussed under Themes.



Themes Based on Highest Number of Thoughts

Thoughtexchange Highest Number of Thoughts	
Theme	Number of Thoughts
Engagement and Success	737
Outside of District Authority/Mandate (e.g., class size, increased resources)	634
Other	412
Well-Being	380
Social and Emotional Learning	223
Technology	206
Professional Learning	185
Literacy and Numeracy	163
Inclusion	81
COVID-19 Related	64
Diversity	27



Chart 2: Themes - Most Frequent Topics Measured by Number of Thoughts

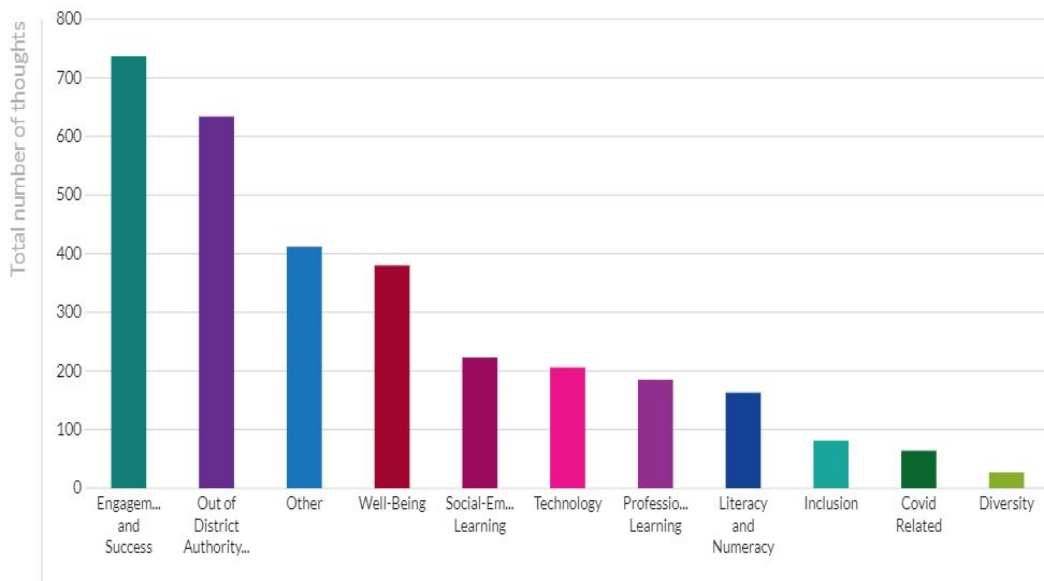
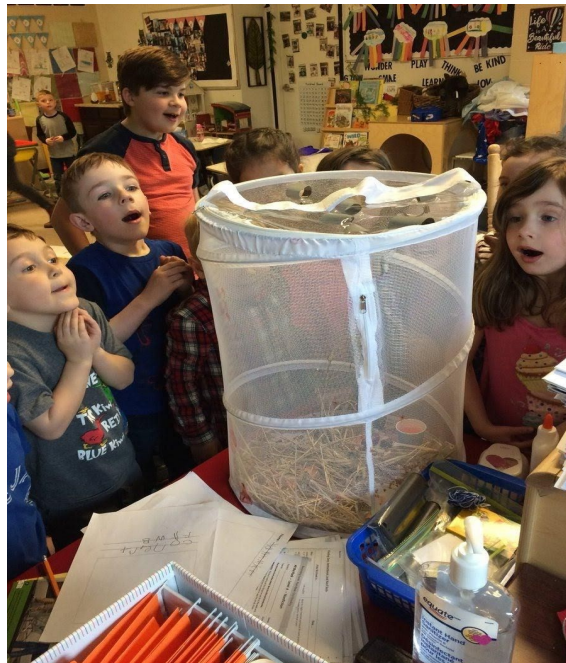


Chart 2

Themes in this chart are presented from the highest to lowest number of thoughts for a topic. The highest number of thoughts related to Engagement and Student Success, ranging down to the lowest number of thoughts on Diversity.



Stakeholder Feedback

Feedback was sought from a number of stakeholders to inform the plan. Feedback from each stakeholder group is discussed below.

District Management

The top two themes for this group were Well-being (star rated 4.2) and Engagement and Success (star rated 4.0). Commentary on well-being included focus on student physical and mental wellness to support student success, and to ensure that the well-being of students and staff is a priority for the District. Thoughts on Engagement and Success included discussion on building strong relationships with students, and providing meaningful interactions with students and their school communities. “Deep Learning” experiences were highlighted, noting it creates globally responsible citizens and provides skill sets for students to be successful beyond graduation. Deep Learning is the process of acquiring six global competencies: Character, Citizenship, Collaboration, Communication, Connectivity, and Critical Thinking. There are four elements of learning design that form the foundation for Deep Learning: Teaching Practices, Learning Partnerships, Learning Environments and Leveraging Digital. Deep Learning has become a major thrust in schools in an effort to promote student engagement. Deep Learning provides a forum for students to engage by integrating innovation and problem-solving into classroom learning, blending play-based learning with curriculum outcomes, and helping teachers try new practices with their students.

Employees (District-based)

The top two themes for this group were Engagement and Success (star rated 3.9) and Social and Emotional Learning (star rated 3.8). Commentary on Engagement and Success also supported “Deep Learning” experiences in schools, as well as building relationships with students. Thoughts included discussion on the need for more opportunities to interact with students and schools in meaningful ways. Comments on Social and Emotional Learning included encouraging the development of the whole person versus a focus on academics only, and highlighted the importance of mental well-being.

Employees (School-Based)

The top two themes from this group were Out of District Authority/Mandate (star rated at 4.6) and Well-being (star rated at 4.2). Thoughts under Outside of District Authority/Mandate included comments/suggestions which require allocation of human resources outside the Board’s current budget framework, and so cannot be directly

included in the Strategic Plan. Comments on Well-being included the need to develop means to support mental health of students and address behavioural incidents in the classroom.

Parents/Guardians

The top two themes of this group were Out of District Authority/Mandate (star rated at 4.2) and Engagement and Success (star rated at 3.9). Thoughts Outside of District Authority included the allocation of more human resources to the school system which, as noted previously, cannot be directly included in the Board's Strategic Plan as it falls outside its direct mandate, authority and control. Comments under Engagement and Success spoke to the development of strategies to engage students in meaningful learning, and to increase awareness of social and emotional learning. Other comments spoke to engaging more students in various curricular areas such as science, and providing opportunities that make school activities more meaningful.

School Council Members

The top two themes of this group were Out of District Authority/Mandate (star rated at 4.1) and Well-being (star rated at 4.1). Comments Outside of District Authority/Mandate again included calls for additional human resources, but noted calls for improved access to instructional resource teachers (IRT) in French Immersion. Thoughts under Well-being included updating curriculum (within the mandate of EECD) and resources; the need to support teachers in addressing mental health issues in schools, and the importance of student well-being in becoming successful learners.

Students

The top two themes for this group were Well-being (star rated at 4.2) and Engagement and Success (star rated 4.1). Thoughts under Well-being included the need to focus on mental health issues as well as student academic achievement. Students spoke to the importance of having healthy recess and meal options available in schools, and building awareness of mental health issues for the return to school after the pandemic. Discussion under Engagement and Success included the need for students to build better relationships with staff, as well as making class more engaging and fun while keeping an educational focus.

Other (Community Members)

The top two themes for this group were Engagement and Success (star rated at 4.2) and Out of District Authority/Mandate (star rated at 4.2). Discussion under Engagement and Success included the need to shorten or reduce curriculum outcomes in order to have time to emphasize relationships and supporting students. Comments suggested

providing more educational opportunities to enhance student engagement. More administrative time was noted as a means to build relationships. Thoughts under Out of District Authority/Mandate included reduction of class sizes, more resources in the classroom such as more teachers and guidance counsellors.

Stakeholder Meetings

Consultations with EECD, the NLTA, and the NLFSC, were held virtually. Feedback included recognition that the COVID-19 pandemic will impact the delivery of educational services in the province going forward, thus potentially impacting achievement of some indicators in Year One of the Strategic Plan. The EECD, NLTA and the NLFSC were supportive of the draft directions of the Strategic Plan. The NLTA offered to assist with facilitating partnerships with NLTA Special Interest Councils and the District in delivery of professional learning. The NLFSC also offered support in alignment of the plan with the Department of Education's School Development Model.

Themes

Thoughtexchange creates themes based on the highest star rating, and the highest number of thoughts. Eleven (11) themes were identified, which can be explored fully by clicking on each theme (coloured bar) and reviewing all thoughts contributed in the link below.

Read the Theme Report here: [Thought Exchange Themes](#)

The themes identified were as follows:

Out of District Authority/Mandate

The highest star rated thoughts were those outside the District's mandate or authority with 634 thoughts and an overall rating of 4.4. Thoughts in this theme referenced the increasing human resources such as teachers, guidance counsellors, instructional resource teachers, and occupational therapists; as well as calls for reduced class sizes and changes to teacher allocations.

Inclusion

This theme included 81 thoughts with an overall 4.2 star rating. Thoughts in this theme spoke to increasing human resources to support inclusion in the classroom.

Social and Emotional Learning

This theme included 223 thoughts with an overall 4.2 star rating. Thoughts in this theme noted that social and emotional learning needs are increasing amongst students, and that additional resources are required to support student needs.

COVID-19 Related

This theme included 64 thoughts with an overall 4.1 star rating. Participants spoke to the need to address the health and well-being of students as a result of COVID-19 and suspension of in-class instruction; increasing teaching and custodial resources to address social distancing and cleaning requirements, and the need for professional learning to better prepare teachers to integrate technology into remote instruction.

Well-being

This theme included 380 thoughts with an overall rating of 4.1. Participants spoke to an increase in a wide variety of behavioural, social, emotional and mental health needs in the classroom and requirements for more one-on-one guidance support.

Engagement and Success

This theme included 737 thoughts with an overall rating of 4.0. Thoughts focused on the need for resources to engage students, meet individual needs, and support student success.

Literacy and Numeracy

This theme included 163 thoughts with an overall rating of 4.0. Participants noted the importance of focusing on the foundational skills of reading and writing for K-3 students; the need for early intervention for children who are experiencing difficulty, and the importance of reading comprehension to success in all subject areas.

Professional Learning

This theme included 185 thoughts with an overall star rating of 4.0. Participants expressed thoughts on providing timely professional learning (PL) on new curriculum resources; the need for additional PL on intervention protocols/strategies to address student behavioural incidents; student self-regulation, student mental health, and the need for teachers to collaborate on teaching practices. Teacher wellness was also noted as a concern.

Technology

This theme included 206 thoughts with an overall star rating of 3.9. Participants spoke to the need to provide teachers and students with the technology to allow equitable access teaching and learning. Training teachers on technology to ensure student success was also cited. Participants noted the importance of ensuring access to the latest technology and accommodations for students.

Diversity

This theme included 27 thoughts with an overall star rating of 3.8. Participants spoke to the curriculum, noting the need to update health information and focus on mental health and LGBTQ inclusive information (EECD mandate); the need to promote respect, diversity and equality for all, and to have zero tolerance for racism, homophobia, transphobia and misogyny. Thoughts included the need to welcome everyone in our schools, and accept all differences in our students.

Other

This theme included 412 thoughts with an overall star rating of 3.8. Participants spoke to a variety of topics including collaborating with staff in decision-making; more class prep time and collaboration time for teachers, and support for students who do not respond to interventions.

Conclusion

The Newfoundland and Labrador English School Board thanks all those who participated in the Strategic Planning consultation. Information gathered will be reviewed and considered within the context of the Board's mandate and authority. We value the time participants have taken to consider the important priorities as we move forward to create the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan.

It is evident that the majority of participants in the exchange consultation were educators. This is understandable, however it did result in a somewhat skewed presentation of suggestions which tended to focus on resourcing issues over which the Board has no direct control - and therefore cannot form part of the organization's Strategic Plan. We did, however, appreciate hearing the opinions of our teachers and thank them for the input provided on all the themes presented.

During the consultation it became apparent that equity of access to resources (technology and internet) was a barrier to many families. As a result, the District will include equity as part of the draft Strategic Plan to be submitted to the Board of Trustees.

The Board recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic created impacts on the school system in the 2019-20 academic year, and its implications will be felt into the 2020-21 school year. This reality will also be reflected in the Strategic Plan, and all feedback will be considered as we move forward.

Appendix A

Discussion Guide



Discussion Guide

Strategic Planning Consultations 2020-2023

The Newfoundland and Labrador School Board is required to develop and implement a three-year Strategic Plan in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. The current Strategic Plan ends June 30, 2020. The Board is required to have a new plan for 2020-23.

The Board will continue to build on the work accomplished under the current plan, with an overarching focus on Student Engagement and Success, and Health and Well-Being and Operational Effectiveness.

Consultations on building the new Strategic Plan will include many stakeholders: staff, school councils, parents and (where appropriate) students. Consultation will be conducted using ThoughtExchange, an online consultation tool which enables individuals to provide input and rate the thoughts of others.

ThoughtExchange will ask a question that will enable participants to provide as many responses as they like, explain them, and then allow them to rate the thoughts of others. To help guide the online consultation, we have included information about the following potential focus areas:

- Student Engagement and Success
- Health and Well-Being
- Operational Effectiveness

Strategic Issue #1 Student Engagement and Success

Student success has been a recurring theme throughout past consultations and we anticipate it will also be a focus area in the upcoming plan. Student engagement is key

to student success and is linked to engagement with teachers and staff, school councils, students and their families to achieve a culture of learning. Some anticipated/potential focus areas are noted below.

Focus areas:

Engagement

Student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught. Generally speaking, the concept of “student engagement” is predicated on the belief that learning improves when students and teachers are inquisitive, interested, or inspired to learn new things.

Literacy

The District will be continuing its focus on developing literacy skills and providing students with the ability, confidence and willingness to engage with language to communicate effectively. There must also be a focus on ensuring students have the ability to communicate effectively.

Numeracy

Work will continue on improving students’ numeracy skills to help students become mathematically literate. Instruction in mathematical processes supports students in their thinking and ability to make connections, reason and communicate mathematically. Enhanced numeracy skills create student confidence and appreciation of mathematics as they continue their education.

Professional Learning

The District will continue working with teachers and staff to create school environments which promote responsive teaching and learning practices and collaboration with colleagues to effect the best possible learning outcomes for all.

- **Other?**

Strategic Issue #2 Health and Well-being

Health and Well-being is important for social-emotional learning. The District plans to continue its focus on health and well-being, and support a culture of equity across all levels of the system. Potential focus areas are noted below.

Inclusion

The District supports the right of all students to attend school with their peers, and to receive appropriate and quality programming.

Diversity

The range of human differences including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs.

Equity

Providing access and opportunity for all students through identification and removal of barriers to learning. Barriers can be:

- Physical: buildings and spaces that prevent access to work, school or community;
- Communication: that prevent access to information;
- Attitudinal: when people think and make decisions based on incorrect information (bias, stereotypes);
- Systemic: policies, practices, or procedures that discriminate against certain groups of people.

Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional Learning is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice is an alternative to punitive responses to wrongdoing. Inspired by indigenous traditions, it brings together persons harmed with persons responsible for harm in a safe and respectful space, promoting dialogue, accountability, and a stronger sense of community.

Online Safety

The District will continue work to ensure students are aware of their internet privacy and how their behaviours can support a healthy use of the internet. Students explore how the internet offers ways to collaborate with others while staying safe through employing strategies such as distinguishing between inappropriate contact and positive connections.

Healthy Eating

The District will continue to work with various partners to promote healthy eating in schools.

Physical Activity

The District is committed to encouraging increased physical activity, any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure.

Mental Health

The District will continue to support environments that promote and support positive mental health. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Strategic Issue #3 Operational Effectiveness

Operational Effectiveness is a continued focus for District Operations. Efficiency in operations supports the delivery of educational services for student achievement in welcoming and safe environments. Potential focus areas are noted:

Financial Management

The District will continue to enhance systems, procedures and practices to guide schools and regional offices in financial management, payroll, inventory and purchasing controls.

Student Transportation

The District will build on work to date on student transportation procedures and stakeholder engagement to reduce risk and enhance student safety.

Human Resources

The District will continue to refine recruitment and hiring practices to support current and future staff.

The Board is inviting feedback from your school community, and a ThoughtExchange question has been created for consideration and input. All voices matter, so your participation is important. **Please note the Board can only consider**

suggestions/comments on K-12 education matters which fall under its authority and control.

Please follow the link below to enter your thoughts on the following question. The exchange will close as of 4:00 p.m. (NT), Friday, May 15, 2020

**What more can we do as a District
that will have the greatest impact on student success?**

Focus areas may include, for example: literacy, numeracy, experiential 'hands on' learning, student engagement, relationship building, social-emotional learning, developing community partnerships, mental health, physical activity, inclusion, recognizing and celebrating diversity, professional learning, student leadership, or any other topic of your choice that falls within the mandate and control of the Board of Trustees of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District.

Thought Exchange link:

<https://www.thoughtexchange.com/join/> and enter Code 209-614-713

Other links - the NLESD Strategic Plan (2017-20)

<https://www.nlesd.ca/about/strategicplans/doc/strategicplan2017-20.pdf>, and NLESD 2018-19 Annual Report

<https://www.nlesd.ca/about/annualreports/doc/NLESDAnnualReport2019.pdf>

Premier's Task Force report: https://www.gov.nl.ca/eecd/files/task_force_report.pdf

and Education Action Plan <https://www.gov.nl.ca/eecd/files/eap-report.pdf>.



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