



The New Brunswick Teachers' Association

P.O. Box 752 • Fredericton, New Brunswick • E3B 5R6 • Tel. (506) 452-8921 • Fax (506) 453-9795 • www.nbta.ca

****Note: This editorial was submitted to Brunswick News and published in their "Focus on Education" supplement on Saturday, November 3, 2018.****

Teachers Working on Key Improvements in Public Education

By George Daley, President, New Brunswick Teachers' Association

Public education is the best hope of levelling the playing field for children and youth facing the greatest challenges, particularly those who have academic issues, mental health difficulties, physical limitations or are living in poverty. We know there are challenges facing the public education system in New Brunswick, but I am very proud of the amazing efforts and successes of our teachers.

Inclusion is Valuable and a Challenge

New Brunswick has the most inclusive education system in Canada. This is a major societal commitment to provide individual supports for ALL of New Brunswick's children, no matter how extreme those needs may be. Inclusive public education is society saying "all children have an equal right to learn". NBTA members support inclusive education practices where all students learn in a common learning environment, while recognizing that individual student needs may necessitate times when the learner is not able to participate in the regular classroom full-time. All pupils require a positive and safe learning environment free from frequent behavioural disruptions that endanger the educational and social development of all students. NBTA believes that clarification, common application, potential revisions to the Inclusive Education policy and the provision of resources that match expectations are necessary, and we are working toward this goal.

It is also extremely important that New Brunswickers realize that we have a unique education system. Not only do we have the most ambitious inclusion program, but no other province has an immersion program that involves such a high percentage of students, approximately 30% in the Anglophone sector. Simply put, we are trying to do what no other jurisdiction does, so comparisons are not always fair.

Committed to Consulting with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and Government

The NBTA is intentionally structured to gather input from our frontline members in schools. We know what is happening in our schools, and often, have ideas about how the system can be improved. Unfortunately, we have had approximately thirty-seven major changes in our system over the past thirty-five years - many of these have been initiated from "external forces," with little or no consultation with those who are best situated to know the needs of the system. We continue to work with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) on many files and remain committed to working with any government towards improvements.

We Can Not Lose Sight of our Successes

Teachers work diligently every day to make each child's educational experience the best, richest and broadest possible. When there are shortfalls in resources (supports), teachers pay for supplies out of their own pockets, organize fundraisers, and volunteer their time to coach or lead clubs. There are amazing initiatives occurring in every school as the curriculum is expanded beyond the classroom into projects supporting social justice, environmental science, gay-straight alliances, and welcoming and supporting newcomers. I would like to say "Thank You" to our parents, who are partners in this endeavor and our greatest supporters.