

# Individual Program Plan (IPP) Review

Themes and  
Recommendations

*February 2016*





# Introduction

In 2014, the Government of Nova Scotia announced an ambitious plan to review and modernize the public education system from grades Primary to 12. As part of that comprehensive work, in December 2014 Minister Karen Casey announced a province-wide review of individual program plans to find out if students are being put on plans for the right reasons and at the right time in their learning.

This report describes the IPP review and what it revealed. It was prepared by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, based on findings gathered and shared by the province's school boards.

Boards reported that, in the majority of the IPPs reviewed, there was evidence to support the need for an IPP. However, boards questioned whether so many students would need individualized programming if the provincial curriculum were more relevant and innovative, and if schools offered more differentiated instruction, a continuum of support, and culturally responsive teaching practices—especially for students of Aboriginal ancestry and African descent.

Boards also confirmed the need for schools to help parents and guardians understand the program planning process and to involve them in decisions affecting their children.

This report includes nine recommendations directed to the department and six recommendations for school boards. The recommendations align with our shared commitment to renew, refocus, and rebuild public education in Nova Scotia, outlined in Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education, 2015.<sup>1</sup> School Boards receive an annual grant for Special Education Policy Implementation which will be directed in 2015-16 to address the recommendations of this report.

Nova Scotia's public education system aims to equip all students with meaningful and relevant knowledge and skills, and the ability to make transitions from school to life beyond school.<sup>2</sup>

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“Individual Program Plans are important to ensure students get the help and support they need, but it concerns me that the percentage of IPPs have increased in every board since 2004–05, even with declining enrolment.”

*Minister Karen Casey*

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1. *The 3Rs: Renew, Refocus, Rebuild—Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education, 2015* ([ednet.ns.ca/files/2015/Education\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2015\\_EN.pdf](http://ednet.ns.ca/files/2015/Education_Action_Plan_2015_EN.pdf))

2. *Education Act, Nova Scotia, 1995-96* ([nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/education.pdf](http://nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/education.pdf))

The goals and policies of public education in Nova Scotia are documented in the Public School Programs (PSP). The PSP includes learning outcomes that define what all students are expected to know and be able to do at various points in their schooling.

All teachers have a duty to use practices that help their students achieve the outcomes of the public school program. These practices include differentiated instruction (anticipating and responding to the different ways students learn) and culturally responsive teaching.

## ADAPTATIONS

Students may need adaptations to help them achieve the outcomes. Adaptations are strategies and/or resources to accommodate the learning needs of an individual student. Adaptations do not change the public school outcomes; they are planned, implemented, and evaluated to enable the student to achieve those outcomes (Appendix A).

Adaptations may be made in one or more of these areas:

- ▶ organizational
- ▶ environmental
- ▶ instructional
- ▶ motivational
- ▶ assessment
- ▶ resources to help access and extend the curriculum

## INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM PLAN (IPP)

For some students, the provincial learning outcomes may not be applicable or achievable, even with adaptations. In that case, the student's program planning team works collaboratively to develop an individual program plan (IPP). An IPP changes the prescribed outcomes and/or adds new outcomes for the student.

Figure 1 summarizes the path to an individual program plan, and emphasizes the principle that special education should be “only as special as necessary” to help the student succeed in school and transition successfully to the next stage of learning.

**Figure 1.** Understanding special education in the context of the public school program

**Public School Programs (PSP)**

is a document outlining the goals, policies and framework of public education in Nova Scotia.

1

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

define what all students are expected to know and be able to do.

All students are entitled to differentiated instruction and culturally responsive teaching to help them achieve the outcomes.

2

**ADAPTATIONS**

are strategies and/or resources to accommodate the learning needs of an individual student.

Adaptations do not change the public school outcomes. They are planned, implemented, and evaluated to enable the student to achieve the outcomes.

3

**AN INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM PLAN (IPP)**

is developed for a student who cannot meet the curriculum outcomes of the public school program, or for whom the outcomes do not apply. The IPP replaces some or all of the outcomes from the public school program with individualized outcomes.

The Special Education Policy outlines the process for developing an individual program plan.

Individual program plans can be developed in one or more of the following areas:

- ▶ academic
- ▶ social development
- ▶ life skills
- ▶ enrichment

An IPP includes the following:

- ▶ summary of the student's strengths, challenges, and interests
- ▶ annual individualized outcomes, describing what the student is expected to know and be able to do over a one-year period and/or a semester
- ▶ specific individualized outcomes, describing the steps to reach an annual individualized outcome
- ▶ recommended services/instructional strategies
- ▶ responsibility areas
- ▶ reviewing and reporting dates
- ▶ signatures

A student may need a combination of adaptations and an IPP. For example, the student may need adaptations for language arts and an IPP for math.

## PROGRAM PLANNING TEAM

The program planning process is a team approach to planning an appropriate education for students with special needs. Members of a student's program planning team include:

- ▶ parents and guardians
- ▶ principal/vice-principal
- ▶ teachers and other professional staff, including resource teachers
- ▶ the student, when appropriate
- ▶ others, depending on the student's needs

Teachers are responsible for reporting the progress of their students, including students who have an individual program plan. IPP report cards are sent home at the same time as reports for all students who follow the public school program.

IPPs are reviewed by the program planning team at least twice a year, or each semester.

# Why a provincial review?

In December 2014, Minister Karen Casey requested that staff in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development work with school boards to ensure that individual program plans are meeting the needs of Nova Scotia’s students.

The minister noted that the percentage of IPPs had increased in every school board since 2004–05, despite declining enrolment (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Fewer students and more IPPs in Nova Scotia over a 10-year period

School Year	Students with an IPP	Percent Students with an IPP	Total Enrolment
2013-14	7,084 ▲	5.9 ▲	120,791 ▼
2012-13	7,174 ▲	5.8 ▲	122,643 ▼
2011-12	7,105 ▲	5.6 ▲	125,540 ▼
2010-11	7,061 ▲	5.1 ▲	128,131 ▼
2009-10	7,279 ▲	5.6 ▲	130,550 ▼
2008-09	6,763 ▲	5.1 ▲	133,134 ▼
2007-08	6,795 ▲	5.0 ▲	135,303 ▼
2006-07	6,545 ▲	4.7 ▲	139,296 ▼
2005–06	6,208 ▲	4.4 ▲	142,304 ▼
2004–05	5,943 ▲	4.1 ▲	145,396 ▼

“We will need to look at the criteria, the increasing numbers of plans, the role of parents, and most importantly, whether the learning needs of the students are being achieved,” said Ms. Casey. “We know there are many students who require extra supports, but we need to make sure we have the right balance to help them succeed and achieve their goals.”

*Minister Karen Casey,  
December 2, 2014*

The minister also noted a disproportionately high number of IPPs for students who self-identified as African Nova Scotian or Aboriginal. According to provincial data:

- ▶ African Nova Scotian students who self-identified were 1.5 times more likely to have an IPP in at least one subject or programming area than non-African Nova Scotian students.
- ▶ Aboriginal students who self-identified were 1.4 times more likely to have an IPP in at least one subject or programming area than non-Aboriginal students.

# How was the review done?

The review process was designed to provide boards with the resources to answer these questions:

Are IPPs being created for the right reason(s), at the right point in the student’s learning; and, if so, are they effectively meeting the student’s identified learning and social-developmental needs?

On January 16, 2015, there were 6,732<sup>3</sup> students in Nova Scotia (5.7 percent of all students) with an IPP documented in TIENET.

TIENET (Technology for Improving Education Network) is a web-based platform designed to manage the program planning process for individual program plans, as well as documented adaptations and other student services information.

The department selected a random stratified sample of 1,232 students who had an IPP in at least one subject or programming area (Figure 3).

3. This number does not include 225 publically funded students enrolled in the Tuition Support Program (TSP) who are registered in five school boards. All of these students had an IPP in order to meet TSP eligibility requirements, and were attending one of three designated special education private schools (DSEPS): Landmark East, Bridgeway Academy, or Churchill Academy.

**Figure 3.** IPP sample size per school board

BOARD	TOTAL SAMPLE PER BOARD				ABORIGINAL ANCESTRY		AFRICAN DESCENT		ALL OTHER
	Total IPPs to review	Percent of IPPS at board reviewed	Sample size for 8% confidence interval	Sample for Aboriginal ancestry, African descent	Included in 8% sample	Oversample for provincial results	Included in 8% sample	Oversample for provincial results	Included in 8% sample
AVRSB	159	18%	128	31	8	19	6	12	114
CBVRSB	155	17%	129	26	7	17	3	9	119
CCRSB	175	16%	132	43	10	29	4	14	118
CSAP	68	56%	67	1	1	1	1	0	65
HRSB	292	12%	141	151	7	43	16	108	118
SSRSB	110	32%	105	5	4	5	0	0	101
SRSB	128	30%	112	16	7	10	4	6	101
TCRSB	145	24%	120	25	9	16	5	9	106
Provincial Totals	1232	18%	934	298	53	140	39	158	842

The department provided boards with the following:

- a random sample of student identification numbers to use for review purposes
- a Scoring Guide and Rubric , developed and field tested in French and English in collaboration with boards, to ensure that IPP review teams applied the scoring criteria consistently
- reporting templates
- a timeline (Figure 5)
- a grant to support the IPP review process
- staff support, as needed

School Board Student Services Coordinators reported their findings to their boards and to the department. Teachers were consulted directly to develop the criteria, to respond on their practice in using the criteria and to provide advice on how to more effectively track and monitor student progress on IPPs.



## Population and Review Characteristics

The group of IPPs selected for review included two samples: one main sample designed to return results at the board level (confidence level of plus or minus eight percent) and a secondary sample designed to return results for students of Aboriginal ancestry and African descent at the provincial level (confidence level of plus or minus five percent). Students who claimed both Aboriginal ancestry and African descent were randomly assigned to one group or the other for the purposes of sampling.

In order to review an adequate sample size of IPP's, a stratified random sampling strategy was used, where a proportional number of IPPs for students of Aboriginal ancestry and African descent were embedded in the main sample, and only after this sample was taken were additional IPPs identified to review for students of Aboriginal ancestry and African descent.

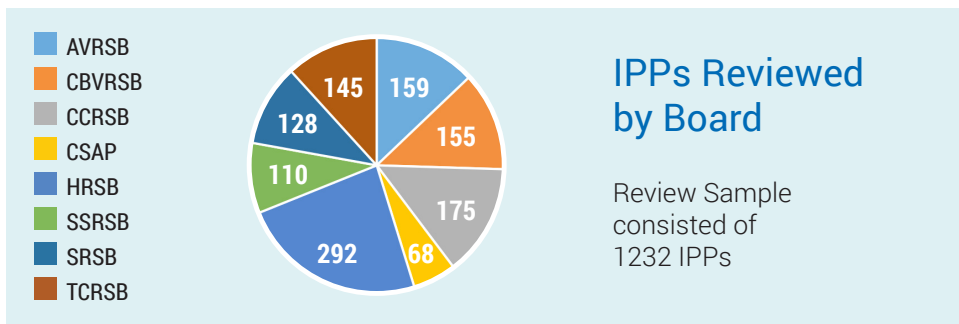
The charts on the following page represent the selected population characteristics at the provincial level.

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IPP characteristics in sample:

- Male 68%  
Female 32%
- Elementary 44%  
Junior High 34%  
Senior High 22%
- IPP Domains:  
Academic 58%  
Enrichment 2%  
Social Development 21%  
Life Skills: 20%





**Figure 4.** Total number of IPPs reviewed – % of IPPs reviewed by board ranged from 12% to 56% of total board IPPs

**Figure 5.** Timeline for the 2014-2015 IPP Review

WHO	WHAT	WHEN	
Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announce the review</li> <li>Define the project goals &amp; timelines</li> <li>Develop reporting templates</li> </ul>	Dec. 2014	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalize the Scoring Guide &amp; Rubric with board leads</li> <li>Field test the Scoring Guide &amp; Rubric with board teams</li> <li>Provide random samples to boards</li> </ul>	Jan. 2015	<p>“This review will help us focus our efforts for next year. TIENET has provided us with a valuable tool to help collect data and through this review we have had the opportunity to collect, analyze and action this information to make a change... it has validated where we knew we needed to go next.”</p> <p><i>Student Services Coordinators Provincial Meeting, June 2015</i></p>
School boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review a random sample of IPPs, drawing on data from TIENET, paper student records, and school visits, &amp; completing the IPP Scoring Rubric &amp; Individual Student Summary Sheets</li> </ul>	Feb.–Apr. 2015	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process findings &amp; complete final reports</li> <li>Share findings and identify themes at a provincial meeting</li> </ul>	May 2015 June 2015	
Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compile findings and identify challenges, responses, &amp; recommendations</li> </ul>	July–Aug. 2015	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft report for the Minister’s consideration*</li> <li>Follow up consultations with teachers</li> </ul>	Oct.-Dec. 2015	

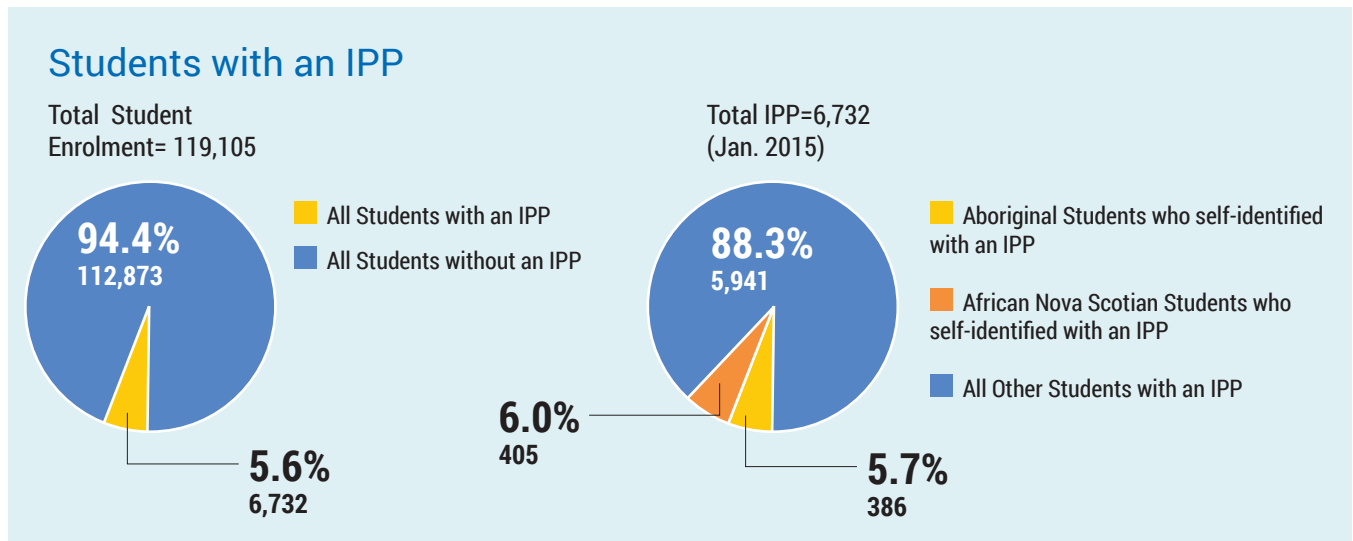
\*The department will implement recommendations as directed by the Minister in alignment with Nova Scotia’s Action Plan for Education 2015.

# Summary of findings

On June 4, 2015, school boards shared their findings at a provincial meeting held at Horton High School in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. Participants identified common themes and proposed a framework for recommendations.

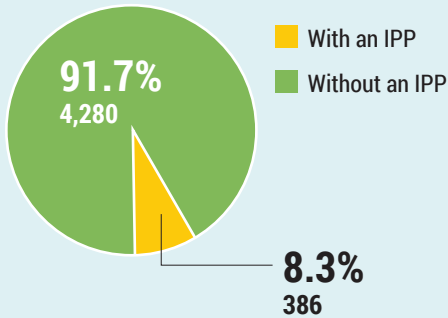
Boards reported that, in 87 % of the IPPs reviewed, evidence existed that supported the development of an IPP for the student. However, boards noted that other factors come into play in relation to the development of program plans, including the degree to which instruction is differentiated, the relevance of curriculum to individual students, the continuum of supports available, and culturally responsive instruction—particularly for students of Aboriginal ancestry and African descent.

In 82% of the IPPs reviewed, it was determined that an IPP was developed at the right point in time in the student’s learning and was the most appropriate programming decision to meet the identified learning and social developmental needs of the student. However in the case of African Nova Scotian students who self-identified, only 66% of the IPPs reviewed were deemed to be the most appropriate programming option for the student, while 75% of the IPPs reviewed of students of Aboriginal heritage who self-identified were deemed the most appropriate programming option for the student.

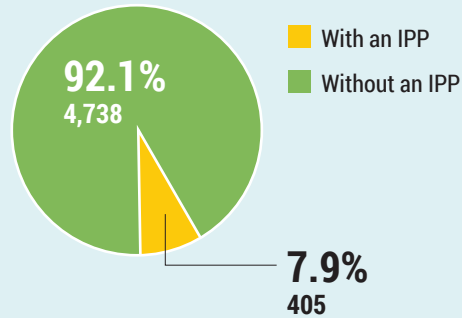


## Percent of Aboriginal and African Nova Scotian Students who self-identified with IPP

Self-identified Aboriginal Students (4,666)



Self-identified African Nova Scotian Students (5,143)



Note: Provincial percent of Non-Self-Identified Students with an IPP is 5.4%

Board data demonstrated a close connection between the students' challenges and the development of the annual and specific outcomes in approximately 50% of the IPPs reviewed. Similar percentages were found documenting the links between the students' strengths and the selection of strategies to meet outcomes. The effectiveness of an IPP in meeting the student's learning and social development needs is dependent upon a strong link between identified strengths and challenges to specific and annual individualized outcomes. This component of the individual program plan was an area identified through this review as requiring further attention.

In discussion of the IPP results, boards confirmed the need to do more to support parents and guardians in understanding the program planning process and to involve them in decisions affecting their children.

All boards found inconsistencies in transition planning. They noted that program planning teams need to focus on writing transition outcomes and exploring transition options—especially for transitions from school to school and from school to the community. Across the province, board data showed that 42% of the IPPs reviewed included transition outcomes. This statistic needs to be considered in the context of several factors, including: time of the year when the data was collected and the grade and individual needs of the student. It should be noted that in Nova Scotia's Action

Plan for Education 2015, there is a commitment to develop and implement a new provincial transition planning guide to support consistent transition planning for students across the province.

The review underlined the important role that TIENET has played in supporting the consistent implementation of the Special Education Policy and, more specifically, the program planning process. Boards identified the need to continue to support school teams in using TIENET effectively.



## Themes in the Review

### ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR STUDENTS OF ABORIGINAL ANCESTRY AND AFRICAN DESCENT

The data indicated that students of Aboriginal ancestry or African descent are disproportionately identified for individual program planning. Boards reported that program planning teams need to consider a student's racial/cultural identity, strengths, challenges, and interests to ensure appropriate program planning on a more consistent basis.

Although Race Relations, Cross-Cultural Understanding and Human Rights (RCH) teams are working with teachers around culturally responsive teaching in our schools, Student Support Workers, Aboriginal Student Advisors, and RCH Coordinators, have reported that they are underutilized when program planning teams meet to develop IPPs.

### APPROPRIATE PROGRAMMING

In 13% of the IPPs reviewed, evidence was not documented in TIENET or in the paper cumulative file to support the decision to develop an IPP.

In terms of required Monitoring and Review of the IPP, this occurred in 58% of the IPPs reviewed. This requires attention as these two stages are critical components in ensuring the ongoing appropriateness of outcomes in relation to the student's needs. Boards identified that issues outside the IPP domains (academic, social development, life skills, enrichment) may affect the student's

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"An IPP was the appropriate programming solution; however, there is evidence that some IPP outcomes, as written, are not necessarily linked to the student's strengths and challenges."

"Relationships are a key component of the program planning process. We can see where there are strong relationships in a school and community."

"The role of assistive technology and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has had a significant impact on our ability to support student learning."

*Comments from board review teams*

ability to meet PSP outcomes. For example, mental/physical health issues, attendance, family responsibilities etc. may present barriers to achievement and although the student may be capable of meeting outcomes, schools may look to supporting them through IPP development rather than utilize other more appropriate options (e.g., credit recovery, virtual school courses etc.).

Although IPPs are individual and outcomes often cross subject areas as well as domains, the largest proportion of IPPs (provincially) are developed in the academic domain.

Of the 1,232 reviewed, only 1 IPP was for Enrichment. In 2014-15, there were 29 IPPs with enrichment learning outcomes across the province.

Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education 2015 committed to developing provincial criteria for placing students on an IPP. The department has completed this work and has updated TIENET to include the IPP criteria. The process follows the steps in the program planning process and requires evidence of documented adaptations before considering or proceeding with the development of an IPP. There are steps built into the system that do not allow a program planning team to proceed without having met all the criteria, including documented adaptations. There is also a provision for a principal when a student comes to school with complex needs and already has a plan in place. In this case, documented adaptations may not be necessary. (see Appendix B for IPP Criteria)

## WORKING WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND OTHER TEAM MEMBERS

Boards reported that program planning is strengthened when schools ensure that there is meaningful communication and collaborative relationships among all team members, including parents and guardians, and students when appropriate. The survey showed that in 80% of the IPPs there was evidence of parent involvement and communication in the program planning process. As evidence was gathered from TIENET data, this percentage is likely higher as not all communication was documented or recorded in TIENET.

The IPP reporting template works well for tracking outcomes, but there was general consensus among board staff that it is cumbersome and there were areas that could be improved in terms of its use in communicating student progress to parents and guardians.

## TIENET

TIENET is an effective tool for supporting special education, and for internal communication at the school, but it is only as effective as the data that staff provide. For example:

- ▶ The minutes of program planning team meetings may not reflect the complexity of discussions during meetings.
- ▶ Ongoing and meaningful communications with parents and guardians were not always documented on TIENET.
- ▶ Parent/guardian signatures on the IPP were not always documented on TIENET.

## TRANSITION PLANNING

Transition planning is a critical part of the program planning process. However, boards reported that program planning teams need to put more emphasis on writing transition outcomes and exploring transition options.

Boards reported that the program planning process and IPP development is more established for the early grades, P-6. Transitions are generally less complicated for students in the early grades because they spend a full year in the same classroom with the same teacher, and stay within the same school from grade to grade. But as students move from elementary to middle/junior high school and from middle/junior high school to high school, they face more complexity and may need more transition support, with or without an IPP.

The data showed that Transition outcomes were present in 42% of IPPs reviewed. However, this needs to be interpreted with caution as the sample size does not support a grade level review and it was therefore not possible to disaggregate the data in this way. Transition planning from school to community can be impacted by students' limited options in the community, although it does not negate the need for planning. Boards noted that more work is needed on grade-to-grade, school-to-school, and school-to-community transitions.

One of the goals of Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education is to create better and more consistent transition planning for all students.

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NOTE: Due to the gradual implementation of TIENET across the province, at the time of the review, boards were at various stages of implementation. This affected access to the information and consistency in reporting as data was partly gathered from paper files and partly from the new student information system.

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NOTE: Although the focus of the review was on gathering data to inform future practice, board review teams said they would take immediate steps to address the issues or concerns they found.



# Recommendations

## Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Recommendations

### PROMOTE EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING THROUGH TARGETED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND RESOURCES

1. Work with the Centre of Excellence to redesign the Bachelor of Education programs, specifically in the areas of individualized program planning, adaptations, differentiated instruction, safe and inclusive schools and equity education.
2. Revise Supporting Student Success: Resource Programming and Services (2006) to advance the principles of differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), adaptations, and evidence-based assessment.
3. Revise the Program Planning Process Modules (resource for teachers) to reflect the findings of this review. The revised modules will include how TIENET is used to document and support the program planning process and to track and enhance communication with parents and guardians.
4. Update the Program Planning Guide for Parents and Guardians to support students, parents/guardians and educators in enhancing their understanding and to help ensure meaningful parental involvement in the program planning process. This is also included in the Department's commitments under Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education, under Inclusive Education.
5. Work with the Education and Innovation Programs and Services Division to participate in the creation of a streamlined, and innovative curriculum to address the "full range of student learning strengths and needs, including opportunities for enrichment", as per the Minister's Action Plan. (p.40)

### EMPHASIZE CULTURALLY RELEVANT PROGRAMMING AND STUDENT WELLNESS

6. Work collaboratively across government, school boards, and community partners to promote culturally responsive instruction, assessment, evaluation and interventions, in particular for students of Aboriginal ancestry and African descent.

7. Strengthen partnerships with community-based organizations and across government to promote student wellness and student engagement through increasing access to resources for teachers in such areas as social emotional development, mental health and school to community transitions.

## MONITOR SYSTEM-WIDE PROGRESS

8. Report on department and school board progress in implementing the recommendations of the IPP Review, at regularly scheduled meetings of the Provincial Student Services Coordinators.

(Provincial Student Services Coordinators meet three times a year. These meetings bring together department staff and one representative from each school board.)

9. Conduct a follow up provincial IPP Review in 2017-2018.

## School Board Recommendations

The following recommendations for school boards were proposed by all or most of the boards through their IPP review teams:

1. Use the revised Program Planning Modules to support professional learning for teachers to ensure that specific strengths, challenges and interests are used to inform programming decisions (Adaptations and/or IPPs).

2. Continue to engage in professional development for teachers regarding TIENET. Ensure that teachers and program planning team members keep up-to-date records in TIENET, including all meeting minutes and a log of correspondence with parents/guardians.

3. Support educators to consider equity education issues as a part of the program planning process and to promote culturally responsive instruction for all students, and in particular for students of Aboriginal ancestry and African descent.

4. Ensure that there are mechanisms in place to consider input from Student Support Workers and Native Student Advisors in the program planning process.

5. Ensure that Transition Planning is included in IPPs where appropriate.

6. Do random audits to ensure compliance with the IPP criteria. (see Appendix B)





# Appendices

- A. Fact Sheet, *Adaptations – Strategies and Resources*
- B. Provincial criteria for placing a student on an IPP



# Adaptations

## Strategies and Resources

- > **Curriculum outcomes** are statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do.
- > Adaptations do not change the public school curriculum outcomes; they enable students to achieve them. Any student might require an adaptation to support their learning; formal identification of a special need or disability is not required.
- > Adaptations that may provide enrichment can be found in the "Options in Programming" section of *Gifted Education and Talent Development* (Education and Early Childhood Development 2010) available at [studentservices.ednet.ns.ca](http://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca)

**An adaptation** is a documented strategy or resource that accommodates the learning needs of an individual student. An adaptation is planned, implemented, monitored, and evaluated to enable a student to achieve the public school curriculum outcomes.

One or more of the following strategies and resources may be explored to support student success:

### **Organizational adaptations, such as**

- copied notes or notes in advance
- a student buddy system
- a daily agenda and graphic organizer(s)
- regular student-teacher check ins and developing learning contract(s)

### **Environmental adaptations, such as**

- appropriate lighting
- an organized workspace
- appropriate seating (e.g., proximity, study carrel)
- alternate locations

### **Instructional and presentation adaptations, such as**

- adjusting the length, complexity, or timelines of assignments
- organizing learning experiences around a variety of levels, themes, or topics
- highlighting key concepts and vocabulary and providing step-by-step directions
- supplying supplementary materials (e.g., calculator, prompts, models, audio, and video)

### **Motivational adaptations, such as**

- using a checklist so the student can monitor their own progress
- using a visual timer to help the student manage time
- developing a reward system based on the student's interests
- matching teaching, assessment, and resources to strengths, challenges, and interests

### **Assessment adaptations, such as**

- demonstrating learning in different ways (e.g., oral presentation, learning portfolio)
- offering tests and exams in alternate formats (e.g., Braille, orally with scribe/note taker)
- providing an alternate location
- providing extra time

### **Resources to help access or extend the curriculum, such as**

- utilizing assistive technology (e.g., a pencil grip, headphones, text-to-speech software)
- offering various formats (e.g., print, electronic, audio) or additional materials
- reviewing vocabulary or formulas at the beginning of units
- providing images and objects to enhance understanding of texts and formulas

- > **The Program Planning Team** includes those who have responsibility for the student's learning—the teacher, principal/vice-principal, guidance counsellor, parents and guardians, the student (when appropriate), and professionals supporting the student.

- > **Assessment adaptation—“verbatim scribe”:** If a scribe (note taker) is required, the scribe writes exactly what the student dictates. Scribes do not edit student responses or imply that changes are required. Assessment content is not interpreted or summarized by the scribe. Questions are read verbatim and explanations are not permitted.

## Who decides that a student requires an adaptation?

The teacher may decide that an adaptation is required to help a student achieve the curriculum outcomes. Sometimes a minor in-class adaptation is enough, especially with additional information from parents/guardians about what works well at home. If the teacher-level adaptation isn't enough, the teacher may submit a “Referral to Program Planning Team” form to the school principal. A Program Planning Team could then be formed and work together to determine other adaptations or supports.

## What are the procedures for documenting and reviewing an adaptation?

Adaptations are documented in a form that the teacher fills out in TIENET, Nova Scotia's online student services information system. Adaptations are not documented on a report card or transcript.

Adaptations are monitored and reviewed throughout the school year to determine if they are helping the student achieve the curriculum outcomes. The decision to add or remove an adaptation is based on ongoing review and evaluation of their effectiveness. The teacher or Program Planning Team should consider reducing the dependency upon, or eliminating, adaptation(s) when possible.

## Can an adaptation be provided for assessment purposes?

Yes. An adaptation used to support the student during instruction may be provided during assessment if the adaptation does not compromise or alter the assessment's validity. Adaptations must be documented in TIENET.

## If the student required an instructional or assessment adaptation, will the adaptations continue in a post-secondary setting?

Adaptations are not documented on student report cards or transcripts, so a post-secondary institution would not be aware an adaptation was in place. Students who are transitioning to post-secondary options should be taught to self-advocate to get the support they will need to succeed in a post-secondary setting and future endeavours.

## What if the student continues to struggle with the curriculum outcomes even though adaptations are in place?

The Program Planning Team may consider developing an Individualized Program Plan for the student. An IPP is developed and implemented when public school curriculum outcomes are not attainable or applicable. An IPP is written documentation of “individualized” annual and specific outcomes that are developed in one or more of the following areas: academic, enrichment, social development, and life skills. An IPP is monitored throughout the school year to ensure the plan is meeting the student's needs.

For more information about adaptations, please contact

**School:** School Principal

**School Board:** Student Services Coordinator

**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development:**  
Student Services  
(902) 424-7454

Evaluation Services  
(902) 424-7746

The Student Services fact sheets series and related policies, guidelines, and procedures may be found at [studentservices.ednet.ns.ca](http://studentservices.ednet.ns.ca).



## Annual IPP Development Criteria (To be checked by the Chair of the Program Planning Team)

*Prior to proceeding with the development of an annual IPP,  
the following criteria must be met:*

- During the current school year, the program planning team has reviewed student progress in previous year/semester in relation to the Public Schools Program or the previous IPP.
- An assessment of individual student learning needs (Comprehensive Assessment) has been completed in the current school year.
- The Program Planning Team Meeting minutes in the Student's Confidential Record (for the current or previous school year) reflect the discussions of programming and services options, including documented adaptations.
- The Program Planning Process: A Guide for Parents has been provided and reviewed with parents/guardians.
- Parents/guardians (and student, when appropriate) have actively participated throughout the program planning process leading to the decision to proceed with an IPP. Parents/guardians (and student, when appropriate) have been informed about what an IPP is, what evidence exists for an IPP to be developed and the potential implications of an IPP. Communication, co-operation and collaboration among professionals and parents/guardians are essential in order to include the student's racial/cultural identity, strengths, challenges and interests to ensure appropriate programming.

Approval to proceed with the development of an IPP, other than as outlined above, can only be given by the School Administrator (override approval is required below).

## Override by School Administrator (can only be checked by a School Administrator)

*Not all of the above criteria are applicable for this student and as  
School Administrator, I am overriding the above criteria and  
permitting the development of an IPP for the following reason:*

- The student is transitioning into grade Primary with identified special needs that will require the development of an IPP; the Program Planning Team may proceed to Stage 5 (Individual Program Plan development)
- The student with an IPP is transitioning in from another school or jurisdiction and their IPP has been reviewed. Evidence exists in the accompanying documentation that the above criteria have been met.
- The parents/guardians have not participated in Program Planning Team meetings and there is documentation on file that parents/guardians have been contacted in more than one way and invited to participate in the Program Planning Team meetings. Ongoing attempts will be made to involve parents/guardians.