

Resolutions Adopted at the 2013 AGM

Resolution 1

Sustainable Funding
for Mental Health
Supports

Rationale:

The Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development recognizes and endorses the fundamental right of all students to full and equal participation in education in the Province of Nova Scotia. This right is protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Teachers are responsible for educating all students who are placed under their care and supervision. This includes responsibility for program planning, teaching, and evaluation as well as addressing the unique safety and well-being needs of all students (*Education Act, Sections 26 and 38*).

The Nunn Commission Report (2006) recommends that the government Departments of Education, Community Services, Justice, and Health and Wellness work collaboratively to address concerns affecting children. Additionally, the Commission identified that schools have the potential to become centres of service delivery for these government agencies and non-government organizations.

Child and youth mental health is becoming increasingly recognized as an important health concern in Canada. Approximately 20% of children and youth experience some form of mental disorder with most mental health disorders appearing before the age of 25. Only a minority of those children and youth requiring professional care receive it, and the pathways to this care are complex and often do not meet the needs of those that require it.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education and the Sun Life Chair in Adolescent Mental Health at the IWK Health Centre and Dalhousie led in the development of a mental health strategy for the Province of Nova Scotia entitled, "Well-Beings: the Nova Scotia School Mental Health Framework" (May 2011).

Therefore,

Whereas given the prevalence and early onset of mental health disorders, children and youth constitute a prime focus group for the national and provincial mental health strategy; and

Whereas mental health is a fundamental component of student health and well-being; and

Whereas there are many complexities in supporting children and youth with mental health disorders; and

Whereas, in part, the goals of the Nova Scotia School Mental Health Strategy recognize the need to improve mental health literacy, reduce stigma, enhance social and emotional learning, use evidence-based programs, and improve access to mental health care for children and youth; and

	<p>Whereas it is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the school boards to ensure the success of all students; and</p> <p>Whereas ensuring a student’s success in school requires a broad view and comprehensive plan to support the whole student, including their social and emotional well-being; and</p> <p>Whereas school is recognized as a site where the needs of children and youth can be addressed; and</p> <p>Whereas we recognize that teachers and support staff are currently maximizing the professional resources and supports currently available; and</p> <p>Whereas inter-departmental collaboration and cooperation is generally accepted as best practice and educational partners across the province, including the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, have been calling for a comprehensive, inter-agency approach to supporting Nova Scotia children and youth, it is now time to address specific initiatives that require a multi-departmental response; and</p> <p>Whereas it is recognized that support for youth mental health requires resources that can meet the unique needs of students in our schools;</p> <p>Be it resolved that the Nova Scotia School Boards Association advocate to and encourage the Nova Scotia Departments of Education and Early Childhood Development, Community Services, Justice, and Health and Wellness to provide sustainable funding and strengthen efforts to increase professional and financial supports for school boards to better deliver and periodically evaluate the mental health resource needs of educators and support staff and to maximize service and supports for students.</p>
<p><u>Resolution 2</u> Safe Working and Learning Environment</p>	<p>Rationale: The Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the NSSBA and individual school boards across Nova Scotia recognize and endorse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the fundamental right of all students to appropriate and quality educational programs and services in the Province of Nova Scotia as protected under the <i>Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> and the <i>Nova Scotia Human Rights Act</i> ; and (b) the right of all staff members to have a safe working environment as protected under <i>Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety</i>. <p>In the recent past, the volume of complex and/or serious medical needs of students has increased to an unprecedented and, possibly, unanticipated level. Furthermore, the volume of incidents resulting in serious violent behaviors of students towards other students and staff members has dramatically increased. While schools and staff members do their best at meeting these needs, there are some rare exceptional situations which may be beyond the safe scope of a school setting and/or school staff training.</p> <p>Whereas the Province of Nova Scotia has an inclusive public education system that supports maximizing the opportunity for success of all students; and</p>

	<p>Whereas the Province of Nova Scotia endorses the safe work environment for all employees and learning environment for all students; and</p> <p>Whereas there are some rare situations involving exceptional medical conditions and/or behaviours which would benefit from deeper analysis regarding the appropriateness and quality of the programs and services currently provided; and</p> <p>Whereas Schools Plus, where offered, is not designed to meet the requirements of these rare situations; and</p> <p>Whereas the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development provides leadership and direction in setting policy to address the special needs of students;</p> <p>Be it resolved that the Nova Scotia School Boards Association advocate to the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to consult with relevant agencies/stakeholders then analyze and address by clarifying policy and procedures as they relate to rare exceptional situations of complex and/or serious medical needs and/or serious violent behaviours so that school boards can best meet the needs of each student while also addressing the safe working environment of staff and learning environment of students.</p>
<p><u>Resolution 3</u> Equity in Preparing Young People For Good Jobs and Citizenship</p>	<p>Whereas the minister of education and early childhood development introduced the ability for high school students to earn a personal development credit through recognized community organizations; and</p> <p>Whereas service learning activities are recognized as a tremendous method of gaining valuable life skills outside the traditional classroom, while making a strong connection with their community; and</p> <p>Whereas many students residing throughout Nova Scotia are not able to access the recognized programs, but are very active, providing service to their community outside of the regular school day;</p> <p>Be it resolved that the Nova Scotia School Boards Association petition the minister of education and early childhood development to provide requirement guidelines for the expansion of recognized activities, eligible for a personal development credit. Such activities will enable students to earn a personal development credit based on their respective service learning initiatives provided to the community outside the instructional day. Guidelines to be approved and finalized by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.</p>

<p><u>Resolution 4</u> Specific Determining Factors To Identify Schools For Review</p>	<p>Rationale:</p> <p>The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board is required on a regular basis to undertake a review of schools for possible closure or reconfiguration based on provincial legislation. The Province has consistently indicated there is increasing amount of excess school facility capacity in a period of declining student enrolment.</p> <p>The process of school review is a very important and sensitive issue with school boards and to those stakeholders facing possible changes to their school community. There can be various factors which can impact the board during its deliberations and decision process. An initial component is that possible determining factors should be used to identify possible schools for in-depth review within the school review process prescribed by the Province.</p> <p>Whereas the Province of Nova Scotia through the Education Act determines the school review process to be followed by school boards in reviewing schools for permanent closure; and</p> <p>Whereas the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has consistently indicated there is declining enrolment within many Nova Scotia schools; and</p> <p>Whereas the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has indicated declining enrolment has resulted in an increasing excess capacity of classroom and space within provincial schools; and</p> <p>Whereas reducing excess school capacity can result in potential financial savings or cost reductions; and</p> <p>Whereas there can be a number of other determining factors which could indicate and identify a school for possible closure; and</p> <p>Whereas it is important to have consistent and standard factors used by all school boards;</p> <p>Be it resolved that the Province, through the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, provide specific determining factors, which are qualitative and quantifiable to enable school boards to identify a school or schools to be considered as part of a school review process leading to possible closure.</p>
<p><u>Resolution 5</u> Timely, Regular Collaboration Between the Department of Education and NSSBA</p>	<p>Rationale:</p> <p>The Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Nova Scotia School Boards Association and school boards across Nova Scotia share a common interest in wanting the best educational experience for students in Nova Scotia. Due to the government policy of <i>Back to Balance</i>, significant and, in some cases, difficult decisions impacting on the education of students have been made by the minister of education over the past few years. Limited input was sought by the minister of education through the Nova Scotia School Boards Association and elected school boards prior to making some of these important decisions or in the implementation of some of these decisions. At this point, it is difficult to predict the status of future provincial budgets or to know how decisions surrounding the budgets will impact the future of education in the Province of Nova Scotia.</p>

	<p>Whereas the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Nova Scotia School Boards Association and school boards across Nova Scotia share a common interest in wanting the best educational experience for students in Nova Scotia; and</p> <p>Whereas the minister of education and early childhood development is tasked with the responsibility of making critical decisions and plans relating to the education of students of Nova Scotia; and</p> <p>Whereas collaboration with relevant stakeholders improves the quality of information used for decision making and planning; and</p> <p>Whereas the NSSBA and school boards provide an enriching perspective on the education of students;</p> <p>Be it resolved that the Nova Scotia School Boards Association advocate to the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to commit to timely, regularly scheduled collaboration with the Nova Scotia School Boards Association and school boards regarding the education of students in Nova Scotia through the Memorandum of Understanding.</p>
<p><u>Resolution 6</u> Schools Plus</p>	<p>Whereas the NSSBA (2010) delivered a report calling for greater interdepartmental delivery of services to youth and families in Nova Scotia; and</p> <p>Whereas an independent, external three year evaluation has demonstrated and acknowledged the SchoolsPlus program as a model that demonstrates positive outcomes for children, youth and families; and</p> <p>Whereas SchoolsPlus is experiencing success at the local school and community level due to the extra-ordinary efforts of front-line staff (Facilitators and Community Outreach Workers) in creating cooperative relationships with front-line staff of other agencies; and</p> <p>Whereas these cooperative, local working relationships continue to be limited due to systemic barriers due to a lack of change in individual agency policy and protocol; and</p> <p>Whereas the government of Nova Scotia has acknowledged the success of the SchoolsPlus model by providing additional support and action for the SchoolsPlus program by expanding the program; and</p> <p>Whereas the program does require commitment, action and resources from other agencies to accomplish the objectives; and</p> <p>Whereas our experience with SchoolsPlus, so far, is that the model continues to have shortcomings due to the inability to have a genuine and productive collaborative approach to comprehensive service planning for students by some of the partner agencies; and</p> <p>Whereas the co-location of the majority agencies in the school setting is still a challenge; and</p> <p>Whereas the lack of vertical communication between senior levels of government</p>

	<p>and the field operations is very limited or still non-existent and appears to be one of the reasons better collaborative relationships are not developing systemically; and</p> <p>Whereas the inter-agency model is still suffering from the “silo” effect;</p> <p>Be it resolved that the Nova Scotia School Boards Association request that the Province and NSSBA establish a joint ad hoc committee of senior officials, ministers and deputy ministers to review the policy and protocol barriers of inter-agency service delivery and establish measures to effect collaborative approaches by all agencies to improve the effectiveness of the programs to youth and families.</p>
<p>NSSBA Internal Resolution</p>	
<p><u>Resolution 7</u> Early Childhood Development</p>	<p>Whereas the Department of Education has been expanded to include Early Childhood Education; and</p> <p>Whereas early childhood education is critical in preparing all children for Grade Primary; and</p> <p>Whereas school boards have various formalized, professional networks already in place with other government departments and agencies which serve children and youth; and</p> <p>Whereas many elementary schools in Nova Scotia have unused space;</p> <p>Be it resolved that the education committee of the Nova Scotia School Boards Association or a new ad hoc committee be given the mandate of defining how the school boards may become involved in and/or support early childhood development in Nova Scotia.</p>