

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24

Education



MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister of Education, I am pleased to present the 2023-24 Annual Report for the Department of Education, which was prepared in accordance with the **Transparency and Accountability Act** as a Category 1 entity. This report covers the department's annual objectives for April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

During the 2023-24 reporting period, the Department of Education's mandate encompassed Early Learning and Child Care, K-12 Education, Education Operations, Post-Secondary Education, and Education Transformation.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the exceptional efforts of our departmental staff, partners, and stakeholders. Their dedication and hard work have been crucial in achieving our 2023-24 objectives.

Following are some of the key accomplishments:

- Introduced a new information management system: Early Learning Gateway;
- Completed integration of the former English school district into the Provincial Government; and,
- Increased accountability and focus on results for adult literacy projects.

My signature below is indicative of my accountability for the results reported.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "K. Howell".

Hon. Krista Lynn Howell
Minister of Education

Table of Contents

Departmental Overview	1
Organizational Structure	1
Staff and Budget	3
Vision	5
Mandate	5
Lines of Business	6
Highlights and Partnerships	8
Highlights	8
Partnerships	16
Report on Performance	18
Issue One: Early Learning and Child Care	18
Objective 2023-2024	19
Issue Two: K-12 Education	25
Objective 2023-2024	26
Issue Three: Post-Secondary Education	29
Objective 2023-2024	30
Opportunities and Challenges	33
Financial Information	35

Departmental Overview

Organizational Structure

The Department of Education (the department) is a category one Provincial Government entity under the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. In 2023-24, it was responsible for achieving outcomes with respect to provincial early learning and child care, K-12 education, and post-secondary education. The department has the objective of building an education system in Newfoundland and Labrador to foster safe, inclusive, and healthy school environments for all children and youth in early childhood settings, licensed childcare, and family resources centers, all students in kindergarten to grade 12 and post-secondary education, and all adult learners.

The former Newfoundland and Labrador English School District was integrated into the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador as of **January 1, 2024**. A new branch, Education Operations, was created within the Department of Education.

The NLSchools brand represents the K-12 English public school system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

During 2023-24, programs and services were provided through six branches:

Early Learning and Child Care

This branch includes the divisions of Provincial Policy, Regional Operations, and Accountability and Reporting.

Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education

This branch includes the divisions of Evaluation and Research, Programs and Services, Program Implementation, and Student Services.

Education Operations

This branch includes the divisions of School Communications, School Systems, Corporate Services, Human Resources, and Information Technology.

Post-Secondary Education

This branch includes the divisions of Literacy and Institutional Services, and Student Financial Services.

Corporate Services

This branch includes the divisions of Financial Operations, and Policy and Information Management.

Education Transformation

This branch does not have any divisions and is focused solely on education transformation in the K-12 education system.

Location of Department of Education

The main offices of the Department of Education are located on the 3rd and 4th floor in the West Block of the Confederation Building, 100 Prince Philip Drive, St. John's.

The Learning Resources Distribution Centre is in Building 909, Pleasantville, St. John's, and the Student Aid Office is located at Coughlan College, 216 Prince Philip Drive, Memorial University, St. John's Campus.

Early learning and child care services are provided throughout the province in offices located in St. John's, Whitbourne, Harbour Grace, Clarenville, Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, Springdale, Corner Brook, Stephenville, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and Labrador City.

The headquarters for NLSchools and the Avalon Region office is located on the 3rd floor of West Block in St. John's with regional offices located in Gander, Corner Brook, and Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

Additional information on the Department of Education can be found at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/education/>.

Staff and Budget

As of March 31, 2024, the Department of Education had 6,872 employees. For the 2023-24 fiscal year, the departmental budget was \$1,280,505,700.

Branch	# of Employees	Budget
Executive Services ¹	16	\$1,344,900
Corporate Services	23	\$4,743,700
Early Learning and Child Care	109	\$66,679,100
K-12 Education ²	6,673	\$816,374,700
Post-Secondary Education	51	\$391,363,300
Total	6,872	\$1,280,505,700

¹ This number includes communications and executive support staff.

² This number includes staff from K-12 Education, Education Operations, and Education Transformation, including applicable NLSchools staff.

NLSchools Employees

NLSchools employed 11,119 full-time, part-time, and casual employees and support staff to deliver curricula and programs and to support the business functions of the public K-12 English schools.

NLSchools employees fall within Education Operation Branch and K-12 Education Branch.

Note that NLSchools employees working in student transportation and school facilities are with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (TI), and employees working in procurement are with the Public Procurement Agency (PPA).

The following numbers reflect NLSchools staffing levels in all government departments as of **March 31, 2024**.

Employee Group	Labrador	Western	Central	Avalon	(2023-24) Number of Employees
Teaching Staff	301	964	1,456	3,025	5,746
Student Assistants	46	253	221	423	943
Support Staff	117	271	488	456	1,332
Program Specialists/Itinerants	17	42	49	103	211
Regional Offices/ Headquarters	10	36	37	114	197
Total Number of Full-Time Employees	491	1,566	2,251	4,121	8,429
Substitute Teachers	1,693				
Substitute Student Assistants	35	127	123	211	496
Casual Employees	57	154	160	130	501
Total Number of Substitutes/Casuals	2,690				
Total Number of Employees	11,119				

Vision

Effective and modern learning environments that foster inclusive and healthy communities for all learners in the province.

Mandate

The Minister of Education is responsible for all matters relating to a high-quality educational system in the province, from early learning and child care to K-12 education and post-secondary education.

The mandate for the department is primarily established under the Departmental Notices under the **Executive Council Act**. Additionally, the following acts (including any associated regulations) support the department's mandate:

- **Child Care Act;**
- **College Act, 1996;**
- **Council on Higher Education Act;**
- **Degree Granting Act;**
- **Memorial University Act;**
- **Memorial University Pensions Act;**
- **Private Training Institutions Act;**
- **Public Libraries Act;**
- **Schools Act, 1997;**
- **Student Financial Assistance Act, 2019;**
- **Teacher Training Act;** and,
- **Teachers' Association Act.**

Lines of Business

Departmental programs and services enable a high-quality learning environment from early learning and child care to K-12 to post-secondary education, focused on ensuring all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have a bright start in life and continued opportunities for learning.

What we do:

Early Learning and Child Care:

- Develop and monitor legislation, policies, and programs to support licensed child care services and early learning programs.
- Provide financial support for the development and operation of child care centres, family child care homes, family child care agencies, and community agencies, such as family resource centres.
- Support children with diverse learning needs in early learning environments.
- License, monitor, and inspect early learning and child care services.
- Monitor and evaluate the early learning and child care system through data collection, analysis, planning, and research.
- Support children's transition from licensed early learning and child care to the K-12 education system.
- Provide parent resources and supports such as the child care subsidy and parent resource kits.
- Support early literacy through funded positions within public libraries which support early childhood educators.

K-12 Education:

- Oversee K-12 educational policies and legislation.
- Fund and support programs of study for the K-12 schools in English and French.
- Provide learning resource materials for the K-12 schools in English and French.

- Develop and monitor English and French curricula and programs.
- Provide distance education.
- Create and/or select curriculum documents and teaching resources.
- Evaluate curriculum and assess outcomes.
- Provide programs and resources to support students with diverse learning needs.
- Monitor education system performance through data collection and analysis, planning, and research.
- Set requirements for student diplomas and certificates.
- Set requirements for teacher certification.
- Collaborate with other branches regarding program implementation, student assessment and evaluation and teacher professional learning.
- Fund and support public libraries.

Education Operations:

- Responsible for the delivery of programs and curriculum, student assessment and evaluation, student placement, and teacher professional learning.
- Offer personal and career guidance and counselling in NLSchools.
- Provide extra-curricular and co-curricular programs and activities.
- Manage fiscal, human, and other resources to ensure quality teaching and learning, appropriate programs and services, and safe and healthy learning environments beneficial to students.

Post-Secondary Education:

- Support the delivery of post-secondary education through Memorial University of Newfoundland, College of the North Atlantic, and private training institutions.
- Fund public post-secondary institutions.
- Regulate and monitor private training institutions.
- Administer the student financial assistance programs.
- Provide support to the Council on Higher Education.
- Provide programs and services for adult learning.

Highlights and Partnerships

The details below illustrate some of the key accomplishments and partnerships of the Department of Education in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

Highlights

Early Childhood Education Week: On May 30, 2023, Minister of Education joined the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador, to proclaim May 28 to June 3 as Early Childhood Educators Week¹. The Early Childhood Educators Week celebrates the crucial role that early childhood educators play in children's early development through responsive care and play-based learning.

Improving Access to Early Learning and Child Care for Health Professionals: In November 2023, the Provincial Government announced a new initiative to enhance early learning and child care in Newfoundland and Labrador². The initiative will develop four new child care sites with two in St. John's and one each in Bonavista, and Corner Brook. This adds approximately 220 spaces once operational which is anticipated to be completed within the 2024-2025 fiscal year. These sites will be managed by YMCA and will respond to the needs of health professionals.

New Model of Assessment and Evaluation for High School Students: In the 2023-24 fiscal year, public exams were officially eliminated from the provincial school system, and it is anticipated that a new model of assessment and evaluation will be implemented for the 2025-26 school year³.

¹ Early Childhood Education Week

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2023/education/0530n01/>

² Improving Access to Early Learning and Child Care for Health Professionals

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2023/exec/1116n04/>

³ Details on the New Model of Assessment and Evaluation for High School Students can be found at

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2023/education/0922n03/>

Provincial Scholarships: In 2023-24, more than \$200,000 in provincial scholarships were awarded to 201 recent high school graduates across Newfoundland and Labrador⁴. The scholarships ranged in value from \$1,000 to \$2,500 and are intended to help students pursue post-secondary education. Because public exams have been officially eliminated from the provincial school system, the scholarship process was applied to the score students received based on school examinations in the relevant subject areas for all members of the class of 2023.

The scholarships awarded include:

- The Junior Jubilee Scholarship, valued at \$2,500. This was awarded to the student with the highest scholarship score in the province.
- The Constable W.C. Moss Scholarship, valued at \$1,000. This was awarded to a child of a member of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (active, retired, or deceased) who, other than the Junior Jubilee winner, achieved the highest scholarship score.
- The Electoral District Scholarships, valued at \$1,000 each. These were awarded to the three high school graduates with the highest scholarship score in each electoral district, other than the Junior Jubilee and the Constable W.C. Moss Scholarships recipients.
- The Centenary of Responsible Government Scholarships, valued at \$1,000 each. These were awarded to the remaining high school graduates with the highest scholarship score, who did not qualify for the Junior Jubilee, Constable W.C. Moss, or the Electoral District Scholarships.

Safe, Caring and Inclusive Graduating Student Leadership Bursary: The Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools Graduating Student Leadership Bursaries are awarded to students who help establish school-based protocols and practices that challenge all

⁴ A complete list of the Provincial Government Scholarship winners for 2023 can be found at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2022/education/1103n03/>

forms of bullying, harassment, and inappropriate behaviour, and to create an environment of acceptance, belonging, respect and empathy.

This Bursary acknowledges the contributions from youth in establishing and maintaining safe, caring, and inclusive schools and communities, and promotes student awareness of the Safe and Caring Schools Policy.

For the 2023-24 fiscal year, the Provincial Government provided \$7,500 through the Safe, Caring and Inclusive Schools Graduating Student Leadership Bursary, shared among 15 students⁵.

Awards for Teaching Excellence: In recognition of primary, elementary, or secondary teaching excellence in all disciplines, the Provincial Government announced the recipients of the Premier's Award for Teaching Innovation and the Minister of Education's Award for Compassion in Teaching.

The 2023 Premier's Award recipients were:

- Wendy Marsh, Peacock Primary, Happy Valley-Goose Bay
- Brigitte White, École C.C. Loughlin School, Corner Brook
- Joanne Broders, Smallwood Academy, Gambo
- Denise Hogan, Carbonear Collegiate, Carbonear
- Peter Constantine, Paradise Elementary, Paradise
- Yvonne Dawe, Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation, St. John's

The following were the 2023 Minister of Education's Award recipients:

- Honda Martin, Cloud River Academy, Roddickton

⁵ A complete list of recipients of the Leadership Bursary for 2023 can be found at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2022/education/0622n05/>

- Perry Hann, Corner Brook Regional High, Corner Brook
- Cameron Snow, Exploits Valley High, Grand Falls-Windsor
- Danielle Doyle, Carbonear Collegiate, Carbonear
- Gregory White, St. Kevin's High School, Goulds
- Penny Pinsent, St. Mary's Elementary, St. John's
- Tara Reid, École St. Matthew's School, St. John's
- Mathieu Laviolette, École des Grands-Vents/École Rocher du Nord, St. John's
- Tonya Kearley-Russell, Holy Trinity High, Torbay⁶

Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence: This annual award honours exceptional elementary and secondary school teachers for their remarkable achievements in education and their commitment to keeping students engaged in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) learning. In 2023-24, the Provincial Government recognizes and congratulates two teachers who received the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence, and three teachers recognized with certificates of achievements.

- Margaret Reha-Taylor and Jill Rose, both teachers at Waterford Valley High in St. John's, were the 2023 recipients of a Certificate of Excellence.
- Lisa Watts Cobb and Roxanne Penney, both educators at Beachy Cove Elementary in Portugal Cove – St. Philip's, were recognized with a Certificate of Achievement.
- Heidi Kavanagh, a teacher at Holy Trinity High School in Torbay, received a Certificate of Achievement in STEM⁷.

These awards demonstrate how Newfoundland and Labrador educators are among the best in the country and have a continued focus on the province's young learners.

⁶ The detail of recipients for both Premier and Minister's Awards for 2023 can be found at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2023/exec/0621n02-2/>

⁷ The detail of recipients for both Prime Minister's Awards for 2023 can be found at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2023/exec/1017n09/>

K-6 Mathematics Bursary Program: The program aims to build capacity among K-6 teachers and enhance mathematics pedagogy skills in primary and elementary schools. The department introduced a bursary program to assist and encourage teacher participation in university-level courses to improve their mathematics content and pedagogy skills required for grades K-6. The department is providing funding annually for a K-6 Mathematics Bursary Program.

Since 2018, more than \$330,000 has been invested in mathematics professional learning opportunities for educators, including \$81,000 in bursaries for 140 K-6 teachers. From April 1, 2023, until March 31, 2024, 15 bursaries were awarded for a total of \$10,000.

Provincial Government Phasing Out 1.6 Kilometre School Bus Policy: The Provincial Government announced the phasing out of the 1.6 kilometre requirement to access school bus services in the K-12 school system throughout the province, starting in September 2023. This change will be in place for the 2024-25 school year for all areas where busing exists today⁸.

As a result of these changes, over 4,000 students who were not previously eligible will be able to access school bus transportation for the upcoming school year. Once fully implemented, any student who lives within 1.6 kilometres of a school that has bus services will be able to avail of school bus transportation.

Council of the Federation Literacy Award: The Council of the Federation Literacy Award celebrates the valuable contributions made by Canadians in the field of literacy, as well as adult learners who demonstrate an exceptional commitment to literacy. The

⁸ Provincial Government Phasing Out 1.6 Kilometre School Bus Policy

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2023/exec/0807n02/#:~:text=Andrew%20Furey%2C%20Premier%20of%20Newfoundland,in%20the%20upcoming%20school%20year.>

award is presented each year to learners, educators, volunteers, community organizations, and businesses in each province and territory.

ABC Life Literacy Canada was the recipient of the 2023 Council of the Federation Literacy Award for Newfoundland and Labrador. ABC Life Literacy Canada is dedicated to advancing literacy by empowering adult learners, increasing awareness, and providing support to the adult learning sector.

This organization has been the lead on two programs that are focused on supporting and empowering individuals in the province: Activate Learning and Learning at the Museum.

- The Activate Learning program is designed to foster a culture of lifelong learning and reduce stigma. The Activate Learning program served 24,216 learners from November 2019 to April 2023 through 680 workshops, home learning activities, and workbook downloads.
- The Learning at the Museum program allows Newfoundland and Labrador residents to avail of cultural literacy activities specific to the province's unique history and culture⁹.

Funding to Local Projects to Strengthen Adult Literacy: Four projects have received a total of \$996,174 in funding by the Government of Canada's Skills for Success Program¹⁰.

- The Newfoundland and Labrador Laubach Literacy Council received \$247,755 for the Employability Skills for Entry-level Health Care Workers project to bridge the gap between underrepresented groups experiencing employment barriers and employers in the health-care sector.

⁹ Council of the Federation Award for Literacy on International Literacy Day
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2023/exec/0908n04/>

¹⁰ Nearly \$1 Million in Funding to Local Projects that Strengthen Adult Literacy
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2024/education/0131n02/>

- Econext received \$360,419 for the Green Economy Adult Learner Career Exploration project to provide adult learners with micro-learning opportunities, information on career pathways, and work placements all specific to the emerging provincial green economy.
- Council of Marine Professional Associates received \$140,000 for the Elevate Empower Employ: Women Ocean Innovators in Newfoundland and Labrador project to address the barriers that prevent women from entering the ocean workforce.
- The Murphy Centre received \$250,000 for TECHPREP, a program that helps create opportunities for participants to enter the technology sector to attract, recruit and train participants for the technology sector, with a focus on those participants who require supportive interventions.

Integration of English School District: As of January 1, 2024, the integration of the former Newfoundland and Labrador English School District was complete¹¹. The NLSchools identity will represent the K-12 English public school system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

All school-facing functions (including the daily operations of schools), teacher hiring and allocation, and student transportation remain unchanged. The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure has undertaken new responsibilities, which include the daily operations of student transportation, as well as supporting maintenance services to school facilities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Integration allows staff from the former school district and from government to work together to support improved educational outcomes in a more unified way. Aligning program and curriculum development and enhancing service delivery will improve the education experience and help students excel.

¹¹ Provincial Government Completes Integration of English School District
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2024/education/0102n02/>

Education Accord NL: The Minister of Education announced the creation of Education Accord NL on January 25, 2024. Dr. Anne Burke and Dr. Karen Goodnough were appointed as co-chairs of the Accord to develop a targeted approach to transforming and modernizing Newfoundland and Labrador's education system.

The Accord aims to create better outcomes for students and learners while also supporting the Provincial Government's goal of becoming one of Canada's healthiest provinces by 2031.

Education Accord NL will focus on four pillars:

- Early learning and childhood development;
- Education engagement and transformation;
- Health and well-being in education environments; and,
- Post-secondary education and learning across the life span.

Education Accord NL will focus on delivering a 10-Year Education Accord with short, medium, and long-term goals for an education system that better meets the needs of students and learners in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Accord will be delivered to government by December 31, 2024¹².

¹² Provincial Government Announces the Creation of Education Accord NL
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2024/education/0125n03/>

Partnerships

Provincial Government Partnered with Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security to Improve Food Access for Families: The Provincial Government and the Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security revealed their joint effort to invest \$1.8 million in a groundbreaking program aimed at enhancing food access for vulnerable families in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Provincial Government will allocate \$300,000 annually for the next three years, which will be matched by the Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security. The department issues the funding to designated family resource centres, and this funding will provide direct support to eligible families across the province, targeting food insecurity and aiming to improve health outcomes for participants.

Eligible families will be provided with support to access nutritious food. This may utilize grocery store gift cards, store credit where gift card capacity does not exist, or gift cards to non-profit food programs. The program began in January 2024 and will be delivered by 16 family resource centres in Newfoundland and Labrador¹³.

Inclusive Education Awards: The department partners with Inclusion Canada Newfoundland and Labrador to present the Inclusive Education Award every year to honour a K-12 school that has shown an exceptional spirit in creating a school that is welcoming and inclusive for students with an intellectual disability.

The recipient in 2023 was Leo Burke Academy in Bishop's Falls. The school's committee, RAD (Respect, Acceptance and Diversity), stands firm on creating a positive atmosphere of belonging and positivity in their school.

¹³ Full details on the news regarding this provincial initiative can be found at <https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2023/education/1211n03/>

The Special Olympics Program is a highlight for students within the school whether they are participating or supporting their classmates. Leo Burke Academy never excludes students, and all celebrate equally. Staff and students show up for each other and create an atmosphere of belonging and inclusion.

PAL System for International Students: In January 2024, the Federal Government announced changes to the International Student Program, including a cap on international students and a new requirement for a provincial attestation letter for all study permit applications.

The Department of Education, in collaboration with Office of the Chief Information Officer, developed a provincial attestation letter (PAL) system and portal that allows post-secondary institutions to upload PAL requests and the department's staff to produce PALs in a timely fashion. The provincial PAL system was developed in less than two months and produced its first PAL on April 1, 2024.

Report on Performance

Throughout the 2023-24 reporting period, the Department of Education made substantial efforts to achieve the first year goal and objective of the 2023-26 strategic plan.

Strategic Issue One: Early Learning and Child Care

The Department of Education is responsible for supporting residents' learning through all ages. The department is committed to promoting early learning and child care across Newfoundland and Labrador. The department undertook significant steps to improve equitable access to early learning opportunities, supporting the developmental potential of children, supporting families/caregivers and early learning professionals, supporting early learning and child care operations and family resource centers, providing more available and affordable licensed early learning and child care services, and facilitating a seamless transition into the K-12 education system.

In the 2023-24 reporting period, the department achieved significant milestones, including continued work towards the development of the Newfoundland and Labrador Early Learning Action Plan, the federal Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan, and implementing the Child Care Demand Portal. The department implemented early childhood education workforce strategies to increase trained professionals in the early learning and child care sector. These significant achievements align with the department's strategic directions for better living and a bright future.

Goal Statement

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Education will have an accessible, high-quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and child care system.

Objective 2023-2024

By March 31, 2024, the Department of Education will have improved programs and services within the early learning and child care system.

Discussion of Objective Indicator Results

Publicly released the Early Learning Action Plan and implement actions to improve programs and services

In 2023-24, the department undertook the development of new Federal and Provincial Early Learning Action Plans, which included a legislative review of the **Child Care Act** and regulations. Public consultation sessions were held across the province to seek input and recommendations on the development of these Action Plans. Public consultations on the new Early Learning Action Plans offered an opportunity for those in the early learning and child care sector, community partners, and the public, to provide input and feedback on programs and legislation, and improvements to help meet the needs of children and families in Newfoundland and Labrador.

During the 2023-24 reporting period, the development of the new Federal and Provincial Action Plans have been ongoing and a draft document has been created. It is expected that these Early Learning Action Plans will be released in 2024-25, and work toward identified actions will continue.

Reviewed and modernized the child care Operating Grant Program to support child care operations and enhance services

The Operating Grant Program (OGP) helps address affordability of early learning and child care services for families with young children. It is a key component of the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

In June 2023, the department engaged Deloitte to review and evaluate the OGP to determine if it is meeting its objectives, and to identify potential improvements, unintended impacts, financial efficiencies, and accountability mechanisms. The review focused on the OGP as a key mechanism within the broader system.

Deloitte provided the [Operating Grant Program Review Report](#) to the department in November 2023 with multiple recommendations, and the department has been working on implementing the recommendations.

As of March 31, 2024, the following recommendations have been implemented:

- Increased infant care spaces.
- Elimination of the two-tiered rate structure.
- Increases to the minimum enrollment criteria for licensed early learning and child care centres.
- Clarification of voluntary closure policies.
- Offering multi-year service agreements.
- Clarification of payment schedules.

In 2023-24, the following recommendations are in progress for implementation:

- Streamlining operational funding across the department into a “one-stop shop” for early learning and child care service providers.
- Ensuring flexibility in funding allocations to achieve desired outcomes.
- Creating mechanisms that allow families to seek support and enhance their role in supporting system accountability.
- Revisiting financial accountability measures.
- Exploring enhanced employee benefits.
- Expanding training and professional learning opportunities.
- Continuing efforts to professionalize the early childhood educator role.
- Developing a pre-approved list of community partners.

Reviewed the inclusion program and made required changes to policy

The Child Care Inclusion Program provides assistance to licensed early learning and child care services to ensure children with exceptionalities (diagnosed or undiagnosed) can participate to their fullest potential in a regular licensed early learning and child care program.

In 2023-24, a review of the Inclusion Program was completed and changes to policy are being developed to improve access, processes, and efficiencies within the program area. A sub-committee of the Minister's Early Learning and Child Care Advisory Committee was created with a focus solely on inclusion.

The department partnered with the Department of Health and Community Services to implement a pilot project. This project allows children with autism, who require support to participate in programming, to be accompanied by Home Therapists when attending licensed early learning and child care services.

Increased the number of pre-kindergarten sites and enhanced KinderStart

Implementation of the Pre-Kindergarten program began in fall 2022 under the Canada-Wide Canada-NL Early Learning Child Care Agreement. It is targeted to be fully implemented by 2025-26.

As of March 31, 2024, there were 28 pilot sites in operation. There were 457 Pre-Kindergarten spaces created since the pilot program started in November 2022.

Implemented a new information management system inclusive of a parent portal

The Early Learning Gateway is an online platform to help improve access to licensed early learning and child care in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Child Care Demand

Portal is the first phase of an Early Learning Gateway, which will be a robust information management system for families/guardians and the department.

The Portal is a tool to assess and understand the current demand for licensed early learning and child care services in the province. The Portal collects information on the age range of the child, the type of care required, and whether the child is currently on a wait list. This information assists the department to better focus on where space creation is needed most and will guide plans for targeted space creation. Also, the Portal provides an avenue for families/guardians to submit information if they suspect a licensed or unlicensed child care service is not adhering to the **Child Care Act** and Regulations.

On October 17, 2023, the Portal became available to families/guardians. Families/guardians were asked to enter information about their child care needs, which assists the department in identifying where space creation is needed.

The department has started work on the second phase of the Early Learning Gateway, which will connect families in need of licensed early learning and child care with services that have space available. The second phase will be launched in 2024-25.

Developed and implemented Early Childhood Education workforce strategies to increase the number of trained professionals in child care

During the 2023-24 reporting period, as part of the department's ongoing efforts to support and enhance the early childhood education sector, several initiatives have been implemented focusing on recruitment, retention, and recognition of early childhood educators (ECEs). Below is a summary of the key actions taken in each area:

Recruitment:

- An additional 214 early childhood educators working in the system as of March 31, 2024.
- Worked with the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills to support their facilitation of Virtual Job Fairs (vFairs). On September 20, 2023, a vFair was held with a specific focus on ECEs.
- Continued funding to post-secondary institutions to ensure programs are more accessible in order to increase the number of annual ECE graduates.
- Early Childhood Educators Human Resource Council was funded to create professional ads to recruit new ECEs. The campaign titled, "You See. We See." used digital advertising, paid social media, organic social media, earned coverage/placements, and printed posters.
- Francophone students now have access to Newfoundland and Labrador ECE bursaries if they are attending a French ECE post-secondary program in Canada that is recognized by the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador (AECENL). A Francophone bonus has also been added to the Wage Grid.

Retention:

- Implemented the Recruitment and Retention Grant for ECEs who meet the eligibility criteria under the grant program to receive \$2,500 upon initial certification. Further grants of \$2,500 up to a total of \$7,500 will be awarded following each three-year renewal of Levels 1 to 4.
- Provided additional funding to AECENL to better support ECEs and their retention efforts.
- Funded AECENL to hire an ECE Navigator to help professionalize the sector by providing support and guidance to those who are working and those who are entering into the early learning and child care field. The ECE Navigator assists ECEs with issues and concerns by providing resources and contact information through the relationships they have built with different organizations, colleges, and provincial government departments.

Recognition:

- Implemented the wage grid as of April 1, 2023 (retroactive to January 1, 2023) to support licensed early learning and child care centres in offering accessible and quality child care by recognizing the valuable contributions of ECEs.
- Held regular virtual town hall meetings to maintain connection and communication with the sector.

Reviewed parent supports and family resource programs

Family resource centres (FRCs) are community-based organizations that deliver programs, supports, and resources to pregnant mothers and families with children, from birth to age six, in supportive environments.

In 2023-24, the department has continued to provide support for FRCs, offering a variety of free community-based activities and resources for children and families. Reviews of the FRCs, as well as the parent resource kits, have been conducted and recommended actions will begin in 2024-25.

Issue Summary

In the 2023-24 reporting period, the department continues strengthening its efforts to create a high-quality, affordable, accessible, and quality early learning and child care system throughout the province.

Objective 2024-2025

By March 31, 2025, the Department of Education will have implemented initiatives to better support high-quality early learning and child care programs and services.

Indicators:

- Released the Federal and Provincial Early Learning and Child Care Action Plans and continued implementation of actions

- Continued implementation of the Pre-Kindergarten Program
- Launched second phase of the Early Learning Gateway
- Continued implementation of the remaining seven recommendations from the OGP Review Report
- Completed the review of Family Resource Centres and respond to recommendations from Family Resource Centre Program Review Report

Strategic Issue Two: K-12 Education

The department is committed to ensuring that all children in the province have access to a safe, inclusive, and healthy school environment and an education system responsive to students' strengths and needs. Improvements in the programs and services offered in the provincial K-12 system support the learning needs of students and help prepare them for future educational and career opportunities, as well as participation in their communities and society.

In the 2023-24 reporting period, the department and relevant government entities successfully integrated the former English school district into the provincial government. Additionally, the department has undertaken full implementation of the Responsive Teaching and Learning database and implemented the Daily Physical Activity Policy to create a more safe and inclusive school environment that is responsive to the diverse strengths and needs of our students and school staff.

Goal Statement

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Education will modernize the K-12 system towards improved learning outcomes for students.

Objective 2023-2024

By March 31, 2024, the Department of Education will have continued with the integration of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) into Government.

Discussion of Objective Indicator Results

Created a joint partnership of district program specialists and department program consultants

Integration of the former English school district was completed in January 2024. The integration allows staff from the former school district and the government to work together to support improved educational outcomes in a more unified way. The goals of integration are to improve educational outcomes by aligning programs to help students excel, as well as improving service delivery and operational efficiency.

In 2023-24, the department has made efforts to create and promote a joint partnership of the former district program specialists and the department program development specialists. Through the transition, the department re-organized the staff structure for the program specialists and program development specialists, and now they are staff under the K-12 Education Branch within the department. This change promotes streamlining of services, increased efficiency in service delivery, and improved communication between program specialists and program development specialists.

Created a seamless transition for students and teachers of the NLESD into Government

As of January 1, 2024, the former English school district has been integrated into the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The NLSchools brand now represents the K-12 English public school system in Newfoundland and Labrador. All school-facing

functions (including the daily operations of schools), teacher hiring and allocation, and school transportation remain unchanged. The department worked with stakeholders to support a seamless transition for students and teachers throughout the integration process.

In 2023-24, the department has taken various actions to improve the educational experience of students in K-12 public education during transition, including:

- Embarking on a transformative educational process to review and evolve the K-12 educational curriculum.
- Developing and implementing a Grade 10 literacy and numeracy assessment by 2025 to ensure that students have the expected mathematics and literacy skills as they leave the K-12 public education system.
- Continuing to promote the new Supporting Teachers/Educators in Lifelong Learning and Reflection (STELLAR) Program, which promotes professional learning opportunities for educators in mathematics education.
- Implementing the Newfoundland and Labrador Standards of Practice for Mathematics Teaching which is designed to promote excellence among math teachers through professional learning, engaging in reflection on practice, and working collaboratively with others in mathematics teaching.
- Phasing out the 1.6 kilometre requirement for access to school bus services, making school transportation accessible for an additional 4,000 students.
- Expanding the Kids in the Know Body Safety Program, which engages students with interactive activities to help build skills that increase personal safety and reduce risk of victimization online and offline.
- Allocating over \$127 million through Budget 2023 to educational infrastructure, including new schools in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, Cartwright, and Kenmount Terrace in St. John's, to support modern learning environments.
- Providing training for all teachers on the Responsive Teaching and Learning (RTL) database.
- Ratifying a new four-year collective agreement with teachers, which provided a significant pay raise.

- Issuing over \$800,000 in funding for teacher recruitment and retention.
- Collaborating with the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA) to host a virtual Teachers Think Tank and committing to implement various initiatives to help address some of the immediate issues identified during the Teachers Think Tank to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers.
- Allocating ~ \$3 million to increase student assistant hours, to the equivalent of 104 full-time student assistant positions.
- Developing a new digitized curriculum platform, with anticipated partial launch in September 2024.

Introduced earlier teacher allocations for deployment

Historically, teacher allocations were not communicated to the school districts until spring (March or April) each year. The department released the teacher allocation numbers in early January 2024. The department intends to continue providing the early notification to assist with teacher recruitment and retention thereby supporting student success throughout the K-12 education system.

Issue Summary

During the 2023-24 annual reporting period, the department demonstrated significant dedication in addressing the challenges of integrating the former English school district into the provincial government and in creating a seamless transition for students and teachers. The department also committed to work closely with multiple stakeholders to create pathways for student success within the K-12 education system, leading to a more inclusive and responsive learning environment for both students and school staff.

Objective 2024-2025

By March 31, 2025, the Department of Education will have implemented a modernized assessment and evaluation practice.

Indicators:

- Introduced a new Model of Assessment and Evaluation for high school students
- Implemented a new Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting Policy
- Commenced developing a computer-based assessment system for provincial assessments

Strategic Issue Three: Post-Secondary Education

The department is dedicated to partnering with institutions, businesses, and the Federal Government to enhance post-secondary education, thereby fostering a brighter future and strengthening the province's economic foundation. To this end, the department offers direct support to Memorial University (MUN) and College of the North Atlantic (CNA), while also regulating and monitoring private training institutions. Additionally, the department is responsible for assisting students through the administration of the Newfoundland and Labrador Student Financial Assistance Program.

In 2023-24, the department continued supporting the provincial student aid program to help remove financial barriers for students pursuing post-secondary education, and enhanced oversight of adult literacy projects. These actions are in line with the department's Strategic Directions for fostering a stronger economy and a promising future.

Goal Statement

By March 31, 2026, the Department of Education will have supported the development of a robust and responsive post-secondary system that is foundational to economic diversity and innovation.

Objective 2023-2024

By March 31, 2024, the Department of Education will have assessed and updated financial supports provided to post-secondary students and adult literacy program providers.

Discussion of Results

Ensured the student financial assistance program continues to address financial barriers to attending post-secondary education

The Tuition Relief Grant (TRG) was introduced in 2022-23, providing up to \$345 per course for undergraduate students at Memorial University whose families are qualified as low- or middle-income (based on family size and income).

The department continued the TRG for 2023-24 to address financial barriers for eligible students to attending post-secondary education. This program offers up to \$3,450 per academic year to eligible applicants. In addition, it provides \$100 per week of study in non-repayable assistance and \$100 per week of study in interest-free loans, which can be fully eliminated upon graduation. These initiatives contribute to an average provincial debt in repayment of \$903 per borrower as of March 31, 2024.

Updated agreement process for Adult Basic Education providers with re-structured funding formula for the training of vulnerable groups and support for student transitions

The Adult Basic Education (ABE) program is a provincial high school equivalency program for adult learners. ABE providers have expressed concerns about the increasing costs of doing business while rates have not changed. In 2023-24, the department began reviewing the agreement process, and multiple stakeholder consultations were held between November 2023 and January 2024.

The department is now developing a new delivery structure and agreement process for ABE providers aimed at addressing the educational needs of vulnerable groups and modifying operational requirements to ensure sustainability of services.

Increased accountability and focus on results for adult literacy projects

Through systematic evaluation and ongoing refinement, the department has fostered increased accountability for adult literacy projects. Key indicators for adult literacy initiatives include learner engagement rates, satisfaction levels, numbers of active learners, referrals, service usage, and learner retention.

In 2023-24, the department extended the Adult Literacy Pilot Projects to continue to raise awareness of literacy, increase access to literacy services, enhance literacy programs, and better meet the literacy needs and demands of adult learners across the province.

Issue Summary

Throughout the 2023-24 reporting period, the department continued enhancing and providing supports through student financial assistance programs, such as the Tuition Relief Grant, to support students attending post-secondary education through MUN, CNA, and private training institutions. Furthermore, the department made continuous efforts to strengthen the adult literacy system by increasing accountability in adult literacy projects. These initiatives empowered adults to acquire essential literacy skills, enabling them to lead vibrant, productive lives and actively contribute to the provincial economy. To achieve this, the department continued to improve the accessibility and quality of adult literacy programs and services.

Objective 2024-2025

By March 31, 2025, the Department of Education will have supported sector alignment with labour market priorities and increased accountability and evaluation measures.

Indicators:

- Continued enhancing student financial assistance programs to alleviate financial barriers for eligible post-secondary students
- Continued enhancing and expanding the Adult Literacy Pilot Projects
- Introduced a new model for the Adult Basic Education Program
- Supported inter- and intra-governmental initiatives focused on labour market priorities

Challenges and Opportunities

The department faces substantial opportunities and challenges as it strives to provide high-quality, accessible, and inclusive education to all learners in the province.

Challenges

In the early learning and child care sector, challenges exist in providing accessible child care services. A shortage of ECEs is negatively impacting the availability of child care spaces, especially for children with diverse needs. Addressing these challenges requires continued review of programs and policies, as well as increased investment in child care centres and family resources centres to ensure they are high-quality and accessible.

The integration of the English school district was finalized on January 1, 2024. The department continues to work on fully integrating operations, including addressing challenges arising with different technology systems and processes, and changes in work environments. The department recognizes the importance of ongoing communication with all stakeholders.

Opportunities

While challenges exist, the department is excited to leverage the opportunities provided to improve education for all learners.

- With investment of Federal and Provincial funding, the department is equipped to advance and promote Early Learning and Child Care programs and services:
 - creating more child care spaces to increase accessibility;
 - promoting inclusivity in child care centres; and,
 - supporting the recruitment and retentions of ECEs with competitive salaries and professional development opportunities.

- Post-integration, substantial opportunities are presented to the K-12 system, in:
 - optimizing use of financial, human, and physical assets;
 - improving teacher recruitment and retention; and,
 - more effectively engaging with and responding to the needs of students, parents, educators, and the communities.
- Opportunities may be identified by the **Education Accord** for future implementation.
- The emerging renewable energy sector in Newfoundland and Labrador provides opportunities for the province's post-secondary institutions to equip students with the education and experience to meet the demand, preparing them for jobs in a growing industry.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers various opportunities to enhance both K-12 and post-secondary education by transforming the way students learn and educators teach. For example:
 - automating administrative tasks, such as scheduling, allowing teachers to focus more on instruction and student engagement and,
 - enhancing personalized learning and support advanced research through AI-driven analytics.

Future Outlook

The department is committed to continuously evolving and adapting to meet the educational needs of all learners. By leveraging new technologies, fostering inclusive practices, and investing in educators and infrastructure, we aim to create a dynamic and responsive educational environment that prepares students for the future.

Financial Information

STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE AND RELATED REVENUE (UNAUDITED) SUMMARY FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2024^{1, 2}

Area	Estimates		
	Actual (\$)	Amended (\$)	Original (\$)
Executive Services (13.1.1.01 - 13.1.2.01)			
Executive Services (13.1.1.01 & 13.1.2.01)	1,447,708	1,481,500	1,344,900
Total	1,447,708	1,481,500	1,344,900
Corporate Services (13.2.1.01 - 13.2.1.03)			
General Administration (13.2.1.01 – 13.2.1.02)	3,885,519	4,107,500	4,743,700
Total	3,885,519	4,107,500	4,743,700
Early Childhood Development (13.3.5.01)			
Child and Family Development (13.3.5.01)	133,826,775	54,279,400	66,679,100
Total	133,826,775	54,279,400	66,679,100
Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education (13.3.1.01 - 13.3.6.01 excluding 13.3.5.01)			
Financial Assistance (13.3.1.01 – 13.3.1.04)	821,946,470	827,272,300	795,452,800
Program Development (13.3.2.01 – 13.3.2.02)	9,370,539	4,624,700	3,560,800
Student Support Services (13.3.3.01 – 13.3.3.02)	2,233,064	2,341,200	2,278,000
Educational Programs (13.3.4.01)	2,418,025	3,118,300	3,121,700
Provincial Information and Library Resources Board (13.3.6.01)	12,841,100	12,841,100	11,961,400
Total	848,809,198	850,197,600	816,374,700
Post-Secondary Education (13.4.1.01 - 13.4.4.02)			
Literacy and Institutional Services (13.4.1.01)	4,989,922	5,029,200	5,157,300
Atlantic Veterinary College (13.4.1.02)	1,276,420	1,276,500	1,242,600
Memorial University (13.4.2.01 – 13.4.2.02)	314,946,758	314,122,700	295,320,700
College of the North Atlantic (13.4.3.01 – 13.4.3.02)	73,948,695	73,948,700	70,116,500
Student Financial Services (13.4.4.01 – 13.4.4.02)	11,996,647	11,016,500	19,526,200
Total	407,158,442	405,393,600	391,363,300
Total Department	1,395,127,642	1,315,459,600	1,280,505,700

1. Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are based on public information provided in the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the Year Ended March 31, 2024.

2. Audited financial statements are a requirement at the government level and are made public through the Public Accounts process. The Department of Education is not required to provide an audited financial statement.