

***Literacy: Key to Learning and Path to Prosperity –
An Action Plan for Atlantic Canada 2009-2014***

**PROGRESS REPORT on LITERACY
2010**



Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training

THE COUNCIL OF ATLANTIC MINISTERS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING (CAMET) IS AN AGENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF ATLANTIC PREMIERS (CAP) AND ITS PURPOSE IS TO ENHANCE COOPERATION IN PUBLIC AND POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN ATLANTIC CANADA BY WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE LEARNING, OPTIMIZE EFFICIENCIES AND BRING ADDED VALUE TO PROVINCIAL INITIATIVES.

Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training
Suite 1006, 5161 George Street
HALIFAX, NS B3J 1M7
camet-camef@cap-cpma.ca



LITERACY: Key to Learning and Path to Prosperity – An Action Plan for Atlantic Canada 2009-2014

Progress Report for the period ending December 31, 2010

INTRODUCTION

Literacy: Key to Learning and Path to Prosperity – An Action Plan for Atlantic Canada 2009-2014 was launched in September 2009 in response to the January 2008 Resolution Concerning Literacy adopted at the Meeting of Atlantic Cabinets. The resolution directed the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) to develop an action plan to improve literacy rates in Atlantic Canada.

The government departments responsible for early childhood, public and post-secondary education across the Atlantic provinces have made significant progress as they work together to address overall literacy rates of Atlantic Canadians. The initiatives identified in the action plan are designed to support and complement those undertaken by provincial governments, community groups, the private sector, as well as labour groups and the public. They also align with the initiatives outlined in the April 2008 joint declaration, *Learn Canada 2020* of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), of which a key goal is that of raising literacy levels in Canada.

The ministers of education and training of the Atlantic provinces are delighted to release a progress report on year one of implementation. This report presents the actions undertaken by CAMET, and highlights the initiatives that ministers wish to undertake regionally.

ACTIVITIES

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Ministers of education and training recognize the importance of literacy and intervention at an early age. Building on the success of existing provincial programs in early childhood development, a dialogue has been established with all government departments having responsibility for early childhood.



Goal: Review and consider current assessment tools for provincial/regional implementation

Status – Provinces have initiated research in the area of early years evaluation and assessment to identify various tools for use with children up to six years of age. Provinces are continuing using various tools to meet the specific needs of their clientele.

Goal: Prepare recommendations/identify actions to promote early childhood literacy

Status – CAMET is committed to the promotion of early childhood/family literacy. The focus on the early years comes from the importance of early year experiences, and how they contribute to lifelong success. A model for Family Literacy Programming is being researched based on the key drivers of family literacy programs presently funded by governments and other agencies in Atlantic Canada.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Ministers are committed to ensure a diminished achievement gap between higher and lower performing Atlantic Canadian students. The regional initiatives planned in public education support provincial initiatives to improve literacy outcomes in all grade levels. These initiatives are presented under four themes in the Atlantic Literacy Action Plan: Literacy Teaching; Literacy Learning; Literacy Leadership; and Literacy in the Curriculum.

Literacy Teaching

Goal: Increase professional knowledge and skills in teaching literacy

Status – In order to make significant long-term changes for improving literacy, professional learning opportunities and shared leadership in the area of teaching literacy needs to be further enhanced.

Pre-service training is a key ingredient for teachers to acquire the necessary foundation and skills for teaching students to read and write. A dialogue has been established with the Atlantic post-secondary education institutions offering teacher training programs. Through ongoing and increased availability of professional development, training and recognition, provinces and universities will continue working together to ensure new and existing teachers will have access to new opportunities for integrating literacy teaching.

Literacy Learning

Goal: Assess, track and improve literacy learning outcomes for all students in the context of diverse backgrounds and abilities

Status – Current, accessible and high-quality resources are an essential element of today's classrooms. The diversity of the student population and the rich experiences they bring to the classroom creates an interesting challenge for literacy teaching. Provinces continue to explore the many uses for the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages. A framework document for use in Atlantic Canadian immersion and core language programs, as well as in additional language classes, is currently being developed. The framework will highlight the classroom applications of the CEFR as well as its assessment applications. Self-assessment learning tools, modeled after the European Language Portfolio, are also being developed for online application.

The *Trousse d'appréciation de rendement en lecture (4e à la 6e année)* was made available to all French first language and immersion schools. This resource is a valuable tool for teaching literacy skills to young learners. It provides a set of tools that allow teachers to assess reading development and skills of students. In addition, it provides students with a variety of texts and lessons to further develop their reading strategies.

Literacy Leadership

Goal: Enhance curriculum leadership

Status – Curriculum leadership plays a fundamental role in encouraging school communities and teachers to engage in professional development related to literacy in the curriculum. Provinces completed an environmental scan of academic standards and educational programs currently used in the field to establish leadership standards in education. This environmental scan will help to identify the role of educational leaders and those features of leadership that are related to improving student achievement outcomes. The document was made available in both English and French.

A framework document was also developed to promote leadership standards in Atlantic Canada. The framework document describes the knowledge, skills, competencies and values that reflect the ideals for aspiring and practicing school principals and vice-principals. The leadership standards document is also available in both English and French, and is presently being used by the provinces to further develop provincial initiatives in educational leadership.

Literacy in the Curriculum

Goal: Improve literacy capabilities for learning in all areas of the curriculum

Status – The grades 7, 8 and 9 English language curriculum was renewed and includes updated teaching and learning strategies and assessment strategies, as well as updated information on teaching literacy. The renewed curriculum sets clear expectations of literacy learning across the phases of learning. An interactive, online application for the curriculum is now being researched.

A new grade 12 French language arts curriculum has been implemented in francophone schools in NB, PEI and NL. The French language curriculum uses both literary and media texts to help students better express themselves orally and in writing. The program encourages participation in projects in order to develop a greater identity.

An interactive Web-based resource was developed to support teachers in the implementation of the French language arts curriculum. This tool promotes a differentiated instruction approach and guides teachers through various activities linked to the curriculum. The site also features links to student exemplars which help to identify student performance.

French first language reading and writing standards and exemplars for grades entry to 9 are being developed. The purpose of this resource is to establish common expectations in reading and writing. These standards will allow each province to identify students and/or groups of students who are performing at grade level, those who may require intervention, and those who may require enrichment. The standards will also enable provinces and/or school districts to set improvement goals using the standards as benchmark data.

ADULT AND WORKPLACE LITERACY

Literacy and essential skills provide a platform for all forms of further learning. In order to meet the demands required for each Atlantic Canadian to prosper in a knowledge-based economy, the role of literacy in everyday living and the development of essential skills become significant drivers in achieving economic prosperity.



Increasing Awareness

Goal: Raise awareness of the socio-economic benefits of improving literacy and essential skills and to encourage employers and industry groups to value literacy and essential skills programs

On November 1, 2010, the ministers of education and training launched a public awareness campaign, *Literacy: It means more than you think / L'alphabétisation, ça me touche plus que je pense*. The four-year campaign will be carried out in two phases and in both official languages. The campaign pursues the following objectives:

- create an awareness that many Atlantic Canadians have low literacy rates and there are a variety of programs available to assist and support adult learners;
- show Atlantic Canadians the social and economic benefits of a more literate community;
- encourage Atlantic Canadians to participate in literacy programs; and
- demonstrate that Atlantic ministers of education and training are concerned, engaged, and collaboratively taking action to improve literacy rates in the region.

The primary target for the first phase is the general population, ages 18 and over, with employers as the secondary audience. Other key audiences include literacy stakeholders and community groups. Phase Two of the campaign will mobilize partnerships with stakeholders and employers, and encourage adult learners to participate in adult learning programs.

The main feature of the campaign was eight 15-second TV ads—four English and four French. The four themes for the ads include: literacy awareness, benefits of strengthening literacy rates for the economy, the impacts and benefits for employers, and the educational and health benefits of lifelong learning for families. For further information on the campaign and to view the TV ads, please visit

www.camet-camef.ca.

INITIATIVES DRIVEN BY INDIVIDUAL PROVINCES

In addition to its contributions to the action plan, each of the Atlantic provinces has targeted areas specific to its needs for addressing literacy issues. Since launching the CAMET Literacy Action Plan in September 2009, PEI is improving literacy with a multifaceted approach. A comprehensive literacy plan is being implemented to support all children in becoming competent and skilled readers and writers. The province has started with a system that provides support to young Island children from birth to age four, their parents and their educators. The Preschool Excellence Initiative plan will achieve that goal by helping to build an accessible, sustainable and quality-driven system which recognizes the need for parental choice.

In September 2010, PEI took a massive step forward in the education of their kindergarten-aged children. It was the first step in the process with the introduction of kindergarten as a full-day program in the public school system. Literacy is the focus in the school system as well. The Literacy Plan includes PEI's Provincial Common Assessment Program, a balanced literacy approach to teaching and learning, which is

based on current research and best practice, teacher inservice and new resources. To complement the plan, literacy coaches and school-based interventions round out the service to children in Island schools. Further, PEI has rolled out the Preschool Excellence Initiative (PEI), which is a day-long province-wide learning program for 0- to 4-year-olds. By September 2011, the Province will have established almost 50 Early Years Centres serving over 2,000 children. The shift in focus from "child care" to "children learning" marks a significant turning point in literacy in PEI.

The development and pilot of the **Literacy and Essential Skills Program** in 2008 on the Scotchfort Reserve was highly successful, resulting in the continuing delivery of the program to reserve members.

This initiative is a partnership of the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI, Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning, Holland College, and Workplace Learning PEI Inc. training.

The **Trades Transitions Program** first delivered in 2010 is a 52-week employment intervention designed to address the employment-related challenges faced by Aboriginal people seeking to engage in the labour market. The program was created to advance the development of Aboriginal workforce by providing fundamental interventions needed to progress into full-time education and training.

In January 2009, UPEI opened the **Aboriginal Cultural Centre**, Mawiomi on campus. Mawiomi is a space for Aboriginal students to meet with other Aboriginal students, as well as a place for students to access reference materials or other materials for school work or pleasure.

As well, the **Master of Education in Leadership in Learning** is being offered as a unique partnership between the University of Prince Edward Island, the Nunavut Department of Education, Nunavut Arctic College, and St. Francis Xavier University, and enables graduates to provide leadership within the school and post-secondary systems of education in Nunavut, as well as in other educational programs.

Aboriginal literacy continues to be a key focus area in Newfoundland and Labrador. The KinderStart program, a school transition program offered to all children a year prior to school entry, helps to prepare future students, parents and caregivers by providing resources and information to help prepare children for school entry. Funding over three years has also been announced for initiatives under Newfoundland and Labrador's provincial Adult Literacy Plan, with a planned release in 2011.

In New Brunswick, through a joint initiative with the private sector, volunteers work with the schools to help children in the early grades who are struggling to read.

Working Together for Adult Literacy: An Adult Literacy Strategy for New Brunswick, was released in December 2009. This three-year strategy focuses on four priority areas: 1) reducing barriers and increasing participation; 2) increasing the number and range of adult literacy learning opportunities; 3) ensuring the quality and effectiveness of adult

literacy programs; and 4) strengthening partnerships to develop an effective adult literacy system.

A new service delivery model for the Workplace Essential Skills (WES) Program was implemented in the fall of 2009. WES provides an accelerated learning pathway for skills enhancement and utilizes recognition of prior learning and curriculum based on nine essential skills delivered with a competency-based approach in training.

Since completing a significant literacy project spanning Primary-12 over a period of ten years (2000-2010), Nova Scotia has refocused on the youngest students in Primary-3 through implementing Young Writers in Action (Primary-1), developing a Reading Assessment Resource (Primary-3), and revising the English language arts curriculum (Primary-3). Professional learning supporting the change of entry date in September 2008 continues this year with grade 2 teachers, and many student and teacher resources continue to be distributed at these grade levels.

The Province of Nova Scotia, through the Adult Education Division of the Department of Labour and Workforce Development, supported various community learning organizations to deliver projects using Labour Market Agreement (LMA) and Strategic Training and Transition Fund (STTF) funds, which has enhanced the provision of employability and essential skills training programs in Nova Scotia.

Several Nova Scotia organizations were successful in their applications for funding from the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills for community-based projects. One of the projects will provide enhanced access to literacy and essential skills training for unionized workers in the province. Another will support a research on identifying key factors for encouraging participation in a family literacy program by a greater number of families in the francophone sector of the province's population.

CONCLUSION

With the completion of Year 1 of *Literacy: Key to Learning and Path to Prosperity – An Action Plan for Atlantic Canada 2009-2014*, ministers of education and training are excited and committed to the implementation of further actions and strategies to promote and improve literacy rates across Atlantic Canada. Ministers are confident that the 2009-2014 Literacy Action Plan will achieve great results and benefit all Atlantic Canadians.