

The Prince Edward Island Learning Partnership: A New Model for Engagement and Alignment to Achieve Excellence in Learning

PEI's education system has evolved continuously over the past several decades to better fulfill the potential of every learner in a rapidly changing society. In continued support of the goal of ensuring the best possible future for Island learners, it is recognized that Prince Edward Island currently needs:

- a broader view on learning, spanning from the early years to the workforce;
- to better support Islanders to contribute to the prosperity of the province;
- an intersectoral approach to leading and delivering learner services and supports, with greater collaboration and cooperation among the Departments of:
 - Education, Early Learning and Culture
 - Family and Human Services
 - Workforce and Advanced Learning;
- a new vision, philosophy and plan for education focused on excellence and the goal to fulfill the potential of every learner in accordance with his/her particular abilities, aptitudes, interests and personality;¹
- a stronger voice for principals, the instructional leaders in our schools, in system-wide policy and programming decisions; and
- to engage parents, teachers, government, education, community and business organizations into meaningful partnerships to achieve excellence for PEI's children, students and workforce.

To address these needs, the PEI government has moved forward with a new direction for education and learning, one characterized by engagement and alignment that will achieve excellence for Island learners. Under this new model:

- A new advisory process has been established at the provincial level, called the PEI Learning Partners Advisory Council (LPAC). This partnership is made up of a group of knowledgeable citizens closely associated with the thinking, planning and implementation of education policies and services, and a group of citizens representative of a broad cross-section of Islanders, who have relevant perspectives on education and learning. The LPAC will support a broader view of learning as spanning from the early years to the workforce and will allow for better integration of government social and employment services to support learners.
- A new advisory process at the Family of Schools level has been established, called the Family of Schools District Advisory Councils. This new advisory structure in each Family of Schools provides for active engagement and collaboration among parents, students and the local school community.
- A PEI Principals' Council has been established to enable focused conversations among principals and with the Department of Education Early Learning and Culture on learning perspectives and learner needs, and to support the exemplary school leadership necessary to provide high-quality educational opportunities to Island learners.

¹ Adapted from Terms of Reference, Consultative Committee on Education, G. Bennett (1968).

- The functions of the English Language School Board (ELSB) are being integrated with the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture (DEELC), resulting in the formation of a Public Schools Branch within the DEELC. This will achieve an alignment of effort across all levels and a shared sense of purpose and direction that will put the system focus directly on the learner. The Minister will be clearly responsible and accountable for the results and outcomes of the education system.

The new functional model for the PEI school system is shown in Figure 1 and has at its core, the learner. The goals and standards function, citizen engagement function and school and Department operations function are clearly identified.

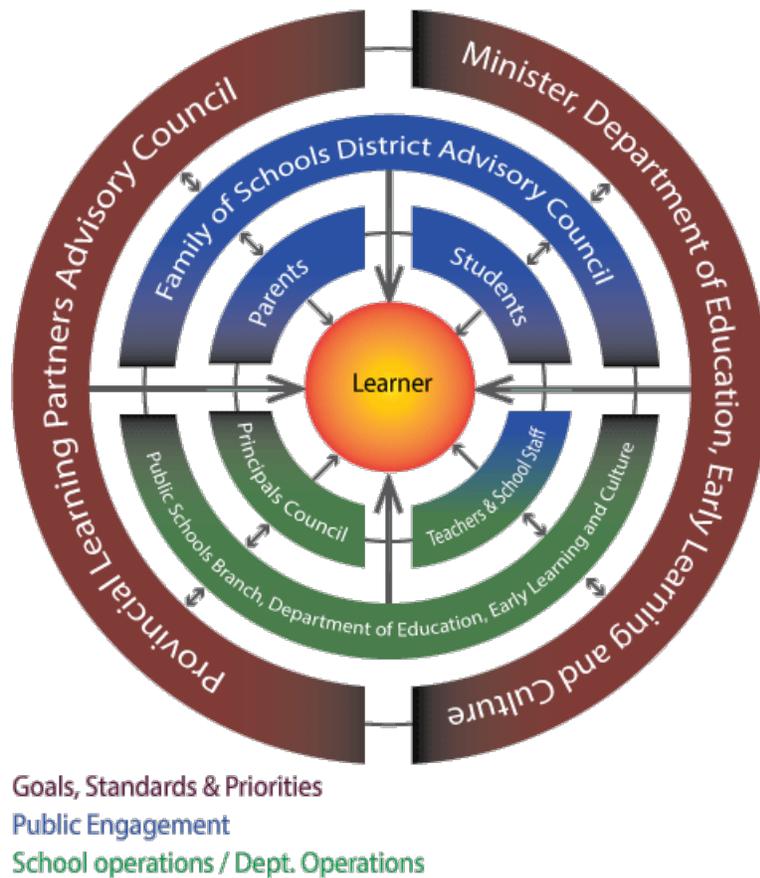


Figure 1. New functional model for the PEI K-12 school system showing focus of all levels on the learner.

The value proposition for the establishment of the PEI Learning Partners Advisory Council, the Family of Schools District Advisory Councils, the PEI Principals' Council, and the integration of the English Language School Board functions with the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture, is that these measures will:

- enable an intersectoral approach to identifying and advancing province-wide learning goals;
- provide for an alignment of resources and priorities to better serve and support learners from birth to the workforce;

- bring greater clarity around accountability and leadership in education;
- enable principals to be educational leaders;
- cultivate school-led innovations;
- provide increased opportunity for and expectation that parents will be engaged in their children’s learning;
- empower students to have an active voice in their own education; and
- position learning and education as the pillars to advance economic prosperity and quality of life for all Islanders.

PEI Learning Partners Advisory Council

The mandate of the PEI Learning Partners Advisory Council (LPAC) is to ***provide insight and advice on how best to advance learning excellence and support learners, from the early years through public education, post-secondary and beyond to the workplace, in support of the Province’s long-term prosperity and well-being.***

The roles of the LPAC are to:

- identify priorities, strategic directions and targets for learning and learners;
- identify areas and opportunities for innovation in learning;
- shape public policy on education and learning;
- identify opportunities to support learners through integration of government services related to learner well-being and opportunity;
- foster a culture/attitude of innovation and entrepreneurship among Island youth;
- develop a vision and plan to position education and learning as the pillars to support prosperity.

The membership of the Learning Partners Advisory Council is designed to ensure that government receives the benefit of diverse and relevant perspectives on education and learning from early childhood to the workplace. The Council shall be comprised of:

- The Premier (or designate) and a citizen from the Island community as Co-chairs;
- Ten citizens associated with the thinking, planning and implementation of education / learning policies, programs, and services (referred to as “education partners”);
- Ten citizens representative of a broad cross-section of Islanders, who have relevant perspectives on education and learning (referred to as “community partners”).

To promote an intersectoral approach to leading and delivering learner services and supports, the LPAC includes three *ex officio* members:

- Deputy Minister, Education, Early Learning and Culture
- Deputy Minister, Family and Human Services
- Deputy Minister, Workforce and Advanced Learning

The selection process for the inaugural LPAC was as follows. The initial announcement regarding the LPAC, on November 5 2015, indicated that the inaugural Council would be co-chaired by Premier MacLauchlan and by Dr. Bill Whelan. Further, six education partners were invited to be inaugural members of the Council: PEI Home and School Federation, the PEI Teachers Federation, University of Prince Edward Island, Holland College, the English Language School Board and the Commission scolaire de langue française, for the purpose of establishing a Selection Committee to review applications for the remaining seats on the Council. This process was intended to make the selection process external to government, and to bring a balanced and knowledgeable review and consensus recommendations from a group of key education partners. For future reviews, the Council will establish a five-person Selection Committee.

The Engage PEI portal was used to seek applications from the public and nominations from organizations. For the inaugural council, Engage PEI received 16 nominations by education and community organizations, and 87 applications from individuals, two of whom had also been nominated by organizations. The initial Selection Committee made up of five of the six inaugural members reviewed the applications and made recommendation to Executive Council for the remaining seats.

In the future, nominations can come from any community organization in PEI and applications can come from any resident of PEI and will be accepted at any time through the EngagePEI site until October 31 for consideration for the upcoming calendar year. Nominees should be at least 18 years of age. The normal term of appointment on the LPAC will be three years. However, the inaugural terms are staggered, with half the terms two years in duration to ensure no more than 50% turn over in any one year. Council members can serve up to two terms.

The Council is to meet up to three times during the school year, and will receive ongoing administrative and research support from Executive Council Office, including access to system-wide education data as required.

The PEI Learning Partners Advisory Council will engage a broad cross-section of Islanders. This advisory body will not function as an additional bureaucratic layer within the education system but, rather, will serve to engage educators and community leaders throughout the province, providing direct advice to the provincial government on issues across the learning spectrum.

Family of Schools District Advisory Councils

The mandate of the Family of Schools District Advisory Councils (FSDACs) *is to help shape an education system that is focused on and meets the needs of learners, by advising the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture on education matters.*

The roles of the FSDACs are to:

- advise the Minister of Education, Early Learning and Culture on education issues;
- identify education priorities within the Family of Schools;

- engage school communities in discussions on learner programs and services; and
- foster improved collaboration among School Councils/Home and School Associations and the community.

Eight Family of Schools District Advisory Councils have been established. The membership of each FSDAC will be:

- one member of each School Council / Home and School Association in the Family of Schools, selected by that Council/Association;
- two students (from the Students' Council(s) at the high school level);
- the Regional Director of the PEI Home and School Federation for the Family of Schools.

For the 2014/15 school year, 53 of the 56 schools in the English Language School Board had Home and School Associations, many of which also served as the School Councils. Home and School Associations on PEI have discussed and made recommendation on many key education issues, as is evident in the resolutions passed by the PEI Home and School Federation (PEIHSF) since 2010.² Further the PEIHSF has recently organized its board and its provincial parent advisory structure around a Family of Schools model, with each family having a PEIHSF Regional Director. The Regional Directors are tasked with engaging local School Councils / Home and School Associations in a dialogue on local schools issues and on broader education issues. Hence, it is appropriate to partner with the PEIHSF by inviting the Regional Director for a Family of Schools sit as a member of its FSDAC. This will enable information sharing and a broader perspective on local issues and priorities, and will promote connectivity among the FSDACs and the PEIHSF, which is desirable. This all supports a stronger, ongoing advisory role for parents and guardians via their local Home and School Associations and the PEIHSF.

FSDAC terms will align to the school year, running from July to June. Student terms will be one year in duration. All other members' terms will be two years, except for the inaugural year where some terms will be staggered to maintain council experience, balanced with new ideas. To this end, terms will be one year for half of the inaugural School Council representatives. It should be noted that the remainder of the 2015-16 school year will not be included in the inaugural members' terms of appointment, e.g. members on a one-year term will serve from early 2016 to June 2017. FSDAC members can serve up to two terms.

Each FSDAC will select its own Chair and will be supported by the FSDAC Engagement Officer employed by the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture. Ms Patricia (Pat) Campbell has been engaged as the FSDAC Engagement Officer, and will receive ongoing administrative support from the Department to fulfill her role.

The FSDACs' minutes / meeting notes / reports will be made public (via a FSDAC website) and shared among the FSDACs and the school principals. Conversely, the FSDACs will be made aware of issues being discussed by the Learning Partners Advisory Council and PEI Principals' Council. The FSDACs will meet up

² <http://peihsf.ca/agm/resolutions>

to three times during the school year, and all FSDACs in the province will come together once a year to meet with the Minister. Inaugural meetings of the FSDACs are beginning in February 2016.

The meeting agenda for a FSDAC will be organized collaboratively by the FSDAC Chair and the FSDAC Engagement Officer, and will be carefully constructed to ensure a balance between issues brought forward by FSDAC members and issues that the Minister and Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture need advice on. For example:

- student attendance;
- length / time of school day;
- rezoning;
- learner supports;
- technology in learning;
- experiential learning opportunities; and
- student transitions from primary to secondary levels.

The FSDAC Engagement Officer will collect and synthesize input and draft reports for the FSDACs and Minister. The reports and resulting actions to be taken by the Department will be the focus of the annual face-to-face meeting with the Minister. With these new advisory processes, the Minister will receive advice from the FSDACs (directly) and the Learning Partners Advisory Council (through the Deputy Minister) and will consider this information in the setting of goals, standards and priorities to benefit student learning. With this process, students and parents will have a stronger voice in shaping public policy in education.

PEI Principals' Council

Principals provide educational leadership and have a significant influence on the achievement of students in the school. They direct and supervise the development, delivery, assessment, and improvement of the education of all students in their schools. Principals on PEI are an untapped resource on the ground. Their collective knowledge of the education system (i.e. successes, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) is of great value, and as such, they need to have a stronger voice in the education system. To this end, the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture, working with Island principals, has established a PEI Principals' Council comprised of all principals in the K-12 education system.

The PEI Principals' Council will enable focused conversations on learning perspectives and learner needs among principals and with the Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture (DEELC). This will help to strengthen a culture of collaboration among principals and will support exemplary school leadership, both of which are necessary to provide high-quality educational opportunities to Island learners. The detailed mandate and terms of reference for the PEI Principals' Council are being developed through collaboration among principals and the DEELC.

The PEI Principals' Council will connect with and be supported by the DEELC through a DEELC official who will act as Secretary to the Council. The Council will meet up to three times during the school year and will meet annually with the Minister. The first meeting of the PEI Principals' Council will be in February 2016.

Connectivity Among the Councils

While each Council structure has a distinctive and vital role to play, it is likely that some of their work will focus on the same themes. To ensure that the work of each Council structure informs and supports the work of others, the following measures will be taken:

- All documents, summaries, reports from the three Councils will be shared.
- Items discussed at one Council may be brought to another Council(s), depending on the issue, for review and input.
- As advice is gathered and decisions are shaped at one Council, there will be value in getting input from another Council.
- The Department's FSDAC Engagement Officer will participate in all three Councils, and will liaise with the Secretary to the LPAC, to:
 - provide a level of connectivity among the Councils;
 - better organize, analyze and synthesize the advice received; and
 - identify issues that would benefit from the diverse perspectives of one or more of the other Councils.