



Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association

May 2000

Response to "Supporting Learning"

The Report of the
Ministerial Panel on
Educational Delivery
in the Classroom



May 2000

The image contains a graphic of a red apple with a green leaf and a small shadow underneath. The text 'May 2000' is printed on the bottom of the apple. To the left of the apple is a vertical line with horizontal tick marks, resembling a scale or a list of items, with two solid black circles on the left side.



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Introduction

In the introduction to "**Supporting Learning: Report of the Ministerial Panel on Educational Delivery in the Classroom**", the authors state that, "The past decade brought changes in the educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador unprecedented since the expansion of the 1960's". Without doubt any observer of the educational scene in this province since 1990 would have witnessed an active, sometimes disruptive, restructuring of our educational system. In that period of time there were significant achievements, such as the elimination of the denominational education system, and subsequent efficiencies that alleviated much duplication of educational services. In terms of curriculum development, Newfoundland and Labrador joined the Maritime Provinces to form the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation and engaged in a collaborative effort to develop a common set of essential graduation learnings and to move toward an outcomes-driven curriculum.

Although some positive trends have emerged over the past ten years, this period has been one of extreme financial constraint and cutback. Higher expectations and pressures for greater accountability emerged from all fronts, while the resources allocated for education diminished considerably, and successful delivery of instruction at the classroom level was seriously compromised.

When the Minister of Education announced the establishment of the Ministerial Panel on Educational Delivery in the Classroom, there was acknowledgment that a review of existing circumstances was timely and that the situation at the classroom level should be a major focus. The NLTA was pleased to have the opportunity to finally address a number of key issues through a formalized process authorized by the Minister. From the early stages the Ministerial Panel expressed keen interest in receiving input from the Association. Two meetings were held between the NLTA Provincial Executive and members of the Ministerial Panel. The Association received input from the field, then developed a draft report through Executive working groups and Joint Council reaction.

In December, 1999, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association presented its formal submission to the panel, a document which contained 55 recommendations. Within these recommendations a number of major themes were predominant:

1. All students in Newfoundland and Labrador, regardless of geographic location, are entitled to a full, balanced curriculum, to promote holistic development and to fully meet the essential graduation learnings as identified by APEF.
2. Early intervention is essential in meeting the needs of many students, particularly in areas of literacy and skill development. In particular, greater emphasis should be placed upon the early development years in pre-school and in primary grades.
3. An outcomes-based curriculum is desirable but should only be implemented when the necessary resources are provided which parallel and fully complement the identified outcomes.
4. Criterion-referenced testing is a logical way to assess how well students are attaining prescribed outcomes, however, the schedule for criterion-referenced testing needs to be streamlined.
5. Tele-learning and distance education require some restructuring, redesign and greater efficiency.
6. Curricula, courses and programs can only be effectively implemented if the necessary resources and personnel are provided. We must continue to provide teachers for specialized programs such as music, physical education, second language instruction.
7. Greater emphasis must be placed in the areas of remedial instruction and learning resources, with increased allocations of personnel and resources to meet the needs in these vital areas.
8. Teacher allocations must be revised to recognize the unique needs of various schools. Just as small rural schools need special consideration, it is important that we not allow excessively large classes to exist in our larger schools.

9. Supports, including alternate settings, must be provided for students who engage in severely disruptive or violent behaviour.

10. Far greater opportunity for professional development must be provided for educators in this province in the areas of pre-service, in-service and ongoing professional growth.

In reviewing "**Supporting Learning**" it appears that many of the recommendations made by the NLTA have been considered. Although only a few have been accepted as is, it is clear that the intent of many of our recommendations has been reflected in the report of the Ministerial Panel. The following chart cross-references the recommendations of the NLTA's submission with those contained in the final report of the Ministerial Panel.

**Recommendation
Cross-Reference Chart ***

NLTA Recommendations	Ministerial Panel Recommendations	NLTA Recommendations	Ministerial Panel Recommendations
1.1	15, 16	3.15	52,56
1.2	36, 37, 39, 41, 56a, 66	3.16	56
1.3	36, 37, 39, 41, 66	3.17	16,56
1.4	36, 37, 38, 41	3.18	--
1.5	18	3.19	--
1.6	8	3.20	--
1.7	3, 5, 7	3.21	48,56
1.8	82, 83	3.22	--
1.9	83	3.23	50
1.10	77	3.24	50
1.11	71, 72, 73, 75	3.25	50
2.1	58, 59, 60, 61	3.26	50
2.2	59	3.27	49,50
2.3	--	3.28	50
3.1	2, 3, 4	3.29	50
3.2	69	4.1	--
3.3	16, 17	4.2	24
3.4	19, 20, 21,22	4.3	--
3.5	4, 7	4.4	22, 23, 24
3.6	2, 4, 7	4.5	--
3.7	2, 7	4.6	46
3.8	3, 5, 7	4.7	7
3.9	--	4.8	44, 47
3.10	--	4.9	46
3.11	--	4.10	--
3.12	42, 56	4.11	--
3.13	16, 56, 57	4.12	--
3.14	56		

* **Note:** In some cases NLTA Recommendations were fully incorporated into the report from the Ministerial Panel, while in many cases they were only partially incorporated.

In responding to "**Supporting Learning**" the Association has decided to comment on each individual recommendation. For each recommendation the NLTA position would comprise one of the following:

A. **Agree**

B. **Agree in Principle** This means that the Association is in agreement with the major thrust of the recommendation, however, there are certain conditions that are recommended before unqualified agreement is given.

C. **Support** Some recommendations define active involvement of NLTA. This position is used if the Association agrees to participate.

D. **Reserved** This means that the Association cannot either agree or disagree with the recommendation given the information provided. Further clarification or study is needed before a definitive statement can be made.

E. **Disagree** The Association does not agree with the direction of this particular recommendation and reasons why are provided.

In determining the major issues and concerns of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, it is suggested that one review the comments attached to those recommendations for which the NLTA position is either Agree in Principle, Reserved or Disagree.

Curriculum Development

Recommendation 1

That the Department of Education continue to cooperate in the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF) Curriculum initiatives and that a three-year curriculum development and assessment plan be developed.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

Fundamentally there is general agreement that the development of an outcomes-driven curriculum is desirable and should greatly assist teachers and students in meeting the goals and objectives of the prescribed program. The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association would support APEF initiatives in curriculum development, providing they are cost effective and do not result in the diversion of resources which are needed within this province. The Association believes that new initiatives should be introduced only when sufficient personnel, resources and professional development are provided. Without provision of such supports the educational system can reach a point where it is seriously overloaded and where teacher workload reaches a critical point as our professionals endeavour to meet the numerous expectations that have been placed upon them. If involvement in APEF forces this province into an agenda without the necessary supports, this Association would, in the best interest of its members and the students of this province, oppose any involvement in APEF.

Regarding an assessment plan, it is recognized that the development and implementation of testing instruments which measure how well our students are achieving outcomes is desirable. However, the NLTA would have some concerns with any introduction of high stakes testing which becomes mandatory and possibly forms part of a public accountability process. This view is consistent with positions articulated by the Canadian Teachers' Federation on various high stakes assessments throughout the country.

Recommendation 2

That the Department of Education, in collaboration with school boards, develop a shared vision for the implementation and assessment of curriculum; that this vision be formalized in a multi-year plan and that the Department of Education manage the pace of curriculum change to ensure a steady incremental approach to revision.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

A collaborative approach to implementation and assessment of curriculum is essential if optimum use is to be made of the personnel and resources available in our education system. When introducing new programs and frameworks it is essential that the ability of the system to accept these initiatives be assessed so that implementation is effective and successful. Long-term planning, involving all major stakeholders including the NLTA, is a most desirable process to ensure the delivery of outstanding programs to students.

Recommendation 3

That the Department of Education's budget for learning resources and curriculum implementation be increased by a total of \$9.2 million and that government make a five-year budgetary commitment to provide these resources.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

The NLTA welcomes an increase in funding for curriculum implementation and learning resources on a continuing basis. Many curriculum initiatives have been on hold for a number of years, and many more new courses are scheduled for implementation under the APEF initiative. However, the level of funding proposed will be insufficient to adequately implement and resource both the programs that have been on hold, and the scheduled programs over the next five years. The NLTA position is that money saved through educational reform should be reinvested in education and that additional funds over and above the \$9.2 million will be necessary to adequately resource and implement the aforementioned programs.

Recommendation 4

That the practice of piloting programs, course textbooks, and other learning resources be extended to include one or more schools in each district.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

The Association believes that practicing teachers should have a vital role in the piloting of new programs, textbooks and other resources and should be adequately compensated. However, there needs to be an avenue to allow the opinions and suggestions of these piloting teachers to impact upon the final course design. This would necessitate greater opportunities for idea sharing through teleconferencing, face-to-face meetings, and other feedback methods.

Recommendation 5

That the Department of Education provide supplementary teacher reference materials in areas where there are significant gaps between specific curriculum outcomes and the prescribed learning resources.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

It is the NLTA's position that gaps between curriculum outcomes and learning resources should not exist. The Department of Education is responsible for providing materials to meet all curriculum outcomes. It is essential that necessary resources be provided which are matched precisely to the outcomes and which give teachers and students the necessary materials to meet expectations. In the past number of years there have been unfortunate experiences with programs that have not included the necessary resources to meet all required outcomes. In the elementary science program, for example, teachers have experienced extreme difficulty in covering the curriculum because prescribed learning resources have not been completely congruent with the outcomes formulated by the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation. This has resulted in a great deal of confusion and has increased the workload of elementary teachers. Furthermore, the mismatch between outcomes and resources has compromised the ability of students to achieve at optimum levels.

The provision of supplementary teacher resource materials to eliminate existing gaps is essential if we are truly serious about exemplary student achievement.

Recommendation 6

That all curriculum documents and necessary textual and visual teacher supports be made available in a Web-based format to ensure availability to all teachers.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

As stated in the Report from the Ministerial Panel, many text resources are now out of print; and because new ones are not approved the province has to pay high prices for re-prints of outdated materials. Resources, both fiscal and human, are needed to develop and, in particular, implement high quality programs. The NLTA's policy states that technology must enhance the learning process and is not acceptable as a cheaper and less effective replacement for teaching personnel. Technology should be used as an equalizer and should not be developed as a means by which those who have the financial capacity can find an advantage over those who do not. Technology should be available for all, and all should have equal opportunity for its use. This recommendation is based on the assumption that all teachers have access to the technology and will be able to access these documents. This may not be the case in all circumstances.

Recommendation 7

That, when new curricula are initiated, appropriate materials be piloted, teachers in-serviced and materials made available to teachers for preview prior to introduction into the classroom.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

The piloting and introduction of new curricula create tremendous increases in the workload of teachers as they seek to become familiar with the new course content, collect appropriate resources and develop lesson plans. It is absolutely necessary to any new course initiative that resources of time, training and materials be adequately allotted prior to introduction in the classroom. It is the NLTA's policy that significant curriculum change should be introduced to teachers at least one academic year before classroom utilization. New curriculum and program initiatives should not be implemented until the Department of Education provides adequate personnel, resources, finances, and time for the explanation of the rationale and need for the curriculum change, an overview of the pedagogical implications of the change, opportunities to experience the new teaching techniques demonstrated in the typical classroom setting, and the opportunity to practice the new techniques in a classroom setting and to receive collaborative feedback on practice utilization.

The High School Program

Recommendation 8

That a concerted effort be made by schools to have students complete 42 credits in their high school program.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

The NLTA agrees that students should have a complete timetable, without unassigned periods, with the goal of completion of 42 credits. However, the NLTA recognizes that some students may require additional time to complete their course work which will result in the completion of fewer than 42 credits. Schools should maintain the flexibility of adapting and providing for the needs of their individual students.

Recommendation 9

That schools establish clear expectations with respect to the nature of student programs and that they monitor and adjust, where necessary, the schedules of students to ensure a full course load appropriate to a student's interests and abilities.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

It is the NLTA's position that the appropriate resources must be put in place in schools to allow this to occur.

Recommendation 10

That schools ensure their timetables are constructed to ensure that all courses receive the recommended allocation of instructional time.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

The NLTA agrees that all courses should receive the minimum recommended allocation of instructional time. However, integration of special needs students and modified programs necessitate that some courses receive more than the recommended allocation of instructional time to best meet the individual needs of students and to facilitate graduation. Provision of extra instructional time is an effective means of modifying a course and providing remedial support for many Pathways 2 students who can succeed given additional instructional time.

Recommendation 11

That the personal development component be amended to include additional courses, including French and theatre arts.

NLTA Position: **Agree.**

Comments:

The NLTA recognizes that the ultimate choice in selecting courses should be with the students and their parents, and the choices available for personal development should enable students to select those courses they feel would be of most benefit to them. Recommendation 16 must be implemented simultaneously to ensure the availability of programs such as music, physical education and art in all schools.

Local Courses

Recommendation 12

That the Department of Education review local courses to consolidate and reduce the number approved annually, designating some as provincial courses, and that the Department of Education and school boards cooperate to develop a multi-year approval process.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

Rather than duplication of course development to reflect local interests, there should be greater opportunity to integrate local content into provincial courses.

Recommendation 13

That as a result of the review process, where local courses are not designated as provincial courses, the Department of Education explore opportunities to infuse local course content from such courses into existing provincial courses or programs.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

Whenever possible there should be efforts made to integrate local content into the provincial courses or programs as referenced in Recommendation 12.

Newfoundland and Labrador History

Recommendation 14

That the Department of Education undertake the development of a program in Newfoundland and Labrador History at the grade 8 level.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

The Association agrees that all students who graduate from our education system should have a compulsory study of Newfoundland and Labrador history. The NLTA would like to stress that subsequent development of an advanced high school course in Newfoundland and Labrador history is essential, to allow for the availability of a more challenging and complex course which would provide a thorough understanding of the political, economic and cultural history of the province to those students who choose to enroll in this course.

Fine Arts

Recommendation 15

That the Department of Education establish the position of a program development specialist in Music.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

In its submission to the Ministerial Panel the NLTA stressed the importance of providing a broad essential curriculum to all students in the province. In considering current research in areas such as multiple intelligences and brain compatible learning, it becomes apparent that a holistic comprehensive education must encompass learning in such areas as music, art and physical education. Furthermore, there is ample empirical research to indicate that learning in music has a positive effect on student achievement in all areas including mathematics and science. This is not to undermine the essential intrinsic importance of music and art in the development of well-rounded, fully educated individuals. The establishment of a position for a program development specialist in music at the Department of Education level is seen as a recognition of the extreme importance of this discipline.

Recommendation 16

That, in accordance with the Panel's recommended teacher allocation framework, the Department of Education allocate teachers to be used to support several program areas, including music and art, at a level of 1 per 250 students in Grades 7-12.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

The NLTA accepts the allocation figure of 1 per 250, but believes the allocation should apply in grades K-12, not just 7-12. Students in all schools, regardless of size and location, are entitled to instruction by specialist teachers in areas such as music, art and physical education. It is the NLTA's position that these allocations are over and above the basic teacher allocations, i.e. these units should not be offset by reducing units in other areas.

It is at the K-6 level that the basic skills, concepts and attitudes are developed in the specialist areas. Pedagogical expertise is required, and specialist teachers are required in these areas to effectively implement program objectives.

Recommendation 17

That, in accordance with the recommendations of the Panel related to the establishment of a Center for Distance Learning and Innovation, the Department of Education and school districts employ distance learning technologies to the fullest extent to ensure courses in music and art are available to all students.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

Students in all schools, regardless of size and location, are entitled to instruction by specialist teachers in areas such as music, art, and physical education. Where it is not possible to allocate such units to individual schools they should be deployed regionally on an itinerant basis, or some similar flexible agreement. It must be recognized however, that it is difficult to teach subjects like music and art via the internet. The Association advocates the presence of a teacher in the classroom.

Programming for Students of Differing Interests and Abilities

Recommendation 18

That to address the program needs of less academically able students, the essential program offered in all schools include:

- a general English course at Grades 10, 11 and 12 in each year of a three-year program
- Reading 1200 every year
- practical mathematics courses to enable access to a different course in each year of a three-year program
- an introductory science and a technology course in each year of a three-year program.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

The NLTA agrees with the above recommendation, subject to a maximum class size of 15 students. This limitation on class size should not be achieved at the expense of larger class sizes in other courses and for other students. To meet the needs of less academically able students requires increased student-teacher contact in a small class setting. For these students it is recommended that the general English course contain components in both language and literature.

Multi-Level Grouping

Recommendation 19

That the Department of Education and School Districts ensure that policies and procedures are in place to guide planning and delivery of multi-level classes.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

Given the high percentage of small rural schools in this province, as well as the pedagogical desirability of delivering instruction in a format that is not constrained by divisions of subject and time, the Association believes that multi-level or multi-age configurations are not only a necessity, but quite often may be a desirable component of our education system. All necessary in-servicing should be provided to teachers.

Recommendation 20

That in all future curriculum development projects, specific suggestions and concrete illustrations be provided which clearly indicate how the program and objectives and requirements can be accommodated in those classrooms with two or more grades.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

Given the Association's commitment to multi-age pedagogy, specific reference to multi-level grouping in curriculum documents would be beneficial to the many teachers who are delivering curriculum in these settings.

Recommendation 21

That the Department of Education and school boards make special provision to ensure a variety of resources are readily available to teachers and students in multi-level settings.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

This provides recognition that the resources required for multi-level settings are unique and that the responsibility for providing such resources rests with both the Department of Education and school boards.

Recommendation 22

That a teacher resource handbook be developed, as outlined by the provincial Working Group on Multi-Grading, and that this handbook be developed by individuals who have had experience teaching in multi-level classrooms.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

This provides recognition that teachers require assistance and various forms of professional development in order to successfully operate in a multi-level classroom. Such a handbook would be a useful tool and the specific input from those who have experience in these settings would be particularly relevant.

Recommendation 23

That the Department of Education co-operate with the NLTA and Memorial University to make available appropriate pre-service and in-service education for teachers, including institutes on multi-level teaching.

NLTA Position: **Support**

Comments:

The NLTA has already demonstrated its commitment to providing professional development to teachers in multi-level situations. Already the NLTA has collaborated with Memorial University in implementing a rural internship program. In August 1999 the Small Schools Special Interest Council of the NLTA provided a one-week institute on multi-age pedagogy for teachers throughout the province. The NLTA would be eager to work with other agencies in furthering appropriate pre-service and in-service education for teachers in this area.

Recommendation 24

That the Faculty of Education at Memorial University recognize, in all its courses, the unique challenges of planning and teaching in a multi-level classroom and that all curriculum and methods courses examine strategies and approaches for multi-level teaching.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

In recent years Memorial University's Faculty of Education has made remarkable gains in ensuring that its programs are relevant and in tune with the demands of the Newfoundland and Labrador education system. Of particular note is the recent introduction of the Diploma Program in Tele-Learning and Rural Education. The Association believes that, given the high number of small rural schools in this province, it is essential that all university courses recognize this reality and include components which seek to address associated educational concerns.

Special Education

Recommendation 25

That Department of Education and school board officials reassess the province's approach to the delivery of special education services with particular attention to the responsibilities of parents, teachers, support staff and specialists in an effort to rationalize programming and support.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

The NLTA has requested the establishment of an Advisory Committee on Special Education that includes representatives from all key stakeholders. This was also recommended by the Royal Commission and the Canning Report.

Recommendation 26

That, through this process, directions be set for the overall delivery of special education services and that these directions recognize the need for a balance between district flexibility and resource limitations.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

Teachers cannot be expected to make up for resource limitations. Inclusion must comprise the provision of adequate support and must allow for a variety of placement options ranging from full inclusion to alternate settings. Teachers must have time, personnel, resources, and funding to implement the delivery of special education services.

Recommendation 27

That the role of student assistants be reviewed with a view to redefining a number of these positions as school-based teacher assistants with educational training and qualifications who can serve a range of educational and individual needs.

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:

The NLTA would like more information on the details and implications for the proposed positions of school-based teacher assistants before a final conclusion can be made. The Association's policy on teacher assistants and student assistants is quite clear. Teacher assistants are auxiliary personnel assigned to work with the teacher, or small team of teachers; and student assistants are assigned to work with students with special needs. The function of the teacher assistant is to assist with the implementation of programs designed and prescribed by teachers, to be involved on an ongoing day-to-day interaction with students in classrooms and other learning centers, and to follow strategies, tactics, and material which have been prescribed by teachers. The function of the school assistant is to perform tasks under the direction of a teacher and to work in duplicating materials, preparing bulletins, distributing materials, supervising certain pupil activities, and setting up visual equipment, displays, and equipment used in the teaching process.

Recommendation 28

That the Department of Education and school districts cooperate to ensure that all educational personnel be fully in-serviced in the application of the Pathways model and that this in-service take place before any school district further advances the Pathways framework.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

Among the Association's original concerns about Pathways was that teachers were not being properly in-serviced and prepared for its implementation. The NLTA has stated continually that a co-ordinated, long-term plan for professional development for teachers needed to be developed to ensure successful implementation of the program. The NLTA is firm in its position that successful implementation of Pathways cannot take place without the provision of necessary resources and personnel.

Recommendation 29

That this in-service include clear definitions of roles of educators and support personnel in the Pathways approach.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

The roles of educators and others involved need to be clearly outlined. The NLTA must be involved in the process and in defining the roles.

Recommendation 30

That the Department of Education, school boards and the NLTA monitor the implementation of Pathways and respond appropriately to issues identified through this process.

NLTA Position: **Support**

Comments:

The recommendation is consistent with the NLTA's position on the implementation of Pathways. All partners must be involved in this process. Significant challenges with the implementation of Pathways still remain and continued monitoring is essential to ensure a workable and immediate resolution to outstanding issues.

Recommendation 31

That the Department of Education produce policy guidelines which simplify, in a substantial way, the documentation process involved in ISSP preparation and that these policy guidelines identify expectations for the involvement of those individuals other than the classroom teachers and the special education teacher in the ISSP process.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

Agreement with this recommendation is subject to the NLTA's involvement. There is a concern about documentation implications as teachers need time to work with the students and continuous working groups need to be set up.

Recommendation 32

That the Department of Education develop a strategy for informing parents and the public about assessment procedures, resources and supports for students with special needs.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

The NLTA would welcome the opportunity for continued involvement in this process and in the development of a strategy for informing parents and the public about this issue.

Recommendation 33

That the Department of Education ensure that the personnel who are responsible for program development, assessment and student support services are involved in all curriculum development initiatives.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

There is ample evidence in recent years that demonstrates the importance of having the divisions within the Department of Education working together. For example, if the development of the Pathways model had included the input and involvement of all divisions within the Department of Education, in consultation with the NLTA and other stakeholders, many of the difficulties that were experienced may have been avoided.

Use of Instructional Time

Recommendation 34

That the Department of Education and school boards regularly monitor assigned instructional time, classroom interruptions and absenteeism (on a school-by-school basis) and report on time lost from instruction through the proposed school reporting system.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

It is important to focus on combating absenteeism through preventative, proactive programs rather than focusing on a monitoring and reporting system. Adequate monitoring and self-regulation already take place.

Recommendation 35

That the Department of Education and school boards monitor the number of examination days with the goal of reducing the length of examination schedules by one-third.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

The preparation, study, and writing of examinations is an integral part of instruction and the instructional process, rather than an interruption to instruction as the Panel seems to imply. It is the position of the NLTA that adequate time within the school year must be provided to allow students to prepare/study for each examination and to allow for correction and reporting of examinations in a considered fashion. The above recommendation would lead to students writing two or more exams each day of an examination period, which is unacceptable. Further, the variety of program options and the number of courses requiring examinations prohibit many schools from shortening the examination period. The length of examination periods can not be arbitrarily shortened by one-third. Rather, each individual school through the board office should be setting their examination schedule in the most efficient manner which meets the specific circumstances of the students and that school.

Early Intervention

Recommendation 36

That a new position be created at the district level with overall responsibility for reading and early childhood literacy development.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

In its submission to the Ministerial Panel the NLTA stressed the importance of early intervention programs in the area of literacy. A position at each district office would certainly be a step in achieving this goal. It is the NLTA's position that these units should be over and above the basic school allocations, i.e., these units should not be offset by reducing allocations in other areas. In addition, effective intervention in early literacy requires adequate resources and personnel at the classroom level. One person at the district level will not meet the significant needs in this area.

Recommendation 37

That the Department of Education and school boards implement a plan to in-service primary teachers and special education teachers on language and reading.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

An essential component of improving language and reading among students is a well trained force of certified teachers who are able to diagnose reading difficulties and to deliver the appropriate interventions which will help their students achieve in this area.

Recommendation 38

That departments of government examine ways to more fully integrate early intervention and prevention programs into a comprehensive service structure.

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:

See comments following Recommendation 39.

Recommendation 39

That education officials strengthen links with agencies which focus on the early childhood years, such as the Family Resource Centres and the Healthy Beginnings program.

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:

In its submission to the Ministerial Panel the NLTA recommended that provision must be made for quality programming and facilities for children in the pre-school years. It was suggested that a greater emphasis must be placed upon the early development years of our children in both pre-school and primary grades. Although these recommendations suggest further collaboration among the various agencies responsible for pre-school children, including the appropriate government departments, it is the Association's belief that these recommendations do not go far enough. It is suggested that government give serious consideration and study to the establishment of a more formalized pre-school program throughout the province, with an approved curriculum developed by the Department of Education.

Areas of concern:

Increased collaboration among various agencies regarding pre-school intervention is important. However, serious consideration must be given to the establishment of a formalized pre-school program with an approved curriculum developed by the Department of Education.

Personnel/resources must be in place and time provided for associated meetings.

Recommendation 40

That the length of the primary school day be prescribed in the Schools Act as five hours.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

This recommendation does not address the inequities and differing levels of preparedness for school of children in the formative years. The Panel has chosen not to make recommendations on the length of the Kindergarten day or the concept of junior Kindergarten as mechanisms for achieving equity among all children entering primary school. The issues of pre-Kindergarten and length of the Kindergarten day should be addressed in conjunction with any change in the length of the primary day.

Recommendation 41

That the Department of Education and school boards undertake an inventory of pre-Kindergarten orientation programs and a review of best practices in the area.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

In many schools and school boards throughout the province a number of highly successful pre-Kindergarten orientation programs have been developed over the years. Such programs have been instrumental in helping prepare young children for their school experience. A review of best practices is certainly desirable. The assumption is that the Department of Education would subsequently take leadership in developing a resource package for successful pre-Kindergarten orientation.

Teacher Availability and Training

Recommendation 42

That, wherever possible, schools be staffed with full-time teachers.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

The recent practice of dividing teaching units into small parts is unacceptable. Schools have limited opportunities to offer programs because part-time staff members are only occasionally present at the school. The expectations on part-time teachers are often considerable, and the workload of these individuals is unmanageable and well out of proportion to the portion of full-time salary being provided. It is difficult to attract qualified teachers into less than full-time positions, especially in rural areas.

Recommendation 43

That the Department of Education publish an analysis of the results from its recent survey of teachers.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

As stated in the Report from the Ministerial Panel there are gaps in our knowledge with respect to teacher supply and demand. The Department of Education periodically conducts a survey of teachers which gives a comprehensive picture of such factors as specific assignments and workloads, grades and subjects taught, and subject specialization of teachers. This information has never been presented in a report that all the stakeholders can use or to inform policymakers on issues like supply and demand.

Recommendation 44

That the Department of Education establish an advisory group comprised of representatives of Memorial University's Faculty of Education, the Newfoundland and Labrador School Boards Association and the NLTA to review teacher training initiatives and examine teacher supply and demand.

NLTA Position: **Support**

Comments:

Teacher education programs should be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that course offerings are relevant and reflect the requirements and challenges of teaching in the current educational environment.

Professional Development

Recommendation 45

That the Department of Education ensure that program consultants spend up to 40% of their time in the field with teachers engaged in direct professional development activities and that financial resources be allocated to facilitate this work.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

The NLTA believes that successful curriculum development and implementation is an integrated process which involves the participation of all agencies. As the special interest councils of the NLTA have attempted to meet professional development needs of teachers, lack of access to program development specialists at the Department of Education has been a matter of some concern. During the last number of years the ability of these consultants to meet with teachers throughout the province and to provide necessary leadership in in-servicing and professional development has been seriously curtailed. Special interest councils and school districts have had great difficulty accessing department personnel and are often expected to cover all expenses for these individuals. For special interest councils this is an unreasonable expectation that they have been unable to meet, and as a result both teachers and program development specialists have had little opportunity to dialogue in curriculum matters. This recommendation should go a long way in alleviating this difficulty.

Recommendation 46

That three paid teacher days be added to the school year and be dedicated for teacher in-service.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

There is a great need for teachers to have continuous in-service available to them if they are to remain current with modern levels of teaching practice. Comprehensive in-servicing must be provided with the introduction of any new programs, courses or initiatives. There should be a designated number of days for professional development defined in the Collective Agreement. Current restrictions on the use of substitute teachers have drastically curtailed opportunities for teacher professional development. The addition of three days to the school year, specifically dedicated to teacher in-service, will provide boards the opportunity to use specific days without the requirement of substitutes or impacting on instructional time. It is the NLTA's expectation that these days are in addition to days for teacher in-service presently provided for in the Collective Agreement.

Recommendation 47

That the Department of Education, school boards and the NLTA establish a Professional Development alliance under a consortium model with the following goals:

- to develop a shared annual professional development agenda;
- to develop a new model of professional development institutes for teachers;
- to establish a system of recognizing participation in professional development activities, giving consideration to incentives, awards and certification; and
- to develop alternate approaches to professional development delivery.

NLTA Position: **Support**

Comments:

In the report of the Provincial Professional Development Advisory Committee, the NLTA representatives gave full support to the concepts of collaboration and long-term planning in the provision of relevant

professional development for teachers. In addition, the Association supports a professional development model which would provide recognition for professional development activities in addition to university-based experiences. The NLTA would welcome the opportunity to participate in a professional development alliance to explore these and other issues, and suggests that Memorial University of Newfoundland should also be included in this partnership.

Guidance

Recommendation 48

That in order to respond to the needs identified for guidance services, the allocation of guidance counsellors be increased to 1 per 500 students.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

Increased guidance services are seen as a positive move to provide a variety of supports to students and teachers. There must now be consultation at the local level as to how one best implements this change. In some instances where individual schools do not qualify for full-time guidance counsellors, it may be advantageous to share an individual with other schools; in other cases a guidance counsellor may need to teach part time in order to obtain full employment. In all cases, every effort should be made to obtain the appropriate guidance allowance for qualifying individuals. It is the NLTA's position that these units are over and above the basic school allocations, i.e. these units should not be offset by reducing units in other areas.

Alternate Settings

Recommendation 49

That the Department of Education establish policies to enable the development of alternate education programs.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

Every school board should have at least one alternate setting for students who are severely disruptive and who demonstrate violent behavior. The NLTA would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the development of these policies and strongly recommends that staffing for these settings be over and above existing allocations.

Recommendation 50

That each school board develop policies and programs which ensure that disruptive and violent students are accommodated in appropriate settings in order to provide them with a sound educational course of study designed to modify disruptive behavior and meet their educational needs.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

It is essential that procedures be put in place to appropriately accommodate disruptive and violent students in a manner that addresses the dual purpose of behavior modification and provision of a sound educational program. On this issue the following are statements of NLTA policy:

- teachers must have the right of refusal with respect to teaching or supervising a student who has demonstrated violent or abusive behavior against adults or other students;

- a teacher, before agreeing to provide instruction or supervision to students who have demonstrated violent or abusive behavior, must have the right to receive in-service to gain the competencies required to deal with violent acts prior to accepting responsibility for a violent student in the school setting;
- a teacher must have the right to have removed from the classroom or teaching/learning situation any student who has engaged in violent behavior in the school and such student shall be disciplined within parameters established by legislation, policy, and guidelines;
- a teacher must have the right to refuse re-admittance of a student who has engaged in violent behavior if there is a compelling reason that suggests the safety of students and the teacher is at risk;
- every school board must have at least one alternate setting for students who are severely disruptive and who demonstrate violent abusive behavior;
- where in a classroom there are one or more students who are severely mentally challenged and/or physically challenged, and/or have injured themselves or others and require constant adult attention in that classroom, there should be provided another suitably trained adult in a support role;
- teachers should not be required to perform the functions and duties of personnel who are assigned to the classroom in a support capacity.

In 1993-94, at the insistence of the NLTA, a Classroom Issues Committee was formed to make recommendations on, among other issues, the problem of classroom disruption. The committee was comprised of representatives from the Provincial Government Departments of Education, Social Services, Health, and Justice, along with the NLTA and the Newfoundland and Labrador School Boards Association. In its report, the Committee made a number of specific recommendations on this issue, most of which have yet to be actioned. These include:

District policies regarding school violence ensure the formation of a school-based Safe Schools Team (SST) consisting of the school administrator and other personnel who are deemed to have a legitimate role in prevention, intervention, and assessment activities.

Each district school board have a Safe Schools Team to have the dual responsibility for: assuming a leadership role in the development of district school violence policy and student-teacher support services; and consulting with school-based SSTs in assessing children who have demonstrated violent behaviours.

When a student has engaged in violent behaviour in the school (violent behaviour and other significant terms having been operationally defined in the Department of Education and Training's policy) that student be immediately removed from the classroom or situation and disciplined within the parameters established by legislation, policy, and guidelines.

- A student not be returned to the classroom if there is a compelling reason that falls within the parameters outlined in provincial policy and that reason suggests the safety of students and the teacher is at risk. In such cases, the concerns be referred to the Safe Schools Team for assessment and consultation with the district's Safe School Team, development of a behavioural management plan, and/or scheduling of counselling/therapeutic supports for the student exhibiting the violent behaviour.
- In order for Safe School Teams to assess adequately a violent event and determine interventions, the Schools Act be amended to allow for assessment time that may be required outside of the disciplinary suspension period. An analysis of interventions would be conducted every two weeks by an independent three-member team representing the Departments in the Model for Coordination of Service Delivery.

School Administrators

Recommendation 51

That there be a five-day extension of the work year for principals and that this extension be matched by a commensurate increase in salary.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

Since schools are administered by teams of principals and vice-principals who share the duties of school administration, it is the Association's position that the reference to "principal" be understood to include vice-principals in qualifying schools. The Association would agree with this recommendation if assistant principals were included.

Secretarial and Technical Support

Recommendation 52

That a Grant Review Committee of the Department of Education and school boards:

- review the formula for the allotment of secretarial hours to ensure an appropriate level of secretarial support, and
- establish a grant for technical support appropriate to the needs of schools.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

There is a need for greater secretarial and technical support in schools during school operating hours. In providing these resources, it must be ensured that they not replace any teaching staff in the school system.

Organizing for Effective Schooling

Recommendation 53

That the Department of Education and school districts ensure that all principals, and in particular new principals, are trained in effective school scheduling.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

See comments in Recommendation 54.

Recommendation 54

That the Department of Education, school districts and the NLTA include institutes on school scheduling in professional development offerings.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

As stated in the Report from the Ministerial Panel, school scheduling –; the number, configuration and duration of student learning periods and teacher work assignments –; is a significant determinant of school productivity. Effective scheduling is the key to properly allocating resources. The NLTA advocates additional training and ongoing professional development for all teachers.

Recommendation 55

That the Department of Education appoint an educational effectiveness audit team consisting of two field

auditors to ensure best educational and administrative practices are followed at the district and school level in the use of resources. Specifically, the audit team would:

- examine school schedules to ensure the appropriate number of instructional hours are provided;
- monitor and provide feedback on the use of school time;
- examine the use of school facilities;
- develop and implement a process for monitoring the coverage of curriculum content by teachers;
- assist districts and schools in implementing structures to become more effective; and
- assist administrators in organizing schools which have similar program and demographic characteristics.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

The Collective Agreement, through Article 14, outlines the process for teacher evaluation. Any efforts by field auditors to evaluate teachers would be a concern for the Association. As well, if there are two individuals responsible for all schools in the province, there is a concern that they will be identifying problems but not having the necessary time or resources to work with schools to provide the assistance needed to correct identified problems.

Components of a Proposed Allocation Model

Recommendation 56

That the following guidelines be used for determining the framework for the allocation of teachers to school districts.

Comments:

The NLTA agrees with the concept that teacher allocations be based on grade level specific ratios and school size, rather than district-wide pupil numbers. Further, it is the NLTA's position that a maximum class size be established, as per recommendation 3.14 in the NLTA submission to the Ministerial Panel. The school should be the focal point for teacher allocations. The actual ratios recommended are discussed under each category below.

A. District Offices:

Reading and Early Literacy Program Specialists	1 per district
Other Program Specialists	5 per district
Assistant Directors	2 per district
Directors	1 per district

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

The NLTA position is that each district should be allocated three assistant directors –; one each for Personnel, Program and Finance. In addition, the allocation of human resource managers has not been addressed. Such positions are essential in large boards and should not be taken from the program specialist allocations. Further, it is the NLTA's position that program specialist allocations should be based on actual programs and the number of students being serviced by each board. Larger boards require more program specialists than smaller boards to adequately address program and in-service demands. In addition to the six recommended by the Panel, all districts should have a minimum of four additional program implementation

specialists allocated according to programs, funded by the Department of Education in addition to existing teacher allocations, and assigned based on needs defined by each district.

B. Small Schools (Schools with an average grade enrolment of less than 30):

Grade Level	Ratio of Students to Teachers	Recommended NLTA Ratio
K	16:1	12:1
1-6	20:1	20:1
7-12	21:1	20:1

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

The general NLTA recommended ratios are provided above. In addition, it is the NLTA's position that schools designated as "small, necessarily existent" (SNE) schools should not lose units as a result of this method of allocation. The Department has previously recognized that additional allocations must be provided to SNE schools in order to offer an adequate program. The Panel's recommendations no longer provide this accommodation. Many of the SNE schools will lose teaching units as a result.

C. Multi-level instructional groups:

Grade Combinations	Ratio of Students to Teachers	Recommended NLTA Ratio
K with any one other	15:1	12:1
K with any two others	12:1	12:1
K with any 3 others (e.g. K-3)	10:1	10:1
Any two primary	17:1	12:1
Three or more primary	14:1	12:1
Any two primary/elementary (e.g. 3-4)	18:1	12:1
Three or more primary/elementary	15:1	12:1
Any two elementary/intermediate	18:1	15:1
Three or more elementary/intermediate	15:1	15:1

Teachers will be allocated for high school based on the framework for small, mid-sized and large schools with a minimum number of teachers assigned as follows:

- In small schools 1.5 teacher units will be allocated to each school with 21 or fewer high school students.
- Schools with 22 to 31 and 32 to 42 high school students (inclusive) will be allocated 1.75 and 2 teacher units, respectively.
- High schools with enrolments greater than 42 will be allocated teachers based on a divisor of 21 for small schools, 24 for medium schools and 27 for large schools.

For schools with total enrolment less than 10 –; 1 teacher; for schools with total enrolment greater than or equal to 10 but less than 15 –; 2 teachers. When high school enrolment drops below 5, options for student

bursaries to study in a larger school should be considered.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

See recommended NLTA ratio in C above.

D. Mid-Sized Schools (Schools with an average grade enrolment greater than or equal to 30 but less than 100):

Grade Level	Ratio of Students to Teachers	Recommended NLTA Ratio
K	20:1	12:1
1-6	22:1	20:1
7-12	24:1	20:1

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

See recommended NLTA ratio in D above.

E. Large Schools (Schools with an average grade enrolment of 100 and above):

Grade Level	Ratio of Students to Teachers	Recommended NLTA Ratio
K	20:1	12:1
1-3	24:1	20:1
4-6	26:1	20:1
7-12	27:1	20:1

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

See recommended NLTA ratio in E above. The current student-teacher ratio for the basic teacher allocation is 23:1. The effect of the Panel's recommendation on large schools will be a higher student-teacher ratio which will result in larger class sizes and increased teacher workload. Many of the large schools already have class sizes in excess of 30 students. Initiatives such as integration of special needs students and removal of remedial supports for Pathways 2 students require smaller class sizes for effective delivery of programs. This increased ratio is a regressive step which will have a negative impact on class size, availability of programs, program delivery, teacher-student contact, and teacher workload.

F. Administration:

School Enrolment	Allocation	NLTA Recommended Administration Allowance	
		School Enrolment	Allocation
1-74	0.25 unit(s)	1-99	0.5
75-149	0.50	100-249	1.0
150-249	0.75	250-499	1.5
250-399	1.0	500-699	2.0
400-549	1.25	700+	2.5

550-699	1.5
700-849	1.75
850+	2.0

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

See recommended NLTA ratio in F above.

G. Rural Adjustment

For rural schools the teacher multiplier for grade/level-specific ratios shall be set at 1.05.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

The NLTA agrees with the concept of a multiplier ratio for rural schools; however, the recommended ratio is not sufficient to adequately address the needs of rural schools.

H. Additional Allocations:

Non-categorical Special Education	7 per 1000 students
Categorical Special Education	Documented cases
Learning Resource Teachers	1 per 1000 students
Guidance Counsellors	1 per 500 students
Teachers to support program areas	1 per 250 students (allocated on the basis of (e.g. music, art, French) enrolment in Grades 7-12)
Francophone schools	At level for small schools
Aboriginal schools	Present allocation (with enhanced guidance and administrator allocation from new model)

The number of students above the grade level criterion is pooled in a "bank" with fractional teaching units assigned proportional to the overall ratio for that grade level, with the multiplier set at one for both urban and rural schools. Recognizing also that it is not reasonable for all schools to employ teachers for small fractions of time, these basic allocations can be combined with special education, administration or other supplementary units to create full-time or large fractional positions.

NLTA Recommended Allocations	
Non-Categorical Special Education (see comments below)	1:10 ratio
Categorical Special Needs	1:4 ratio
Learning Resource Teachers	<150 students 0.5 units
	150-500 students 1.0 units
	>500 students 1.5 units

Guidance	1:500 ratio
Teachers to Support Program Areas (in all Grades K-12)	1:250 ratio
Francophone Schools (Grade K)	1:12 ratio
Aboriginal Schools (Grades 1-12)	1:20 ratio

Non-Categorical Special Education Comments:
 The Panel has recommended an allocation based on total student population. The NLTA position is that non-categorical special needs teachers should be allocated on the basis of the actual number of students in the classroom. Allocating non-categorical special education on a student population basis ignores the ISSP needs and requirements of these special needs children. These needs are individualized and the actual allocations should be based on the numbers of actual special needs students. The NLTA recommends a ratio of 1:10 non-categorical special needs children in the classroom.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:
 See recommended NLTA ratio in H above.

Recommendation 57

That teacher allocations for the 2000-2001 school year for each school district be as presented in Table 5.2.4.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:
 It is the NLTA's position that no school should receive a teaching allocation that increases the student-teacher ratio from the previous year. The NLTA is receiving feedback from school administrators in Newfoundland and Labrador on the impact of the Panel recommendations on their allocations for the 2000-2001 school year. There are indications that many mid-size and large schools are receiving fewer teacher units than the previous year, despite enrolments remaining stable and even increasing. In addition, small necessarily existent schools are losing units despite the Department's previous recognition that these units are required for delivery of a basic program. The NLTA has major concerns if, as a result of the Panel's recommendations, allocation concerns are addressed by shifting units from one school to another, resulting in a higher pupil-teacher ratio than previously existed in some schools.

A Distance Education Model and Its Implementation

Recommendation 58

That the province embark on a program to substantially increase the scope of distance education offerings in the schools through the establishment of a "Center for Distance Learning and Innovation".

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:
 At the present time there are many groups that are dealing directly or indirectly with distance education. Combining STEM~Net, OLIN, the Center for Tele-Learning, and the School of Distance Education, may be a good idea but each of the stakeholders has various areas of responsibility that may not be able to be

combined under one umbrella organization.

Tele-learning and distance education should be offered through the most technologically advanced means possible, operating within a digitized web-based environment and made available to all students. Any courses or programs offered through tele-learning must be designed to allow the necessary guided instruction and feedback from classroom teachers. The delivery and coordination of distance education/tele-learning should be offered to clusters of schools on a local/regional basis.

Further consultation with the membership is required before a final position is established.

Recommendation 59

That the Center for Distance Learning and Innovation consist of a number of teachers, who may be termed Electronic Teachers or E-teachers, with primary responsibility for course delivery and evaluation and that, at the school level, teachers be assigned from the regular school allocation as mediating teachers to ensure appropriate interaction between students and E-teachers.

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:

There currently exists a number of inefficiencies with respect to distance education in our schools. Distance education courses, although a small component of a school's total program, place demands on the entire school. For example, schedules are often dictated by time slots for distance education programs, placing significant demands on administrators as schedules are prepared.

Insufficient resources for distance education sometimes compromises the efficiency and effectiveness of these programs and, in such cases, one can legitimately speculate whether the dollars currently committed for distance education would be more efficiently used if they were redirected back to the classroom.

The current model needs some reworking to broaden the scope and effectiveness of distance education and tele-learning. It is therefore essential that the involvement of teachers be maintained and adequately resourced and that such does not increase the workload of on-site teachers. Many students would lack the independence and necessary study skills to succeed in the tele-learning environments without the guidance of a teacher.

Further consultation with the membership is required before a final position is established.

Recommendation 60

That an approach be taken to content packaging and delivery that is not totally dependent on high bandwidth technologies.

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:

The wording of this recommendation is open to interpretation. In one sense, it suggests that the web-based components of courses be designed to meet the current realities of Internet connectivity in rural areas of the province. Yet, in the elaboration of this recommendation, the Panel equates content packaging and delivery with the development of multi-media CD's for student use on computer workstations. The intent seems to be that students experiencing low bandwidth problems, poor connectivity, or server downtime can avail of CD's to help meet the learning outcomes.

Simply put, without the goals of creating a high bandwidth network and having good connectivity, 95+ percent of the time for every site from the onset, a model that invokes packaged content (CD's) as a back-up

to web-based content may come to rely heavily on the more reliable medium (i.e. the CD's). Moreover, if the model lacks the technical support required to ensure minimal downtime, and if cash strapped schools and school boards are made responsible for hardware maintenance and replacement, some students may experience long- term reliance on the packaged content. In other words, for the student who is experiencing chronic connectivity problems, their distance learning program becomes nothing more than a set of new-age correspondence courses. For the mediating teacher at these sites, the role of facilitator evolves into that of teacher.

Further consultation with the membership is required before a final position is established.

Recommendation 61

That most communications be through an Internet-based system incorporating e-mail, conference forums, Internet fax and similar devices, with minimal reliance on synchronous communications, fixed schedules or other constraining elements.

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:

The model, including the specifications for the hardware required, should be based on the principle of synchronous communication between students and teachers with adequate provision for asynchronous activities. It is questionable how well a student studying French or music can learn by interacting with the audio component of a multimedia CD. The goal of distance learning should be to keep the teacher in the classroom virtual or otherwise.

Further consultation with the membership is required before a final position is established.

Recommendation 62

That the Department of Education develop the Center for Distance Learning and Innovation, in cooperation with the other agencies currently involved in distance education, as an interim measure to ensure that Phases I and II of the proposed model be implemented without delay.

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:

Developing and adapting courses for distance delivery should begin as soon as possible. However, it must be noted that certain APEF programs are still in various stages of development, and this has implications for course development timelines in this province. Furthermore, proceeding without pilots in the new distance courses where the delivery and instructional issues may be different from those in the current programs (math and science mainly) is not advisable.

Course development must be founded on a model that has a strong synchronous component. The challenge of scheduling constraints can be overcome through good planning and creative time-tabling.

Further consultation with the membership is required before a final position is established.

Recommendation 63

That the Center for Distance Learning and Innovation be mandated to proceed with implementing Phase I of the model beginning in 2000 and Phase II beginning in 2001.

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:

Timeline and budget allocations are not practicable. It is too optimistic to think that 18 courses can be developed for delivery in 16 months when the Center for Distance Learning and Innovation does not yet exist. It is not practical to expect a staff to be recruited before September 2000. It is not possible to develop/adapt the courses for distance delivery at the cost of \$10,000 per course. A recipe for failure is to implement hastily prepared programs without piloting.

Further consultation with the membership is required before a final position is established.

Recommendation 64

That planning begin immediately for the integration of all distance education infrastructure and developmental activities under a single open learning agency, of which the Center for Distance Learning and Innovation would be one component.

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:

The existing agencies for the development and delivery of distance learning programming have their own agendas. The goal of a single open learning agency of which the Center for Distance Learning and Innovation is but one component is a good goal, but given the current state of matters, achieving that goal may be as difficult as giving each distance learning site good, reliable Internet connectivity with reasonably high bandwidth.

Further consultation with the membership is required before a final position is established.

Governance and School Board Operations

Recommendation 65

That the Schools Act (1997) be amended to accommodate a change to the legislative procedures for the appointment, termination and accountability of school district directors to parallel that of the model in place under the Colleges Act (1996).

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

School district directors should not be appointed, terminated and accountable directly to Cabinet. Since they are responsible for district governance, they should be chosen by and accountable to the local region through the democratically chosen boards.

Recommendation 66

That the Department of Education liaise with other departments of government to develop and institute a shared support services arrangement, on a pilot basis, between one or more school boards and other government agencies.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

It is the NLTA's understanding that this recommendation is intended to foster collaborative efforts on issues such as early intervention with an attempt to address the needs of disadvantaged children.

Recommendation 67

That the protocol for school board and Department of Education executive communication be reviewed in a meeting of school board directors and the executive of the Department of Education.

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:

The NLTA will await a protocol agreement between the school board directors and the Department of Education, and will assess its impact at that time.

Department of Education Structural Issues

Recommendation 68

That the Department of Education examine the structure of its Primary, Elementary, Secondary Branch with a goal to substantially linking departmental functions and improving cooperation and communication among staff, thereby achieving a more integrated approach to its planning and operations.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

In dealing with the Department of Education on curriculum and program issues, the NLTA has observed the need for greater communication and collaboration among the various divisions within the Department. For example, in dealing with the Department of Education on the implementation of Pathways, it became clear that there were many complex issues which crossed the divisions of Program Development, Student Support Services, and Evaluation, Testing and Certification. It quickly became apparent that the Pathways framework initiated by the Student Support Services Division had a significant impact on curriculum and

assessment issues. Another significant concern for the Association during the past few years has been the large number of new programs and initiatives that have been introduced into the school system from all divisions of the Department. In order to prevent further overload and the introduction of excessive and unreasonable demands from these various divisions, any realignment which would ensure integrated, long-term planning would be most desirable.

School Construction and Maintenance

Recommendation 69

That the Department of Education review and revise all policies and procedures associated with school construction to ensure maximum flexibility and innovation in school design.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

The NLTA welcomes a review of policy and procedure in this area. There is considerable concern that the planned physical size of classrooms in new school designs is not adequate. The current planning manual for school construction has reduced room sizes, which is problematic for creative teaching and grouping situations. The NLTA believes input of teachers and the Association is necessary in developing these policies on school design. A mechanism for addressing the concerns of teachers and students during the planning, construction, and renovation of schools is necessary.

Recommendation 70

That the Department of Education's Grant Review Committee examine the area of school maintenance to determine whether grants are adequate to ensure a clean and healthy environment for learning.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

The NLTA agrees that the Department of Education needs to examine the area of grants to school maintenance in order to ensure clean and healthy learning environments. There are many examples where there is a need for major spending to improve the physical plant of schools throughout this province, particularly in reference to health and safety issues.

Public Examinations

Recommendation 71

That a public examinations system be implemented as of June 2001 and that examinations be conducted in academic English, academic and advanced mathematics, biology, chemistry, geology and physics, core French, world geography and world history.

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:

The NLTA believes that global issues should also be included in the list of subject areas referenced.

Recommendation 72

That final grades in public examination subjects be made up of a 50% contribution of public and teacher grades.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

Continued teacher involvement in assigning grades to students is desirable.

Recommendation 73

That the public examinations be developed in accordance with currently modern standards of test development, including the use of item banks keyed to the curriculum, field testing of items, a standards-setting procedure and the use of item statistics to monitor and improve item quality.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

In addition to the conditions outlined in this recommendation, the NLTA believes that public examinations must be developed by active teachers who are recruited from the field for this purpose and appropriately compensated for their input.

Recommendation 74

That, for improved reliability and greater efficiency in marking, greater use be made of multiple choice items, including the use of such items to test higher order thinking. While other forms of items should be used where necessary, the principle should be that other forms would only be used to measure outcomes that cannot be captured by the multiple choice format.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

Although the Association recognizes the need for improved reliability and greater efficiency in marking, it must be remembered that multiple choice items have significant limitations. For example, in areas such as English or social studies it is very difficult to assess student ability to communicate and to analyze concepts through the use of multiple choice tests. Some concepts, particularly in certain subject areas, are not conducive to multiple choice evaluation.

Recommendation 75

That to ensure proper control of marking standards, the examinations be marked by a teacher panel employed specifically for this task and overseen by professional staff of the Department of Education.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

The NLTA believes that use of a teacher panel for marking of public examinations is essential. It is understood, of course, that such teachers would be appropriately remunerated and that the NLTA would be involved in any discussions on compensation amounts.

Recommendation 76

That the examinations system make maximum use of assessment material prepared under the APEF assessment program but that it not be made contingent on such developments. In particular, examinations in all of the identified subjects should be in place by June 2001, regardless of the pace of development within the APEF.

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:

At this point in time the NLTA is preparing to administer a questionnaire to high school teachers regarding

the re-instatement of public examinations. This questionnaire arose as a result of a resolution from our 1999 Biennial General Meeting. It is anticipated that our membership will favour the re-instatement of public examinations. However, there may be some specific suggestions regarding the setting, administration and marking of these tests. Following administration of the questionnaire and an analysis of the results, the NLTA will be developing a more detailed position on public examinations.

System Accountability

Recommendation 77

That an educational indicators report, comparable to the "Profile '96" document, be produced every three years and that the Department of Education allocate sufficient resources to ensure that this can be accomplished.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

The Department of Education should implement a communication/in-service program to assist teachers and parents in the interpretation of standardized test results. It is important that all parties involved in education at the school level be knowledgeable about the interpretation of test results so that any conclusions or action plans are made from an informed perspective. As the employer, the Department of Education has an obligation to inform the employees about the results.

Recommendation 78

That the Department of Education implement a school reporting system, involving public reports at two-year intervals giving comparative data on all schools in the province.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

See comments in Recommendation 79.

Recommendation 79

That the reporting system be based primarily on the Department of Education's School Profile System.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

The NLTA sees no benefit in the public comparison of schools. Within this province there are many inequities and unique circumstances which would impact upon the performance of a particular educational institution. It is certainly appropriate for an individual school to assess its own performance and to be aware of its standing with respect to other schools throughout the province. Given this information, an under-performing school should work with the community, the school district and provincial agencies to develop a reasonable strategic plan for improvement. Development of such a plan should consider the multiplicity of factors which can influence student achievement in that school, including those which are beyond the control of the educators within that institution. Significant gains can be made when a school works closely with its immediate community and school district in making a reasoned and knowledgeable interpretation of any assessment results. Such processes would derive absolutely no benefit from a public province-wide school reporting system.

Recommendation 80

That schools continue to produce their own reports incorporating data for both the school and the province

and providing appropriate information about the school context and any mitigating circumstances that might account for the published comparative results.

NLTA Position: **Agree in Principle**

Comments:

During the past number of years many schools in this province have had various successful and rewarding experiences in creating school reports for their community and school districts. It is important that teachers, administrators, and the school community be provided the necessary information and advice which would allow them to conduct valid interpretation of assessment results. The NLTA does not support the use of these reports to explain mitigating circumstances in reviewing comparative results between schools.

Recommendation 81

That schools that are underperforming as compared to provincial expectations be specifically targeted for improvement and that school districts be responsible for follow-up with schools and school councils in addressing the problems of such schools.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

The NLTA supports concepts of school improvement and staff development as a collaborative school-based initiative. To suggest that schools be "targeted" for improvements seems totally inconsistent with any school improvement/staff development literature which suggests that the design and implementation of successful school improvement plans must be initiated and carried through at the school level. This recommendation could potentially be a top-down approach based upon accountability and excessive pressure. It is more desirable to suggest that schools which under-perform be provided with the resources and assistance required to achieve improvement.

Enhancing the Basis for Accountability

Recommendation 82

That the province recommit to the development of a provincial assessment program incorporating a comprehensive test with sub-tests in at least the subject areas of language, mathematics, science and social studies.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

See comments in Recommendation 83.

Recommendation 83

That such a test be administered annually on an alternating basis to all students at the end of the primary, elementary and intermediate levels.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

The NLTA believes that the development of an outcomes-driven curriculum is desirable and should greatly assist teachers and students in meeting the goals and objectives of prescribed programs. Furthermore, the development and implementation of testing instruments which measure how well our students are achieving outcomes is certainly essential. At its 1999 Biennial General Meeting, the NLTA took a position opposing

the implementation of a full battery of subject-based criterion-referenced tests given in the same year at any grade level. The development and introduction of one comprehensive, integrated criterion-referenced assessment would certainly seem a more reasonable approach in assessing student performance consistently in a variety of areas.

Recommendation 84

That individual student results on such tests be reported to parents and that school-level results be reported as part of the overall accountability system.

NLTA Position: **Reserved**

Comments:

See comments following Recommendation 85.

Recommendation 85

That final marks consisting of public examination results and school results be aggregated to the school level and used as measures of school performance at the end of high school.

NLTA Position: **Disagree**

Comments:

The NLTA agrees that criterion-referenced test results may be reported to individual parents and that overall scores should be communicated to parents, school councils and the local school district. However, the NLTA opposes any introduction of high stakes testing which becomes mandatory and possibly forms the basis of a public accountability process. This view is consistent with positions articulated by the Canadian Teachers' Federation on various high stakes assessments throughout the country.

Recommendation 86

That the Department of Education initiate research on the effectiveness of particular approaches to serving special needs students and especially on the effectiveness of alternate ways of allocating resources to such students.

NLTA Position: **Agree**

Comments:

Consistently over the past number of years, since the introduction of Pathways, the NLTA has lobbied for a higher allocation of personnel and resources to special needs students. In considering research on the effectiveness of particular approaches it is imperative that we assess what we do and, when deficiencies are revealed, put appropriate measures in place to address these needs.

Summary of NLTA Positions

Recommendation #	NLTA Position	Recommendation #	NLTA Position
1	Agree in Principle	48	Agree in Principle
2	Agree in Principle	49	Agree in Principle
3	Agree in Principle	50	Agree in

			Principle
4	Agree in Principle	51	Disagree
5	Agree	52	Agree in Principle
6	Agree in Principle	53	Agree
7	Agree in Principle	54	Agree
8	Agree in Principle	55	Disagree
9	Agree in Principle	56 a)	Disagree
10	Disagree	56 b)	Disagree
11	Agree	56 c)	Disagree
12	Agree	56 d)	Disagree
13	Agree	56 e)	Disagree
14	Agree	56 f)	Disagree
15	Agree	56 g)	Disagree
16	Agree in Principle	56 h)	Disagree
17	Agree in Principle	57	Disagree
18	Agree in Principle	58	Reserved
19	Agree	59	Reserved
20	Agree	60	Reserved
21	Agree	61	Reserved
22	Agree	62	Reserved
23	Support	63	Reserved
24	Agree	64	Reserved
25	Agree	65	Disagree
26	Agree in Principle	66	Agree in Principle
27	Reserved	67	Reserved
28	Agree in Principle	68	Agree
29	Agree in Principle	69	Agree in Principle
30	Support	70	Agree
31	Agree in Principle	71	Agree
32	Agree in Principle	72	Agree
33	Agree	73	Agree in Principle
34	Disagree	74	Disagree
35	Disagree	75	Agree in Principle
36	Agree in Principle	76	Reserved

37	Agree	77	Agree in Principle
38	Reserved	78	Disagree
39	Reserved	79	Disagree
40	Disagree	80	Agree in Principle
41	Agree	81	Disagree
42	Agree	82	Agree
43	Agree	83	Agree
44	Support	84	Reserved
45	Agree	85	Disagree
46	Agree in Principle	86	Agree
47	Support		

Conclusion

The NLTA commends the Minister of Education on the establishment of this Ministerial Panel and for some of the actions that have already been taken in implementing the recommendations. However, the Association expresses considerable disappointment that a number of critical issues were addressed inadequately or not at all. These issues include:

- the need for teacher preparation time;
- establishment of a formalized pre-school with a prescribed curriculum;
- length of the Kindergarten day;
- maximum class size;
- early intervention for disruptive students;
- allocation of administrative time;
- allocation of specialist teachers in K to 6 for such programs as music, art and physical education;
- allocation of teachers for remedial services;
- additional allocation of learning resources teachers;
- use of non-teaching personnel for supervision of students outside the classroom.

The NLTA requests that the Minister seriously consider the positions and comments of the Association on each recommendation and looks forward to working with the Department of Education in achieving improvements in educational delivery in the classroom.

The Association hopes this challenging and tumultuous period in education is now behind us and that we will finally move toward an education system that is adequately funded, provided with necessary resources and supports, and provides teachers with the professional development opportunities needed to effectively provide excellent instruction to the students for whom we are all responsible.
