

# Students First

Inclusive Education that Supports  
Teaching, Learning, and the Success  
of *all* Nova Scotia Students

Final Report of the Commission on Inclusive Education

# About the Commission



- Appointed in March 2017, under Bill 75, *An Act Respecting a Teachers' Professional Agreement and Classroom Improvements* reporting to “the parties” – NSTU, and Minister of Education & Early Childhood Development.
- Dr. Sarah Shea, Adela Njie (NSTU appointee) and Monica Williams (EECD appointee).
- Provided Interim Report in June 2017, with 15 recommendations, many of them focused on information and data gathering.
- The commission’s work concludes with the submission of this final report.

# Guiding Principles for Our Work

- We are committed to:
  1. The best interest of every student;
  2. Evidence-based practice; and,
  3. Feasible solutions that can work in our classrooms across the school system.
- This final report reflects our commitment to putting students first.

# Research, Consultations & Outreach



In addition to the academic research and engagement with educational experts, the commission undertook engagement with students, families and advocacy groups:

- Hosted public workshops across the province, with over 465 participants;
- Hosted stakeholder meetings with community, advocacy and non-profit groups;
- Invited written public and organization submissions;
- Offered a broad-based online public survey with 4,258 participants; and,
- Held focus groups with parents and students.

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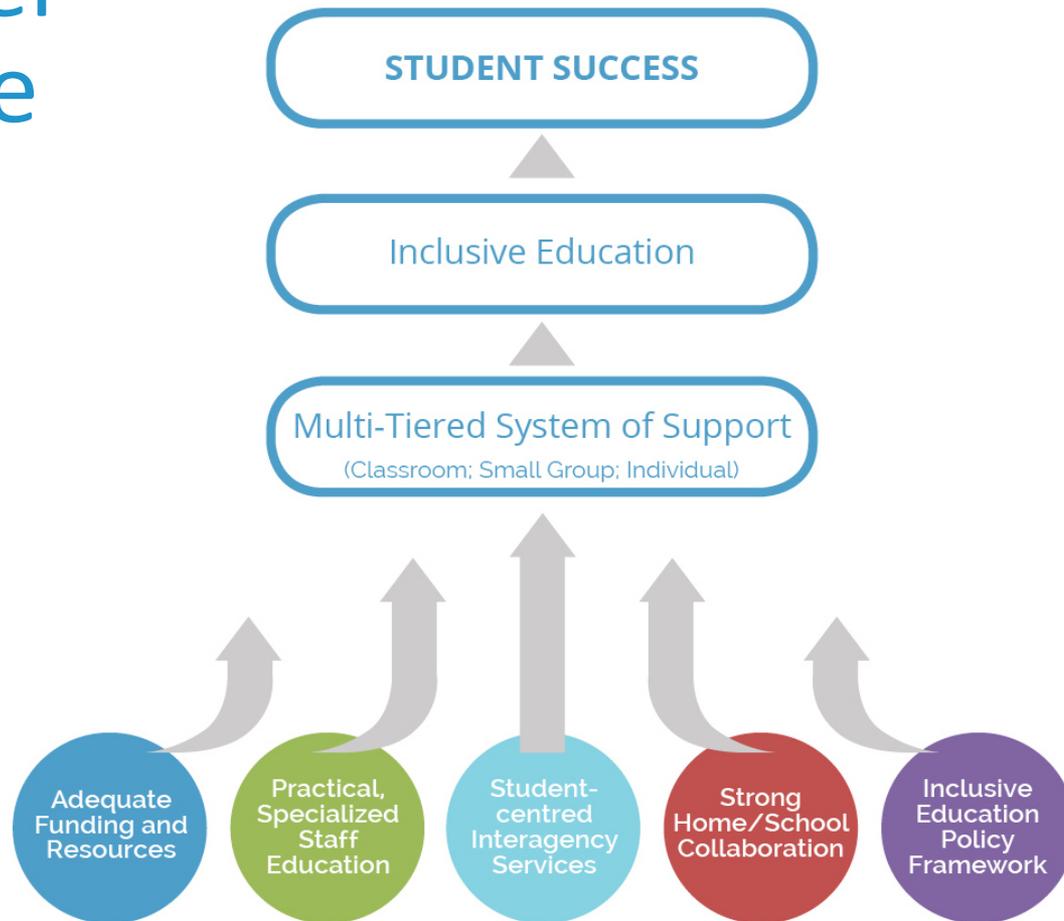
# Listening to Nova Scotians

- Nova Scotians have made it clear that their highest priority areas for improvement are behavioural challenges, mental health, literacy, mathematics, and life skills.
- The system needs more resources; delays in responding and failing to address student needs deny children their right to a good education and lead to poorer outcomes.
- Teachers and administrators feel ill-prepared to meet the demands and challenges of inclusive education.
- There are too many silos.
- Parents need to be true partners, more collaboration is required.

# Final Report

- Sets the course for major changes, from a system that was put in place in 1996, and includes:
  - A new definition of Inclusive Education;
  - The framework of a new model of Inclusive Education;
  - The outlines of a new policy framework for Inclusive Education; and,
  - A strategic implementation plan to realize these changes.
- This change will take time, resources, and collaboration. In the report, we outline mechanisms for oversight, and accountability.

# New Model of Inclusive Education

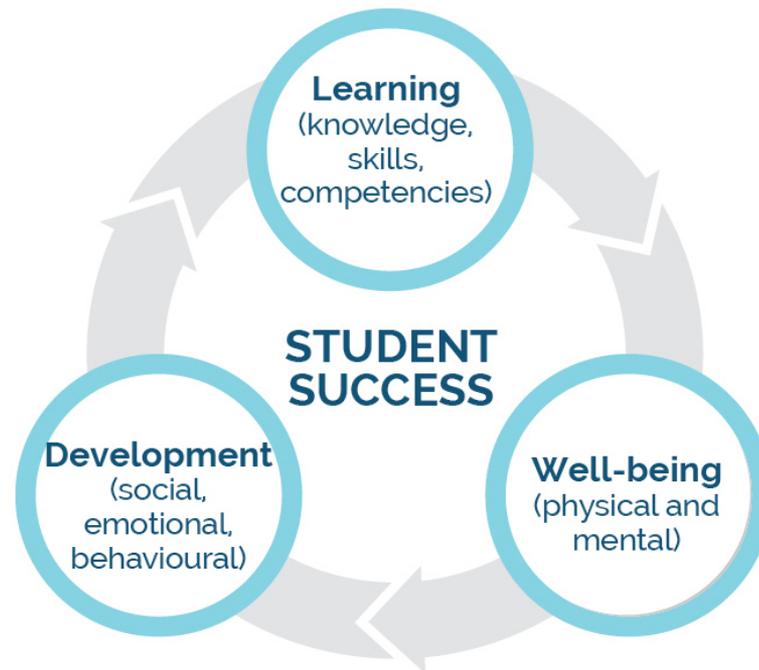


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# Student Success

- Student success must not be narrowly defined as academic achievement on standardized tests of mathematics and literacy.
  - **Learning**
  - **Development**
  - **Well-being**



# The Definition of Inclusive Education

- Inclusive education is public education that supports the learning, development, and well-being of all students in an equitable, efficient, and effective manner.
- Inclusive education is:
  - the right of all students to a quality education;
  - a student-centered, needs-based approach;
  - a multi-tiered continuum of programs, services, and settings;
  - positive learning environments;
  - core values and beliefs;
  - evidence-based policies, practices, and procedures; and,
  - a commitment to excellence.

# New Model of Inclusive Education

## **Is:**

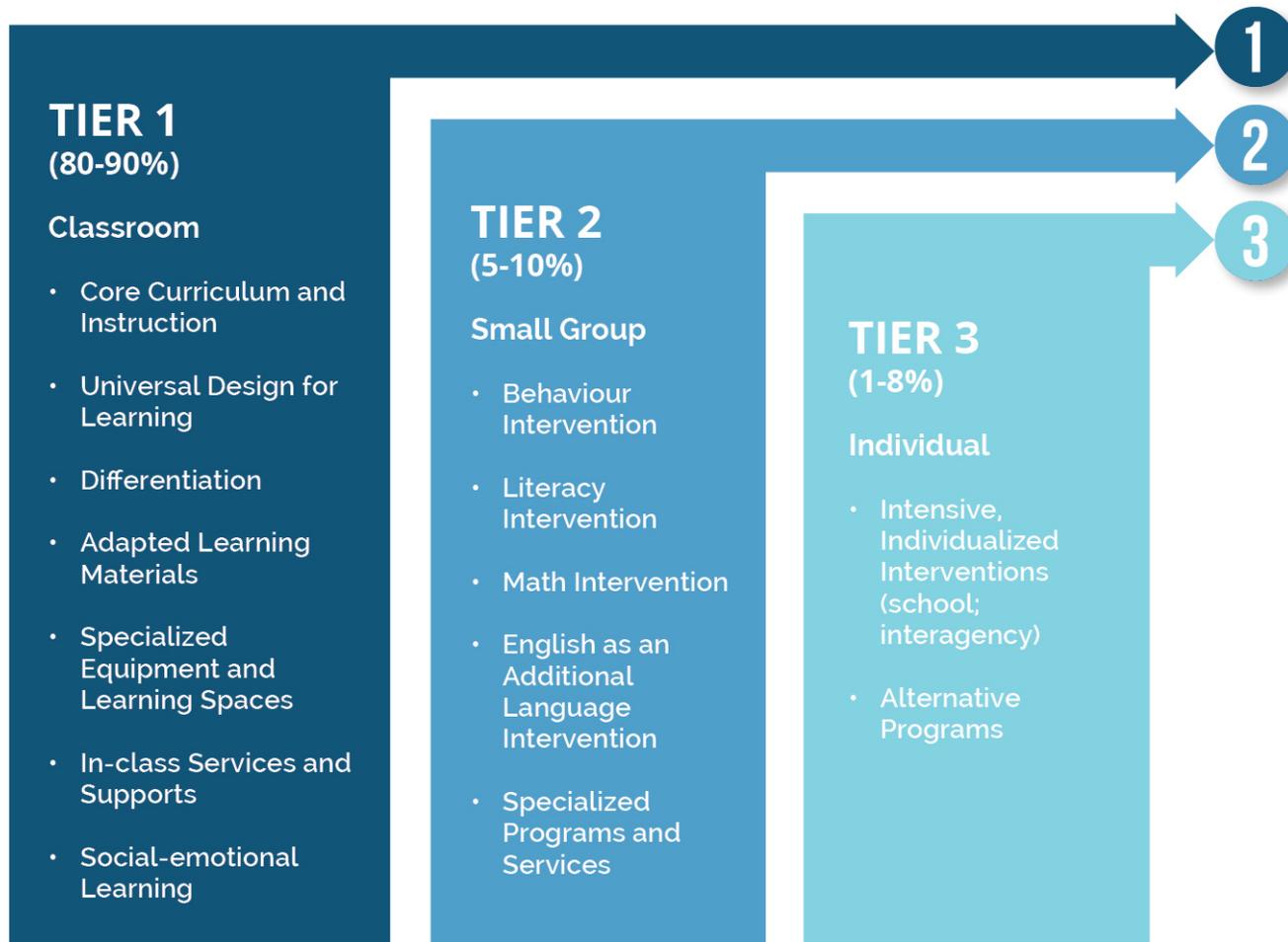
- Classroom, small group and individual supports
- Flexible option: programs, services & settings
- Student-centered: focused on prevention and early identification and intervention
- Blended academic, behaviour and social-emotional support

## **Is not:**

- Traditional programs and placement
- Streaming
- Program-centered
- Separate approaches to student learning, behaviour & social-emotional development

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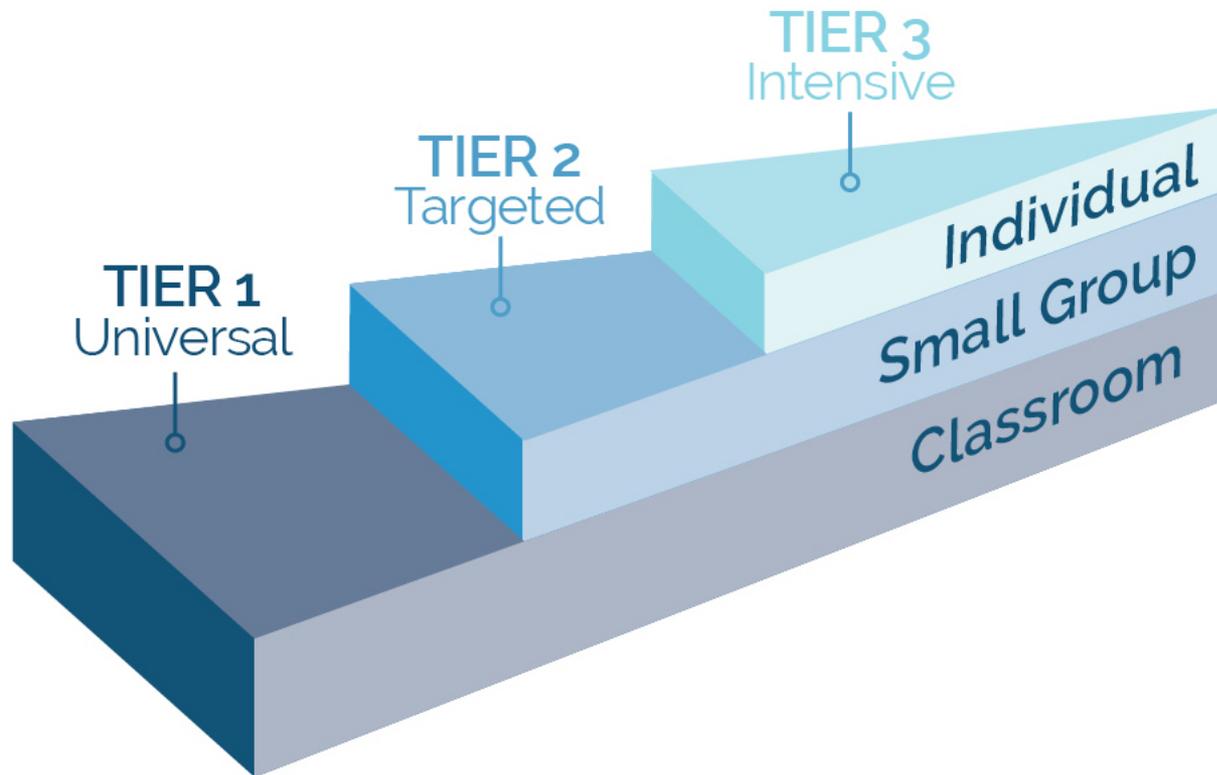
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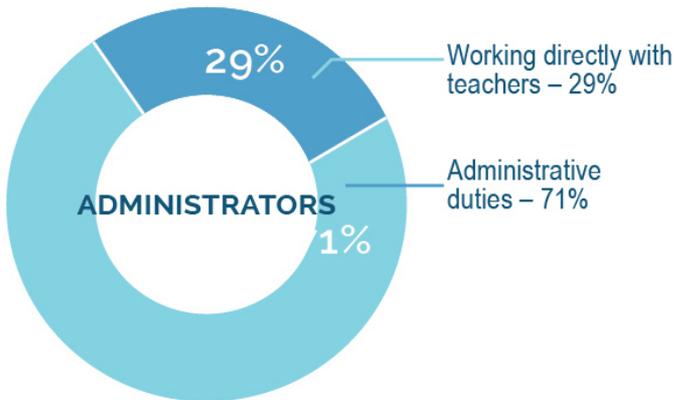
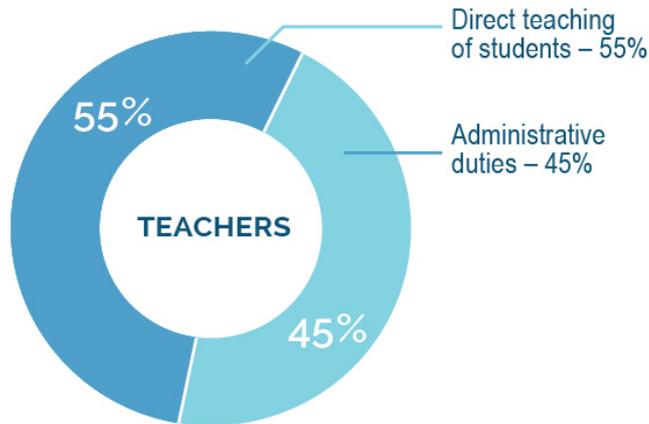
# MTSS



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# Supporting Teaching & Learning



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# Inclusive Education Policy Framework

- Key changes will include:
  - Replacing existing board and provincial policies with one consolidated **Inclusive Education Policy**;
  - New **Teacher Assistant Guidelines**;
  - A provincial **Behaviour Strategy**;
  - A provincial **Autism Strategy**;
  - A provincial **Mental Health Strategy** for schools; and
  - **Interdepartmental Policy and Protocols** for provision of programs and services to public school students by Education, Health, Community Services and Justice.

# Practical, Specialized Staff Education

- Practical, specialized staff education for inclusive education is hands-on, job-embedded learning that teaches educators **how to** implement inclusive education successfully.
- Goals:
  - **Revamp existing teacher preparation and professional development programs to provide them with the practical knowledge, skills and competencies they require to successfully implement inclusive education and meet diverse student needs.**
  - **Create new preparation and professional development programs in inclusive education for teachers, administrators, and teacher assistants.**

# Student-centered Interagency Services

- There is a gap in the coordination of service delivery for students and a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities for funding, service provision, and supervision.
- Goals:
  - **Build on the work to date to increase interagency and interdepartmental collaboration.**
  - **All individuals, departments, and agencies involved with service delivery to school-aged children and youth and their families need to practice meaningful student-focused communication and collaboration.**
  - **Improve transition supports.**

# Strong Home/School Collaboration

An inclusive system is built on a foundation of collaboration among families, educators, and other agencies that support children.

## Schools need

### To Create Successful Home and School Partnerships:

- ✓ Practices that authentically include parents and their communities
- ✓ Physical spaces that help parents feel comfortable when meeting
- ✓ Resources to meet the needs of all students

## Educators need

- ✓ Time to collaborate with parents
- ✓ Multiple and flexible ways to connect with parents
- ✓ Skills and support for their roles as partners with parents

## Educational Leaders need

- ✓ Time to collaborate with parents and educators
- ✓ Skills to support teachers as collaborators with parents
- ✓ Skills in creating school environments that are welcoming to all parents

## Parents need

- ✓ Multiple and flexible ways to connect with teachers
- ✓ Support in navigating the system
- ✓ To feel skilled and supported in their roles as partners with educators
- ✓ To contribute to decisions affecting inclusive education systemically
- ✓ Empowerment in their roles

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# Adequate Funding and Resources

The report calls for:

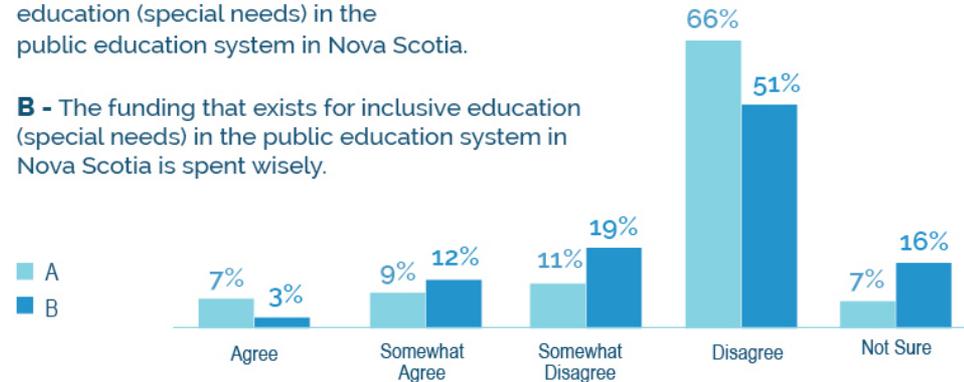
1. Additional core funding for new teaching positions in behaviour support, autism, and other specialties.
2. More core funding to hire more staff: teachers, specialists, and paraprofessionals.
3. Student-centered funding processes that include streamlined procedures and paperwork.
4. Increased funding support for complex classrooms.
5. Equity funding to provide more equitable inclusive education across the province.

## FUNDING FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The extent to which Nova Scotians agreed or disagreed with the following statements.

**A** - There is adequate funding to support inclusive education (special needs) in the public education system in Nova Scotia.

**B** - The funding that exists for inclusive education (special needs) in the public education system in Nova Scotia is spent wisely.



# Leadership & Oversight



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# Accountability & Transparency: NSIIE



- Establishment of the **Nova Scotia Institute for Inclusive Education** (NSIIE), which will be at arm's-length from government.
- Provide oversight, a forum for shared leadership, and a review mechanism for monitoring, measuring, and reporting to the public on the outcomes achieved.
- Over the next few years, NSIIE will:
  - Conduct a financial audit to inform the transition of the funding formula for inclusive education from an enrolment-based formula to a needs-based model;
  - Undertake capacity-building; and,
  - Review staffing ratios, the Tuition Support Program, and the provisions for complex classrooms.

# Membership of the NSIIE

- The membership of the nine-member NSIIE will include:
  - the appointed **independent** chair
  - the Executive Director of Inclusive Education
  - a representative from the NSTU
  - a representative from the deans of the Nova Scotia schools of education
  - a teacher
  - a school administrator
  - a parent of a student with special needs
  - a representative from the Council on African Canadian Education
  - a representative from the Council on Mi'kmaq Education

# Blueprint for Change

 <b>TARGETED FUNDING</b>	 <b>ACCESS TO SPECIALISTS</b>	 <b>BETTER SUPPORTS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Core funding for inclusive education</li><li>• Needs-based funding formula</li><li>• Rural schools</li><li>• Complex classrooms</li><li>• School psychology and speech-language pathology assessments</li><li>• Incentives to recruit and retain specialists</li><li>• Incentives for teachers to complete specialist training</li><li>• High school transition programs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Behaviour support teachers</li><li>• Learning support teachers</li><li>• School psychologists</li><li>• Autism specialists</li><li>• Speech-language pathologists</li><li>• Guidance counsellors</li><li>• Assistive technology specialists</li><li>• Transition/parent support specialists</li><li>• Regional school health nurses</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nova Scotia Institute for Inclusive Education</li><li>• Behaviour strategy</li><li>• Mental-health strategy</li><li>• Autism strategy</li><li>• Alternative programs</li><li>• Intensive treatment programs</li><li>• Interagency programs/services</li><li>• Parent supports</li><li>• Staff education</li><li>• Teacher assistant training/guidelines</li><li>• Communication disorder assistants</li><li>• Policies, guidelines, and procedures</li></ul>

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# Strategic Implementation Plan

- 5-year plan.
- Incremental implementation while building capacity across the system.
- Mixes immediate, short-term changes to address urgent needs, while building for longer-term changes to address Nova Scotians' priorities.
- Provides benchmarks for accountability.

# September 2018

- **Access to Specialists:**
  - More psychologists, behaviour support teachers, regional health nurses.
- **Better Supports:**
  - Alternative program options, intensive treatment programs, teacher education & behaviour intervention.
- **Targeted Funding:**
  - Faster access to student assessments.
  - Support for complex classrooms.

# Where to from Here

- Look to the Department and NSTU for support and leadership in the process of change.
- Pass the baton over to Nova Scotians to make sure the work is completed.