

Education report calling for more language duality

Description

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Education report calls for separate French, English systems from birth onwards

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More duality in early childhood development, more instruction time and more consistency despite changing political regimes are among the recommendations in a new report released Friday on New

Brunswick's education system. Gino LeBlanc and Karen Power, co-chairs of a yearlong consultation process put in place by the provincial Liberal government, said their report does not call for a radical makeover of the province's schools or a new direction in education. The report, which is intended to lay the groundwork for a new 10-year education plan, makes many general recommendations for the system, including more resources, better collaboration and up-graded curriculum. "There is a lot we do correctly in New

Report calls for more duality

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because he has not had enough time to study it.

The same was true of the New Brunswick Teachers Association, which said it needs more time to review the document.

Gary Crossman, opposition Tory education critic, said he likes the call for long-term planning rather than education changes that are timed to four-year political cycles.

"I think teachers, support staff, administrators and district offices would all like to see that happen," he said. "They don't want the government to change the education plan every four years."

The recommendations are divided into French and English reports, as is the province's dual education system.

In the French report, duality throughout the education system – beginning with babies in daycares – is endorsed. It would mean separate French and English child care and learning systems from birth onwards.

"The 10-year education plan must ensure that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development continues its efforts toward achieving full linguistic duality in early childhood education and that the deputy minister responsible for each linguistic sector has the necessary resources to carry out those efforts," the francophone report states.

Currently, bilingual daycares are allowed in the province. Michel Doucet, a Université de Moncton law professor, recently called on the province to include the bilingual daycare issue in the reference case to the Court of Appeal about bilingual school buses.

However, the daycare matter was not added to the reference.

Marc Arseneau, president of the francophone teachers association, said

Friday he wants the government to proceed with implementation of duality in early childhood development.

"As francophones living in a minority context, it is essential that francophone children be placed in a homogenous environment so they can develop their language skills and build their French culture and identity," Arseneau said.

Power, a former school superintendent, said there are concerns about the length of instructional time in New Brunswick schools, specifically noting two areas: short days for kindergarten to Grade 2, and storm days which can lop upwards of two weeks off a school calendar during extreme winters.

"In provinces with rural communities and winter weather similar to ours, schools are rarely cancelled and the decision whether students attend is left to families," the report states.

"In New Brunswick, there does not seem to be an acceptance for moving in this direction."

The report says New Brunswick teachers have bargained for the right to stay home when school is cancelled.

"It may be important for teachers to reconsider their position," it states.

Power said that when it comes to the K to 2 school days, most jurisdictions have a full day "and ours looks more like a half day."

"Whether it's the day that gets extended or there's a review of what is being done in K to 2, we really need something that looks a little different."

One of the specific recommendations in the report calls for the establishment of what might be seen as a teachers college.

The report calls on educators to establish "a self-regulating, professional governance structure to oversee certification, licensing, discipline and professional learning opportunities for educators."

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