

## Education and Early Learning

### 2011-2012 Budget highlights

- The total Education and Early Childhood Development budget will increase by more than \$6.8 million in 2010 to over \$227.3 million this year.
- Funding for kindergarten will increase from \$7.65 million in 2010 to \$10.9 million this year.
- There are currently 40 round one Early Years Centres in place across Prince Edward Island. This is an increase from the 20 we thought would open in round one and means a much quicker rollout. Full implementation will be complete by year end.
- Spaces in new Early Learning Centres will increase from 1,340 to 1,800 in the coming year.

### Major accomplishments since 2007

Over the past four years government has maintained a steadfast focus on improving education - based on its conviction that the future of the province is fundamentally tied to learning in early childhood, during the school years, in higher education and throughout life.

Several major steps have been taken to transform the education system. A full-day, school-based publicly funded kindergarten program was established in 2010. A new and enriched early childhood program now provides consistent high quality early learning and child care to families across the Island. Major initiatives are underway in public schools to improve student achievement and provide students with 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills. Significant investments are being made to expand post-secondary and skills training programs and reduce the cost of post-secondary education for Island families.

### Early learning

Government worked closely with the early childhood community to develop a new Pre-school Excellence Initiative.

Introduced in September 2010, it was supported by a 63 per cent increase in annual funding - from \$5.4 million in 2009 to \$8.6 million in 2010. This was the largest investment ever in early childhood development, a sector that was under-funded for years.

The Pre-school Excellence Initiative reflects a major policy shift from supporting child care services to building an integrated provincial system

that focuses on both early learning and high quality child care, and better prepares children for the classroom and a lifetime of learning.

In 2010, 40 Early Years Centres were established. Another six to eight centres will be phased in this fall, bringing the program to full implementation.

Early Years Centres must have 40 children registered, be open year-round, accept infants and children with special needs, have all certified staff and follow a provincial curriculum framework.

A regulated Infant Homes Program is being developed to increase access to infant care which

is one of the biggest challenges facing young families. Infant Homes offer high quality care for up to three infants in a certified provider's home, with a maximum of six spaces and two staff in each home. Providers must be certified, pass a background check and provide a safe home environment. Parent fees are regulated to ensure stability. Providers receive an annual grant of \$1,000 per infant, start-up grants for equipment, as well as mentoring and support from the department.

In 2010, the wages of early childhood educators were enhanced to reflect their important role. Wages of certified staff increased from \$12 to \$15 per hour. The wages of supervisors in Early Years Centres increased from \$15 to \$21 per hour.

Parent rates at Early Years Centres have been set and regulated to ensure that all Island children can access the same high quality programs at the same cost. When the Centres opened, 40 per cent of parents saw their rates drop, 20 per cent saw no change, and 40 per cent saw an increase in fees of no more than \$1 per day.

A new early learning curriculum framework will be field tested this spring. Over 120 Islanders are now being supported to receive their certification in early childhood development at Holland College and College Acadie.

### **Kindergarten**

In September 2010, the provincial government established the Island's first full-day, school-based, publicly funded kindergarten program. It was the largest educational initiative in the modern history of the province.

Provincial funding for kindergarten tripled from over \$3 million in 2009 to \$10 million in 2010.

The success of the kindergarten transition was attributed to the deep commitment of the 80 people on the transition teams who kept the best interests of the children front and centre throughout the transition.

### **Kindergarten Transition**

In 2010, Island schools welcomed 1,410 children into kindergarten, as well as 112 new kindergarten classroom teachers; 20 specialty teachers; 31 Educational Assistants; and 4 custodians.

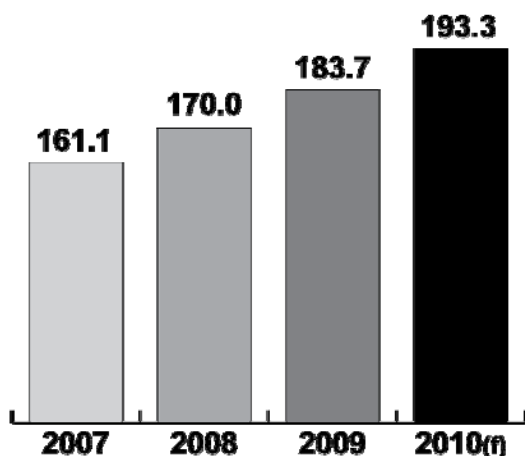
The kindergarten transition was a massive undertaking that involved the following activities:

- 20 tractor trailer loads of equipment, furniture and supplies were moved into schools
- 103 classrooms were re-configured
- 17 additional specially-equipped school buses were put on the road
- 300 new computers were purchased
- \$1 million was invested in new books, supplies and equipment
- 80,000 square feet of space was added
- A new Stratford Elementary School was constructed
- Expansions were constructed at six schools, including Ecole Francois-Buote, LM Montgomery, Miscouche, West Royalty, Westwood, and Sherwood schools
- Training was provided to hundreds of existing teachers and staff to provide them with a solid understanding of the play-based learning style that is used in kindergarten
- 1,191 children took part in early years assessments
- Hundreds of parent sessions were held
- 80 (61-English and 19 French) early

## Grades 1-12

Annual grants to school boards increased from \$159 million in 2007 to \$193 million in 2010, an increase of 21.4 per cent.

### Funding for grades 1-12 (millions) (Grants to school boards)



Government has maintained teacher numbers in spite of declining enrolment. The number of Educational Assistants increased from 264 in 2007 to 340 today.

Prince Edward Island's teacher-student ratio is among the best in the country. Class sizes average 15:1 in kindergarten, 18:1 in grades 1 to 3, and 19:1 in grades 4 to 6.

### Teacher - student ratio

Grade	Ratio
Kindergarten	15:1
Grades 1-3	18:1
Grades 4-6	19:1

The education system has made an intensive effort to improve literacy and learning in the early grades. Grade 3 reading scores increased by more than 20 per cent in the last three years which shows that investments in early literacy coaches, classroom resources, and professional development for primary teachers is paying off.

Early literacy will be further enhanced by school-based kindergarten and the Preschool Excellence Initiative. New initiatives are now underway to improve literacy and learning in the intermediate and senior grades.

A Minister's Summit was held in 2010 to engage education partners in a conversation about preparing students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Participants agreed that the current system must adapt and evolve to offer students the skills they need to become lifelong learners in a changing world and it must make more room for skill-building through experiential and project-based learning.

Government has invested heavily in technology for learning. Over 250 smart boards and 500 LCD projectors have been installed in high school classrooms at a cost of approximately \$500,000. Over 2,500 new computers were installed in intermediate and high schools over the past two years. Many new technology-based courses have been introduced as well as software to improve communication with students and parents.

Government invested nearly \$30 million in education capital expenditures in 2009-2010. This included approximately \$26.7 million on school construction and renovation projects, and more than \$3.1 million on school buses. New school construction included the new Montague Regional High School, Stratford Elementary School and Ecole St-Augustin in Rustico.