

Student Achievement in Literacy

Chapter 3

Volume I: Performance Audit
Independent Assurance Report

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Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN LITERACY



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN LITERACY

Chapter 3 Highlights

Literacy results show large, persistent gaps compared to provincial targets	Not all provincial literacy targets are monitored or supported by assessments	No intervention thresholds to identify targeted support required
Known literacy achievement gaps are not driving timely, targeted action		Effectiveness of literacy programs and student-level interventions are not consistently evaluated

OVERALL CONCLUSION:








While the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has mechanisms to measure student literacy achievement, they are inconsistent, and monitoring is insufficient to ensure timely adjustments are made.

Results at a Glance

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN LITERACY

Improvements required to measure and monitor student literacy achievement



FINDINGS	
	No provincial literacy assessment target was met in any year of our audit period, for any assessment, with results falling short of targets from 7.8% to 34.4%
	Provincial literacy target for First Nations students not monitored or reported
	No achievement thresholds to trigger targeted supports
	Districts do not set literacy targets that are aligned with the provincial education plan targets, as required by the <i>Education Act</i>
	Over 50% of Anglophone students achieving below the required level are not receiving specialized learning plan interventions
	Six out of eight literacy programs did not have evaluations to assess their effectiveness in improving student literacy outcomes
	2.8% of Anglophone students and 13.6% of Francophone students graduated without obtaining required literacy proficiency

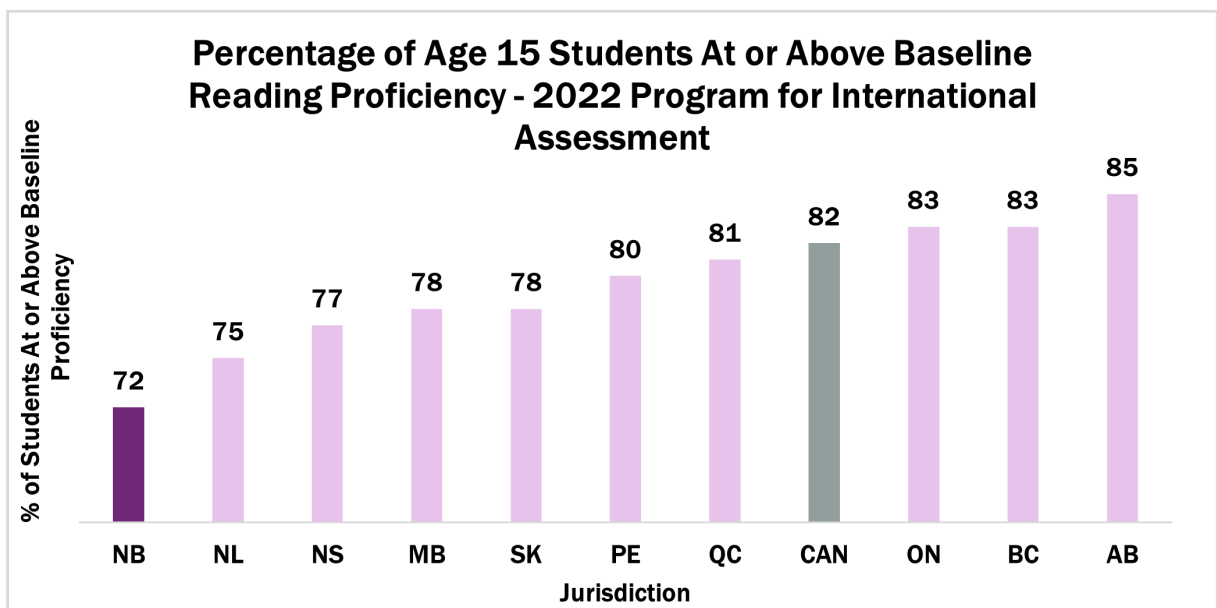
About the Audit

INTRODUCTION TO THE AUDIT

- 3.1 There were 108,779 students enrolled in the New Brunswick public school system from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in the 2024-2025 school year.
- 3.2 The mission for New Brunswick public schools is to have each student develop the attributes needed to be a lifelong learner, achieve personal fulfilment and contribute to a productive, just, and democratic society.
- 3.3 In 2016, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development established 10-year education plans for both the Anglophone and Francophone sectors. These plans identify a literate population as “the cornerstone of a cohesive, thriving, and sustainable society,” recognizing that literacy influences both students’ academic success and overall quality of life.
- 3.4 Improving literacy outcomes has been identified as a key government priority within internal accountability reports which state “without a good foundation in literacy, all of our other efforts will be compromised.”

WHY WE CHOSE THIS TOPIC

- 3.5 New Brunswick had the lowest reading scores across Canada in a 2022 assessment of 15-year-olds, as shown below:



Source: Prepared by AGNB based on data from *Measuring Up: Canadian Results of the OECD Program for International Students Assessment 2022 Study (15-year-old-students) (unaudited)*

- 3.6 The province's 2016 report *The Power of Literacy: Moving Towards New Brunswick's Comprehensive Literacy Strategy*, identified literacy as an essential skill affecting the quality of life of New Brunswickers, and linked low literacy rates to numerous social and economic issues such as fewer economic opportunities for individuals, the remedial cost of learning programs, and inter-generational costs as low literacy skills are passed from parents to children.
- 3.7 A lack of adequate actions to support, assess, and monitor literacy for children enrolled in the New Brunswick public school system could put students at risk for impaired social fulfilment and economic opportunities in their adult lives.

AUDITEE

- 3.8 Our auditee was the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (the Department). We also made enquiries and obtained audit evidence from the province's seven school districts.

AUDIT SCOPE

- 3.9 For the purpose of this audit, literacy assessments include assessments of reading and/or writing in the primary language of instruction for each linguistic sector.
- 3.10 Our scope included literacy assessments, and literacy-related programs and services for students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12) in the Anglophone and Francophone sectors of the public education system.
- 3.11 The audit covered the period from July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2025. Information outside of this period was also collected and examined as deemed necessary.
- 3.12 As part of our work, we interviewed departmental staff and reviewed relevant legislation, policies, annual reports, provincial literacy assessment data, and other documentation supporting the Department's systems and practices.
- 3.13 More details on the audit objective, criteria, scope, and approach we used in completing our audit can be found in Appendix II and Appendix III.

AUDIT OBJECTIVE

- 3.14 Our audit objective was to determine if the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has adequate mechanisms in place to measure, monitor and report on student literacy achievement, and ensure timely adjustments are made to improve performance.

CONCLUSION

3.15 Our audit work concluded that while the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has mechanisms to measure student literacy achievement, they are inconsistent, and monitoring is insufficient to ensure timely adjustments are made. Overall findings are as follows:

- improvements are required in literacy target and assessment practices
- not all literacy programs are evaluated to make timely adjustments to improve student literacy performance
- identified literacy gaps are not driving timely, targeted action
- public reporting on the achievement of provincial literacy targets is timely

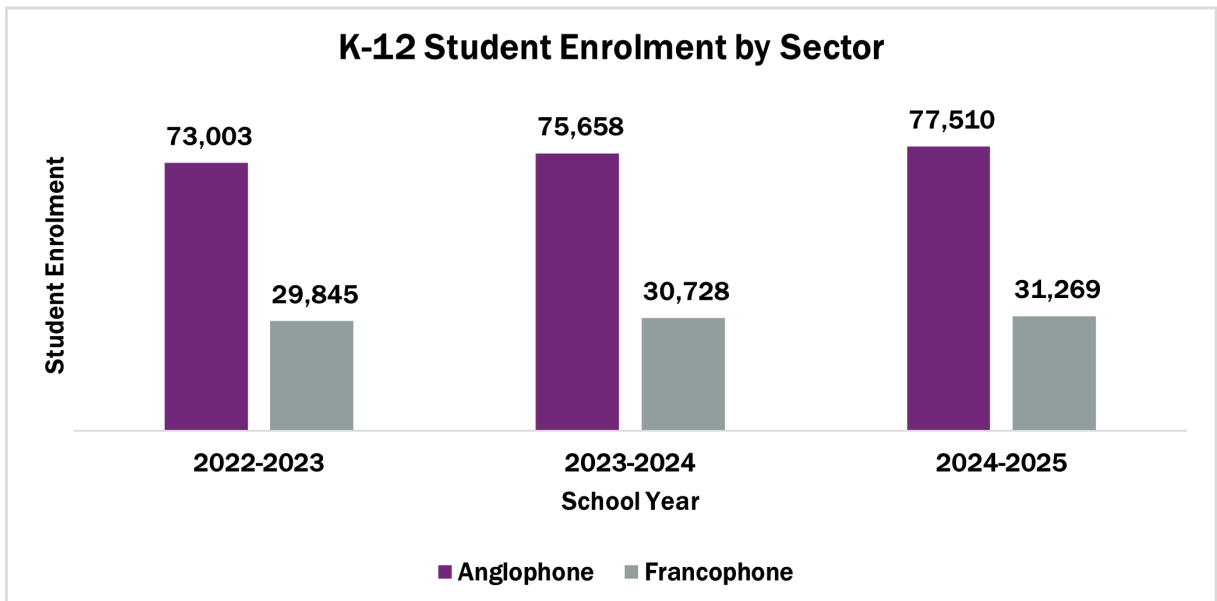
Background

3.16 The New Brunswick education system is divided into two linguistic sectors: Anglophone and Francophone. The *Education Act* requires the Department to have a dedicated division for each linguistic sector to “develop and oversee the implementation and evaluation of educational programs and educational services.” Each division has its own curriculum, student services, and assessments.

3.17 Below is an overview of the New Brunswick education system, by linguistic sector for 2024-2025:

Statistics	Anglophone	Francophone	Total
Number of Districts	4	3	7
Number of Schools	206	90	296
Pupil Enrolment	77,510	31,269	108,779

3.18 Between the 2022-2023 and 2024-2025 school years, total K-12 enrolment in the New Brunswick public school system increased by 5.8%:



Source: Prepared by AGNB based on data from the Department (unaudited)

3.19 The Department carries out provincial literacy assessments at different grade levels:

- the Anglophone sector assesses reading in Grades 4 and 6 and conducts the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) in Grade 9
- the Francophone sector assesses reading in Grades 2, 3, and 7, assesses writing in Grades 4 and 7 and conducts the Grade 10 Provincial Reading and Writing Assessment

3.20 The following chart outlines the responsibilities under the *Education Act* of the Department, District Education Councils, district superintendents, and school principals, as they relate to student achievement:

Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• set provincial educational goals and standards• develop provincial education plans• design, oversee, and evaluate educational programs and services• monitor student performance
District Education Councils
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• oversee district operations• submit a 3-year district education plan that is consistent with provincial education plan to the Department• approve annual district performance reports
Districts (Superintendent)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• coordinate educational programs and services prescribed by the Department• prepare and implement the district education plan• develop annual district performance reports
Schools (Principal)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• implement the curriculum prescribed by the Department• prepare an annual school improvement plan and coordinate its implementation• prepare an annual school performance report

3.21 The focus of this audit was on the responsibilities of the Department as they relate to student achievement in literacy.

Improvements Required in Literacy Target and Assessment Practices

EDUCATION PLANS HAVE ESTABLISHED PROVINCIAL LITERACY TARGETS

- 3.22** The *Education Act* requires the Department to establish educational goals and standards in each linguistic sector and gives the Department the authority to conduct examinations in any grade.
- 3.23** In 2016, the Department established clear, measurable targets for both sectors aimed at improving literacy skills for all learners in their 10-year education plans. Targets were set for the percentage of students achieving required levels on provincial reading and writing assessments:

Anglophone Sector	
Assessment	Target
Grade 2 Reading (discontinued)	90%
Grade 4 Reading	90%
Grade 6 Reading	90%
Grade 9 Reading (ELPA) (first attempt)	90%
ELPA First Nations Students (first attempt)	90%
Francophone Sector	
Assessment	Target
Grade 2 Reading	90%
Grade 3 Reading	90%
Grade 4 Reading (discontinued)	85%
Grade 4 Writing	85%
Grade 7 Reading	85%
Grade 7 Writing	85%
Grade 11 Reading and Writing (discontinued)	80%

THE DEPARTMENT HAS A PROCESS TO REGULARLY COLLECT STUDENT LITERACY DATA

- 3.24** The Department collects literacy results from reading and writing assessments through the Assessment and Analysis Services branch in the Anglophone sector and the Measurement, Research and Evaluation branch in the Francophone sector.

3.25 Elementary and middle school assessments, and the Grade 10 Provincial Reading and Writing Assessment (Francophone sector) are conducted in the spring of each year, and the ELPA (Anglophone sector) is conducted in January. Teachers receive the results for all assessments before the end of the school year.

LITERACY RESULTS CONSISTENTLY FALL SHORT OF TARGETS

3.26 Literacy data collected by the Department shows that targets from the education plans were not met in any year of our audit period, for any assessment.

3.27 While achievement rates varied across assessments, sectors, and years, the shortfall in results compared to targeted achievement ranged from 7.8% to 34.4%:

Anglophone Sector Grade 4 Provincial Reading Assessment			
School Year	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Target	90%	90%	90%
Achievement Rate	56.6%	55.6%	60.5%

Anglophone Sector Grade 6 Provincial Reading Assessment			
School Year	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Target	90%	90%	90%
Achievement Rate	69.3%	76.0%	78.3%

Anglophone Sector Grade 9 Provincial Reading Assessment (ELPA)			
School Year	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Target	90%	90%	90%
Achievement Rate	80.3%	82.2%	80.9%

Francophone Sector Grade 2 Provincial Reading Assessment			
School Year	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Target	90%	90%	90%
Achievement Rate	60.2%	61.4%	60.2%

Francophone Sector Grade 3 Provincial Reading Assessment			
School Year	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Target	90%	90%	90%
Achievement Rate	68.8%	70.2%	69.5%

Francophone Sector Grade 4 Provincial Writing Assessment			
School Year	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Target	85%	85%	85%
Achievement Rate	60.0%	68.3%	69.1%

Francophone Sector Grade 7 Provincial Reading Assessment			
School Year	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Target	85%	85%	85%
Achievement Rate	75.2%	73.8%	69.2%

Francophone Sector Grade 7 Provincial Writing Assessment			
School Year	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Target	85%	85%	85%
Achievement Rate	62.5%	62.9%	55.7%

NOT ALL PROVINCIAL LITERACY TARGETS ARE BEING ASSESSED

Grade 2 Student Achievement

- 3.28 The education plan for the Anglophone sector set a literacy target of 90% of Grade 2 students achieving required results in reading.
- 3.29 The Anglophone Grade 2 assessment used to measure that target was discontinued after the 2017-2018 school year.
- 3.30 No comparable early-grade provincial literacy assessment was in place until the Early Grades Literacy Assessment was fully implemented in the 2024-2025 school year.

Grade 4 Student Achievement

- 3.31 The education plan for the Francophone sector set a literacy target of 85% of students achieving the required results in Grade 4 reading and writing assessments.
- 3.32 The Francophone Grade 4 reading assessment was discontinued after the 2017-2018 school year and has not been replaced.

Grade 11 Student Achievement

- 3.33 The education plan for the Francophone sector set a literacy target of 80% of students achieving the required results in the Grade 11 reading and writing assessments.
- 3.34 The Francophone Grade 11 reading assessment was discontinued after the 2018-2019 school year, and the writing assessment was discontinued after the 2017-2018 school year.

3.35 No replacement assessment existed until the Grade 10 Provincial Reading and Writing Assessment (Francophone sector) was introduced in 2022-2023.

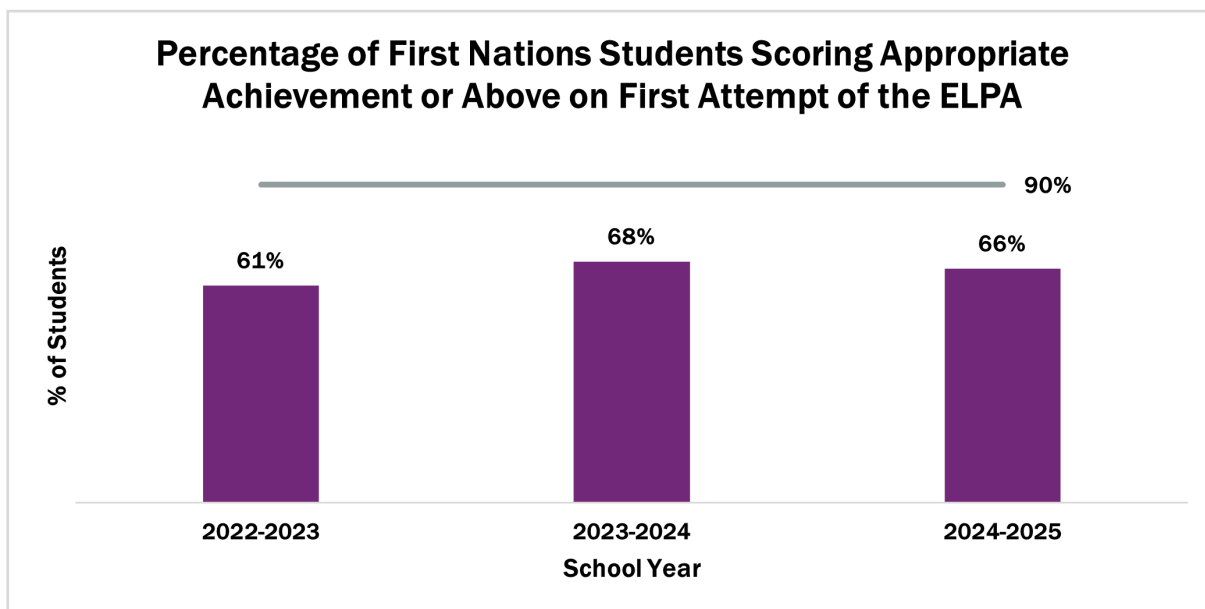
3.36 As a result of these assessments being discontinued, the Department lacked consistent provincial data to measure progress toward its literacy targets and identify gaps affecting students during this period.

Target for First Nations Student Achievement Is Not Monitored or Reported

3.37 The education plan for the Anglophone sector included a target that 90% of First Nations students achieve required results on their first attempt of the ELPA.

3.38 While the assessment result data set includes a First Nations identifier, we found no evidence that performance against the target was being monitored or reported.

3.39 We found that the target was not met in any year of our audit period:



Source: Prepared by AGNB based on data from the Department (unaudited)

3.40 Without monitoring and reporting on progress against the provincial target for First Nations student achievement, the Department cannot take timely action when First Nations learners are not achieving expected outcomes. This increases the risk that achievement gaps for First Nations students will persist or widen without detection or accountability.

TARGETS ARE NOT ESTABLISHED FOR NEW LITERACY ASSESSMENTS

3.41 Two new literacy assessments have been introduced without associated targets:

- In the 2024-2025 school year the Early Grades Literacy Assessment was launched across the Anglophone sector as an ongoing formative assessment of foundational literacy skills for Kindergarten to Grade 2 English Prime classes, and Grades 1 to 3 French Immersion classes.
- In the 2022-2023 school year, the Francophone Sector Grade 10 Provincial Reading and Writing Assessment was administered for the first time to all Grade 10 students in the Francophone sector.

3.42 Without established targets, the Department cannot evaluate whether student performance is acceptable and programs are effective.

Recommendations

3.43 We recommend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development ensure all provincial literacy assessments have measurable, evidence-based achievement targets.

3.44 We recommend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development consistently monitor and report on all literacy targets.

LITERACY RESULTS ARE NOT CALCULATED CONSISTENTLY

3.45 In the annual publication of assessment results, the Department has stated that provincial assessments are important because their standardized nature provides reliable, valid, and comparable data that supports government decision-making.

3.46 Some students do not write provincial literacy assessments because they are formally exempted by the Department. This may occur, for example, when a student is following an individualized learning program, experiences serious illness or bereavement, or has not yet developed sufficient language proficiency.

3.47 We found that, while both sectors collect detailed assessment data, there are inconsistencies in how exemptions are considered in achievement results across grades and linguistic sectors.

Sector	Assessment	Exemptions Removed?
Anglophone	Grades 4 and 6 Reading	No
Anglophone	Grade 9 ELPA	All Exemptions
Francophone	Grades 2, 3 and 7 Reading; Grades 4 and 7 Writing	Language-Based Exemptions
Francophone	Grade 10 Provincial Reading and Writing Assessment	All Exemptions

3.48 These inconsistencies limit the comparability and reliability of literacy assessment results and reduce the Department’s ability to compare performance or assess students as they progress through grades.

Recommendation

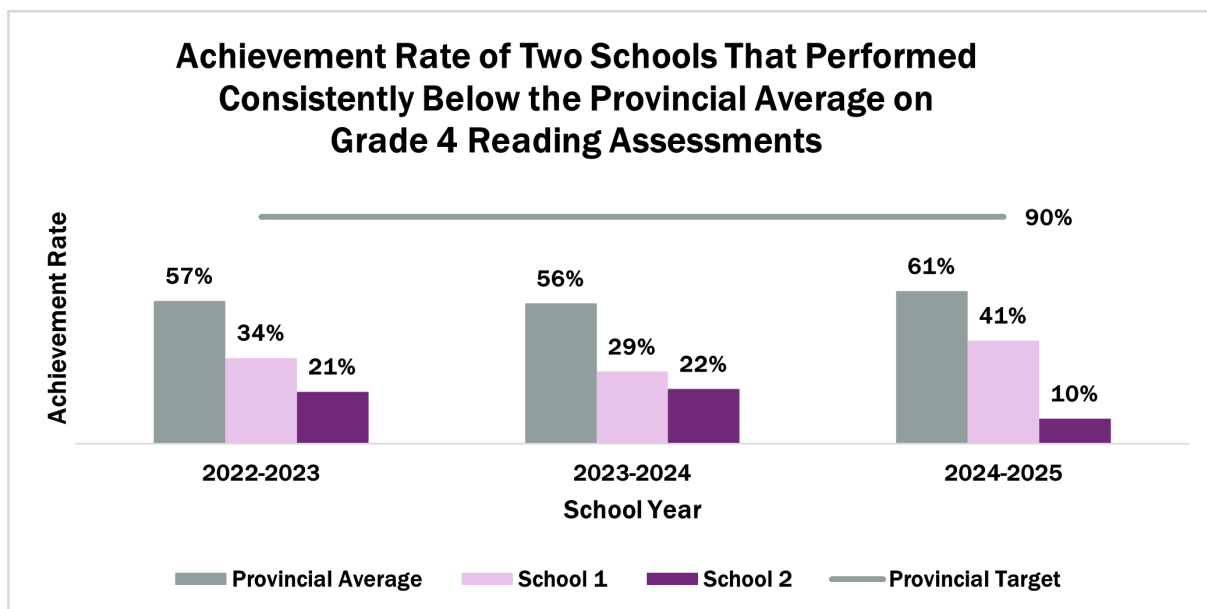
3.49 We recommend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development ensure literacy achievement results are comparable across grades, years, and linguistic sectors and can be reliably used to monitor progress toward provincial literacy targets.

Not All Literacy Gaps Receive Corrective Action

THE DEPARTMENT LACKS THRESHOLDS TO TRIGGER TARGETED SUPPORT

- 3.50** We found there is no process or intervention threshold at the Department to identify when a district or school requires targeted support.
- 3.51** During our audit period, the largest shortfalls from provincial literacy targets at grade level occurred in elementary reading:
- Anglophone sector (all districts): Grade 4 reading results were 34.4% below target in 2023-2024
 - Francophone sector (all districts): Grade 2 reading results were 29.8% below target in 2024-2025
- 3.52** The largest shortfalls from provincial literacy targets at the district level occurred in:
- Anglophone East School District, which recorded the largest shortfall from target among Anglophone districts across all assessments in our audit period, excluding the 2024–2025 ELPA. The district’s greatest shortfall was 38.8% below target on the 2023–2024 Grade 4 reading assessment.
 - Francophone South School District, where Grade 2 reading results were 33.8% below target in 2024–2025
- 3.53** In the Anglophone sector, only 4/130 schools achieved the target on the 2024-2025 Grade 4 reading assessment, with one school having an 80% shortfall in results when compared to target.
- 3.54** In the Francophone sector, only 4/69 schools achieved the target on the 2024-2025 Grade 2 reading assessment, with one school having no successful writers.
- 3.55** We found that five schools in the Anglophone sector performed consistently below the provincial average achievement rate on every assessment in our audit period.

3.56 Below is the performance of two of these schools on the Grade 4 reading assessments in our audit period:



Source: Prepared by AGNB based on data from the Department (unaudited)

3.57 The lack of a threshold for when to intervene at the district or school level based on assessment results could result in a lack of programming to targeted areas of need.

Recommendation

3.58 We recommend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development establish criteria, based on provincial assessment data, to consistently identify when school districts and schools are experiencing persistent or significant literacy achievement gaps to help guide when additional supports and targeted interventions are needed.

NOT ALL IDENTIFIED LITERACY GAPS HAVE REMEDIATION PLANS

3.59 Gaps in literacy achievement that have been identified by the Department with no remediation plans are in the following areas:

- Francophone sector middle school learners
- English Prime learners
- First Nations learners

Francophone Sector Middle School

3.60 The shortfall in results compared to targets on Francophone 2024-2025 middle school assessments were:

- 15.8% on the Francophone Grade 7 reading assessment
- 29.3% on the Francophone Grade 7 writing assessment

English Prime

3.61 In the Anglophone sector, students enrolled in the French Immersion program consistently performed better on English language literacy assessments than students enrolled in the English Prime program. This performance gap was evident across all provincial literacy assessments administered during the audit period:

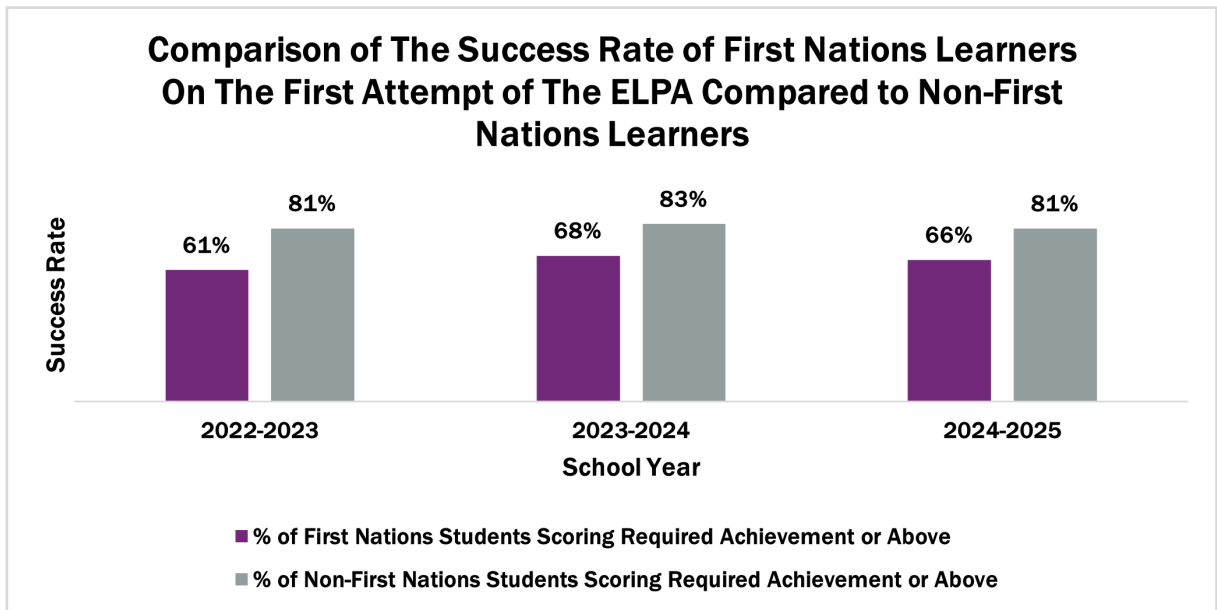
Grade 4 English Reading Assessment			
School Year	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Early French Immersion	66.0%	64.1%	72.7%
English Prime	52.0%	51.7%	55.3%

Grade 6 English Reading Assessment			
School Year	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Early French Immersion	81.6%	90.0%	91.1%
Late French Immersion	82.2%	83.8%	89.8%
English Prime	60.8%	67.4%	69.9%

Grade 9 English Language Proficiency Assessment			
School Year	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024	2024 - 2025
Early French Immersion	92.6%	92.6%	92.9%
Late French Immersion	88.4%	90.7%	91.4%
English Prime	72.8%	76.2%	74.7%

First Nations Learners

- 3.62** The Anglophone education plan identified a need to address the achievement gap between First Nations and non-First Nations learners, however, the Department has not been tracking achievement of this indicator.
- 3.63** Our analysis showed that there is still a notable achievement gap between First Nations learners and non-First Nations learners, as noted below:



Source: Prepared by AGNB based on data from the Department (unaudited)

- 3.64** We could find no documentation of a formalized remediation plan to address noted gaps.
- 3.65** Unaddressed gaps in both sectors could have a detrimental impact on literacy in New Brunswick.

Recommendation

- 3.66** We recommend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development establish and implement formalized remediation plans, including defined actions, timelines, and mechanisms to monitor progress.

DISTRICT LITERACY TARGETS ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH LEGISLATION

3.67 The *Education Act* states that:

- each District Education Council shall establish, implement and monitor a three-year district education plan that is consistent with the provincial education plan

3.68 We found that none of the seven school districts set literacy targets that aligned with the provincial education plans in their district education plans. The established targets were as follows for 2022-2025:

District	District Target	Provincial Target
Anglophone East	No Assessment Targets Set	90%
Anglophone North	Grade 4 - 75% Grade 6 - 85% Grade 9 - No Target	
Anglophone South	No Assessment Targets Set	
Anglophone West	5% Increase Each Year for All Assessments	
Francophone North-East	No Assessment Targets Set	Grades 2-3 - 90% Grades 4-7 - 85%
Francophone North-West	80% for All Assessments	
Francophone South	No Assessment Targets Set	

Source: Prepared by AGNB based on information from the Department (unaudited)

3.69 The Department is aware that districts set no or lower literacy targets than the province and has not requested updated plans to ensure consistency with provincial education plans.

Recommendation

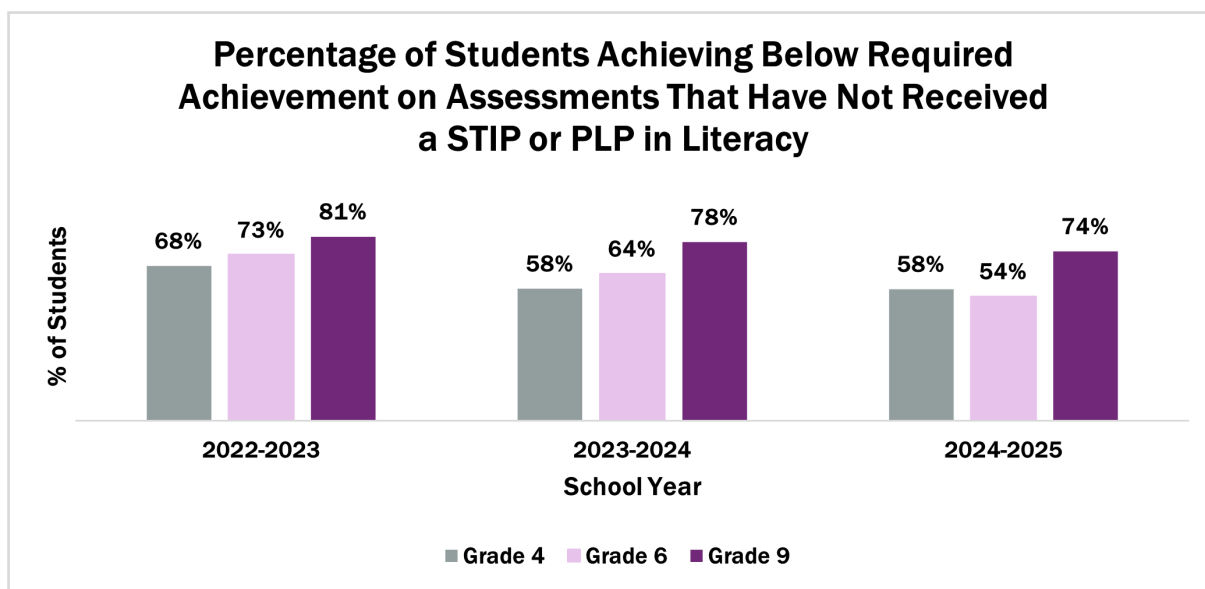
3.70 We recommend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development require district education plans to include literacy targets that are aligned with provincial literacy targets.

STUDENTS ACHIEVING BELOW REQUIRED LITERACY LEVELS ARE NOT CONSISTENTLY RECEIVING ADEQUATE SUPPORTS

- 3.71** The Department aims to ensure the consistent and equitable application of support services including Short-Term Intervention Plans (STIPs), Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) and Intervention Plans (IPs).
- 3.72** Teachers and Education Support Services teams are responsible for putting supports in place for students based on observed needs and reviewing what interventions have already taken place prior to escalating.

Anglophone Sector

- 3.73** We examined students who achieved below required levels on literacy assessments to determine if they received literacy interventions (STIPs/PLPs). As noted in the graph below, over 50% of students achieving below the required levels had not received these types of literacy interventions:



Source: Prepared by AGNB based on data from the Department (unaudited)

- 3.74** We also found that 32% of students who achieved below required levels on their Grade 4 assessment in 2022-2023 continued to do so on their subsequent Grade 6 assessment in 2024-2025. Of these:
- 49% had not receive literacy support in the form of a STIP or a PLP
- 3.75** Without interventions, students who are underachieving may continue to face future academic challenges.

Francophone Sector

3.76 Due to technical limitations, the Francophone sector was not able to provide the data to determine whether students below benchmarks are receiving interventions in literacy.

Recommendations

3.77 We recommend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development ensure students achieving below the required level on provincial literacy assessments are receiving adequate interventions.

3.78 We recommend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development ensure that historical data on student interventions where formally documented is available for analysis in both linguistic sectors.

INSUFFICIENT RESOURCES ALLOCATED TO SUPPORT STUDENT PROGRESS

3.79 Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) in the Anglophone sector and Intervention Plans (PIs) in the Francophone sector represent the most intensive type of support provided.

3.80 While many teachers and support staff may be involved, Educational Support Teachers have a primary role in planning and monitoring learning plans.

3.81 Educational Support Teachers are allocated based on student population, using a ratio funded at 1:180 in the Anglophone sector and 1:140 in the Francophone sector. Departmental experts determined the recommended ratio should be 1:120.

3.82 A departmental project underway in the Anglophone sector, involving reviewing staffing formulas, recognizes that Educational Support Teachers are the highest-impact instructional support role and has identified that their workloads are unsustainable.

3.83 Insufficient allocation of critical support resources could result in students with higher needs not receiving the support necessary to succeed, and not having their progress monitored consistently.

Recommendation

3.84 We recommend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development monitor the workloads of Educational Support Teachers and ensure that they are sufficiently allocated to meet student support needs.

Effectiveness of Literacy Programs and Student Supports is Not Consistently Evaluated

LITERACY PROGRAMS OFTEN NOT EVALUATED

3.85 The *Education Act* states that each linguistic sector shall have a dedicated division to develop and oversee the implementation and evaluation of educational programs and educational services.

3.86 Various literacy initiatives have been initiated in response to gaps identified in elementary and high school. We reviewed four initiatives in each sector to determine if they are evaluated to make timely corrective action.

Anglophone Sector

3.87 In the Anglophone sector we found:

- 4/4 programs had established key performance indicators
- 1/4 programs utilized key performance indicators to evaluate effectiveness

Francophone Sector

3.88 In the Francophone sector we found:

- 3/4 programs had established key performance indicators
- 1/4 programs utilized key performance indicators to evaluate effectiveness

3.89 A lack of regular reviews and evaluations of effectiveness for literacy programs could result in programs being continued that are not working to close gaps.

Recommendation

3.90 We recommend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development include plans for review and evaluation of effectiveness for literacy programs and ensure they are carried out.

PROGRESS ON LEARNING PLANS IS NOT MONITORED AT THE DEPARTMENT LEVEL

3.91 Progress reporting on PLPs and PIs is captured in departmental systems, however there is no monitoring of progress for students on learning plans by the Department.

3.92 We noted the achievement of goals on PLPs and PIs in both sectors across our audit period was as follows:

- Anglophone sector - 19% not met
- Francophone sector - 9% not met

3.93 Insufficient reporting and monitoring of progress on PLPs and PIs creates a risk that students struggling to meet their goals would go unnoticed and unaddressed, services may not be working and intended corrective actions are not made.

Recommendation

3.94 We recommend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development regularly review the progress of students on learning plans to monitor the effectiveness of supports and make timely adjustments as required.

GRADUATION-LEVEL LITERACY OUTCOMES ARE NOT MONITORED

3.95 During the audit period, we found that literacy gaps persisted at graduation with students continuing to graduate without obtaining required literacy proficiency. In 2024-2025:

- 186 (2.8%) students in the Anglophone sector
- 316 (13.6%) students in the Francophone sector

3.96 The Department does not monitor or report on the number of students graduating without meeting required literacy proficiency to assess the effectiveness of literacy programs and supports in ensuring that students are leaving the public school system with foundational literacy skills.

Recommendation

3.97 We recommend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development monitor and report on literacy proficiency outcomes at graduation to inform the effectiveness of programs and services and system level decision making.

Public Reporting on Literacy Results is Timely

- 3.98** The Department communicated literacy assessment results to districts, schools, and teachers in a timely manner before the end of the school year, allowing time for planning and decision making prior to the next school year.
- 3.99** The Department also publicly released reports on provincial literacy assessment results in a timely manner, generally within three months of assessments being administered.
- 3.100** The Department is also monitoring and publicly reporting on a government priority that was initiated in February 2025 to improve literacy outcomes, targeting an increase of 2% of students scoring at or above the required level each year on the Grade 3 (Francophone) and Grade 4 (Anglophone) reading assessments:

	Francophone Grade 3 Reading	Anglophone Grade 4 Reading – English Prime	Anglophone Grade 4 Reading – French Immersion
Target	71.5%	52.7%	65.4%
2025 Status	69.5%	55.3%	72.7%

New Education Plans

3.101 The current 10-year education plans expire in 2025-2026. At the time of our audit, the Department was developing new provincial education plans which are expected to be released in May 2026 and will establish new priorities, targets, and expectations.

3.102 As these plans were still under development and had not been implemented during the audit period, we did not assess their design or effectiveness. Our audit conclusions are based on the Department's systems, practices, and performance in place during the period examined.

Appendix I:

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

Par. #	Recommendation	Entity's Response	Target Implementation Date
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We recommend that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development:

3.43	ensure all provincial literacy assessments have measurable, evidence-based achievement targets.	Agree The Department recognizes the importance of having evidence-based achievement targets for our provincial literacy assessments. This is a priority area for the new Education Plans for the Anglophone and Francophone sectors. Each plan has set improvement targets for provincial literacy assessments.	2026-06-01
3.44	consistently monitor and report on all literacy targets.	Agree The Department consistently reports on provincial assessment results. Literacy targets identified in the new Education Plans will be reported on annually.	2026-06-01
3.49	ensure literacy achievement results are comparable across grades, years, and linguistic sectors and can be reliably used to monitor progress toward provincial literacy targets.	Agree The Department recognizes the importance of ensuring that literacy achievement results are comparable across grades, years, and linguistic sectors. While the Anglophone and Francophone sectors operate as two distinct education sectors, the Department is committed to strengthening alignment and consistency at a system level.	2026-06-01

Par. #	Recommendation	Entity's Response	Target Implementation Date
3.58	<p>establish criteria, based on provincial assessment data, to consistently identify when school districts and schools are experiencing persistent or significant literacy achievement gaps to help guide when additional supports and targeted interventions are needed.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>The Department agrees that establishing clear, consistent criteria based on provincial assessment data is an important step in identifying when school districts and schools may be experiencing persistent or significant literacy achievement gaps. Such criteria can help ensure that additional supports and targeted interventions are provided by school districts and schools in a timely and responsive manner.</p> <p>Under the <i>Education Act</i>, the Department plays a key role in monitoring system-level performance, setting provincial literacy targets, and identifying areas of concern through the analysis of provincial assessment data.</p>	2026-06-01
3.66	<p>establish and implement formalized remediation plans, including defined actions, timelines, and mechanisms to monitor progress.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>The Department supports the intent of ensuring that identified literacy achievement gaps are addressed through structured and responsive planning. This work is reflected in the provincial Education Plans, which emphasize early identification, targeted intervention, and ongoing monitoring of student progress.</p> <p>In the Anglophone Education Plan, there is a specific action for an intervention framework to ensure a consistent understanding and application of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports across the sector. As well as an established internal school review process and external school review process to support ongoing improvement in student achievement.</p>	<p>Work will be undertaken over the next three years aligned to the Education Plans.</p>

Par. #	Recommendation	Entity's Response	Target Implementation Date
3.70	require district education plans to include literacy targets that are aligned with provincial literacy targets.	<p>Agree</p> <p>The Department will work with school districts with the release of the new Education Plans to ensure that District Improvement Plans (DIPs) and School Improvement Plans (SIPs) are aligned with provincial improvement targets. This expectation is supported by the <i>Education Act</i>, which requires alignment across provincial, district, and school-level planning.</p> <p>The Anglophone Education Plan includes a specific action requiring measurable outcome targets tied to student achievement in literacy to be reflected in both district and school improvement plans and that these be publicly available.</p>	Work will be undertaken over the next three years aligned to the Education Plans.
3.77	ensure students achieving below the required level on provincial literacy assessments are receiving adequate interventions.	<p>Agree</p> <p>The Department recognizes the importance of ensuring that students performing below the expected level on provincial literacy assessments receive appropriate and timely interventions.</p> <p>Responsibility for identifying these students and implementing targeted interventions rests with school districts and schools. Within the framework of the provincial Education Plans, school districts and schools are expected to have processes in place to identify students who are not meeting learning outcomes and to provide and monitor appropriate supports.</p>	Work will be undertaken over the next three years aligned to the Education Plans.
3.78	ensure that historical data on student interventions where formally documented is available for analysis in both linguistic sectors.	<p>Agree</p> <p>The Department recognizes the value of having access to data on student interventions, where formally documented, to inform analysis, budgeting decisions, and support system improvement.</p>	2026-06-01
3.84	monitor the workloads of Educational Support Teachers and ensure that they are sufficiently allocated to meet student support needs.	<p>Agree</p> <p>Through the annual budgetary process, the Department continues to re-evaluate needs and prioritize resource requirements. As part of this exercise, a number of resource teachers, Academic Support Teachers and Educational Assistants were added the last several years to meet the needs of an ever-growing diversity of needs. Ongoing work is also being undertaken to review classroom composition and ensure that staffing models are aligned with school needs.</p>	2027-03-17

Par. #	Recommendation	Entity's Response	Target Implementation Date
3.90	include plans for review and evaluation of effectiveness for literacy programs and ensure they are carried out.	<p>Agree</p> <p>The Department agrees that the evaluation of literacy programs and curricula are important components of continuous improvement and curriculum implementation. Ongoing program and curricula review processes are already embedded within the system to assess effectiveness and support evidence-informed improvements in literacy instruction.</p>	2026-06-01
3.94	regularly review the progress of students on learning plans to monitor the effectiveness of supports and make timely adjustments as required.	<p>Agree</p> <p>The Department recognizes the importance of monitoring Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) / Plan d'intervention (PI) and our current practices include monitoring and spot checks of PLPs and PIs to support consistency and quality.</p> <p>A measure in the Anglophone Education Plan that will be reported on annually is the following: % of students with a Personalized Learning Plan (Adjusted and Individualized) who meet their documented annual goals. This measure will support broader monitoring.</p> <p>In the Francophone sector, an audit on PIs (plans d'intervention) will begin in Q2 2026. The intent of the audit is to determine whether students meet their documented annual goals and also determine whether the plans are developed effectively. The results of the audit will guide next steps (training for teachers, resources to help develop effective plans, etc.)</p>	2026-06-30
3.97	monitor and report on literacy proficiency outcomes at graduation to inform the effectiveness of programs and services and system level decision making.	<p>Agree</p> <p>In accordance with Policy 316: <i>Graduation Requirements</i>, a Grade 9 reading comprehension assessment (Anglophone) and Grade 10 reading and writing competency evaluation (Francophone) are required for graduation. Results from these assessments, along with other relevant indicators, are used to support system-level analysis of student achievement in literacy.</p>	2026-06-01

Appendix II:

Audit Objective and Criteria

The objective and criteria for our audit of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development are presented below. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and their senior management reviewed and agreed with the objective and associated criteria.

Objective **To determine if the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has adequate mechanisms in place to measure, monitor and report on student literacy achievement and ensure timely adjustments are made to improve performance.**

Criterion 1 The Department has established clear, measurable, evidence-backed literacy targets for students and regularly collects, monitors, and analyzes student literacy data to assess progress and identify gaps.

Criterion 2 The Department has programs and services in place to address the identified gaps and support the achievement of literacy targets.

Criterion 3 The Department evaluates the effectiveness of programs and services to make timely adjustments to improve student literacy performance.

Criterion 4 The Department provides timely public reporting on the achievement of provincial literacy targets.

Appendix III:

Independent Assurance Report

This independent assurance report was prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of New Brunswick (AGNB) on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and its role with respect to student literacy achievement. Our responsibility was to provide objective information, advice, and assurance to assist the Legislative Assembly in its scrutiny of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development with respect to student literacy achievement.

All work in this audit was performed to a reasonable level of assurance in accordance with the Canadian Standard on Assurance Engagements (CSAE) 3001 – Direct Engagements set out by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA Canada) in the CPA Canada Handbook – Assurance.

AGNB applies the Canadian Standard on Quality Management 1 – Quality Management for Firms That Perform Audits or Reviews of Financial Statements, or Other Assurance or Related Services Engagements. This standard requires our office to design, implement and operate a system of quality management, including policies or procedures regarding compliance with ethical requirements, professional standards and applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

In conducting the audit work, we have complied with the independence and other ethical requirements of the Rules of Professional Conduct of Chartered Professional Accountants of New Brunswick and the Code of Professional Conduct of the Office of the Auditor General of New Brunswick. Both the Rules of Professional Conduct and the Code are founded on fundamental principles of integrity, objectivity,

professional competence and due care, confidentiality and professional behaviour.

In accordance with our regular audit process, we obtained the following from management:

- confirmation of management's responsibility for the subject under audit
- acknowledgement of the suitability of the criteria used in the audit
- confirmation that all known information that has been requested, or that could affect the findings or audit conclusion, has been provided
- confirmation that the findings in this report are factually based

PERIOD COVERED BY THE AUDIT

The audit covered the period between July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2025. This is the period to which the audit conclusion applies. However, to gain a more complete understanding of the subject matter of the audit, we also examined certain matters outside of this period as deemed necessary.

DATE OF THE REPORT

We obtained sufficient and appropriate audit evidence on which to base our conclusion on May 11, 2026, in Fredericton, New Brunswick.