



Portrait of a Learner

in New Brunswick's Anglophone School System

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Engaged and Globally Competent Learners

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New Brunswick Public Schools' mission

Each student will develop the attributes needed to be a lifelong learner, to achieve personal fulfillment, and to contribute to a productive, just, and democratic society.

Purpose

The Portrait of a Learner identifies the competencies and attitudes learners need to develop through educational and life experiences from their first contact with public school through to their high school graduation. These competencies and attitudes have been defined within the context of the New Brunswick education system, which values inclusion of diverse peoples and ideas, reconciliation and renewal of the relationship with Indigenous peoples and worldviews, equity among all people, plurilingualism, and pluriculturalism.

In the New Brunswick education system, a **competency** is defined as the ability to mobilize skills, sets of knowledge, and attitudes to take action in a particular context while self-assessing.

Plurilingualism Plurilingualism is the ability of a person who has competence in more than one language and who uses the language that best fits a particular context. It values an interconnectedness between languages rather than treating different languages separately.

Pluriculturalism is the mediation of different cultures in the construction of a person's or community's cultural identity.



This portrait will guide the decisions and actions of everyone involved in the education of New Brunswick youth by providing a context for the opportunities that learners need to determine their own pathways and to contribute to society. When applied, this portrait will inform updates to curricula, instructional decisions, assessment practices, policy development, professional learning, infrastructure, and educational and strategic planning. It will also support a shared sense of history and foster diverse relationships. This portrait will build collective understanding so together our society can deliver on the mission of public schools.

Although this portrait focuses on the work of public schools, it recognizes other parts of the education system in New Brunswick, such as early childhood and post-secondary education. This portrait—including the identified competencies and attitudes—has been developed in consideration of these important parts of the larger system. For learners, the development of these competencies begins at home and in partnership with early childhood education. Public schools aim to continue the development of these competencies and attitudes from early childhood to kindergarten to grade twelve, so that learners can continue learning and thriving after graduation, whether it is at a post-secondary institution, on the job, or in life. All parts of the education system in New Brunswick play a role in developing the competencies and attitudes identified in this portrait.

This portrait, intended for educators, parents, students, and communities, is an important step in the articulation of how the system will best prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of their lifetimes. It accounts for some of the progress currently being realized in public schools while providing direction for further transformation. Although it is not the only document to do so, it is an important part of the vision for public schools in New Brunswick. To help further articulate this vision, additional materials and documents for different audiences will be developed in support of this portrait.

Context

The world is changing drastically and rapidly. Communities are growing more diverse, job markets are demanding new skill sets, and societies are being shaped by extraordinary conditions. The transition into what the World Economic Forum calls the Fourth Industrial Revolution is largely being driven by the advancement of technology and global issues that impact local communities. To be ready for this unpredictable future, people must be sufficiently prepared to meet challenges and seize opportunities.

There is already a growing need for people to work together to solve complex problems while also focusing on our collective health and well-being. People need to consider multiple perspectives, think critically, and innovate to peacefully address issues such as sustainability, human rights, truth and reconciliation, equity, poverty, political conflict, food insecurity, environment, health and wellness, and changing demographics. To address these issues at local and global levels while investing in socially cohesive communities that value the inclusion of diverse peoples and ideas, people need to take meaningful and thoughtful action.



A 2018 Royal Bank of Canada report predicts that half of all Canadian jobs will “require very different skills than they do now” as the nation shifts from a jobs economy in which people prepare for a relatively stable career or position, to a skills economy that requires people to continually adapt to changing economic and societal conditions.¹ Critical thinking, problem solving, and communication are essential for the 2.4 million jobs that will be added to the Canadian economy by 2022. This new economy relies more on a person’s skills and their ability to continually learn, upskill, and reskill to meet the changing demands of work and life; this also impacts access to and preparation for post-secondary education.

The peoples of New Brunswick are anticipating global, national, and local shifts and the impact that they will have on young people. The peoples of New Brunswick recognize the important role that schools play not only in equipping learners with fundamental skills like literacy and numeracy, but also in ensuring that learners develop the global competencies needed to thrive in a changing world. Transforming education is critical to these changing times and the emerging evidence of how to engage people in deep and meaningful learning.

Deep learning “is about individuals and groups really understanding and engaging in something that is important to them, and of value to the world.”²

This is a time of great change and incredible opportunities. Successfully adapting to these changes will help lead to rewarding lives, strong communities, and prosperous economies. It is within this context that schools will help prepare New Brunswick youth for every opportunity in this new and exciting future.



Portrait of a Learner

Learner Agency

The *belief* and *capacity* required to take action in making life better for oneself and others.

Capacity

Capable Learners are:

- literate,
- globally competent, and
- have disciplinary competence.

Self-Determined Learners feel:

- autonomous,
- competent, and
- related to others.

Belief

In the context of this Portrait of a Learner, **agency** is defined as the belief and capacity to take action to make life better for oneself and others.

Globally Competent
Critical Thinker
Collaborative
Creative
Literate Entrepreneurial
Agency Self-managed
Democratic Society
Lifelong Learner
Contributor
Self-aware
Autonomous
Personally Fulfilled
Global Citizen Sustainability
Communication Related
Competent Problem Solver
Innovative



Learner Agency

The world is changing and that means people will need a well-developed set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes to be successful. As defined in the previous section, the people of New Brunswick, and the rest of the world, are faced with solving complex social problems and transitioning to a skills economy. To learn and thrive in this exciting future, people will need to have the agency to take action in their life, learning, and work.

Agency can be defined as the “initiative and capacity to act in a desired direction or toward desired goals”³, the ability to make “meaningful changes in oneself or the environment”, and the ability “to determine [one’s] own course of action.”⁴ The mindset to become lifelong learners, achieve personal fulfillment, and contribute to a democratic society is realized through a learner’s agency. Agency is a person’s belief and capacity to take meaningful action in pursuit of learning and to participate fully in their local, virtual, and global communities. Examples include developing a new competency at school to prepare for employment, organizing a community garden to supply a local shelter with fresh foods, and improving the design of a sustainable and portable lamp for impoverished communities abroad. These actions require both the belief to begin and to persevere along with the capacity to make life better for oneself and for others.

An individual’s belief in their ability to take action is informed by their feelings and perceptions and is best understood through self-determination theory in which learners identify as autonomous, competent, and related.⁵ Equally important is a person’s capacity: the literacies and competencies developed through their educational and life experiences. The concepts of self-determined learners and capable learners are interconnected as each informs and strengthens the other.

The New Brunswick public school system will develop self-determined and capable learners who can take action in improving their lives and the lives of others.



Agency and Personal Wellness

When learners have a positive sense of personal wellness, or well-being, they are also more likely to have the agency necessary to take action in their life, learning, and work. Well-being is more than just a person's physical health. The New Brunswick Wellness Strategy defines seven dimensions of wellness that contribute to a person's overall sense of well-being: physical, mental, social, spiritual, emotional, environmental, and occupational.⁶

Learnings from the Wabanaki people tell us that a person must have balance in their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual components of life to be ready to learn. These same values are the cornerstone in early childhood education which focuses on the importance of the whole child, so that individuals "grow to their fullest potential with dignity, a sense of self-worth, and a zest for living and learning."⁷

This idea of balance, or sense of personal wellness, strengthens a person's ability to take action in making life better for oneself and others. Wellness "influences our decisions; how we create and learn, play and work; how we build our lives, families and communities; and how we connect with each other and contribute to making our province better."⁶ Personal agency and wellness are interdependent and together impact an individual's ability to participate in learning and life.

The New Brunswick public school system will foster both a person's personal sense of wellness, or well-being, and their sense of agency so they are prepared to meet challenges and seize opportunities.

Wabanaki, or People of the Dawn, are the first peoples of the territory that includes Eastern Canada and the Northeastern United States. The Wabanaki people include Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, Abenaki, Penobscot, and Peskotomuhkati.⁸



Self-Determined Learners

Self-determined learners believe they have the autonomy, competence, and relatedness to be successful in taking action. Learners who are self-determined have a greater sense of identity and purpose, take greater ownership of their actions and learning, display greater confidence and efficacy, and are typically more motivated and engaged.^{3, 4, 9} People who feel they have autonomy, competence, and relatedness also tend to experience greater well being and resilience.^{3, 10}

Autonomous learners feel that they have some control over their learning, decisions, actions, and environment. **Competent** learners have a sense of purpose and the self-efficacy to be successful in their learning and actions. **Related** learners feel like they belong and have a positive connection with their peers, the adults in their lives, and their learning. According to Wabanaki worldviews, all people are related and fostering relationships is key to learner success. A student's autonomy, competence, and relatedness are most strongly lived through authentic and relevant experiences that address their interests, culture, background, needs, and future.

Self-determined learners see their daily lives as part of their greater purpose. Through their learning and lived experiences, learners develop a better sense of their strengths, their communities, and belonging. Their voices, and the voices of others, matter in learning, work, and life.



Self-Determined Learners

Autonomy - Freedom to choose and decide. Choice and voice.

Competence - The ability to do something successfully.

Relatedness - A feeling of belonging or connection with others.

Capable Learners

Literate

Capable learners are literate as they have the capacity to interpret, understand, and create texts. A text is a framework people use to communicate with one another and consists of anything that conveys a set of meanings to the person who examines it. A text is not just the written word—other examples include an oral story, a musical score, a piece of art, a mathematical equation, a dance, a chemical formula, a game, a network of linked web pages, an advertisement, a video, and an outfit. Capable learners have the literacy to interact with various forms of texts as this is foundational to solving problems, creating new ideas, thinking critically, collaborating, and communicating.

Globally Competent

Learners need to develop global competencies to meet the shifting and ongoing demands of life, work, and learning; to be active and responsive in their communities; to understand and respect diverse perspectives; and, to act on issues of significance. These skills, sets of knowledge, and attitudes are transportable across disciplines and are required to take action to make life better for oneself and others.

Through their experiences, learners develop the confidence and capacity to engage in **critical thinking** to understand and **resolve problems**. They also use critical thinking to seek opportunities for growth within themselves and their communities. They turn ideas into action to meet the needs of a community and to develop an **entrepreneurial** mindset to contribute new-to-the-world or improved solutions to complex economic, social, and environmental issues. They develop leadership traits, models for risk-taking, independent and unconventional thinking, and the ability to **create and innovate** by experimenting with new strategies, techniques, and perspectives through inquiry research.

In the New Brunswick education system, **global competencies** are defined as the skills, sets of knowledge, and attitudes of a well-rounded person. Global competencies cross disciplines and contexts, and enable a person to thrive in local, virtual, and global communities.





Learners are **self-aware** and **self-manage** their emotions, thoughts, actions, and well-being. They develop their sense of identity and purpose while developing goals, opportunities, and plans in their personal, academic, and work lives. Learners monitor their progress and persevere to overcome challenges while adapting to change. Remaining curious, they believe in their ability to be successful, learn, and grow while seeking feedback and help.

Learners have knowledge of the texts that **communicate** New Brunswick's identity, as well as their own personal identity. They communicate for a variety of purposes, in different contexts, and with different audiences. They understand the link between language and culture. They recognize that plurilingual and pluricultural competence leads to an understanding of diverse perspectives and enhances their capacity to relate to and engage with others. They build on their additional language acquisition as well as honour the language of their ancestors.

Learners **collaborate** effectively and ethically in teams. They apply their cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills to diverse situations, roles, groups, and perspectives to co-construct knowledge, meaning, and content, and to learn from, and with, others in face-to-face and virtual environments.

Learners develop a balanced relationship with nature and develop the capacity to advocate for **sustainable** practices as citizens of the Canadian democracy and stewards of the earth. They know and respect shared Peace and Friendship Treaties and diverse worldviews and perspectives. They learn to address the complex ecological, social, and economic issues crucial to living as a **citizen** in a contemporary, **globally** connected, interdependent, and sustainable world.

Disciplinary Competence

Learners develop the capacity to use concepts and competencies introduced through the disciplines. A discipline is an area or field of study and inquiry, and involves knowledge specific to that area. Examples of disciplines include performing arts, languages, sciences, literature, economics, mathematics, visual arts, and health. Disciplinary concepts and competencies are important to participate in learning and in life. Disciplines, represented in school subject areas, provide a way of interpreting and interacting with the world. Learners explore key concepts, how such concepts are produced through disciplinary methods, how they can be applied, and how knowledge in the discipline is organized and communicated. They also learn that disciplines are lenses that can help them make sense of the world. Disciplines are ever-changing and shaped by the people who study and work within them. Learners examine these fields and develop an appreciation for the diversity of the people and roles that contribute to them. Global competencies are often achieved through interdisciplinary learning.

In the New Brunswick education system, the **disciplinary competencies** are defined as the skills, sets of knowledge, and attitudes specific to understanding, learning, and working within and across subjects.



Capable Learners

Literate - The capacity to interpret, understand, and create texts used by people to convey meaning.

Globally Competent - The skills, sets of knowledge, and attitudes of a well-rounded person. Global competencies cross disciplines and contexts, and enable a person to thrive in local, virtual, and global communities.

Disciplinary Competence - The skills, sets of knowledge, and attitudes specific to understanding, learning, and working within and across subjects.

Capable learners who can take action in this increasingly complex world are able to mobilize literacies, concepts, and competencies from multiple disciplines and the global competencies in skilled and adaptable ways. Competencies are leveraged in a variety of situations and across disciplines to take action in making life better for oneself and others. Finally, as knowledge and the access to knowledge grows, learners can reflect upon their learning to identify and understand their thought processes. Learning that has depth builds confidence, transfers easily, and leads to further learning.



Summary

The young people of New Brunswick are counting on their families, schools, and communities to provide them with the experiences to be future ready and prepared for the challenges and opportunities of their lifetime. To thrive in these increasingly interdependent and complex times, young people will need to understand and experience how to take meaningful and thoughtful action to address complex social, environmental, and economic issues, both local and global, and to invest in socially cohesive communities that value the inclusion of diverse peoples and ideas. They will need to establish strong relationships with others, connect to nature, and take action to be mentally and physically well in order to manage and balance a world of rapid change. New Brunswick learners must be ready to develop new competencies throughout their life, to find ways to be personally fulfilled, and to productively contribute to a just and democratic society.

To best prepare young people for these future opportunities and challenges, New Brunswick public education must help students develop agency: the belief and capacity that a person requires to take meaningful and thoughtful action that will make their life and the lives of others better. Within their educational and life experiences, learners must be supported to develop the belief and capacity to take action, helping them to become:

- **self-determined** learners who feel autonomous, competent, and related to others; and
- **capable** learners who are literate, globally competent, and have disciplinary competence.

To successfully develop self-determined and capable learners, all partners in New Brunswick public education will need to work together to provide young people with the conditions and experiences necessary to thrive in their learning, growth, and development. Educational staff will need to provide experiences and support in school to develop self-determined and capable learners, learners will have to take greater ownership of their learning and actions in all parts of their lives, families will need to promote and support their child's growth and development at home and beyond, and community partners will need to make the learning and growth of young people a priority.

Together, we can ensure the amazing talents and abilities of New Brunswick youth are developed and realized, so every citizen lives a rewarding life and is part of a prosperous future.

Glossary of Terms

The following are the New Brunswick public school system definitions of important terms:

Agency – the belief and capacity required to take action in making life better for oneself and others.

Competency – the ability to mobilize skills, sets of knowledge, and attitudes to take action in a particular context while self-assessing.

Discipline – an area or field of study and inquiry. A discipline involves knowledge specific to that area. Examples of disciplines include performing arts, languages, sciences, literature, economics, mathematics, visual arts, and health.

Disciplinary Competency – In the New Brunswick education system, the disciplinary competencies are defined as the skills, sets of knowledge, and attitudes specific to understanding, learning, and working within and across subjects.

Global Competency – the skills, sets of knowledge, and attitudes that comprise a well-rounded person. Global competencies cross disciplines and contexts, and enable a person to thrive in local, virtual, and global communities.

Literate – the capacity to interpret, understand, and create texts used by people to convey meaning.

Plurilingualism – the ability of a person who has competence in more than one language and who uses the language that best fits a particular context. It values an interconnectedness between languages rather than treating different languages separately.

Pluriculturalism – the mediation of different cultures in the construction of a person's or community's cultural identity.

Wabanaki People – also known as the People of the Dawn, are the first peoples of the territory that includes Eastern Canada and the Northeastern United States. The Wabanaki people include Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, Abenaki, Penobscot, and Passamaquoddy.⁷

Footnotes

¹Royal Bank of Canada. (2018, March). *Humans wanted - how Canadian youth can thrive in the age of disruption*. Retrieved from <http://rbc.com/humanswanted>

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