



Association des Orthophonistes & des Audiologistes du Nouveau-Brunswick
New Brunswick Association of Speech-Language Pathologists & Audiologists

147 Ellerdale Avenue Moncton, NB E1A 3M8
Telephone: (506) 858-1788 Fax: (506) 854-0343
nbaslpa@nb.aibn.com

November 10, 2015

Education Plan Secretariat
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Place 2000 P.O. Box 6000 Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1

Dear Mrs. Power and Mr. LeBlanc;

We welcome this opportunity to provide input on the development of the 10-year education plan for New Brunswick. Since the transfer of our school-based speech-language pathologists (SLPs) from Health to Education in 2013, we have seen their professional roles broaden. The physical move has increased their accessibility and they now undertake a more prominent role within the support services teams.

It is well-established that effective communication is an essential, foundational skill for children to enable them to access and to have success with the school curriculum. Language development is one of the most important school readiness skills. Yet, far too many New Brunswick children enter school with weak language and when faced with the demands of school, they cannot even begin to keep up. Research clearly states that children's capacity to talk and the size of their vocabulary when they enter kindergarten is predictive of their success in the early school years and is central for the acquisition of many cognitive and academic skills. There is a robust pool of evidence that the preschool and early school years are an optimal period for language learning and untreated oral and written comprehension problems do not resolve with time.

Communication skills are also essential for human interaction and children who cannot communicate effectively may experience social isolation. Language provides the main method of establishing and maintaining social relationships. Poorly developed language skills are strongly associated with life-long difficulties in psycho-social development and psychiatric disorders are more prevalent in those with language disorders than in those with normal language learning.

Speech-language pathologists are the uniquely qualified school-based professionals in the assessment, identification and treatment of a wide range of language and speech difficulties that are at the root of academic challenges. As students across the grades work to meet academic demands through listening, speaking, reading and writing, the devastating effects of a language impairment become evident when they try to adapt and learn in the classroom and struggle to form social interactions.

We applaud our government's open process of feedback on the 10-year education plan and welcome opportunities to work with you for the benefit of all New Brunswick students. As outlined, both

academic learning and social interactions are critically dependent on language skills. Speech Language Pathologists can provide direct intervention with children to increase their learning potential, as well as work with the school teams to ensure that all students acquire skills needed to live, work and contribute to society. Our schools require more SLPs on their teams to identify and address language difficulties at the base of academic underachievement in a timely manner. Delays in intervention result in a more pervasive impact and potentially life-long challenges socially, academically and vocationally.

Please feel free to contact me at the address above or by e-mail at nbaslpa@nb.aibn.com to further our discussion of the points raised.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Maund". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and 'M'.

Deborah Maund, M.Sc., S-LP(C)
NBASLPA President/Présidente AOANB