

REACTIONS OF RURAL EDUCATORS IN LUNENBURG AND QUEENS
COUNTIES TO PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE NOVA SCOTIA HIGH SCHOOL
PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAM

by

L. Allan Turner

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Masters of Arts (Education).

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY
HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA
CANADA

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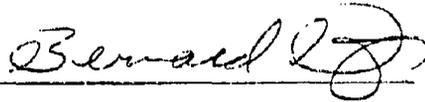
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(Supervisor)



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Date: April 27, 1993.

ABSTRACT

REACTIONS OF RURAL EDUCATORS IN LUNENBURG AND QUEENS COUNTIES TO PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE NOVA SCOTIA HIGH SCHOOL PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAM

This thesis was undertaken to gauge the reactions of rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties to proposed changes in Nova Scotia's high school Public School Program (PSP) announced by the Minister of Education's Advisory Committee on May 3, 1989 in Education Nova Scotia. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine if the proposed senior high school PSP changes were expected to create unique problems for small rural schools in these counties having a senior high school population (grades ten to twelve) under 250.

Twelve interviews were conducted with rural educators. The principal, one social studies teacher, and one science teacher were interviewed from three rural schools: two from Lunenburg County and one from Queens County. In addition, the Superintendent of Schools for Lunenburg County, the Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum Development for Lunenburg County, and the Superintendent of Schools for Queens County were interviewed.

The interviews comprising the data of this study were tape recorded between November 6, 1992 and December 17, 1992. Identical procedures were followed for each interview. Educators were asked to comment on each of the proposed recommendations to Nova Scotia's high school PSP

made by the Minister's Advisory Committee in May, 1989.

The study concludes with a "Summary of Major Findings" outlining some of the issues that rural educators indicated would create problems for small rural schools. This section also addresses some of the major concerns expressed by Department of Education officials. Six recommendations are made based on the literature review and the data collected from the rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties.

L. Allan Turner

April 27, 1993

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CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

The 1980s- A Decade Of Educational Reform

The last decade has witnessed a critical examination of educational practices throughout the western world and numerous reform proposals for the improvement of schools. Recently recommended changes to Nova Scotia high schools can be viewed in the context of these related initiatives. (Ad hoc Committee, 1991, p. 4)

Educational reform is not a new concept or process; however, much of the educational reform throughout the western world in the 1980s was unique in that it recommended, in some cases, complete overhauls of entire educational systems rather than small sections of these systems. According to McConaghy (1990), in his article, "Seeking the Road to Excellence, Trends in Canadian Curriculum Reform," the "controversy over education, especially what should be taught in our schools and how it should be taught, is not unique to this decade or even this century" (p. 14). He quotes a passage from Aristotle's Politics, written around 350 B.C., to demonstrate how debates over education occurred in Ancient Greece:

That education should be regulated by law and should be an affair of state is not to be denied, but what should be the character of this public education, and how young persons should be educated, are questions which remain to be considered. As things are, there is disagreement about the subjects. For mankind are by no means agreed

about the things to be taught.... The existing practice is perplexing; no one knows on what principle we should proceed- should the useful in life, or should virtue, or should the higher knowledge, be the aim of our training?... Again about the means there is no agreement. (p. 14)

Despite numerous calls for educational reform over the past twenty years, bureaucrats seldom considered it an urgent priority until the explosion of information in the 1980's forced school districts throughout the western world to scramble to meet new demands and challenges ushered in by this new age of information.

Across Canada and indeed around the world, education and training are increasingly viewed as being directly linked to social and economic prosperity. With increased globalization, the events within one country can have implications for the entire world. Political and social harmony are not only national but international concerns. (Planning, Research, and Policy Coordination Branch, p. 10, 1991).

As countries around the world recognize their membership in one global family, they are confronted with the issues that challenge most other members: renewed economic development, improving health standards, the alleviation of poverty, increased concern for individual rights, and environmental concerns.

Educational Reform in Great Britain

In Great Britain, educational reform began in the

late 1970's. Since its rise to power in 1978, the Thatcher government placed a priority on educational reform:

Under Sir Keith Joseph, Mrs. Thatcher's long-time Minister of Education post-secondary education policy was directed to the scientific and the technical. Many in the universities thought that this threatened their entrenched position- especially when university grants were cut and the money was directed to technical and occupational training colleges. But the Joseph policy appears to have paid off, for in strengthening technical education, it has provided the beginnings of an upgraded technical workforce appropriate to the needs of the highly technical electronic and information age in which the world now lives. (Fraser, 1987, p. 7)

Early in 1980, the Department of Education and Science, with input from the Welsh Office, published A Framework for School Curriculum, establishing a number of proposals to improve the educational system in Great Britain. This text served as a discussion paper. Following wide-range consultations, interviews, and public hearings, the British Department of Education and the Welsh Office published "The School Curriculum," in 1981 to "offer guidance to the local educational authorities and schools in England and Wales on how the school curriculum can be further improved." (Department of Education and Science, Welsh Office, 1981, p. iii) The British Secretaries of State, Mark Carlisle and Nicholas Edwards write in the forward to this document that:

This paper covers the whole period of compulsory education. What is taught at school should be adapted to the needs of every pupil, including the gifted, and those with special educational needs, so that everyone is appropriately prepared for the practical demands of adult and working life. (Department of Education and Science, Welsh Office, 1981, p. iii)

Reform in the British education system culminated in the 1988 release of "The Educational Reform Act" which outlined major changes in curriculum and assessment.

The national curriculum, the centre-piece of the Act, consists of three core subjects- English, mathematics, and science- and seven foundation subjects- history, geography, technology, music, art, physical education and modern languages (at the secondary level). Students will be assessed at the end of the school year in which most students in the class reach the ages of seven, eleven, fourteen, and sixteen. The implementation of the national curriculum has a timetable of about eight years. (Ad hoc Committee, 1991, p. 4)

The British National Curriculum, however, has been recently criticized by many educators in Great Britain. What has resulted according to many critics is " a curriculum which glorifies a mythical, monolingual, monocultural 'British' heritage and attempts to ignore cultural diversity, racial antagonism and ethnic tensions." (Tomlinson, 1993, p. 11). An important caveat can be inferred from this criticism: If politicians and Department of Education officials do not heed the suggestions and recommendations from all stakeholders in

education, a narrowly-defined curriculum can result that does not provide students with adequate preparation for the twenty-first century. In Great Britain, despite strong lobbying to make the National Curriculum reflect a multi-cultural society, the council responsible for its creation decided to avoid the entire issue of multiculturalism. Tomlinson (1993), makes this conclusion about the British National Curriculum: "Such a nationalistic curriculum is not an adequate preparation for life in the twenty-first century and does a grave disservice to young people in this country." (p. 11)

Educational Reform in The United States

The educational system in the United States came under intense scrutiny following the National Commission on Excellence in Education's 1983 release of A Nation At Risk. This document began a long barrage of texts exposing a widespread malaise plaguing the American educational system. Average Americans, somewhat apathetic when it came to educational matters, were jolted by the publication of numerous texts commenting on the deficiencies in the education that their children were receiving.

Arthur Powell's (et al.) 1985 release of The Shopping Mall High School: Winners and Losers In The Educational Market Place and Carol Sommer's (1984) Schools In Crisis, added fuel to an already explosive issue. One can imagine

how shocked American parents were after reading accounts like the following from Sommer's (1984) text:

At commencement exercises across the nation untold thousands of high school graduates will receive a counterfeit diploma: a mere 12- year attendance certificate. Many of these tassel-capped students marching slowly down the aisle with lifted chins and throbbing hearts to receive their long-sought diplomas will one day come to this shocking discovery- they have been cheated of an education. It is not that they were intellectually unable to learn; rather, they were inadequately trained. A large number of these students face a bleak future because of their faulty education. (p. 3)

A Nation At Risk (1983) indicates how this malaise might be addressed and corrected:

Knowledge, learning, information, and skilled intelligence are the new raw materials of international commerce and are today spreading throughout the world as vigorously as miracle drugs, synthetic fertilizers, and blue jeans did earlier. If only to keep and improve on the slim, competitive edge we still retain in the world markets, we must dedicate ourselves to the reform of our educational system for the benefit of all- old and young alike, affluent and poor, majority and minority. Learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the "information age" we are entering. (p. 7)

Numerous other texts criticizing the American educational system triggered calls for increased accountability in areas of curriculum design, instruction, and assessment. According to McConaghy (1990), in his

article, "Seeking the Road to Excellence: Trends in Canadian Curriculum Reform," much of the controversy that surrounded American curriculum reform in the early 1980's concerned "the direction of reform." (p. 15)

Should a reformed curriculum be designed to prepare students for the world of work, should it concentrate on basics, should it be a model for teaching morals and values, or should it be more rigorous with increased emphasis on intellectual attainment? (p. 15)

What surfaced as perhaps the most contentious issue facing American educators in the mid 1980's was the issue of tracking, or ability grouping. Although there is no dearth of literature outlining the limitations and even harmful effects of tracking (Bempechat and Wells, 1989; French and Rothman, 1990; Gamoran, 1989; Goodlad and Keating, 1990; Goodlad and Oakes, 1988; Hallinan, 1990; Kerckhoff, 1986; Oakes, 1985; Oakes, 1986; and Raze, 1984), other research indicates that ability grouping has no harmful effects on student, and can, in fact, be beneficial. (Jaeger and Busch, 1984; Kulick, 1985; Kulick and Kulick, 1982; Kulick and Kulick, 1987; Moydell, et al., 1991; Pritchard, 1987; Slavin, 1987; and Valli, 1986).

A more moderate approach to tracking is taken by Braddock and McPatland (1990) who state that "studies of schools' attempts to soften detrimental effects of tracking indicate that reform may come about through modifications to tracking, rather than by its outright

elimination" (p. 76). Their "bottom line" on the tracking and reform follows:

Tracking as practiced in many American schools and districts is clearly in need of reform, but turning the suggestion for reform into action will not be easy. In considering their policies concerning this practice, educators would do well to listen to arguments both for and against tracking. Only by listening to both sides can they recognize- and address- the norms and interests that have sustained tracking practices (p. 78).

Educational Reform In Canada

The Canadian educational system was and continues to be influenced by similar trends in educational thought. Curriculum reform became a priority for many provinces during the early 1980's when pressures emerged from the following:

1. Geographic shifts in population (to urban areas away from rural and northern areas)
2. An overall aging population
3. A comparatively young and growing Aboriginal population
4. Increased cultural and linguistic diversity
5. Economic globalization, changing trade partners and relationships, the need to compete in the international marketplace
6. Economic growth in the service sector, development of knowledge-based industries, economic restructuring resulting in changing skill requirements for the labour force

7. Increased concern for the protection of the environment and natural resources
8. Rapid development of new technologies, especially information technologies
9. A climate of fiscal restraint
10. Pressing social issues such as violence, AIDS, gender and social equity, quality of health care, justice and law reinforcement
11. Political issues, including constitutional affairs, greater demand from members of the public to participate more directly in decision-making that affects them
12. Increased concern for individual and group rights
13. Increased public demand for accountability from government agencies. (Planning, Research and Policy Coordination Branch, 1992, p. 10).

In reaction to these and other local pressures, most provinces in Canada established task forces and committees with mandates to carefully examine existing curricula and make recommendations for reform. What resulted in many cases were new core curricula as well as major changes to existing public school programs, particularly at the senior high school level: In British Columbia (A Legacy For Learners: News Releases, Highlights, Background Information, 1988; British Columbia Schools and Society, 1988; The Learners Of British Columbia, 1988); Alberta (Secondary Education in Alberta, 1985; Senior High School Graduation Requirements, 1988); Saskatchewan ("Core Curriculum Proposals," 1986; Policy Direction For A Core Curriculum, 1987; What They

Said: Educational Views of Saskatchewan People, 1984);
 Manitoba (High School Education: The Issues, 1987);
 Ontario (Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education and
 the Issue of Dropouts, 1987; Secondary Education Review
 Project, no date); New Brunswick (Excellence in Education-
 Issues Paper I: Schools For A New Century, 1991;
Excellence in Education- Issues Paper II: To Live and
 Learn- The Challenge of Education and Training, 1992; In
 Touch With Excellence: Teacher Perspectives on Excellence
 in Education, 1992; Schools for a New Century: Report of
 the Commission on Excellence in Education, 1992); Prince
 Edward Island (Education- A Shared Responsibility: The
 Report of the PEI Task on Education, 1992); and Nova
 Scotia (Report of the Advisory Committee on the Public
 School Program, 1987; Report of the Advisory Committee on
 the Public School Program, 1989; The Core Program and
 Related Services for Nova Scotia Schools, 1992).

While some provinces have already implemented major changes to their curricula, others are still reflecting on numerous recommendations, weighing the benefits of their implementation, and proceeding cautiously giving due consideration to current educational research. According to McConaghy (1990) in "Seeking the Road to Excellence: Trends in Canadian Curriculum:"

All Canadian provinces have completed reviews of their educational systems. The pace and depth of curriculum reform varies from province to province. A few provinces have made changes only in their existing

courses of studies; whereas, most provinces have undertaken more indepth changes in curriculum and assessment. (p. 17)

McConaghy (1990), makes two important points that curriculum experts across the country should heed. First, in the article "Curriculum Reform in Saskatchewan," he praises Saskatchewan as:

... leading the way in education reform in Canada not only in what is being developed but also in how it is being developed. Collaboration, sufficient time for implementation, and meaningful in-service training for the province's 12,000 teachers have been keys to successful curriculum reform in Saskatchewan (p. 496).

In this article, McConaghy (1990) outlines the process that has attributed to successful curriculum reform in Saskatchewan:

- The formation of a twenty-four member advisory committee consisting of parents, teachers, administrators, trustees, teachers' organizations, and government representatives;
- The formulation of education policy "through extensive consultation with the organizations and institutions connected to schools and teaching" (p. 496);
- Distribution of a discussion paper sent to every household with school-aged children in the province encouraging parents to make written submissions;
- The formulation of a report titled Directions based on over "40,000 pieces of data" (p. 495) from which the major recommendation was the creation of a "core curriculum development consisting of "four functions: program evaluation, program design, program implementation, and program maintenance" (p. 495);
- The identification of "common essential learnings

(CELS),... six areas of concentration that develop understandings, values, skills, and processes that are considered to be foundations for learning in all school subjects" (p. 495);

- The development of curriculum guides in core subjects over the next eight years explaining how CELs can be incorporated into each area of study;
- A ten-year timetable to implement the core curriculum including "an elaborate inservice training program" to "acquaint teachers and principals with the curriculum" (p. 496).

Secondly, in the article, "Seeking the Road to Excellence: Trends in Canadian Curriculum Reform," McConaghy (1990) comments on what he considers imperative before effective curriculum reform can take place:

In order for curriculum reform to be effective in the school level, sufficient resources must be provided for staff development and instructional materials.... To be effective, reforms at the school level must include teachers in the decision-making process. It has been shown that teachers in many schools will accept changes when they are provided with the encouragement and with the resources for professional development, when they are provided with the resources for instructional materials, and when institutional constraints are lifted or eliminated. (p. 17)

At the sixty-second meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) held in Winnipeg at the end of September, 1992, the Ministers responsible for education released a draft mission statement outlining educational priorities in Canada. In this mission statement, the Ministers outlined "common values and beliefs that underlie our education and training systems

and a common mission for education and training" (CMEC, 1992, p. 11):

Education in Canada is a lifelong process intended to provide for each individual and for the country the knowledge, skills, and values needed for personal development, for economic and personal prosperity and for democratic citizenship. (CMEC, 1992, p. 12)

Educational Reform In Nova Scotia

In 1986, the Nova Scotia Department of Education established a standing committee to study high school curriculum in the province. This committee was assigned by then Minister of Education, The Honourable Thomas J. McInnes to:

... examine issues related to the public school program and to make recommendations to the minister for changes and revisions or modifications to the public school program or to the Education Act and the Regulations governing its implementation. (Advisory Committee on the Public School Program, 1987, p. 1)

The Advisory Committee's mandate was to cover all aspects of the credit system from grades ten to twelve "including the number of hours required for a credit, the number of credits required for the high school completion certificate, the compulsory credits and the course coding of credits" (p. 1).

The committee also examined educational reforms

taking place in other parts of Canada and the world, particularly Great Britain and the United States, to see how various curricula were addressing students' needs. This research assisted the Committee in judging how well Nova Scotia's high school public school program was preparing students for a rapidly changing global society. The Committee was chaired by Mr. B. Robert Haines, then Chief Director, Education Programs, for the Nova Scotia Department of Education.

In June, 1987, after sixteen months of public meetings, research, and reviewing submissions received from individuals and organizations across the province, the Committee released its "Report of the Advisory Committee on the Public School Program." The paper, intended to be a white paper for discussion purposes, was the first review of Nova Scotia's public school system in fifteen years to recommend change. In total, eight recommendations were made, and eight areas for future review and action were identified (see Appendix A).

Approximately 18,000 copies of the report were sent to educators, politicians, school boards, universities, libraries, other interested organizations, and all individuals and organizations that had made submissions to the Committee. Following the white paper's distribution, the chairperson, committee members, or both met with special interest groups "to provide clarification as necessary, and to answer questions." (Advisory Committee, 1989, p. 4) A total of 172 responses were received from

individuals and organizations around the province. To assist in the organization of these submissions, the gathering of additional information, and the conducting of further research, one research working group and three sub-committees were formed; a sub-committee on business education, a sub-committee on Acadian programs, and a sub-committee on alternatives.

Following is a summary of comments made by Nova Scotia educators and other stakeholders of education (parents, businesses, universities, etc.) between 1987 and 1989 as recorded by Langille (1988).

The first recommendations which suggested an increase in compulsory credits (see Appendix A) received the most response.

Positive Feedback:

- Majority of respondents favoured this increase;
- Little or no opposition to making English, science, French and practical/ technical arts credits compulsory;
- General agreement with social studies component;
- Fine arts recommendation well received by cultural organizations as well as parents and educators.

Negative Feedback:

- Recommendation overemphasizes academic students and ignores those whose plans do not include university;
- Certain recommendations such as French and fine arts were viewed as unworkable (eg. How could students with a learning disability complete a French credit?);
- Increasing the compulsories would result in a "watered down" curriculum;
- Increased compulsories would be disastrous to small

schools with limited personnel;

- Change appears to be a make-work project for the sake of change itself;
- Where will the money come from for additional compulsories and the teachers to teach them;
- A clearer definition of global studies is required, and the social studies requirement needs further clarification.

The second recommendation called for the number of credits required for Nova Scotia high school graduation to increase from sixteen to eighteen. (See Appendix A).

Positive Feedback:

- Very few special associations had negative reactions;
- Many students already achieve eighteen credits; therefore, major adjustments are unnecessary.

Negative Feedback:

- Eighteen credits in three years leaves no room for failure;
- Concern that up to 25% of students in Nova Scotia will require an extra year of high school in order to graduate;
- Extra staff will be required to teach additional courses.

Recommendation three calls for increasing the number of minimum hours to receive credit for some courses to 140 hours from 120 hours [English, French (as a first language), and mathematics], decrease the minimum hours for others to 100 hours (fine arts, practical arts, and technical arts), and leave the remaining courses at 120 hours. (See Appendix A).

Positive Feedback:

- None recorded.

Negative Feedback:

- Improve the quality of instruction not the quantity;
- Having various hours for credit courses will result in "a timetabling nightmare" (Langille, 1988, p. 23).

The fourth recommendation calls for a guarantee of 300 minutes of daily instructional time in each high school in the province.

Positive Feedback:

- Recommendation has received very little opposition.

Negative Feedback:

- Clarification requested as to what exactly is meant by "instructional time;"
- May require increasing the length of the school day which may result in very long days for students living in remote rural areas;
- Perceived difficulties in coordinating bus schedules in schools that teach all levels of students (elementary, as well as junior and senior high school).

Section (a) of recommendation five calls for most high school courses to be taught at one "regular" level with the exception of certain courses that could be taught at "academic" or "honours" levels. (See Appendix A).

Positive Feedback:

- None recorded.

Negative Feedback:

- Will result in lessening of academic standards, lowering

of educators' expectations, and lower levels of student achievement.

Section (b) of recommendation five calls for simplification of course nomenclature.

Positive Feedback:

- A survey of grade nine students in a large senior high school felt that the current system of course nomenclature was confusing and that a simpler system should be implemented;
- These students also reported unnecessary duplication of certain courses such as those designated "enriched" and those designated "honours."

Negative Feedback:

- None recorded.

The sixth recommendation, according to Langille (1988) "appears to have sparked very little reaction, positive or negative, from educators" (p. 24).

In their report on the Public School Program, the Advisory Committee noted additional concerns expressed by various stakeholders in education. Regarding the first recommendation (see Appendix A), the Advisory Committee added as a positive comment that the compulsory French component was strongly supported by representatives from the business and university sectors.

The Committee noted four negative comments in addition to those made by Langille (1988). First, that several respondents found the "list of practical and technical arts too long and diversive" (p. 7); secondly, business education teachers felt that business education

should not fall under practical and technical arts but should rather be considered a separate program; thirdly, that making French compulsory at the senior high school level would require French to be compulsory in junior high school, which is not presently the case; and finally, several educators feared that those courses not included in the compulsory list will be eliminated (eg. geology).

No additional positive feedback was noted by the Advisory Committee with regard to recommendation two (see Appendix A); however, the Committee did include one additional criticism: This recommendation might mean that students will have to take twenty-one credits to allow for a margin of failure.

With regard to recommendation three (see Appendix A), the Advisory Committee provided no additional positive feedback. The Committee did, however, include a negative criticism of this recommendation as recorded by one respondent: "Since all the subjects in the curriculum should be regarded as being of equal intrinsic worth, then all deserve the same allocations of time." (p. 12) No additional comments regarding recommendation five (a) (see Appendix A) were found in the Advisory Committee's report, but the Committee did provide one criticism directed toward recommendation five (b) that was not mentioned by Langille (1988): Not only is the current nomenclature confusing to students in grade nine, but it is equally confusing to senior high school students, parents, and businesses.

With regard to recommendation six, the development of alternative programs (see Appendix A), the Advisory Committee reported the following:

There is an evident lack of suitable alternatives to meet the needs of some students, including those from the adjusted program... originally intended to lead to employment or, possibly, to an intermediate industrial or other vocational option. (p. 15)

Two additional concerns that the Committee expressed regarding this recommendation follow: First, the current shortage of employment coupled with limited admission into very competitive vocational programs, have left many of these students with few alternatives; and secondly, many students from adjusted programs enroll into 200 level courses that were not designed for their needs. Neither Langille's (1988) research nor comments made by the Advisory Committee (1989) provided feedback on the seventh and eighth recommendations of the Committee's original report on the PSP in June 1987.

After reviewing submissions from various individuals and organizations, current research provided by the research group and three sub-committees, the results of a 1988 survey of high school graduation requirements from provinces across Canada, and the reactions of eighteen of the provinces twenty-one school boards, the Advisory Committee published their final report on the PSP in Education Nova Scotia on May 3, 1989. (This issue was devoted entirely to "The Report of the Advisory Committee

on the Public School Program.") In a forward to this edition of Education Nova Scotia, The Honourable Ronald C. Giffin, Minister of Education, is quoted as having announced that the recommendations of this report had been "accepted in principle" (p. 1). According to excerpts from the Minister's speech, he added the following:

1. Students entering grade ten would not be expected to take eighteen credits until September, 1990 (rather than September 1989 as recommended by the Advisory Committee).
2. The feasibility of the five-year timetable that the Advisory Committee suggested to implement the compulsory French, fine arts, independent living skills, and physical active lifestyles would be further discussed.

The Advisory Committee used the following guiding principles to arrive at the nine recommendations (see Appendix B) published in May, 1989:

The Committee believes that excellence in education in the high school may be judged not only by the quality of individual courses, but also by the diversity of educational experiences in which students participate, and by the number of individual students whose needs are met at every level of interest and ability. In addition the Nova Scotia high school program should be in harmony with what has gone before in the elementary and junior high programs. This implies a greater extension into junior and senior high school of the student-centred approach that is now the practice at the elementary level. (p. 5)

The Advisory Committee also stressed the necessity for the high school PSP to reflect current research on learning styles as well as local, national, and international factors that will affect students once they leave school. The Committee outlined what it considered should be integral to a "forward-looking and flexible" high school PSP (Advisory Committee, p. 6):

1. Balancing a content-based curriculum with a skills/process-based curriculum;
2. Establishing and maintaining a "common shared educational experience" for all students that would include a range of options (sanctioned by the Department of Education) from which students can choose "according to individual needs and objectives" (p. 5);
3. Ensuring that the high school PSP "serves the broad civic, social, and aesthetic needs of students and society" (p. 5);
4. Ensuring that the high school PSP recognizes the constantly changing demands put upon the student (especially social factors such as family structure, mobility, human rights, rights of children, etc.);
5. Providing for a "rising student retention rate in Nova Scotia, influenced by wider access by all to education" (p. 5);
6. Preparing students for the implications of an increasingly older Canadian population (in light of the "steady growth in the percentage of the population over 65");
7. Ensuring that students have the opportunity to develop confidence and competence in the use of technology as an effective tool to support their learning both within the school and in their lives outside of school" (pp. 5-6). In addition, students should be provided with the opportunity to examine, discuss, and evaluate the social implications that result from the continued expression of technology;
8. Ensuring that the administrative structure of high schools support the following:
 - Professional development of teachers, particularly in

the area of how students learn;

- Teaching major skills necessary to deal with the information explosion; information-processing skills; problem-solving skills; decision-making skills to help students cope with job changes, new technologies, and work and leisure demands.

Following the publication of the "Report of the Advisory Committee on The Public School Program" in May, 1989, the Nova Scotia Teachers Union struck an ad hoc committee in the fall of the same year "to access independently the proposed changes to the public school program'." (Ad hoc Committee, p. 3). "The ad hoc committee was directed to gather information and opinions from teachers and other interested parties and 'to formulate recommendations regarding the proposed changes' for consideration of the provincial executive." (Ad hoc Committee, p. 3). (See Appendix C)

To measure the reactions from educators around the province, to seven recommendations made by the Advisory Committee on the Public School Program, the ad hoc committee developed and distributed questionnaires (one long and one short) to teachers and administrators at all grade levels. The ad hoc committee's questionnaires did not reflect revisions made to the Advisory Committee's recommendations in May, 1990, because the questionnaires were distributed prior to the revisions. The following is a summary of the ad hoc committee's findings based on "over three hundred questionnaires representing the views of nearly four hundred educators" (Ad hoc Committee, p.

8). (Note: The ad hoc committee did not use the actual wording or chronological order of the Advisory Committee's recommendations).

1. "It is recommended that each credit course be of 120 hours duration."

386 Survey Responses

Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	
70%	13%	17%	(p. 8)

Positive Feedback:

- "Guaranteed instructional time is critical to quality education" (p. 8);
- The amount of time "is necessary to cover the material adequately" (p. 8);
- If this recommendation is accepted, it should include an attendance policy to ensure equality for all students.

Negative Feedback:

- More hours should be devoted to teaching English and mathematics since literacy, numeracy, or both are needed in all other courses.

2. "It is recommended that each high school operate for 300 minutes of instruction time daily."

383 Survey Responses

Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	
75%	11%	14%	(pp. 8-9)

Positive Feedback:

- Call for standardization of instructional time across the province.

Negative Feedback:

- Length of school day will have to be reviewed carefully in light of transportation time and bus scheduling;

- More emphasis needs to be placed on quality rather than quantity;
 - A clearer definition to what "instructional time" refers is required.
3. "It is recommended that the number credits required for a high school completion certificate be increased from 16 to 18, effective September, 1990.

386 Survey Results

Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	
43%	40%	17%	(p. 9)

Positive Feedback:

- Students need a broader and more comprehensive program;
- The number of credits for high school graduation should be comparable to the number of credits in other Canadian provinces;
- Eighteen credits "allow for a greater variety of courses and a broader range of educational experiences" (p. 9).

Negative Feedback:

- For some students, requiring eighteen credits will mean an additional year in high school;
 - Small schools may be unable to offer the required number of courses;
 - Teachers might end up with additional students and courses;
4. "It is recommended that the number of compulsory credits be increased from 4 to 7 in September 1990 and that these compulsory credits include:
- i) 3 English
 - ii) 1 Mathematics
 - iii) 1 Science
 - iv) 2 Social Studies
 - a. one 'global studies'
 - b. one of history, geography, or economics

385 Survey Responses

Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	
67%	22%	11%	(p. 10)

Positive Feedback:

- "Ensures all students have a reasonably well-rounded education" (p. 10);
- "Provides a better balance" of courses (p. 10).

Negative Feedback:

- "5 arts, 2 sciences- why so many arts when we are moving so rapidly to the technological age?" (p. 10);
- "In this age of lifelong learning, schools should not be held ransom to deliver the total student for all occasions" (p. 10).

5. "It is recommended that the number of compulsory credits be increased from 7 to 10 and that the additional compulsory credits include:
- i) 1 Fine Arts
 - ii) 1 French
 - iii) 1/2 Physical Active Lifestyle (PAL)
 - iv) 1/2 Independent Living Skills (ILS)

387 Survey Results

Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	
27%	48%	25%	(p. 10)

Positive Feedback:

- The additional compulsories are "part of everyday life." (p. 11)
- Additional compulsories expose students to culture and allow for "creative expression." (p. 11)

Negative Feedback:

- Uncertainty was expressed regarding the content and approach of PAL and ILS;
- What effect would a compulsory French course at the senior high school level have on the junior high school?

- "Some of these compulsory credits may infringe on cultural preferences and/ or home family prerogatives" (p. 11);
- Fear that certain handicapped students such as the hearing impaired may not be able to successfully complete a French credit;
- "Students mature in the process of choosing- this proposal does not provide sufficient student selection" (p. 11).

6. "It is recommended that most courses be offered at the 'academic' level and that some courses in English, French, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies also be offered at the 'preparatory' level. These designations are to apply for students entering Grade 10 in September, 1992."

384 Responses

Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	
27%	49%	24%	(p. 11)

Positive Feedback:

- "Differentiation, especially in English, mathematics, French and science seems appropriate. Offering these at both academic and preparatory levels seems sensible before any single tracking is accepted" (p. 12).

Negative Feedback:

- High degree of uncertainty; many educators called for additional clarification of this recommendation;
- One educator asked, "Have we switched names or decided to 'beef up' the general courses?" (p. 11);
- Another educator commented, "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" (p. 11);
- The new labelling will be confusing to parents;
- "Kids will take 30 seconds to figure out that academic means general and opt for preparatory" (p. 11);
- "There needs to be a more meaningful technically-based (rather than academic) option for students" (p. 12);
- "If anything, more streams and more innovative approaches are required" (p. 12).

7. "It is recommended that a further reduction in multiple level offerings lead to a single track system in ten years. (The PSP Report with its vision of a single track system and the 'common shared experience' appears to recommend that the needs of all students be met within heterogeneous classrooms.)"

388 Survey Results

Agree	Disagree	Uncertain	
8%	84%	8%	(p. 12)

Positive Feedback:

- One educator stated, "I firmly believe in integrated classrooms" (p. 12);
- Some teachers gave "conditional support." "This proposal is acceptable if the student/ teacher ratio is 1: 15" (p. 12);
- "Although it [mainstreaming] will require massive retraining of teachers and smaller class size, it will eliminate the discrimination that now exists" (p. 12).

Negative Feedback:

- Students planning to attend university will no longer be properly prepared;
- Less emphasis will be placed on higher order thinking skills within a heterogeneous class;
- "As a teacher of lower streams, I feel these students will be destroyed if put with regular students" (p. 12);
- "Programs standards and general expectations would be lowered" (pp. 12- 13);
- "The product is watered down; the higher achievers are unchallenged; slower students are over their heads" (p. 13);
- The adoption of a single track would turn the educational clock backwards" (p. 13).

After analyzing data collected from the long and short questionnaires, the ad hoc committee made eighteen recommendations on the proposed changes to the senior high

school Public School Program. (See Appendix D).

Purpose of Study

The following points can be summarized from analyzing curriculum reform that shook the western world in the 1980s:

1. Global interdependence, major political reforms in many parts of the world, and a renewed focus on human rights have presented interesting challenges to existing school curricula.
2. Most educational systems in the western world were "ripe" for educational reform since these systems had not been adequately keeping up with new technologies and innovations ushered in by the information age.
3. Much of the research in the 1980's indicated that the focus of school curriculum should be on student-centred, skill-based approaches rather than traditional, content-based approaches.
4. Educational reform should be an on-going process that reflects changes in the world and local societies.

Most educational systems in the western world did respond to the challenges that the 1980s heralded in. How successful these educational systems were in responding to these challenges will be left to history to decide.

Having examined the Nova Scotia Government's response to the educational challenges of the 1980s, as well as

summaries of comments made prior to and after the release of the Report of the Advisory Committee on the Public School Program (1987), the next section of this paper will examine in-the-field responses to the provincial government's initiative from the perspectives of rural educators in three senior high schools in Lunenburg and Queens Counties.

CHAPTER TWO: COLLECTING DATAGetting Started

Before conducting any research on curriculum reform to Nova Scotia's senior high school Public School Program (PSP), I contacted officials from the Department of Education in July, 1992 to determine the current status of the proposed changes to the PSP announced in November, 1991 to be fully implemented by the 1996-1997 school year. On July 15, 1992, I contacted Mr. Bob LeBlanc, at the Department of Education, Director of English Program Services, whose responsibilities include the coordination of PSP implementation. My agenda for this 1 1/2 hour meeting was four-fold:

1. To introduce to Mr. LeBlanc my interest in researching how the PSP proposals for the senior high school level would impact rural schools, particularly those in Lunenburg and Queens Counties;
2. To establish an historical perspective of senior high PSP development in Nova Scotia, particularly with regard to the most recent proposals;
3. To generate a list of resources utilized by the Department of Education during the developmental phases of PSP revision in the early 1980's as well as the names of individuals who were instrumental in creating a philosophy and rationale to guide the formation of a new Senior High School PSP;

4. To determine where the PSP proposals were now with regard to implementation;

In response to my first inquiry, Mr. LeBlanc outlined three departmental concerns regarding proposed PSP changes and rural high schools:

1. Will the implementation design pose specific problems for rural schools?
2. How will the new courses outlined in the PSP be implemented in rural schools?
3. Will these changes threaten small school survival?

(Mr. LeBlanc indicated that a major concern of rural educators, "being able to offer enough courses so that students can go to university" was also a concern of the Department of Education and that efforts were being made to address this issue.)

Mr. LeBlanc was not a member of the Department of Education during the early research and developmental phases of the proposed senior high school PSP changes in the early 1980s. He indicated that Mrs. LaJune Naud, Director of Curriculum Development for the Department of Education, however, played an integral role during the formative stages of these proposals. Mrs. Naud was a member of the original Advisory Committee on the PSP established by then Minister of Education, the Honourable Ronald C. Giffin. In addition, she was Advisory Committee Chairperson on two sub-committees established by the original Advisory Committee to assist in carrying out further study regarding the PSP proposals: The Sub-

Committee on Alternatives, and the Business Education Sub-Committee. Mr. LeBlanc, therefore, suggested that it would be best to consult his colleague regarding the philosophy as well as the early developmental phases of the proposed changes to the senior high school PSP.

Mr. LeBlanc also gave the following names and their positions at the release of the "Report Of The Advisory Committee On The Public School Program," May 3, 1989, as key organizers in the early phases of PSP development: Mr. Ronald J. Morrison, Assistant Executive Secretary, Nova Scotia Teachers Union and committee member of the Sub-Committee on Acadian Programming as well as the Business Education Sub-Committee; Mr. Lloyd Gillis, Superintendent of Schools, Halifax County-Bedford District School Board, and member of the Research Working Group; Mr. Michael J. Woodford, Executive Director, Nova Scotia School Boards Association, and Chairperson of the Research Working Group; Dr. Murdock MacPherson, Nova Scotia Teachers Union (to June 1987); and Mr. William Redden, Nova Scotia Teachers Union (to August, 1988).

Mr. LeBlanc expressed concern over the dissolution of the partnership between the Department of Education and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union after the Provincial Government broke a collective agreement with the province's public school teachers by the imposition of Bill 160, the Act Respecting Compensation Restraint in the Public Sector in May, 1991. He indicated that the Union's decision to withdraw all its members from the *Advisory*

Task Forces and Sub-Committees created difficulties for the Department of Education, but that the Department was committed to carrying out the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee in May, 1989.

Mr. LeBlanc reported that in-site developmental pilots of new courses began during the 1989-1990 school year at West Pictou District High School. These small-scale projects resulted in refinements in language art courses and major changes in high school science programs. He stressed that knowledge gathered from piloting will be instrumental during the implementation of new courses throughout the province. Mr. LeBlanc mentioned that as of September, 1992, at least one of eighteen new pilot courses was being offered in thirty-nine of the province's ninety high schools representing eighteen school boards. He also indicated that by the 1993-1994 school year, the first four PSP courses will be implemented province-wide: English 10, Science 10, Global History 12, and Global Geography 12, and that no "A" (academic) or "P" (preparatory) designations would be part of the nomenclature for these courses.

Following this interview, I contacted Mrs. Faye P. Lee, Director of Publication and Communication at the Department of Education. During the early phases of the senior high PSP revision, Mrs. Lee's official title was Director of Publication and Reference, and she was the secretary of the Minister's Advisory Committee on the Public School Program. Mrs. Lee made available two large

boxes containing research material, drafts of PSP proposals, letters written to the Advisory Committee from various interest groups, educators, and concerned citizens, as well as an office at the Department of Education where I could peruse these documents at my convenience. Many of these articles and documents were used in preparation of the previous chapter.

A later meeting with Mrs. LaJune Naud on Tuesday, July 21, 1992 provided further background information on the philosophy and rationale of the senior high school PSP proposals. Referring to research conducted in the early 1980s, Mrs. Naud provided four reasons why Nova Scotia's senior high school PSP required an overhaul at this time.

1. The needs of several Nova Scotia high school students were not being met.
2. National and international studies (particularly those done in Ontario and the United States) of school curriculums indicated that disadvantaged students (including those coming from poor socio-economic backgrounds) and students coming from ethnic minorities were not recipients of a quality curriculum and further that such inequality was discriminatory.
3. Of all Canadian provinces, Nova Scotia students required the fewest credits and fewest compulsory credits required to receive a high school leaving certificate.
4. Current research on cognitive learning and higher level thinking indicated that students required new

learning opportunities stressing learning as an active rather than a passive process.

Mrs. Naud added Mrs. Bette Kelly, Director of Research at the Department of Education, (1989), to the list of those who were instrumental during the formative stages of senior high school PSP proposals. Mrs. Naud also expressed interest in focussing on the attitudes of teachers with regard to the proposed PSP changes.

These preliminary contacts at the Department of Education facilitated my research at later dates. On Friday, October 30, 1992, I returned to the Department to interview Mr. Bob LeBlanc regarding the current status of the implementation of the PSP proposals. I presented to Mr. LeBlanc a typed summary of the recommendations from the "Report of the Minister's Advisory Committee of Nova Scotia's PSP" for the senior high school level containing the most recent changes regarding the implementation dates of various recommendations. (See Appendix E).

This summary was based on information in the Advisory Committee's 1989 Report (see Appendix B) as well as changes made to this Report as announced by the Department of Education in the May 22, 1990 release of Education Nova Scotia. This summary, however, was prepared prior to additional changes made to the PSP recommendations announced by the Department of Education in the January 5, 1993, issue of Education Nova Scotia. This tape-recorded interview with Mr. LeBlanc took place in his office at the Department of Education.

After reviewing the goal of my research, Mr. LeBlanc outlined five additional concerns that the Department of Education had regarding the impact of the PSP proposals on rural high schools in Lunenburg and Queens Counties.

1. Because the PSP recommendations are linked very closely to the CORE proposals, how will this affect small schools' scheduling processes?
2. How do these proposals affect educators' desire or lack of desire to offer courses at varying levels (i.e. tracking)?
3. Are the financial implications to implement PSP proposals for small schools different from larger schools?
4. Is it possible to have better connections among different disciplines at the small schools doing PSP programs (programs which are based on a set of common set of psychological principles) than the larger schools?
5. Does the retraining of teachers to teach new PSP courses provide special problems for rural educators? Specifically, will the school board and school administrators provide adequate support to ensure that teachers will have sufficient background to teach the courses well?

I then inquired about the CORE Program and Related Services for Nova Scotia Schools and how this initiative would impact the senior high school PSP proposals. Although no succinct definition exists for the CORE

Program, what is understood is that the CORE consists of those courses and programs that must be offered by all school boards in Nova Scotia. According to the Report of the Select Committee on Education: Submissions and Recommendations (1992):

The CORE programme recommendations attempt to do two things: Broaden the mandatory range of subject matter for all students, i.e. broaden the knowledge base and secondly, to ensure the provision of certain "support" resources -- guidance, library, technology and special education. [sic] (p. 238)

Mr. LeBlanc explained that the compulsory courses [listed as Recommendation 1 of the proposed PSP changes (see Appendix B)] will become part of the CORE program. As the PSP recommendations evolve, so will the CORE program. For example, Integrated Science (SCI-10), expected to be implemented province-wide in September, 1993, was developed to replace the current Physical Science, which will be phased out. Integrated Science- 10 will become part of the CORE and may serve as the one science course that all students must complete in order to graduate (see Appendix B).

After going through each of the recommendations included in the typed summary, Mr. LeBlanc indicated that the information was complete and current. He advised me that the Department of Education was deliberating on the recommendation regarding the nomenclature of senior high school courses and that a decision would be forthcoming.

He also advised that other recommendations or parts of recommendations were under revision and were subject to change.

Arranging Interviews to Gauge Practitioners' In-The-Field
Reactions to the Advisory Committee's Recommendations
Regarding Changes to the Senior High
School PSP

To gauge in-the-field reactions and perceptions of educational practitioners regarding the impact of the proposed PSP, three rural high schools in Lunenburg and Queens Counties were chosen: New Ross Consolidated School and New Germany Rural High School in Lunenburg County, and North Queens Rural High School in Queens County. Superintendents of these respective school boards were contacted in early November, and both agreed to be interviewed for this research.

On Friday, November 6, 1992, I interviewed the Superintendent of Schools for Queens County, Mrs. Grace Beuree. Mr. Norman Johnson, Superintendent of Schools for Lunenburg County, was interviewed on Thursday, December 3, 1992. Except for Mrs. Beuree's earlier interview date, all other interviews were originally scheduled between Tuesday, December 1, 1992 and Friday, December 4, 1992. The interviews set for December 4 at North Queens Rural High School, however, were postponed until Thursday, December 17, 1992 because the principal had to attend a meeting, and the senior high school science teacher was attending an inservice at Park View Education Center.

regarding the new Integrated Science course for grade ten.

To elicit representative responses regarding the PSP proposals from educators at these three schools, the principal, one science teacher, and one social studies teacher from each school, were interviewed. The principals of these schools were notified of this research in mid-November, and interview dates were set. The principals were asked to select one senior high science representative and one senior high social studies representative from their respective staffs to be interviewed for this research. The principals were also told that the research being conducted concerned the recommendations of the 1989 "Report of the Minister's Advisory Committee on the Public School Program" regarding changes to the high school program, and that the interviews would be tape recorded.

On Tuesday, December 1, 1992 and Wednesday, December 2, 1992, I conducted interviews at New Ross Consolidated School, the smallest of the three rural high schools with a senior high school population (grades 10-12) of 80 students. The first interview with Mr. Glen Demone was taped in the upstairs biology/chemistry lab. Mr. Demone teaches all senior high academic chemistry, physics, and biology courses at New Ross Consolidated High School.

The second interview was with the school's principal, Mrs. Patricia Helm. Mrs. Helm indicated that this was her first assignment as a senior high school principal in Nova Scotia having had previous administrative experience in

elementary schools in Lunenburg County, as well as senior high schools in Great Britain. Mrs. Helm indicated that she was not yet completely familiar with the proposed changes to the senior high school PSP, but that she had recently been seeking answers and information from other administrators and school board officials. Despite this admission, Mrs. Helm provided clear and insightful reflections on the recommendations to Nova Scotia's high school PSP.

This interview was conducted downstairs in the resource room, near the elementary classrooms. A few interruptions occurred when the bell rang for classes to change and when the resource teacher could be overheard teaching a student next door.

The final interview with Mr. Luke Fusco, senior high school social studies teacher, was also conducted in the resource room on Wednesday, December 2, 1992. Mr. Fusco teaches the majority of senior high school social studies courses at New Ross Consolidated School including law, history, and geography. Because part of the interview took place over the lunch break, there was some extraneous interference, however, not enough to cause serious disruptions during the interview process.

On Thursday, December 3, 1992, I arrived at New Germany Rural High School at the beginning of a winter snow storm that resulted in school cancellation at noon. This high school has a senior high school population (grades 10-12) of 240 students, the largest of the three

high schools used for this research. Staff and students anticipating school cancellation, seemed much less focussed on the academic matters at hand. Therefore, interviews were conducted amongst a flurry of activities, announcements, and other interruptions. I was prepared to interview the principal of the school, Mr. Chris Lenihan, in his office when he had to take an urgent phone call. He advised me that it might be best to begin another interview and return to his office after its completion. Mr. Lenihan gave me directions to Mr. Roger Demone's room, Social Studies Department Head at NGRHS.

Mr. Demone was teaching a grade seven social studies class when I arrived, and I observed in the back of the room for approximately fifteen minutes until he gave the class a homework assignment to complete. The interview process then began. I set up the tape recorder at the front of the classroom near Mr. Demone's desk. The interview was occasionally interrupted by students who, possibly curious about my presence, disguised this curiosity by asking questions regarding their assignment or about the possibility of school cancellation.

When the period concluded, the interview was not yet complete, and Mr. Demone suggested that we move to the teachers' room while his next class got settled. After approximately ten minutes in the teachers' room, Mr. Demone indicated that he had to return to his classroom, and that I should return at a later date to finish the interview. (The rest of his day was full, and school had

not yet been cancelled).

I returned to Mr. Lenihan's office, when he had just been notified of the school board's decision to close all County schools. Despite this announcement, my interview with Mr. Lenihan progressed without interruption. Because school was cancelled, and students were being dismissed as buses arrived, I returned to Mr. Demone's homeroom class and finished my previous interview.

The final interview at New Germany Rural High School was conducted in the chemistry lab with Mr. Bruce Marshall, senior high physics and chemistry teacher. The atmosphere was calmer and more conducive to conducting a good interview as most students had left the school.

Following these interviews and a treacherous drive from New Germany to Bridgewater, I arrived at the Lunenburg County District School Board Office. Here, I first interviewed Mr. Norman Johnson, Superintendent of Schools for Lunenburg County. The interview was conducted in the Board Room. Mr. Johnson indicated that he had limited knowledge of proposed changes to the PSP, and that all issues regarding curriculum were handled by his Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum Programming, Mr. Lloyd Campbell.

Following this interview with Mr. Johnson, I was fortunate to find Mr. Campbell still in his office, and he agreed to do an unscheduled interview regarding the proposed PSP changes to the senior high school program.

This interview was not originally scheduled as I had

expected to keep the number of interviews with school board personnel consistent with respect to each county. My decision to interview Mr. Llyod Campbell, a curriculum specialist, was to balance the in-depth interview with Mrs. Grace Beuree, Superintendent of Schools for Queens County. Mrs. Beuree, in her previous position as Assistant Director of Curriculum Development for the Department of Education, had served on the Sub-Committee on Alternatives during the formative stages of the PSP proposals, and later chaired the Alternatives Task Force regarding the senior high school PSP.

Arriving in Liverpool on Thursday evening, December 3, 1992, I was notified that the interviews slated for the following day at North Queens Rural High School were cancelled. I contacted Mr. Tom Sheppard, Principal at North Queens, and arranged to have the interviews rescheduled to Thursday, December 17, 1992, the last full school day prior to the Christmas Break.

On this date, I arrived at North Queens Rural High School, one of only two senior high schools in Queens County, with a senior high school population (grades 10-12) of 108 students. My first interview with Mr. Harlie Johnson, junior and senior high school English and social studies teacher, took place in the school's staffroom. Although Mr. Johnson was teaching all English courses and one grade 10 academic biology course in the first semester, his assignment in the next semester was social studies and English.

After finishing Mr. Johnson's interview, I interviewed Mr. Tom Sheppard in his office. Mr. Sheppard informed me at the end of this interview that my interview with the senior high science teacher, Mr. Orval Meisner, would have to be conducted during the lunch break because Mr. Meisner had no other free periods that day.

I returned to North Queens at 1:20 P.M. and interviewed Mr. Meisner downstairs in the chemistry lab. The interview was briefly interrupted when students returned to their homerooms after lunch hour and when the afternoon announcements were read. To avoid other interruptions, Mr. Meisner suggested that we conclude the interview in the vice-principal's office.

The Interview

The same format was observed for all interviews. While I was preparing the tapes and the recorder for the interview, the interviewee was given a copy of the "Summary of Recommendations" pertaining to Nova Scotia's senior high school PSP. (See Appendix E). The interviewees were advised that if they wished to have the tape paused in order to reread a particular passage more carefully, or to reflect on the contents of a specific recommendation, they could by signaling me to pause the recorder. Prior to the formal interview, I explained to each educator that I was interested in whatever he or she had to say regarding the PSP. I indicated, however, that

I could not offer any explanations or opinions on any of the recommendations.

At the beginning of the interviews, I asked the educators to introduce themselves, to state their positions, and if applicable, what courses they taught. They were then asked if they had any general comments to make regarding the proposed changes to the PSP. After these introductory remarks, I read each of the recommendations pertaining to the PSP in chronological order and asked the interviewees if they had specific comments to make regarding each recommendation. After going through all nine recommendations, the interviewees were asked if they had any concluding comments to make. Conducting the interviews in this way ensured the consistency required to compare the various comments and concerns in the following chapters.

Interests in Conducting Study

I have many interests in this research. First, I graduated from one of the rural high schools used in this research, New Ross Consolidated High School. Secondly, I have taught for six years in one of the smallest school districts in Nova Scotia, Queens District, where there are only two senior high schools- Liverpool Regional High School (grades 10-12), servicing rural and town students in South Queens; and North Queens Rural High School (grades 7- 12), servicing rural students in North Queens.

Thirdly, I am interested in how educational services are delivered to students in rural communities often located several kilometres from district school boards. Finally, I am interested to see if rural concerns regarding educational reform were addressed by the Advisory Committee in their "Report of the Advisory Committee on the Public School Program," 1989. (See Appendix B).

Another interest developed as I was conducting my research at the Nova Scotia Department of Education. When examining the 1991-1992 Directory of Public Schools in Operation, I discovered that of the ninety senior high schools in Nova Scotia, forty-five, (50%) had a senior high school population (grades 10- 12) under 250, the number that I arbitrarily chose in my study to classify as a small high school. The comments and concerns found in the next chapter, therefore, may be representative of other high schools in the province. This would be an area of further study.

CHAPTER THREE: PERCEPTIONS OF RURAL EDUCATORSGeneral Comments

I began each interview by asking educators if they had any general comments to make regarding the proposed changes to Nova Scotia's high school PSP. Ten of the twelve educators made introductory remarks. Three commented on several of the recommendations, while seven narrowed in on specific concerns.

The remarks ranged from general approval of the guiding philosophy behind the proposals to outrage toward specific recommendations. Between these extremes were more frequent remarks of frustration, fear of a hidden political agenda, and confusion. Although the extent of confusion varied, it was mentioned as a problem by five of the ten educators who made introductory comments.

One interviewee saw the recommendations to the senior high school PSP as a way of closing an apparent "credibility gap." This educator suggested that there was a genuine concern expressed by parents that their children were not reaping all possible benefits from the existing high school curriculum, and that since the intent of the senior high PSP proposals appeared to be a "get back to basics" approach, this would ensure that all students had equal accessibility to all courses. This educator indicated that "what is communicated through the new PSP is that each student will now have a basic and broad education." This educator also supported that is

considered a basic objective of the PSP recommendations: "to give kids a broad-based, well-rounded, participatory type of education and to foster excitement about learning so that learning will become a full-time endeavor."

This blanket support of the senior high school PSP recommendations was, however, expressed by only one of the ten interviewees who made introductory remarks. Two interviewees gave approval to certain aspects of the PSP proposals: the irrelevancy of having two-levels of courses, making high school less of a tracking process and more of an academic process, and incorporating methods and approaches used in elementary schools into senior high schools.

One of these two educators commented that "within a streamed system, kids often opt for the easiest stream there is. Such proposals (i.e. PSP recommendations) would generate more challenge for students." Another interviewee, who once believed that two-leveled courses (i.e. academic and general) were useful when there were job opportunities for students regardless of which track they followed, no longer saw a need for tracking. This educator felt that streaming in today's fiercely competitive society is detrimental to students enrolled in general courses who often find it difficult to secure employment or gain acceptance at community colleges after senior matriculation. This educator indicated that PSP changes at the high school level might help to alleviate this problem.

Four interviewees expressed concern in the introductory remarks that there might be a hidden political agenda behind the PSP proposals. These educators felt that the intent of the PSP was to reduce the number of courses being offered in Nova Scotia's high schools which would in turn lead to a further reduction of teachers. Specific reference was made to the cuts in general programs at the senior high school level (grade 10 Physical Science and grade 10 General Biology, for example). Although one educator remarked that many of these courses "may have run their time span," he added that others are extremely valuable, especially considering the number of students falling within the "general spectrum" who will not be successful in an integrated system.

This concern was echoed by another educator who speculated "that many of these students (general) will become frustrated in de-streamed classes and consequently drop out of school." In addition, this educator indicated that there was a real inequality of resources in rural areas to assist students forced into an integrated system. Resources at one school have been cut back so drastically that if teachers are faced with integrated classes, "they will not have the necessary support data, the information, or the skills to help general students achieve in any form of successful manner."

The most frequent introductory comments were remarks of confusion. While one interviewee stated that he had

more questions than comments about the PSP proposals to the senior high school curriculum, and that he was still awaiting proper guidance as to how best implement the proposed changes, the other interviewees indicated more specific areas from which their confusion originated.

One interviewee was confused about the relationship between the CORE Program and Related Services for Nova Scotia Schools (beginning with the 1993-1994 school year) and the PSP recommendations. Two other interviewees indicated how difficult it was to prepare for change when implementation dates for various recommendations were always changing. The problems resulting from these changes pose a special concern for small rural schools, especially with regard to staffing considerations and course offerings.

What was particularly frustrating for one interviewee was an answer received regarding the current status of the PSP from the Minister of Education, Mr. Guy LeBlanc, last October, 1992, when the Minister was touring the province's schools. The reply to the interviewee's question was that the proposed changes to the senior high school PSP were currently under review, that eighteen courses were currently being piloted, and that there would be more announcements in "the immediate future." This educator concluded that things were not yet settled, particularly with regard to implementation dates.

Two additional areas with which interviewees expressed confusion concerned the "A" ("academic") and "P"

("preparatory") designations that may or may not be a part of the nomenclature of new courses [this issue will be further discussed with recommendation five (a)]; and confusion as to how these new courses will be evaluated, and whether this issue had at all been considered by Department of Education representatives.

Four interviewees commented on the most controversial issue of the PSP proposals- the de-streaming of students that would result in students with wider abilities in every class. [This issue will be further analyzed in the discussion of recommendation five (c).] One educator, summed up the issue in this way:

The greatest significance of PSP changes has to do with de-streaming or integration of instruction at the secondary high school level which is a major departure from our traditional way of segregating or streaming our students into academic or alternative kinds of courses. This will cause us the greatest amount of difficulty and will create the most change for our students and teachers.

One educator who made reference to de-streaming in the introductory remarks, although philosophically in favour of the process, pointed out a possible reason for many educator's disapproval: "lack of adequate and meaningful inservicing offered to teachers." This interviewee maintained that many teaching staffs at this time are not yet ready for such integrated programs basically because teachers have not "bought into the philosophy" of the PSP recommendations:

To run integrated programs, you really need a teacher who buys into the philosophy of the PSP and who is at the top of his or her skills. The problem is that currently there are skilled teachers but not too many who buy into the philosophy. This is evident at inservicas from superintendents down to principals and teachers.

Two interviewees expressed strong disapproval of de-streaming, one of whom stated that if the intent of the PSP recommendations is to "get rid of streaming completely, then I'm not in agreement with it because I don't think it will be very efficient." The other interviewee was extremely frustrated with this issue. He felt that de-streaming would only exacerbate an existing problem: a wide ability range of students already enrolled in his academic courses. He admitted being perplexed at how to deal with an even wider ability range in larger classes.

What makes de-streaming additionally frustrating to this interviewee are the numerous reports, editorials, and statements about teachers graduating illiterate students who cannot function in society, and students who cannot handle university level courses. This educator's obvious frustration is clear in this statement: "How much more can they throw on my plate and ask me to deal with?"

Two interviewees commented in the introductory remarks on the inadequate recognition given to science and technology in the PSP proposals. [This issue will be further discussed with recommendation one (a)]. Both

educators were disappointed to see only one compulsory high school science course in the entire proposed high school PSP, especially in light of increasing emphasis placed upon technological development in today's information-based society. One interviewee pointed out how difficult it will be to maintain our current standard of living and our competitive edge in a global society if so little attention is placed on science at the senior high school level.

The other interviewee accused the Department of Education of taking too many "short cuts" in its treatment of the sciences. He explained how there is need for

... a general science program to be offered that would allow all students to have a basis for making intelligent decisions in matters dealing with science. Maybe the program proposed at the grade 10 level is a little too academic for some students. Maybe there's room for a new consumer science course, a practical science course.

PSP Recommendation 1

The first of nine recommendations proposes to increase the number of compulsory credits to ten by the 1996-1997 school year. (See Appendix E). Until 1989, there were only four compulsories existed at the senior high school level: three English Language Arts courses (one from each grade level), and one Canadian content course. In 1990, the number of compulsories changed to

seven. One mathematics, one science, and two social studies courses became compulsory in addition to the three English Language Arts courses. The Canadian content course was no longer compulsory, "since it is now considered extensively in the upper elementary and junior high grades." (Advisory Committee, 1989, p. 7). The final stage of this recommendation is slated to be implemented by the 1996-1997 school year at which time one French Language Arts, one fine arts, and two one-half credit courses in independent living skills and physically active lifestyles will join the existing compulsories.

Subsection (b) recommends that "school boards be allowed up to five years to permit the resources to be assembled for full implementation of the compulsory French, fine arts, independent living skills, and physically active lifestyles credits." Subsection (c) pertains specifically to Acadian schools in the province of Nova Scotia and is, therefore, non-applicable to this research, and subsection (d) commented on the role of business education in the senior high school PSP. (See Appendix E).

Eight of the twelve educators were generally in favour of increasing the number of compulsory courses to ten, although there was not total agreement as to what these ten should be. One interviewee stated "that if our goal as educators is to prepare students for a complex world, then the ten compulsories are adequate." This view was supported by another interviewee who felt that since

universities are requiring a broader background knowledge from students whom they accept, this recommendation will help serve this end.

Two interviewees favoured the increase in compulsories because they felt students had too much choice in the past, and often "students don't know what is better for them in the long run." Both interviewees felt that there was still room enough for choice within the eighteen credits, and that the ten compulsories would help establish a foundation for all students.

Another interviewee was indifferent toward the ten selected compulsories, stating that since one of the primary goals of education should be to teach students how to access information about the courses they are studying, any course could have become part of the ten compulsories. This educator also stated that the compulsories would make no difference to 95% of the students in Lunenburg County whose regular programs already include most of these compulsories.

One interviewee's preference would have been fewer compulsories based on the argument that a higher number of compulsory courses limits students' choices of the types of programs they could build on their own. This view regarding the loss of flexibility was shared by two other interviewees, one of whom referred to the number of compulsories as a "defined and rigid system." How the courses are currently set up at one of the high schools used for this research is that if any students express an

interest in science, they would be able to take all science courses offered at the school from grade ten onward. However, with an increased number of compulsories to be timetabled, these students might no longer have this choice.

The first recommendation was most strongly criticized by an interviewee who regarded the ten compulsory courses as being superficial and unrelated. The major criticism was that because the compulsories appear merely "bite size" courses rather than continuous programs that would provide more challenge to students, a common perception exists among students that once the content of a course has been delivered and an examination written, the course can then be forgotten. Although this interviewee acknowledged that breadth of knowledge is important, when considering the number and range of compulsories that students are expected to complete, "one then asks if these courses are too shallow."

French as a Compulsory Credit

Of the ten compulsory courses listed, the one that received most comment (eight of twelve interviewees) was French. Much of the controversy surrounding French as a compulsory credit originates from the conflicting messages coming from the Department of Education and the Minister of Education, Mr. Guy LeBlanc. According to one interviewee, while the Department of Education has always

maintained that at least one French course will be required of Nova Scotia graduates at the senior high school level by the 1996-1997 school year, the Minister of Education was giving the opposite impression to Nova Scotians during his visitations last autumn to school districts across the province.

Only one educator agreed with the inclusion of French as a compulsory credit, maintaining that "we're at the point in Canada where at least a minimal level of French should be expected from our students." Other interviewees viewed the French compulsory from the viewpoint of their rural students and the existing attitudes toward French within their communities. As one interviewee commented, "Especially in rural schools, there exists a real feeling among community members that French is not a relevant subject." (Similar comments were made by two other educators). Another interviewee added that educators' hands are bound when there is little or no support at home for taking French at the senior high school level.

What further intensifies this problem is that many parents are presently demanding that their children be taken out of French classes at the junior high school level (learning disabilities were mentioned as the main reason for this) and placed in resource programs. This creates an interesting scenario if French is kept as a compulsory, as one educator pointed out: "How will these students be expected to take a senior high school French course without a junior high background? What kind of

program would be offered in grade ten to ensure that these students would graduate?"

Another interviewee echoed these concerns and estimated that 10- 20% of students might not be able to graduate if required to complete a compulsory French course at the high school level. This educator was not in favour of offering a "watered-down" French course to serve this end as this would defeat the purpose of offering such a credit. A possible solution to this problem, however, was offered by another interviewee who suggested that a course in French culture be offered as an alternative to French language.

One educator, concerned about the financial implications of a French credit, asked who would provide the money to hire extra French teachers at the senior high school level. An additional concern was, "How can we have French offered as a compulsory course when at the elementary levels where students should be receiving a foundation in the language, there are no French specialists?" One interviewee felt that whether or not French should be a compulsory credit might be viewed in this way:

If we are going to be a truly bilingual country, French should be compulsory to grade 10; if, however, we are only paying "lip-service" to the idea of bilingualism, making grade ten French compulsory is unnecessary.

Science and Mathematics as Compulsory Credits

Comments pertaining to compulsory science and math credits were made by seven interviewees. Although two of these educators were glad that at least one science and one mathematics course would be compulsory at the senior high school level, four were appalled that only one science course was compulsory and believed that this recommendation was already outdated in its failure to recognize the world's increasing reliance on science and technology. One science educator was frustrated at what he perceived as the social agenda of the high school PSP recommendations at the detriment of the sciences.

How can I even prepare a student to be even literate in the ways of science and technology processes if they [sic] don't have some background in the sciences and are expected to take only one course? Things have gone the other way. We're slowly switching now into more of a social club. I say that because now there seems to be a sudden increased emphasis in social studies at the detriment of science. Yes, we're in a global society, but in order to compete, we need to know more than where the countries of the world are. We have to be able to deal with these nations in this very competitive market, and science and technology seems [sic] to be lacking from what I see.

These concerns were echoed by another educator who, despite favouring the social studies compulsories, felt that the ratio of these compulsories (two) to the one science compulsory was "completely out of balance," and

that this recommendation was "more like something you'd see out of the seventies." What this educator saw resulting from this recommendation follows:

What I see here is that we're going to get more lawyers and politicians and fewer technical people and scientists. One problem now is that we have too damned many lawyers and politicians. We need people who can deal with the new technology; therefore, science and math should be emphasized more.

Another concern was that the proposed compulsory would do little to alleviate the poor performance of grade twelve students in science and math areas on Provincial Achievement Tests. One educator felt that since recommendation one proposes that students need only one compulsory science credit from grades ten to twelve, many students would opt for this science course at the grade ten level and enroll in no other science course in later grades. This interviewee commented that if Nova Scotia Achievement Tests are going to continue, then the tests should more accurately reflect what students have studied. Another educator suggested that there should be one compulsory science at every senior high grade level because many jobs in "today's high-tech driven economy are science related." It was felt that senior high school students should be as literate in math and science as they are in language.

Fine Arts as a Compulsory Credit

Six interviewees commented on the inclusion of a fine arts compulsory in the senior high school PSP. Four welcomed this credit, while two questioned its necessity. One educator was particularly pleased with a fine arts compulsory because of a more rigid program that would require increased compulsories. Another educator felt that a fine arts credit recognized the different types of intelligences (linguistic and mathematical intelligences are most often stressed in schools), and that this would benefit students by enriching their overall educational experience.

One interviewee who welcomed the fine arts compulsory was not sure if it would be initiated. The reasons given was that this compulsory was not part of the CORE program. Reference to the fine arts in the CORE document was that such a credit would be further studied and that a "phase-in" (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1992, p. 17) plan would be developed so that all senior high school students would have an opportunity to take a fine arts credit.

Two interviewees did not see the necessity of a fine arts credit. One educator viewed such a compulsory as another restriction placed on student choice; the other stated that a compulsory computer course would be far more beneficial to students. The argument made follows: "I don't think we can export a lot of dancers and singers,

but I think better computer skills would strengthen our position in terms of technology."

Social Studies as Compulsory Credits

Six of the twelve interviewees commented on the two compulsory social studies credits. All educators were pleased that a compulsory global studies course would be offered, although two educators, as mentioned, felt the additional social studies compulsory was at the detriment of an additional science compulsory.

One educator, concerned about students' lack of world history and geography, sees the global studies compulsory as a way to educate students about the world in which they live. Another educator commented on how the October 26, 1992 Referendum on the Charlottetown Accord sadly demonstrated how little Canadian adults knew of their history and cultural identity. This educator felt that "two compulsory social studies credits may help Canadians know more about what they want for their country."

Independent Living Skills and Physically Active Lifestyles as Compulsory Credits

Two educators referred to and welcomed independent living skills and physically active lifestyles as two, one-half credits. One educator felt that students need to be made aware of the importance of daily physical activity

The other felt that a course in independent living

skills would be especially beneficial for those students who are unfortunately forced early in life to become independent (pregnant teens was given as an example). This educator was concerned that neither credit was included in the CORE program and that it would be unfortunate if this component were omitted.

PSP Recommendation 1(b) - Implementation Dates and Special Concerns of Small Rural Schools

Although interviewees felt the recommendation dates listed in subsection one (b) were generally acceptable, some concerns were raised. One educator summed up the majority attitude well:

There's never a perfect cutoff date; there will always be problems. The dates established are reasonable as long as it is realized that when these dates become effective, there may still be some unresolved problems.

Another educator was not seriously concerned about the implementation dates because they were constantly changing. One interviewee even likened these implementation dates to a previous Russian government's "five-year plans." This educator doubted if the Department of Education's plans would be any more successful because of the way bureaucracies operate.

Three interviewees felt insufficient time was spent inservicing staff about the recommended changes. They

were also concerned about the additional finances that would be required to implement the new courses.

Other interviewees were concerned about additional implications of the proposed implementation dates for small school boards and small schools. One educator mentioned planning difficulties common to small school districts, particularly the training or retraining of existing personnel to ensure the availability of qualified professionals to teach the new compulsory courses.

Another educator made specific reference to the difficulties in providing for the fine arts compulsory with current staffing in a small rural school. For example, in one of these rural high schools, there was no qualified person to teach a fine arts course. Although this school has a music room and some resources, there is not a teacher among the junior or senior high staff who could teach music. A credit in drama could not have been provided at the time of this interview because there was no specialist English teacher at the senior high school level. This brings to the fore the quality of educational services if such a course had to be provided.

One interviewee explained how implementation dates of new courses in small rural high schools are largely dependent upon the teaching staff's flexibility. A special problem arises when some teachers are already responsible for the preparation of six or more credit courses. It is impossible to expect such teachers to be specialists in all the fields they teach. Because of

financial considerations, new staff is not an alternative to this dilemma. Therefore, these teachers are required to learn new skills and content in order to deliver new programs. The question of who will finance teachers' retraining for courses that may or may not be supported by CORE in the future is another concern to small schools. For this reason, one school board is not making "radical changes" to accommodate for those courses that are not yet part of the CORE program.

In addition to adjusting to these changes, educators will also be expected to teach students with a wider range of abilities in each of these classes. [This issue will be further examined in recommendation five (c)]. The phasing out of general and open (those courses not considered academic or general) category courses poses yet another concern to many rural educators. One interviewee stated: "It is easy to see the writing on the walls; we are going to lose more staff" (an issue discussed in the introductory remarks). According to one interviewee, this could lead to teacher retraining for many educators whose current positions might become obsolete. This educator hoped that teachers would volunteer to make the transition to teach new courses, and that adequate training and inservicing would be provided by the Department of Education.

Business Education and Other Concerns

Recommendation one (d) of the proposed changes to Nova Scotia's high school PSP calls for a review of the role of business education in Nova Scotia's high schools. (See Appendix E). Three educators commented on this recommendation. One neutral statement confirmed the existence of such a program in one of Queens County's senior high schools, Liverpool Regional High. Two educators, however, spoke of the unnecessary duplication of such a program and that it should only be offered by the Community Colleges.

While one interviewee felt that such a program in high school was not practical enough and has been ineffectively utilized in the past, the other educator felt that offering this program in high school was a complete waste of resources. This educator added, however, that a course in keyboarding should have been part of the compulsories mentioned in recommendation one (a) because of the increased use of computers in the information age. This concern was shared by another educator who felt that such a compulsory computer course would be beneficial in preparing students for future jobs and in making our province more technologically aware and competitive.

One educator expressed concern of a trend occurring in many high schools across Canada- "lining up schools with businesses to help train students for a particular

job or career." This educator's apprehension is expressed in the following statement:

There is a problem of bringing businesses into sponsor schools in terms of computers or whatever. Are we then going to be obligated to change our direction in education so that we focus more on the self-interests that these businesses might have?

PSP Recommendation 2

Recommendation two to Nova Scotia's high school PSP proposes to increase the number of credits required for a Nova Scotia High School Leaving Certificate from sixteen to seventeen, effective September 1993, and to eighteen, effective September, 1996. Section two (b) states that the Department of Education will work closely with school boards to supervise and monitor this requirement. (See Appendix E).

Of the eleven interviewees who commented on this recommendation, two stated that this proposal would be no problem, while nine educators expressed various concerns and questioned its necessity and rationale. One educator stated that 80- 90% of the graduates in his school already have eighteen or more credits. Another suggested that schools might consider semestering to alleviate the problems of returning students who need only one or two more credits to graduate. A semestered system allows students to complete courses in five rather than ten months.

One educator who had reservations regarding this recommendation, did point out in its favour that it would force students to become more serious about their studies. This educator indicated that it has been common for students to "play the system in that even though they may have been enrolled in six credits per year, they knew they could fail two and still receive a Nova Scotia High School Leaving Certificate."

Even though several educators indicated that over 80% of students graduating in Lunenburg and Queens Counties already had eighteen credits, one interviewee was concerned with the types of credits that would become compulsory in 1993 and 1996 respectively. This educator was also concerned about the major staffing adjustments that would have to be made, particularly in small rural schools, in order to offer the outlined compulsories. An example given was that to provide for French as a compulsory course in grade ten, other courses deemed non-compulsory would have to be reduced or eliminated.

One interviewee questioned if this recommendation was a significant change, while two others doubted if increasing the number of compulsories would produce better students. One of these educators questioned the rationale of this recommendation and suggested that its hidden agenda might be to keep provincial unemployment figures down by keeping more students in school for a longer time. The same educator stated that this recommendation would be detrimental to small rural schools because some

of the compulsories (fine arts was given as an example) did not seem suited to the students' needs. This view was shared by another educator.

The most common criticism of this recommendation expressed by six interviewees was that 20% of the students in Lunenburg and Queens Counties, will be adversely affected because they have weaker academic abilities and are already stressed by existing graduation criteria. According to these educators, many of these students will have to complete an extra year of high school in order to graduate with eighteen credits.

Two interviewees commented that many students will become frustrated over the extra time required to complete eighteen credits and will drop out of school before receiving their high school leaving certificate. One educator indicated that many students now struggling to meet the sixteen-credit requirement already return to school an extra year. Increasing the number of credits to eighteen will only aggravate an overcrowding problem at one of the high schools.

Another interviewee felt that this recommendation would have a profoundly negative impact on students who have various learning and social disabilities. In addition to their learning problems, many of these students are being placed into larger classes because of cuts to resource programs and teacher assistants. This educator stressed that quality not quantity should have been the focus of recommendation two.

PSP Recommendation 3

Recommendation three to Nova Scotia's high school PSP proposes a minimum of 120 hours for each full credit course accredited toward a Nova Scotia High School Leaving Certificate. This time frame, however, "would not preclude school boards from offering additional hours, as circumstances permit." (See Appendix E)

While nine of the twelve interviewees stated that their schools already surpassed the 120 hour minimum per credit, two interviewees doubted if the 120 hour minimum was being met in their schools, and felt that the 120 hour minimum should be exceeded. One interviewee was opposed to restrictions created by this recommendation. Other concerns raised with regard to this recommendation were 1) ensuring that the 120 hour minimum is real instructional time; 2) covering a set curriculum within the 120 hour time frame with students who have weak academic skills (largely blamed on social passes given to them in elementary and junior high school); 3) fear that the 120 hour minimum will become the norm; 4) including a provision to this recommendation stating the minimum time that a student must attend class in order to receive credit; and 5) confusion about the wording of the last section of this recommendation.

The two interviewees who were doubtful if the 120 hour minimum was being met in their schools stated that 120 hours of instructional time per credit is very

difficult to achieve in a semestered system, and that often the number of hours that a school states as a minimum is deceiving. These educators stressed that the 120 hours needs to be real classroom time, and that examinations or special events should not be included as part of this time.

One of these two educators stated that the minimum 120 hours should be exceeded for certain courses such as mathematics for science students (presently Math 431 and Math 441), but felt that this would pose numerous scheduling problems if other courses were kept at 120 hours. The second educator reported difficulties at present trying to cover the current chemistry curriculum in just over 120 hours. These educators felt that the overall quality of courses would be improved by offering more hours per credit, so that the courses could be taught in more depth. The two interviewees commented, however, that this would be impossible in a semestered system, especially when teaching some students with weak academic skills who had been given social passes throughout elementary and junior high school. Another educator argued, however, that more content could be covered in a semestered system that is less stressful for students who take fewer courses and for teachers who have fewer preparations.

The one educator, who was strongly opposed to the restrictions of this recommendation, stated:

This is the most ridiculous and stifling of all recommendations. If students are completely capable of completing the credit in fewer hours (maybe even half), why hold them back?... It is skill and knowledge we are hoping to instill in our students, not that they sit for 120 hours in each of their classrooms.

Another interviewee argued that while some students may not require the 120 hours and would benefit instead from some type of individual work, there are other students who require far more than 120 hours of instructional time. Unfortunately, these students suffer most from a 120 hour minimum which this educator feared would become the norm rather than the minimum. He concluded that "the fixation on the number of hours in recommendation three says nothing about the quality of a course and if the number of hours keeps in mind the best interests of the student."

Two interviewees stated this recommendation should include a provision stating the number of hours a student must attend a class in order to receive credit for the course. Both educators were frustrated by students who miss time unnecessarily and who still receive credit for the course. Another educator emphasized, however, that students who are hospitalized for any length of time, but who are still capable of completing assignments, should be exempt from the 120 hour minimum requirement outlined in this recommendation.

Two interviewees were confused about the wording of this recommendation. One of these educators was unclear as to what "additional hours" referred to as well as what the

implications of "additional hours" would be, especially for rural educators whose instructional time is often dependent upon busing schedules. According to this educator, if the intent of this recommendation is to provide additional time after school, this might not be possible for those students who have to travel long distances on buses. Another interviewee criticized the lack of clarity regarding the final portion of this recommendation... "that this [the 120 hour minimum] shall not preclude school boards from offering additional hours as circumstances permit." This educator mused, "to what do these 'circumstances' refer?"

PSP Recommendation 4

Recommendation four to Nova Scotia's high school PSP calls for the Minister of Education to clarify the difference between instructional time and length of the school day to ensure that a minimum of five hours of instructional per day is provided in every senior high school by the 1993-1994 school year. (See Appendix E). All twelve interviewees agreed that there should be a minimum of 300 minutes of instructional time per school day. Most educators added that the schools with which they are associated have always complied with provincial regulations regarding instructional time.

One educator who had given little prior thought to the amount of instructional time stated that if 300

minutes were not currently being offered in his school, it would be almost impossible to lengthen the school day because some students would then be arriving home as late as 5:00 P.M. The problem of lengthening the school day and providing busing services is a particular concern for rural schools that service high school and elementary students. Although increased instructional time would be advantageous for high school students, one educator pointed out that an increased school day offers no advantages to very young children. Another educator asked who would pay for the extra supervision time especially after school and between bus runs. This interviewee was concerned about increased damage to school facilities over the past few years.

Other interviewees indicated, however, that the school day may have to be extended in order to cover a net curriculum and that this was not an unrealistic request for the Department of Education to make. One educator indicated that the amount of instructional time in his school will increase from 300 to 310 minutes by the 1993-1994 school year. Another interviewee cautioned, however, that ensuring 300 minutes of instructional time per day does not guarantee that each student will receive this amount of instruction daily because of time tabling and individual course selections.

One educator was particularly happy that this recommendation specified a minimum amount of instructional time to which all provincial high schools must adhere.

even those that have down-played provincial requirements in the past by including morning and afternoon recesses as part of instructional time. This educator felt that recommendation three will make administrators in all schools be more accountable. Two interviewees believed that the greatest benefit of this recommendation is that each high school administrator in the province must now carefully examine the time allocated for instruction to ensure that his or her students are receiving the quality and quantity of instruction to which they are entitled.

PSP Recommendation 5(a)

The content of recommendation five, divided into three subsections, created more controversy than any of the other recommendations. Some interviewees commented on each segment separately, while others gave a general overview of the implications of this recommendation. The numerous responses ranged from near blanket approval of this recommendation to outrage. This recommendation has generated debates that will be ongoing in Nova Scotia's public high schools for years to come.

Section (a) of recommendation five calls for a change in nomenclature which will result in all classes being considered "academic" with the exception of certain English, French, mathematics, science, and social studies classes which may be designated as "preparatory" and taught at higher levels of abstraction to prepare those

students who might continue their studies beyond high school. One can infer from this recommendation that the descriptor "general," long part of the nomenclature of high school courses taught in Nova Scotia, will become obsolete. (See Appendix E).

Only two educators supported this section of recommendation five. [Their comments are recorded in the discussion of recommendation five (b)]. The majority attitude is best summed up in the following:

This is ridiculous, and is an example to me of a bureaucracy gone wild. Do they [the Department of Education] want two levels of instruction or don't they? If they want them, then what the hell matters what they call them? In my mind, "general" will be changed to "academic," and "academic" to "preparatory." I hope they didn't pay too many people too much money to come up with this.

Although this frustration was not as obvious with other educators, six educators felt that the only thing achieved in section (a) was a semantic exercise in labelling. One educator stated this section contained too much "double talk" and offered no clear rationale as to why a change was necessary. (This educator did indicate, however, that the new labels were more acceptable). Another educator stated that this change was nothing more than "gobbledygook" and remembers the late sixties when the general program was first created. It was believed at this time that 75% of senior high school students would enroll in general-level courses and 25% in academic

classes. What resulted was a reversal of this expectation owing primarily (according to this educator) to the high expectations parents had of their children. This educator felt a similar trend will occur if "academic" and "preparatory" designations are imposed. "`Preparatory' will indicate students' desire to continue their education beyond high school, while the `academic' program will become what the old `general' program was."

One educator felt that recommendation five (a) was inconsistent with the philosophy of proposed PSP changes stating that "if we're going into full de-streaming, this is in conflict with the guiding philosophy." This interviewee argued that there would have been less resistance to the PSP recommendations had the Department of Education resolved such issues before going public. This educator suggested to "scrap" the "A" and "P" designations and to "stick with one course offering for all which can be enriched or adjusted depending on individual needs." This view was supported by another educator who thought that "A" and "P" were merely temporary designations until a single course was designed.

One educator admitted to being completely confused calling recommendation five (a) a "fuzzy recommendation." This confusion grew largely from the unclarity as to whether the "academic" and "preparatory" levels were to be taught separately in two classes or together in one class. Another educator felt that "A" and "P" designations would be unnecessary if all students were in

one class because students would then be grouped according to ability level (even though this is contrary to the idea of integration).

Another question posed was "who will decide who gets what designation?" It was felt that this might be the subject teacher's responsibility. This educator raised an interesting problem that might result if all graduating students were labelled "academic."

If we better educate another group of kids, where are they going? There are no empty spots out there now. There is unfortunately an existing belief that if we offer a higher quality education, there will be more positions available for graduating students, but in reality, the positions aren't there.

Another educator commented that at the time of taping, discussions were ongoing at the Department of Education regarding the fate of the "academic/preparatory" designations. The point made was that since Department officials are yet unclear as to the direction of these designations, it is no wonder educators are so confused.

PSP Recommendation 5 (b)

Recommendation five (b) calls for a simplification of course nomenclature. For example, English 421 which currently represents grade ten academic English, will be replaced by English 10 (followed by the letter "A")

designating "preparatory" or "A," representing "academic," if required). (See Appendix E). Eleven educators commented on this recommendation.

Unlike the other two sections of this recommendation, section (b) was welcomed by six educators who felt that the proposed nomenclature would be a great improvement over the existing system. One interviewee commented that even though the old numerical system did work and was especially effective for students seeking admission to universities, the proposed system is "better and clearer." Another of these six educators commented that the public, especially the business community, has long been seeking a more simplified nomenclature.

Three educators were indifferent to this recommendation. One commented that the nomenclature of courses goes in cycles and that "we are now back to the number ten representing the grade rather than the number two in the current three-numbered code." (For example, English 421 currently represents grade ten academic English). Another educator commented that it didn't really matter what the courses were called, and a third stated that "one system will work as well as another."

Two educators stated that the proposed nomenclature would be more useful if integrated programs were run with different levels (i.e. academic and preparatory). One of these educators was unhappy with the new nomenclature because it provided less information to people outside the school system, particularly employers and those in post-

secondary institutions. What concerned this interviewee was that if the "A" and "P" designations were deleted from the proposed nomenclature:

... the community at large would no longer be able to determine what students have done.... I basically would like to see some type of determination of what these students have been working at and where their directions lie.

PSP Recommendation 5 (c)

This section of recommendation five initiated more controversy than any other recommendation. Section (c) calls for 1) the reduction of current multiple levels within a ten year period (a move toward integration at the senior high school level), and 2) modelling the senior high school experience after the elementary school experience with more emphasis placed on the following: integrating students with various ability levels, increased individualized instruction, and more flexible teaching methods. (See Appendix E).

Two of the twelve interviewees gave "blanket" approval to this recommendation, two gave "lip service" to the ideas but qualified their acceptance, two educators cited advantages and disadvantages of both integrated and segregated school systems, and six educators were opposed to part or all of this recommendation. This opposition ranged from mild disapproval to outrage.

Of the two interviewees who gave blanket approval to

this recommendation, one stated that the controversy surrounding this issue is that "teachers are not grounded in understanding the philosophy of this part of the PSP; rather, they are into comparing this to past practices." This interviewee believed that teachers should "disregard past and current practices and examine the new philosophy with an open mind."

It is hard to make a change when you're still hanging on to what you remember. If you believe in the philosophy, there is only one end product.... People [educators] are reluctant to throw away past practices and become risk takers, perhaps because of personal insecurities. Our personal views and experiences can filter the potential of this philosophy.

In expressing support for the philosophy behind this recommendation, this interviewee emphasized the importance of having only one class with no designations and stressed that educators used to teaching only the top "academic" students will have the most difficulty with integration.

The second educator who welcomed the proposals in recommendation five (c), a high school principal, indicated that this acceptance was not common among his colleagues. This educator also indicated that it is difficult to implement such changes when a teaching staff does not buy into the philosophy of such changes and stressed that it is a mistake to think senior high students are "radically different" from junior high school or elementary students. This administrator's

position was that all students like excitement and teachers who use a variety of methods, such as oral reading, to make lessons interesting.

Two educators who stated that they accepted the philosophy of recommendation five (c) later qualified the extent of this acceptance. One educator stated that this was his favourite recommendation, and he felt that it was a "courageous and revolutionary move, the crux of the matter of the entire PSP proposals." This educator believed that the present senior high school PSP fosters elitism by "keeping 'normal' kids away from the 'elite' students doing honours courses," that the ending of segregation is long overdue at the senior high school level, and that the practice of labelling students as "general," "academic," or "special ed" serves no important use. This educator stressed that several senior high students are considered second-class citizens because of an elitist high school system, and that even though such a system is easier for teachers to focus on streamed groups of students, the question of equality of such educational practices remains. This educator stressed that meaningful inservicing must be provided for teachers to assist them incorporate strategies to help them deal with the new changes introduced in recommendation five (c), and that such changes will not occur on any specific date just because it is written on paper.

After stating support for this section of recommendation five, this educator provided parameters for

this support in the following "word of caution" : "No babies should be thrown out with any bath water; not all segregation and streaming is bad." He felt that people were naive if they took this recommendation literally to mean that all segregation had to end. He cited three examples where integration is either impossible or unnecessary:

1. Integrating students who because of the severity of their handicap are hospitalized for long periods of time;
2. Integrating students into technical science courses such as grade eleven physics that require students to learn highly abstract concepts;
3. Integrating International Baccalaureate students such as those in the IB Program at Park View Education Centre, the largest high school in Lunenburg County, into mainstreamed classes.

When commenting on number two above, this educator stated:

Is it realistic to believe that this teacher [physics] should be expected to teach similar concepts to students who were once considered "general?" Is this the most effective and efficient way we can teach physics to these students?

When commenting on the International Baccalaureate Program at Park View Education Centre, this educator

addressed a self-imposed question: " By offering such courses aren't you keeping elitism alive?" The response was that "an elite type of treatment should be kept alive for students who need it and can handle it." This educator remarked that the IB Program offered at Park View Education Centre has been tremendously successful and has opened all kinds of international doors for students in Lunenburg County, many of whom have gone on to attend such renowned universities as Harvard, Stanford, Oxford, and Cambridge. This educator further commented:

Are you going to tell me that just because we are getting into integration that we'll have to throw all of this out and put these students with a bunch of "not-so-bright" kids and handicapped kids, and with a teacher who has to deal with three groups instead of one? To me, this would be a backward step... To take five (c) to its logical conclusion in my mind, I support integration of students and of programs, and I think we should work as hard as we can as a profession to do both, but I don't think we should throw any babies out with the bath water. I don't think we should be 100% pure in our attempt to do this. We have to use a high degree of common sense.

The second educator agreed in principle to the philosophy of reducing multiple levels, adopting flexible teaching methods, and moving to increased individualized instruction. However, this educator stated that individualized instruction should be separate from classroom instruction, and that it should be offered in another classroom or a seminar room. Like the previous interviewee, he did not completely embrace the idea of

full integration and indicated that he was excited about new enriched social studies programs at his junior/ senior high school due to be implemented by the 1993- 1994 school year. He indicated that grade eleven academic history (currently History 431) will become History 531 (an honours history course).

This educator also commented on the frustration experienced by low-ability students placed in an academic setting.

We have general students now in academic programs, and they're not passing. They stay for maybe five or six weeks and then they leave school.... I'm strongly against this move where you bring a general student into an academic subject area. It never works out, and I see so much of it happening now.

He saw some type of alternative school similar to Nova Scotia's old vocational schools (now serving a Community College network) as ideal settings for many students having problems with current programming. The idea of an alternative school system based on the old vocational school system was shared by another educator who felt that "students could then opt into the courses most appropriate to them." (This issue will be further discussed with recommendation six).

Of the two interviewees who cited advantages and disadvantages of tracking, one felt that the segregated high school system under which most high schools now operate is ineffective because several courses presently

offered do not prepare students for an occupation or for post-secondary study. This educator emphasized, however, that segregation may not be bad, and that "it has to happen somewhere.... I'm not going to play on the same softball team as David Winfield." [Member of the 1993 World Series Champions, The Toronto Blue Jays].

The other educator, after a recent re-examination of the current high school PSP, sees promise in the philosophy behind recommendation five (c), yet continues to see value in an integrated system. He disagrees with those who maintain that students enrolled in general level courses are stigmatized by their peers:

I have yet to find that basically general students here are stereotyped or characterized by being in that course. They are comfortable, and in most cases, they are happy and successful. And in truth, I think that's basically what we are trying to do.

The six interviewees who opposed recommendation five (c) felt that its guiding philosophy was too idealistic and had many short-comings. One of these educators doubted if the Department of Education had the political will to fully implement this recommendation and cautioned that:

If this is going to be implemented, the Department of Education needs to make sure resources such as space, teacher assistants, dollars, administrative support for teachers, and community support are available to implement it. These

resources should come from the Nova Scotia Department of Education, The Nova Scotia Teachers Union, and local school boards.

Three of these educators emphasized the need for financial support, additional personnel, and modified programs to help all students meet their individualized needs. One commented:

Unless all these things happen, it is ridiculous to try this recommendation. I don't think on the broad scale we have the money to make this work across the board.... I think there are going to be a lot of problems with this recommendation.

Four of these six interviewees expressed reservations about adopting elementary teaching methods at the high school level as recommended in five (c). One educator felt the idea was "hogwash." "To say that elementary strategies will be used throughout the system is a 'cop out.'" He believed that as students mature, teachers must adapt their strategies and teaching styles to the learning styles to their students.

Another educator commented that:

If we're saying that our discipline problems and test results are going down over the years as we go through junior and senior high school, and if elementary school students are already taught using these particular methods, it would appear to me that these methods are not working as well as we think they are at the elementary levels. So why in heaven's name would we want to change to a methodology that seems to be contributing to the fact that students are still turning out this way?

A third educator felt that even though teachers continue to teach students basic skills (reading, writing, math, as well as social) at the high school level, what makes high school unique from elementary or junior high is "specialist knowledge." Because content specialists are not as common at lower levels, there is a different emphasis on approaches to curriculum and teaching styles. At each level, teaching methods are adopted to meet the learning styles of the students.

Although the fourth educator felt that it was important for teachers to adapt new teaching styles, he added that if a teacher is successful using the so-called "older methods," and if students are having successes passing the course with continued success in these courses after senior matriculation, then "I don't believe in fixing something that isn't broken."

The most unpopular issue in recommendation five (c) according to these six educators is integration. All six agreed that under an integrated system, teachers' time will become more limited, and they will be less able to serve the needs of students with a wide range of abilities. One of these educators, using mathematics as an example, stated that "randomly choosing thirty students, putting them into an academic math class with one teacher to teach to the needs of all students will simply not work."

Another educator, while agreeing with the idealism of

integration, stated that such a policy works best in an utopia where everyone is equal, but ignores the fact that students are not equal and do not have the same desires and aspirations.

Students themselves recognize that they have different interests, abilities, and desires. A student whose ambition it is to go to university has different needs than a student who wishes to go to trade school. To create this uniform group of students at the high school level within an educational system that is geared to enclose everybody, is just going to miss out on the needs of the two extremes. [That is, the academically-gifted and weaker students].

This educator believes that putting weaker and unmotivated students into what will amount to an academic program when they would be better suited in some type of vocational program will only generate more discipline problems at higher levels.

Another educator believed that if teachers spend more time with slower students in an integrated class while high achievers are allowed to work on their own, "there is an increased risk of losing the middle group of students." He added that small schools, would have no choice with the integration issue, but that large schools, where several classes of the same grade level are possible, would probably still continue streaming even once the proposals to the high school PSP are implemented.

Although one educator admitted that the present segregated system was not perfect, and that some students

"slip through the gaps in a streamed system," he believes that such a system is more efficient and effective. Making specific reference to integration, this educator commented: "For the benefit of a few, we sacrifice the good of many. Sounds like democracy in reverse. I don't think this is the way we ought to be going."

I understand that there are some students who 'slip through the gaps' in our streamed system, but I believe in the end that this streamed system is more efficient. And if it means that this system is less fair to some, then that's a compromise that I would personally be prepared to live with, rather than making it fair for all but not being able to give them [students] what they want.

One of three educators who believed he could do a better job teaching students at the same ability level wondered who would be accountable to the public when it was discovered that children's education was suffering because of integration. This educator doubted if the public was aware of "the profound effect that integration could have on teachers' time." He also wondered if integration was common in other industrialized nations like Japan and Germany, "the so-called technological leaders who are the one's we are trying to catch, if you will, in terms of bringing up our science and math scores." He indicated that if he had more time, he would like to do a literature search on this topic.

Another educator saw problems with evaluation under an integrated system maintaining that it will be

very difficult to judge what a student knows and to justify to society what this student knows. This educator saw integration resulting in "watered-down" courses with students doing less work, and he felt that these less challenging programs would be detrimental to students in that they would be less prepared for employment or placement in post-secondary institutions.

Finally, one of the interviewees who had nothing positive to say about recommendation five (c) stated that "it is a wonderful utopian idea that will probably work as well as communism in the former Soviet Union." For this educator, recommendation five (c) "is the biggest fundamental mistake in the whole change. What you will still have to do is group within the classroom which will be left up to the teachers to decide how to do." This educator also felt that recommendation five (c) was politically motivated, and that its thrust is to save money.

I think they [Department of Education officials] want us to believe that its superior in an educational sense, but I honestly don't believe it. In order to believe this will work, I believe you would have to spend most of your days in the Department of Education's Ivory Tower. I don't know if they're under pressure from the [provincial] government to save money one way or another, and they're simply trying to save face by saying this will work, or if they're really naive enough to believe it.

This interviewee stated that his frustration as a teacher is insignificant to the outrage he feels as a parent whose

children will be going through a system that he believes will be inadequate for them. This educator also doubted if there would be any reduction in tax dollars to compensate for the reduction in quality education that will result from this recommendation.

PSP Recommendation 6

Recommendation six of Nova Scotia's high school PSP calls for the Minister of Education to establish a "task force with the mandate to develop alternatives to enhance the learning opportunities of students entering high school, particularly those who have difficulty meeting the criteria of current program offerings." (See Appendix E).

The thirteen educators who commented on this recommendation can be divided into two groups. The largest group of educators felt that the changes proposed in this recommendation were long overdue in Nova Scotia's provincial high school PSP. Six educators welcomed this recommendation, three commenting that its implementation should be a priority, and that it should be implemented concurrently with recommendation five. They felt, however, that the Department of Education had given no indication that such proposed changes as outlined in recommendation six were urgently required.

One of these three educators felt that recommendation six was "the key to the entire proposed PSP, and that "it would determine the success of recommendation five. If

there are appropriate alternate methods of teaching certain students the required courses, perhaps number five [recommendation five] has hope." This interviewee felt that even though "the mechanical aspects of the PSP [that is , the recommended changes to Nova Scotia's high school PSP] will work, the 'guts' of the philosophy underlying the PSP [proposed changes] will not 'fly' until recommendation number six flies."

Another of the three educators who felt that the implementation of recommendation six should be a priority was "upset" because he felt that nothing more than "lip service" was being provided by the Department of Education and that this recommendation would not be implemented until "two, three, or four years down the road." The immediate concern was that the program outlined in recommendation five will be in place for "85%" of the student population with a "future chance" of something being offered for the remaining "15%." This educator agreed with the previous interviewee that "recommendation five and six must be implemented hand-in-hand."

The third educator in this group felt that "the Department of Education had an obligation to follow up on the recommendations made by the Steering Committee," and that a task force on alternatives should be developed immediately. He felt that the area of alternative education has been "the area of greatest neglect in our educational system for the past decade," and that to fix the "gaps" in this area, a tremendous amount of hard work

and cooperation will be required.

In the second group of five educators, two were confused about this recommendation, one felt it was only strong in theory, and two were cynical. One confused educator stated, "I wish the Department of Education would stop waffling and make a decision as to what exactly is meant by "alternative education." Another educator who found the phraseology of recommendation six ambiguous, asked: "What exactly is meant by "enhancing learning opportunities of students entering high school?"

This educator suspected that this part of recommendation six might require that teachers develop new programs and strategies to teach students with a wider range of abilities in the same class. Even though this educator felt that the idea behind such programs was fine in theory, he felt that such alternatives would do nothing more than place an additional workload on already overburdened educators. These comments were echoed by a high school principal:

Considering the number of courses that teachers already teach, [particularly in small schools], given the changes that are taking place and the new courses that are going to be introduced, to ask teachers to also find the time to learn new strategies and to implement them as well is really expecting a tremendous amount. It is a large enough task now to keep abreast of the information you are trying to impart.

One of the final two educators in this group

commented: "there's a good government solution to solving a problem [that is, creating alternatives to the current high school PSP]- establish a task force." This interviewee felt that if the government were really interested in addressing the issue of alternative education, a task force would be unnecessary. In his opinion, the government would just have to survey provincial teachers who would generate a list of solutions to some of the current educational problems, including the need for alternative education. This educator felt that the call for a provincial task force was "the political way to do things." The second educator agreed that a task force was unnecessary stating that, "task forces have not had great track records in the past."

Referring to a section of this recommendation "to enhance the learning opportunities"- the first of these two educators stated that this passage was "full of jargon.... It reeks of not being able to accomplish anything at all. I don't even know how to interpret what exactly it will end up achieving."

Nine of the twelve educators interviewed had ideas as to what "alternatives" should be provided in the new high school PSP. The most popular suggestion, made by five of these nine educators called for the creation of an alternative school system, one that would provide services similar to those provided by Nova Scotia's previous network of vocational schools. Each of these educators agreed that something had to be done soon for the

"approximately 15%" of the current high school population who "cannot function in regular programs." As one educator stated:

I agree something has to be done. There's a hole in the system right now, and that is for those students for whom high school is not a reasonable alternative. They're not meeting with success, they're becoming a burden on the system, and there's nothing out there to fill the void since vocational schools have become community colleges. If that's what this recommendation means, to find new courses and programs to help these people, then I'm all for it.

Another of these five educators commented that the transition from vocational schools to community colleges brought dramatic changes to the old vocational school system, and that many students, including those with a Nova Scotia High School Leaving Certificate, are now finding it difficult to gain admittance into certain programs. A third educator emphasized that "alternative programs have to be real ones that prepare students not for post-secondary education but rather for work. Society may have to tell community colleges: "No, you cannot teach cosmetology or lower-level carpentry; these are now going to be alternative high-school programs."

Two educators felt that if integration were going to be imposed, extra personnel, including teachers' aids, and curriculum experts would be required, the former to facilitate the delivery of instruction during classroom time, and the latter to suggest ways to modify and then

present the curriculum to a multi-ability group of students. Another educator suggested that the only way to ensure the success of a new high school PSP would be to have better networking among all school levels: elementary, junior high, and senior high. This educator felt that each level of educators should have a better understanding of the other levels.

In order for all this to come about, elementary teachers must know what junior high school is all about, and junior high teachers must know what senior high school is all about. Everybody must be made aware of what the requirements are at the next level. If we're going to implement this program at the senior high level, then there has to be better communication between junior and senior high levels. Then, if problems do arise, they can be dealt with properly with an understanding of each others' curriculums.

One educator felt that the implementation of a new PSP at the high school level provides a perfect opportunity to develop and implement new programs that could be generated through inter-agency cooperation (schools, police, family and children services, and mental health). This educator believes that if these agencies were to network, and share information, better services could be provided for those students who rely on community agencies outside the school. He commented on several situations in the past where the above agencies denied him access to information regarding certain students because the information was considered confidential. This

educator feels that such barriers between agencies should be eliminated.

This educator sees high school as playing an integral role in the creation of inter-agency alternative programs, for those students who cannot cope in the high school environment. He sees such alternative programs as being key to saving those students who decide to leave or who are "kicked out" of school in grades ten, eleven, or twelve because of academic or behavioural problems. This educator stressed that what these students need is "some type of facility within our school system that can provide outdoor education or work-experience programs. There are all kinds of creative alternatives that could be developed with the help of community agencies."

At the time of this interview, Thursday, December 2, 1992, the provincial Minister of Education had just announced ninety million dollars for new school construction. In reference to this announcement, this educator commented: "Recently, the Minister of Education announced ninety million dollars for new school construction. I wish he would have announced eighty million dollars and ten million just for the implementation of recommendation six, and called for inter-agency proposals."

Finally, one educator proposed that school boards have a responsibility to take preventive measures to ensure that students will not reach high school ill-prepared and unable to cope with "the criteria of current

program offerings." This educator felt that it is often students coming from poorer socio-economic backgrounds who fail in our school system, and that often school board policy seems more concerned with "pushing" these students from grade to grade regardless of the knowledge or skills they have mastered. This educator believes that rather than tackling a problem that has been festering for several years, school boards should focus their attention on preventative measures as early as elementary school.

If kids come in from underprivileged backgrounds, you have to catch them up somehow. This can be done with extra help, but extra help is going to cost extra money for computers, smaller class sizes, and more teachers and teachers' assistants. There's no way you can start with a kid who's already behind in grade primary, push him through elementary school regardless of what he learns, let him go through without the skills to do junior high, and then say at the senior high school level, "O.K., now you fit in with everybody else; you are the same age." ... The needs of these kids are not being met, and they'll reach high school not being able to deal with what society expects them to come out of high school knowing.

PSP Recommendation 7

Recommendation seven to Nova Scotia's high school PSP states that "it is recommended that these recommendations be made public, along with the Minister's response." (See Appendix E).

Four interviewees (three senior administrators and one high school principal) commented that this

recommendation had already been implemented and that the more the public knows about such matters, the better. The remaining interviewees, all of whom agreed that the PSP recommendations should be made public, had some reservations about this recommendation and discussed some implications of its implementation.

First, one educator questioned what the word "public" meant. He asked if "public" made reference to all members of society or just those responsible for public education in Nova Scotia. This educator did not remember reading or hearing any major news releases regarding the status of the high school PSP, and this made him wonder about how much society really knew about the significant changes that were being proposed to Nova Scotia's high school PSP. The fear that society was being "kept in the dark" about these recommendations was shared by three other educators.

Although one educator acknowledged that members from the public had given input during the formative stages of these recommendations, he emphasized that further public input is necessary now that these recommendations are beginning to be implemented. He echoed the opinion of another educator who stated that the public, as the largest stakeholder of any provincial curriculum changes, should be concerned for two reasons: First, it provides the tax dollars which funds the research for such curricular proposals; and secondly, it is the public's children who will be the benefactors of changes made to Nova Scotia's high school PSP. This educator concluded

with this ominous remark: "I think the public has a lot at stake here if its expecting something that is going to give their kids an opportunity for meaningful employment."

A concern raised by two educators was that the Department of Education released the recommendations prematurely. They felt that the recommendations should not have been released until they were thoroughly understood by the province's educators. One of these educators stated: "We shouldn't go to anybody until we have our own acts together." The other felt that if educators had better understood the philosophy of the recommendations, they might have made public statements about the strengths rather than the weaknesses of the recommendations.

One educator stated that much of the misinformation so common in society regarding educational issues can be largely attributed to the release of ambiguous documents such as the PSP recommendations. Unfortunately, according to this educator, a misinformed public often makes statements pertaining to educational issues that are based on "half-truths." Another interviewee expanded on this idea by stating that teachers are often the victims of a misinformed public.

When teachers start airing their concerns over the implementation of these recommendations, this can lead to teacher bashing. For example: "Teachers should be doing their jobs better," and "They should be helping students more to pass the courses they are taking."

This educator emphasized that the public should be made aware of:

... the extra resources that teachers will need to implement these recommendations, and the changes that will have to be made regarding discipline; that is, having students of this age [older than what students would traditionally be in grades ten, eleven, and twelve] in school coping with academic subjects that they are perhaps unable to cope with.

PSP Recommendation 8

The eighth recommendation calls for the Minister of Education to "request school boards to develop their projections on implementation of the recommendations and to submit these plans of action through the Inspector of Schools, within six months of the date of adoption of these recommendations." (See Appendix E).

Although all interviewees commented on this recommendation, four stated that this was primarily an administrative concern for school boards. One of these educators stated: "I'm not sure how relevant things done four years ago still are today."

Considering the administrative implications of this recommendation, comments made by the two superintendents and one assistant superintendent (referred to in the following as administrators) will be looked at separately. A "substantive issue" on which one administrator commented was, "How do you get your teachers to change their

teaching styles into something more involving?" This administrator felt that it "may take a generation of teachers to effect change."

Another administrator was frustrated at the numerous forms that had to be filled out at Central Office and forwarded to the Department of Education. This educator commented:

There appears to be so many gaps in this whole policy that I don't know how legitimate the forms are that we have already sent in. . . . The mechanics of the policy are in place, but what does this tell you? Not too much I think.

The third administrator commented on how important it was for senior administrators to provide reliable and accurate advice to school board members when planning for such projections. This educator felt that because "school board members are a group of lay people who have jobs or occupations, they do not have time to read professional, educational journals, and they have to rely on staff (senior administrators) for the kinds of projections that will be needed." This administrator emphasized that long range and continuous planning is necessary to ensure that school boards are ready when the time comes to implement the recommendations.

Three other educators stressed the importance of planning especially with regard to book orders for new courses, which two educators commented could be a "financial burden" for small, rural schools.

One educator indicated another implication that this recommendation has for small schools:

We can probably put into place everything that will be needed although some courses will have to be offered in alternate years. Although we can't offer every course every year, it will be possible for students to get their required courses during their three years in senior high school.

This educator hoped that school board officials would consider the special problems small schools have when scheduling courses to ensure that students will have the required number of courses when they graduate as well as the required number of compulsory credits.

Finally, in reference to recommendation eight, one educator replied:

The Department of Education can ask school boards to request anything, but if its going to cost money, I don't think they're [the Department of Education] planning to foot any bills; maybe they've designed the changes so that in fact they will try to save money.

This educator indicated that many of the changes to be made at his school, such as offering new courses, will run into substantial costs, even if some teaching positions are eliminated. He explained how last year when one teaching position was cut from his school, six courses had to be eliminated. This educator stressed that the fear of teacher cuts and the further reduction of courses

are other special concerns unique to small schools that must be addressed when school board projections are made.

PSP Recommendation 9

The ninth and final recommendation to Nova Scotia's high school PSP calls for "assistance to and continuing communication by the Department of Education with all responsible for effecting these changes." (See Appendix E). While all interviewees agreed that this recommendation was important, all but two doubted the Department's sincerity to carry it out. Specifically, these educators disapproved of the "top-down" communication approach which they felt the Department of Education would use to "force through" the other recommendations.

One of the two interviewees who praised efforts made by the Department of Education stated that he was appreciative of the useful information regarding new programs sent to him from the Department. In particular, this educator mentioned Mr. John Stone, Social Studies Consultant for the Department of Education, as being helpful in advising about "the best social studies textbooks on the market as well as the most current trends in education."

The second interviewee who praised the Department's efforts acknowledged the work done by Gail McLean, Consultant, Teaching Effectiveness, Department of

Education, who has been inservicing senior high school teachers around the province on how to broaden their repertoire of teaching methods and styles. This educator was also pleased that the Department of Education would be sponsoring workshops in early December (1992) to prepare science teachers for the new grade ten integrated science program due to be implemented by the 1993- 1994 school year. In response to the self-imposed question, "Is this enough?" [that is, support from the Department of Education], this educator responded: "Is anything ever enough?"

In contrast to this praise is the following viewpoint which represents the opinion expressed by three educators:

I think their [Department of Education] idea of communication is telling everybody else what they want done. I honestly wonder if the majority of teachers in Nova Scotia are pleased with what they [Department of Education] are trying to do?... If the majority of teachers really do have legitimate concerns with these changes, then I guess the communication process hasn't been too effective. I think that their idea of communication is that they tell us what to do, and we just go ahead and do it. That's not communication.

As an example of how the Department of Education "communicates," this educator explained how the Science Plus Junior High Program was implemented at his school with little inservicing support from the Department of Education. In addition, inadequate facilities and insufficient equipment at this school made it difficult to

implement the program. This educator felt that the PSP recommendations will be implemented in "a similar fashion." Another interviewee explained how a breakdown in the communication process between the Department of Education and provincial teachers has resulted in the following situation:

Right now new programs are being introduced, but there are some teachers who are unaware of them; we do not know everything we should. Often, I make comments on the very limited knowledge I have about what is going on. It is important for teachers to know what is going to be implemented, how new courses will be implemented, and what exactly will be expected from us.

One educator described the approach taken by the Department of Education with regard to policy changes in the following way: "I think in some sense we [educators] are always fighting in the dark with an unseen enemy. I'm not sure if we're necessarily working hand-in-hand a lot of times." Although this educator admitted that part of the problem might originate from teachers' determination to guard the things they do not want changed, he explained that this resistance to change is often the result of a one-way communication process: from the Department of Education down to teachers. This educator expressed the opinion of five other interviewees when he emphasized that more input must come from teachers up to the Department of Education, and that representatives at the Department have an obligation to act on the information they receive from educators.

One educator felt that because so much of what happens with education is dealt with in "the political realm," communication will never be effective and efficient. He stressed that "it is a shame to waste the expertise of master teachers in Nova Scotia," and that "one should not merely have to work at the Department of Education to be anointed." Similar imagery was used by another educator who stated: "Sitting in an ivory tower with no students around, all PSP recommendations sound perfectly feasible."

Finally, of the two educators who felt that other "shareholders" have been left out of the communication process, (see the discussion on PSP recommendation eight), one interviewee hoped that the Nova Scotia Teachers Union would renew its strategic position as a key player in the communication process after having withdrawn much of its support in reaction to Bill 160, "The Act Respecting Compensation Restraint in the Public Sector" imposed on May 14, 1991.

I understand now that they're [the Nova Scotia Teachers Union] backing off because they feel the government [provincial] stabbed them in the back when it cancelled their [teachers'] contract without consulting them. Although I agree that it wasn't right, neither do two wrongs make a right. I hope that in the future the union and teachers in the union have lots of direct input into these changes and that its not the special interest groups who start to take over and direct policy through the Department of Education. Teachers should be the only special interest group because they are best informed on educational matters.

Interviewees' Concluding Comments on PSP Recommendations

Before ending the interviews, I asked educators if they had any closing remarks to make regarding the Advisory Committee's report on the senior high school PSP. Eleven interviewees made remarks.

Three of these educators accepted the PSP challenges, but mentioned no particular strengths of the proposed program. One interviewee commented, "If the PSP is the direction, then let's roll up our sleeves and get on with it." What this educator objected to was that what appears to be the direction one year, changes the next, and sometimes this change occurs "mid-stream." This sentiment was also mentioned by one educator who opposed the PSP changes.

The second educator, stating general support of the PSP recommendations concluded, "I hope the political scenario will support these recommendations by providing adequate funding for the many changes." This educator also believed in the Department of Education's sincerity to act on the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee.

The third educator specified that what he liked most about the new proposed PSP was the new emphasis placed on global studies (global history and global geography). This interviewee felt that these courses should have been implemented "a long time ago," and stated that, "We shouldn't be thinking of isolated communities; we should be thinking globally."

One educator, stated that even though the Advisory Committee's report was nothing more than "a patch," the PSP initiative was " a meaningful exercise in that we should always be examining what is going on in our public school system." This educator indicated, however, that much of the work accomplished by the Advisory Committee was redundant:

Some of the dust should be blown off "The Graham Commission" that was done in the 70's because several of the recommendations found by the recent Select Committee On Education as it went around the province were already reported in "The Graham Commission."

Of the seven educators who expressed particular problems or concerns they had regarding the PSP recommendations, five re-emphasized their disapproval of integration at the senior high school level. All five felt integration would not work at this level although one educator agreed with integration until the end of junior high school. One of these five educators felt that increased discipline problems would be the end result of integration at the high school level. This educator stated:

I know that teachers are going to find this [integration] very difficult. Some teachers may have to put on an armour. It's going to be much more difficult in general, particularly for those teachers already experiencing problems. Some teachers may not enjoy going into such classrooms because of the amount of pressure placed on them by so many different children, who differ emotionally as well as academically.

Another of the seven educators who opposed the PSP recommendations took exception to the entire process of educational reform in Nova Scotia as well as the end result:

I don't really see yet a master plan for education in this province. I see some procedural things, but no long term vision of where exactly education is going in this province. The PSP proposals are a reflection of what is going on everywhere in North America, but I don't see the framework necessary to make these things successful. Maybe we have put the cart before the horse. We still need to determine exactly what kind of education system we need in this province, how much money we are willing to commit to it, and then we can start developing the things that mesh with these particular plans.

This educator felt that the current proposed changes were motivated politically. To help get at the real issues of what is needed in terms of educational reform in Nova Scotia, this educator suggested that a more impartial study be conducted, "not to spite the Department of Education, but rather by the Department of Education in conjunction with schools, universities, and others who might have an idea of a good master plan we could all buy into."

These concerns were shared by another educator who objected to overall changes proposed by the Advisory Committee in their report on the PSP:

I'm not sure if proposed PSP changes address the problems that we see. I'm not a negative

person; I'm quite positive. However, I don't feel proposed changes are great, and this is the first major change I've experienced in my twenty-two years as an educator.

Two of the seven educators opposing the PSP recommendations repeated their objection to the recommendation regarding compulsory credits. One stated that, "The absence of a compulsory computer course is ridiculous."

Another educator who opposed the PSP recommendations called for additional support staff and community volunteers to assist teachers in the classroom. "Currently as a classroom teacher, as one of the guys who mans the trenches, ... I see need for support and help if these programs are to come in."

Finally, one educator referred to a unique problem small rural schools would have during the implementation of new courses and programs:

What is also difficult in a small school is when you have only one teacher per subject there is no support system that can be built into the school for the implementation of new courses. All the workload will fall on the one teacher. In a larger school, it is much easier to implement new courses because you can share the workload and there are more resources.

CHAPTER FOUR: SUMMARIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Major Findings

Rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties interviewed for this research generally agreed with parts of the Advisory Committee's (1989) report: (1) the need for curriculum reform in Nova Scotia, (2) some type of alternative education at the high school level, (3) increasing the number of compulsory credits required to graduate, (4) that each credit course be a minimum of 120 hours, (5) that each school day have 300 minutes of instructional time, and (6) that any changes to the PSP, as long as they are clearly defined, be made public.

All educators indicated at least once during their interviews that curriculum reform was needed at the senior high school level in Nova Scotia. There was a consensus that the present high school curriculum was not meeting the needs of all students, particularly those "pushed" through the school system to the senior high school level where they then met with frustration and failure.

Although there was mention that present "general" level courses might be inadequate, rural educators stressed that tracking was still necessary at the senior high school level to meet the needs of those students who find academic courses too rigorous. Rural educators indicated that some students enrolled in general-level courses are unable to grasp abstract concepts because they

have not acquired the skills necessary to turn academic exercises into meaningful learning experiences.

Nine out of twelve rural educators emphasized the need for some type of alternative education at the senior high school level (see discussion on PSP recommendation six): They were skeptical, however, if this recommendation would receive the priority it warranted. The most frequent suggestion was some type of vocational training for those students unsuccessful in academic programs. Such a "vocational track" would be skills-oriented with an emphasis on working with modern technology.

It was noted that Nova Scotia's present network of community colleges (the old vocational school network), will now usually accept only those students with a high school leaving certificate, and that even this does not guarantee admission into certain programs. Such competition means many students enrolled in general programs have difficulty being accepted at community colleges.

Rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties generally favoured increasing the number of compulsory credits to include more than three Language Arts and one Canadian content course. (There was disagreement, however, regarding the number of compulsories as well as what courses should or should not be made compulsory).

Although some rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties felt that more emphasis should have been placed

on science and technology, especially in this age of information that relies on computer technology, educators generally accepted the new science, mathematics, and social studies compulsories. This approval reflected the NSTU ad hoc committee's (1991) poll that found 67% of surveyed teachers in the province favoured increasing the number of compulsories from four to seven. (p. 10)

However, although eight of the twelve rural educators in this research (67%) agreed with ten compulsories, only 27% of provincial teachers surveyed favoured this number of compulsories. (p. 10)

There was also general agreement among rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties that each credit course be a minimum of 120 hours. Although some educators felt that certain courses should exceed this minimum, they appreciated the problems that would be generated in time scheduling. They indicated that they could accept 120 hours of real instructional time (excluding time set aside for exams and extra-curricular activities). Once again, the viewpoint of educators reflected the NSTU's ad hoc committee's (1991) poll which found 70% of surveyed teachers favoured this recommendation.

Fourth, even though selected rural educators recognized that the 300 minutes of daily instructional time reflected current Department policy, there was unanimous agreement that each senior high school in the province should provide a daily minimum of five hours of

instructional time. Again, this support is reflected in the NSTU's (1991) poll which indicated that 75% of surveyed teachers favoured this recommendation.

Finally, although all the rural educators in this study agreed that any changes to Nova Scotia's Public School Program should be made public (as suggested in recommendation seven), they doubted if this would be successfully handled by the Department of Education because of what was perceived as improper handling of the Advisory's Committee's (1989) Report.

While most senior administrators indicated that recommendation seven had already been fulfilled with the release of the Advisory Committee's (1989) Report, there was a general feeling among principals and teachers that the public is currently confused and misinformed regarding the senior high school PSP. They blamed much of this confusion on frequently announced changes in PSP content and implementation dates since the release of the Advisory Committee's (1989) Report. Rural educators also suggested that ambiguities in particular PSP recommendations should have been recognized and clarified before releasing the Advisory Committee's (1989) Report. Rural educators maintained that more opportunities should have been provided for public input throughout all stages of the reform process.

Other areas of the Advisory Committee's (1989) Report on the PSP that drew criticism from selected rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties include:

(1) the inclusion of French as a compulsory credit, (2) making eighteen credits compulsory in order to receive a Nova Scotia High School Leaving Certificate, (3) using the designations "academic" and "preparatory," (4) de-streaming, and (5) the communication and implementation processes used by the Department of Education.

There was little support among rural educators for a French compulsory. Most educators suggested that this reflected a prevailing rural attitude that French is not a relevant subject.

Eighty-two percent of selected rural educators who commented on recommendation two questioned the necessity of increasing the number of compulsories from sixteen to eighteen by the 1996-1997 school year. This percentage more than doubled the provincial percentage of 40% reported by the NSTU ad hoc committee's (1991) poll.

(p. 9) Although this poll indicated that the majority of respondents (43%) favoured increasing the number of compulsories to eighteen, it also reported a very high percentage of uncertainty, (17%). (p. 9) All educators opposed to this recommendation indicated that approximately 20% of the student population, who already find existing graduation criteria challenging, would require an extra year of school to meet the new criteria.

Rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties were generally opposed to recommendation five (a) which called for a re-labelling of courses as either "academic" or "preparatory." Educators felt that this exercise in

semantics would result in no real change: "General" level courses would become "academic," and "academic" courses would become "preparatory." Only two (16.7%) rural educators agreed with this recommendation compared to 27% of the provincial educators polled for the 1991 NSTU survey. (p. 11)

Part of recommendation five (c), the issue of de-streaming, or the movement toward a "single-track," was the most controversial issue of PSP recommendations. Although two rural educators welcomed this recommendation, and two others gave "lip-service" to this concept, the mainstreaming, of students with mixed abilities in a single class, was viewed by the majority of rural educators as an utopian idea that was basically unworkable at the senior high school level. These educators outlined concerns they had about mainstreaming at the senior high school level:

- Larger classes;
- Increased discipline problems;
- Increased demands on teachers' time resulting in lower quality of instruction;
- Lower teacher/ student expectations;
- Less challenging programs;
- Evaluation problems;
- Public dissatisfaction.

There was also a strong reaction from provincial educators regarding integration at the senior high school

level as reflected in the NSTU ad hoc's committee (1991) poll. Only 8% of provincial educators surveyed favoured a single-track school system within a ten-year period. Eighty-three percent of provincial educators were opposed to this recommendation. (p. 12)

Ten (83%) of selected rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties felt that there was poor communication between the Nova Scotia Department of Education and provincial educators. Several rural educators indicated that directives and policy changes are issued by the Department down to teachers, and that such a "top-bottom" communication approach discourages input from professional educators. The end result is that curriculum reform lies primarily in the hands of Department of Education bureaucrats.

As another illustration of the inadequate communication network, most rural educators indicated at least once during their interviews that they were still confused about part or parts of the PSP recommendations. Some rural educators were frustrated with the entire curriculum reform process and felt that curriculum reform to Nova Scotia's high school PSP was primarily motivated by a hidden political agenda to save money. These educators felt that mainstreaming would result in fewer courses, larger class sizes, and ultimately, fewer teachers.

Addressing Concerns Expressed by the Department of
Education

During my interviews with Mr. Bob LeBlanc on July 15, 1992 and October 30, 1992, he outlined specific concerns that the Department of Education had regarding the proposed PSP and its impact on small rural schools. This section will deal with some of these concerns based on information obtained from the interviews with twelve rural educators from Lunenburg and Queens Counties.

Concern 1. Will the implementation design pose specific problems for rural schools?

Educators did outline problems that small rural schools would have implementing the PSP recommendations. Most problems originated from the first recommendation that outlined the new compulsory courses. For rural schools that have only one subject specialist at the high school level, the implications are numerous. First, the subject specialists will be responsible to teach any new compulsory credit courses in their discipline. These courses will require additional preparation and marking time for rural educators. It was not uncommon in this research to find some rural educators already responsible for six or more lesson preparations. Secondly, specialist departments, uncommon in small rural schools, means feedback as to how well a new course is progressing will be inadequate.

Another problem unique to small schools is that certain credits, presently offered as electives, will have to be eliminated to provide for new compulsory courses. One educator was concerned that scheduling new compulsory credits at his school might eliminate the choice that students have had up to this time of taking all science courses from grades ten through to twelve.

Another educator feared that important and popular elective courses might be eliminated when such courses as French and fine arts become compulsory. The point was made that even though such proposed compulsory courses do not reflect the needs of rural students, they would still become graduation criteria.

Concerns were expressed that mainstreaming would be particularly devastating to small rural schools. To some rural educators, the phasing out of "general" and "open" category courses clearly signal larger classes and additional teacher cutbacks. One educator mentioned that the loss of a teaching position during the last school year meant that six courses had to be eliminated.

Another concern, unique to rural schools servicing both elementary and high school students, is ensuring that instructional time guidelines are met within the time frame of the busing schedules. Lengthening the school day for one of the rural schools used in this research could mean that students living in remote rural areas will be arriving home as late as 5:00 P.M.

Concern 2. How will the new courses outlined in the PSP be implemented in small schools?

As alluded to in the first concern, when there is only "one teacher per subject, no support system can be built into the school for the implementation of new courses." As a result, "all the workload will fall on the one teacher."

Another concern for one high school regarding implementation was that it would be impossible to offer every compulsory credit outlined in recommendation one every school year. Therefore, to ensure that students complete all compulsory courses as well as increased number of credits, certain courses will have to be offered in alternate years. One implication of this is a scheduling nightmare since students could be registered in courses at various levels during each year of high school. As indicated, if the number of credits required to graduate increases to eighteen, including ten compulsory credits, popular elective courses may have to be eliminated, creating a rigidly defined high school system.

Concern 3. Does the retraining of teachers to teach new PSP courses provide special problems for rural educators?

It is crucial that small rural schools have adequate time to implement new courses particularly if specialist

teachers (for example, music, fine art, dramatical arts) will be required. Limited operating budgets, however, mean that school boards may have to retrain current staff members to ensure qualified teachers are available to teach the new courses.

One problem with retraining in a small rural school is finding teachers whose present course loads will become obsolete once the PSP recommendations are implemented. This is because each teacher is often responsible for teaching six or more different courses. Administrators would, therefore, prefer if teachers volunteered to be retrained to teach the new courses. One educator emphasized that a staff's flexibility was crucial if the PSP recommendations were to be successfully implemented.

Commenting specifically on the fine arts credit scheduled to become compulsory by the 1996-1997 school year, one educator outlined how the implementation schedule of new courses could create problems for small rural schools. In this educator's school, there is a music room and some resources; however, there is no teacher among the junior or senior high school staff qualified to teach music. This educator also indicated that, at the time of this interview, a drama credit could not be offered because there was no specialist English teacher at the senior high school level. It is obvious, then, that in some small rural schools, many adjustments must be made to accommodate new PSP courses and that these

adjustments will require time and financial support.

Concern 4. Because the PSP recommendations are linked very closely to the CORE proposals, how will this affect small schools' scheduling processes?

As indicated in the last response, how successful small schools will be implementing PSP recommendations will depend on teachers' flexibility as well as financial support to hire new teachers, to retrain current staff, and to provide adequate resources. A related concern was the question of who would finance teachers' retraining for courses that may or may not be supported by the CORE program?

One district superintendent indicated that preparations were being made to provide for the new compulsories, but that because of limited finances, there was no urgency to prepare for PSP courses until they become part of the CORE program. Then, all provincial school boards would be mandated to provide these courses in every senior high school in the province.

Another educator mentioned that constantly changing implementation dates and new PSP announcements make it very difficult for rural educators to prepare in advance for new compulsory courses.

Concern 5. How do these proposals affect educators' desire of lack of desire to offer courses at varying

levels (i.e. tracking)?

None of the six subject teachers interviewed for this research welcomed integration, maintaining that some type of tracking was necessary at the senior high school level. The reasons given for this opposition to integration can be reviewed in the discussion of PSP recommendation five (c) in chapter three. Although these objections to mainstreaming are not new, one rural educator made an interesting comparison about mainstreaming in small and large high schools. According to this educator, because of limited enrollment, small high schools will have no choice with the integration issue and will be forced to teach larger classes of students with wider ability ranges. Some type of streaming, however, will probably still continue in large high schools where there are several classes of the same grade level.

Another educator felt that there was a real inequality of resources in rural areas to assist students forced into an integrated system. In one rural school where resources have been cut back considerably, one educator commented that the required infrastructure to teach integrated courses was not in place. Another educator speculated that students would become frustrated in de-streamed classes and eventually quit high school.

Recommendations

Based on the literature review for this study, and the data collected from selected rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties, this study concludes with six recommendations. This study's findings and recommendations might be significant to other small rural high schools in Nova Scotia. According to Department of Education statistics (1992), 50% of all high schools in Nova Scotia had a senior high (grades ten to twelve) population under 250.

Report's First Recommendation - Improving Communication Network

Widespread confusion and frustration exists among rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties regarding curriculum reform to Nova Scotia's high school PSP. The fear of a hidden political agenda motivating curriculum reform in Nova Scotia, illustrates their alienation from the curriculum reform process. In addition, many rural educators are frustrated with a "top-bottom" communication approach between the Department of Education and the province's educators.

These feelings of frustration and alienation between educators and Department's of Education is not the norm in every province in Canada undergoing curriculum reform. In Saskatchewan, for example, curriculum reform has been very successful, and the process has been supported by

provincial teachers.

The Department of Education should, therefore, adapt a communication strategy that will provide rural educators an opportunity to have an active voice in future curriculum reform in the province. Such a view of curriculum reform would require a collaborative effort particularly on the parts of the Department of Education and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union. If the Union is given an equal voice in the educational reform process, rural educators would have a forum from which to collectively voice their concerns.

Such a communication strategy would provide an opportunity for various stakeholders of education to participate in future committees and task forces formed to review existing curriculum, make recommendations, or study implementation strategies. No particular organization should dominate such committees so that all voices of participating members can be heard. Committees thus formed increase the chances that concerns of particular groups, such as rural educators, will be addressed before any recommendations are made.

Officials responsible for curriculum reform at Nova Scotia's Department of Education might consider "the way in which Saskatchewan is handling curriculum reform, an effort that could serve as a model for all of North America." (McConaghy, 1990, p. 493) In his article, "Curriculum Reform in Saskatchewan" (1990), McConaghy highlights some of the reasons why "Saskatchewan's model

of curriculum reform is an excellent example of the process of collaborative decision making" as well as reasons why Saskatchewan's "teachers are enthusiastic about the curriculum changes." (p. 496).

Saskatchewan's model involved parents as members in the earliest advisory committees. Education policies were formulated only after extensive consultation with organizations connected to schools and teaching, and every household in the province with school-aged children received a copy of a discussion paper on educational reform. Parents were then encouraged to make written submissions, based on information in the discussion paper. Curriculum guides were and continue to be developed as new programs are introduced, and considerable time is spent inservicing teachers and administrators about the new curriculum.

It is therefore recommended that Nova Scotia's Department of Education adopt a communication model of curriculum similar to the model that is meeting with widespread success in Saskatchewan.

Report's Second Recommendation- Providing Adequate Resources for Educational Reform

As reported by the NSTU's ad hoc committee (1991), "it is viewed as highly objectionable that while proposing major changes to the high school, the provincial government embarked on a severe program of restraint." (p. 38) A major concern voiced by many rural educators

was that overall spending cuts have resulted in fewer resource teachers, and teachers' assistants, and cuts to much needed resource programs. Therefore, students who were once receiving resource assistance are being placed in programs with which they are unable to cope.

Several rural educators indicated that the DSP proposals will not work unless extra funding is provided for inservicing, development of curriculum resources, textbooks, and alternative programs to meet the needs of those students who, because of learning disabilities, find the existing curriculum too demanding.

It is therefore recommended that the provincial government, through the Department of Education, provide adequate funding in order to facilitate educational reform in Nova Scotia. It is also recommended that funding be continuous throughout the implementation process and that once curriculum reforms have been implemented, additional funding be provided to ensure the maintenance of various reforms.

Report's Third Recommendation- Reconsidering French as A Compulsory Credit

Rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties expressed numerous reservations regarding a compulsory French credit at the senior high school level. A pragmatic concern was that since French is not compulsory for all students in junior high school, how can it be a compulsory credit at the senior high school level?

Other educators were concerned about those students with learning disabilities, particularly those students who had difficulty learning their native language. Because many parents insist that their children be taken out of French class and placed in a resource program, a French compulsory for these students at the senior high school level could present an obstacle to graduating.

Rural educators were also concerned that little community support exists for a French compulsory, and that many parents give their consent to have their children taken out of French programs at the junior high school level.

In the January 5, 1993 edition of Education Nova Scotia, the Department of Education announced a deferral of the French compulsory, "to ensure that school boards have adequate time to phase in these changes and that appropriate facilities and staff with necessary expertise are available throughout the province." (p. 6) With respect to this deferral that will give the Department of Education time to regularize the junior high French program, it is recommended that the Department of Education clearly delineate the status of French as part of the junior high school curriculum before it implements a French compulsory at the senior high school level.

Fourth Recommendation- Reconsidering Mainstreaming at the Senior High School Level

All rural teachers and some administrators in

Lunenburg and Queens Counties interviewed for this research opposed full integration maintaining that such an idea was "unworkable" at the senior high school level. This opinion is prevalent among provincial educators who "envisage significant difficulties in attempting to meet the varied individual needs of all high school students in a single-track system." (Ad hoc committee, p. 35, 1991)

Consideration must, therefore, be given to the views of professional educators. They are, after all, those who work most closely with students of all abilities. Although research exists outlining the disadvantages of streaming, other research advocates that streaming students by ability level can work. Rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties, as well as educators from across the province, have attested to the success of streamed classes.

The fact that some rural educators acknowledged that certain streamed classes were not adequate in meeting the needs of all senior high school students can not be interpreted as a call for de-streaming and integration. More likely, this could mean that rural educators feel a need to reform certain programs so that the needs of students with all abilities are best met. In fact, "many boards across the province have invested a great deal of time and resources in the development of alternative courses, programs, and services." (Ad hoc committee, p. 36, 1991)

Rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties

suggested numerous alternative programs they would welcome, particularly some type of vocational training programs. It was also suggested that if such alternate programs existed, they would better serve the needs of those students currently enrolled in general-level programs.

It is therefore recommended that the Department of Education provide adequate funding for a viable vocational program at the senior high school level before proceeding with plans to implement mainstreaming into the senior high school PSP.

Report's Fifth Recommendation- A Call for the NSTU to Renew Involvement in Educational Reform Processes

Rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens Counties emphasized that the NSTU should play a key role in educational reform and curriculum development processes. Until the spring of 1991, NSTU members were involved in numerous committees and task forces struck by the Department of Education to examine and make changes to the senior high school PSP. In May, 1991, the provincial government imposed Bill 160, and the NSTU responded by withdrawing its members from provincial committees and task forces.

This reaction came only months after the NSTU's ad hoc committee had recommended in their report (January, 1991), "that the NSTU establish the necessary mechanisms to further elaborate a vision of the future direction of

the high school." (p. 38) One rural educator, while acknowledging that the NSTU was placed in an unfortunate situation by the provincial government, called for the NSTU to renew its involvement in the reform process dealing with the senior high school PSP. Other rural educators indicated that teachers' voices needed to be heard by the Department of Education, and that these voices can best be heard through the NSTU. It is

therefore recommended that the NSTU renew its commitment to any provincial committees or task forces struck by the Department of Education to address educational reform in Nova Scotia.

Report's Sixth Recommendation- Call for the Formation of
an Association of Rural Educators.

A feeling existed among rural educators in Lunenburg and Queens that their concerns were not adequately represented during the review and revision processes to Nova Scotia's high school PSP. Many educators indicated that they were still confused about part or parts of the PSP recommendations. Much of this confusion was blamed on inadequate inservicing, frequent changes to the proposed PSP recommendations, and poor lines of communication between the Department of Education and provincial educators.

One educator commented that teachers in small rural schools, responsible for various disciplines, do not have the opportunity to attend all the inservices that would be

beneficial to them. These teachers must, therefore, receive this inservicing from other educators.

Even though it is a positive sign that the Department of Education is now expressing an interest in rural concerns, the question might be asked as to why rural issues were not priorities during the Advisory Committee's earliest deliberations.

It is therefore recommended that a special committee be formed, in consultation with the NSTU, consisting of rural educators throughout the province, and that this committee be responsible for outlining special concerns and issues pertaining to rural education in Nova Scotia. It is further recommended that representatives from this committee be part of all provincial task forces struck to review or implement changes to Nova Scotia's PSP.

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APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONSRecommendation No. 1

It is recommended that the number of compulsory credits required for Nova Scotia high school graduation be increased from four to ten for English schools and from seven to twelve for Acadian schools, to provide additional content, wider exposure and improved balance as follows:

At Present

3 English (plus 3 French First
Language for Acadian schools)
1 Canadian Studies

Total Compulsory 4

Acadian Schools 7

Recommended

3 English and 1 French Second
Language for English Schools
3 French First Language and 3
English for Acadian Schools

1 Mathematics

1 Science from the following:

Physics

Chemistry

Biology

Physical Science

2 Social Studies,

one from the following:

Geography

History

Economics

and one Global Studies

1 Fine Arts from the following:

Drama

Music

Art

other, as approved

1 Practical and Technical Arts

from the following:

Home Economics

Industrial Arts

Life Skills

Computer Studies

Business Education

(designated courses,

e.g. typing,

word processing)

Physical Education

Career Studies

Health Education

Total Compulsory 10

Acadian Schools 12

Recommendation No. 2

It is recommended that the number of credits required for Nova Scotia high school graduation be increased from sixteen to eighteen.

Recommendation No. 3

It is recommended that the minimum hours for credit for high school graduation be as follows:

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Min. Hours for Credit</u>
English	140
French First Language	140
Mathematics	140
French Second Language	120
English in Acadian Schools	120
Biology	120
Physics	120
Chemistry	120
Physical Science	120
History	120
Geography	120
Economics	120
Global Studies	120
Fine Arts	100
Practical and Technical Arts	100
Electives	100

Recommendation No. 4

It is recommended that the Minister of Education change the current regulations to clarify the difference between instructional time and the length of the school day, and to ensure that a minimum of 300 minutes of instructional time per day is provided in every senior high school.

Recommendation No. 5

(a) It is recommended that most senior high school courses be taught at one level, the "regular" level, and that only the following courses be offered at the "academic" or "honors" levels, indicating a greater breadth and depth of treatment:

English	Chemistry
French First Language	Physical Science
Mathematics	History
French Second Language	Geography
Biology	Economics
Physics	Global Studies

[This recommendation is made on the understanding that Physics and Chemistry would be offered only at the academic or honors levels, while other courses in the above list would be authorized at both the regular and academic (and possibly honors) levels.]

(b) It is further recommended that the following system of identifying senior high school courses be adopted.

- In general, the name of the course would be given in full, followed by a grade designation (10, 11 or 12), followed in turn by "Regular", "Academic", or "Honors" to indicate the level of difficulty. For some courses, an additional explanatory word may be added.

Examples: Biology 10 Regular
 English 12 Academic
 Histoire 10 Académique Immersion

These full names would be used on the high school graduation certificate.

- When a shorter designation of courses is necessary, the course name would be reduced to a three letter code as currently used, which would be followed by the grade level (10, 11 or 12) and by a letter or letters indicating the level of the course and other information as needed. (For examples see page 11.)

The junior high adjusted program is at present designed as a school leaving program, whereas the great majority of these students are now choosing to continue their education into high school.

It was recommended that the Minister consider the format and future development of an alternative developmental program, to meet the needs of students entering high school from the junior high adjusted program.

Recommendation No. 7

It is recommended that the Committee's report be made available, as a discussion paper, to school boards, schools, parents, teachers, educational administrators, the general public, municipalities, universities and other educational institutions.

Recommendation No. 8

The Committee recommends that the changes to be adopted be phased in over an adequate period of time, after consultation with those affected.

Recommended for Future Review and Action

Other related issues brought to the attention of the Committee are stated in the following section with the suggestion that they may be addressed as appropriate in the future through the Advisory Committee, or by referring them for internal consideration by the Department of Education.

- a) Review of the need for a special education high school completion certificate in recognition of the efforts of the special education students who are now attending high school.
- b) Consideration of guidelines for credit to be given for certain out-of-school and employment related experiences such as independent study and research; work experience; and various community based volunteer contributions.
- c) Review of the role and training of guidance counsellors to ensure that they are able to assist fully in the successful implementation of the proposed new credit system.
- d) Consideration of recognition for summer school funding of remedial and study skill courses.
- e) Review of the role of honors courses.
- f) Reconsideration of the intended role of daily physical activity in the high school.
- g) Emphasis to be given to oral communication in the language arts program.
- h) Continuing review of subject content and methodology related to the recommended changes, as part of the established curriculum development procedures of the Department of Education.

APPENDIX B

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC
SCHOOL PROGRAM

effective tool to support their learning both within the school and in their lives outside of school. Many students must develop the necessary skills to permit them to use technology on the job. Overall, students will have to address a number of social issues as a result of the continued expansion of technology. They must be encouraged to develop the ability to make sound judgments on these issues.

To meet changing needs and expectations, the administrative structure of education and the approach to teaching need to be adapted, along with the program, to reflect the changing composition of the high school population, and the heightened expectations of parents, society and students themselves. Teachers and administrators must be helped to acquire new and further knowledge of how students learn. Emphasis on process learning should no longer be confined to the earlier grades but should be considered just as necessary by high school teachers. High school students need to acquire the ability to cope with the information explosion, as well as the self-confidence, decision-making skills, and adaptability to deal with the possibility of multiple job changes, new technologies, and more complex work and leisure time demands. They need to understand how learning and problem solving take place and how they can be facilitated.

The Department of Education, school boards, and teachers each have a vital role in helping students to develop. It is essential that the curriculum be regarded as a means of building learning skills and of fostering individual strengths, and of producing active learners, as well as a means of transmitting knowledge and information which may, in fact, be subject to change in a short time.

Students must continue to be regarded as individuals within the formal structure of school, as has become customary at the elementary level. Their distinctive needs should be recognized and met on an individual basis. There are Nova Scotia school systems, administrators and teachers who are beginning to organize the delivery of education in this fashion, but it must become the practice in all schools in order for students to profit as fully as possible.

It is in this spirit that the Advisory Committee on the Public School Program submits the following recommendations which it hopes are forward-looking and flexible. It is the desire of the Committee that these recommendations may assist all students who wish to

complete a high school education that is practical, individualized, and, above all, fulfilling.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION NO. 1 COMPULSORY CREDITS

- (a) For the purpose of the Nova Scotia High School Completion Certificate, it is recommended that there be 10 compulsory credits:

Compulsory Credits

- 3 English Language Arts
- 1 French Language Arts (Acadian schools - 3 French)
- 1 Mathematics
- 1 Science from:
 - Physics
 - Chemistry
 - Biology
 - Physical Science
- 2 Social Studies:
 - 1 Global Studies
 - 1 from Geography, History, Economics
- 1 Fine Arts from
 - Drama
 - Music
 - Art
- ½ Independent Living Skills
- ½ Physically Active Lifestyles

Total = 10 compulsory credits (Acadian schools = 12)

- (b) It is recommended that school boards be allowed up to five years to permit the resources to be assembled for full implementation of the compulsory French, fine arts, independent living skills and physically active lifestyles credits. Students entering grade 10 in September, 1989* will be required to take 18 credits and to fulfil the compulsory requirements in English, mathematics, social studies and science. Compulsory credits in French, fine arts and independent living skills and physically active lifestyles will be required of students entering grade 10 in September, 1993.

*The Minister has indicated this will not be implemented until 1990. See note on page 1.

- (a) It is further recommended that the high school completion program for students in Acadian schools continue to be reviewed as to the implications and implementation of these changes, with the assistance of a Minister's Comité Avisoire sur l'Éducation, involving representatives of the Acadian community.
- (d) It is recommended that the role of business education be reviewed by the sub-committee on business education of the Advisory Committee on the Public School Program, and that this review be considered at an appropriate time by the standing advisory committee.

Compulsory Credits: Responses to Committee's 1987 Recommendation

The Committee had recommended that the number of compulsory credits required for the Nova Scotia high school completion certificate be increased from 4 to 10 for English schools and from 7 to 12 for Acadian schools to provide additional content, wider exposure and improved balance.

It was recommended that the compulsory credits be 3 English, 1 French, [3 French for Acadian schools], 1 mathematics, 1 science from either physics, chemistry, biology or physical science, 1 social studies from geography, history or economics, plus 1 global studies, 1 fine arts from drama, music, art or other as approved and 1 practical and technical arts from a list of 8 (home economics, industrial arts, life skills, computer studies, business education, physical education, career studies, health education). Canadian studies would no longer be compulsory, since it is now covered extensively in the upper elementary and junior high grades.

The proposed increase in the number of compulsory credits for high school completion met with a favorable reception from the majority of respondents. Most agreed that the present requirement of compulsory subjects (3 English Language Arts, 1 Canadian Studies), is inadequate for the demands of life, employment or higher education upon today's student.

Most of the individual compulsory subjects that had been recommended by the Advisory Committee were also found to be generally acceptable by the majority of respondents, although several found the list of practical and technical arts too long and diverse.

There were requests for certain additional subjects to be made compulsory, or to be

May 3, 1990.

accorded special treatment, as in the case of physical education and health. Some economists teachers and other groups indicated the need to include life skills as a compulsory subject. There were many requests by geology teachers for geology to be included with physics, chemistry, biology and physical science as one of the group of sciences from which a compulsory could be selected. Attention was called to the unique culture, language and related educational needs of Mi'maq native students, and to the special circumstances of new immigrants for whom English or French is not the first language.

There were requests for two compulsory mathematics and/or two sciences, rather than one as recommended. These were seen as increasingly important areas for the workforce in an advanced technological society, or they were perceived by some respondents as being neglected by students.

The recommendations that Canadian studies be replaced by a course in global studies, and that there be a compulsory fine arts credit met with general approval, although some administrators expressed concern about the implications for staffing and facilities of the latter requirement.

In the case of the proposed new requirement in global studies, there were questions about what this would entail, and whether it could include subjects other than social studies. Several respondents requested that it be a new, specifically designed course rather than an adaptation of existing courses.

Some concern was expressed that students with certain learning disabilities could have difficulty in obtaining the French second language credit and teachers of French recommended development of courses designed to meet the needs of those who might have difficulty in language learning. Representatives of the business sector, and of the university community strongly supported the proposed compulsory French credit.

It was noted that the French requirement would have the further effect of making French compulsory for students in grades 7, 8 and 9, which is not presently the case. There was also concern about the difficulty in obtaining enough teachers of French even to meet present needs, and the suggestion was made that additional time would be required to implementing a requirement for French.

The categorization of business education as courses under the practical and technical arts

category, rather than a separate program as it is presently offered in a number of high schools, met with objections from some respondents who pointed out that, particularly in rural areas where there is no vocational program available, high school business education is a useful option that provides students with valuable marketable skills. In addition, there was some concern expressed about accessibility to the business education programs of the new community college system.

Compulsory Credits: Committee Review and Rationale

English Language Arts [recommended in June, 1987 - 3 credits] and
French Language Arts [recommended in June, 1987 - 3 credits for Acadian schools]

There was a unanimity of response regarding the lifelong importance of competent use of language. The Advisory Committee recommends that 3 credits in English Language Arts should be required for the Nova Scotia high school completion certificate. In addition, 3 French language arts credits should be required for the Acadian schools certificate.

French Second Language [recommended in June, 1987 - 1 credit]

The Committee recognizes the difficulty in obtaining enough French language teachers for the immediate implementation of the compulsory French second language credit that it had originally recommended, and it acknowledges that the move to require a high school credit will have the effect of making French compulsory for all students at the grades 7-9 level. However, it reaffirms its view that a knowledge of French is an asset, and sometimes a requirement, in the working and leisure life of Canadians, and to a growing extent on the national political scene.

The Committee obtained and studied further information supplied through the Acadian sub-committee, including statistics on the number of French courses taken by high school students over the past five years. These indicated an increasing number of high school students taking French each year. It is probable, however, that it would present a major challenge to introduce French as a compulsory subject, without providing more time for school boards to obtain the necessary resources, including sufficient teaching staff.

The Advisory Committee therefore concludes that French second language instruction should

be required as a long-term goal of high school education, with one compulsory credit to be phased in as a requirement over a maximum of five years. This initial credit should be regarded as a first step, with future action to be considered after it is fully implemented.

It is accordingly recommended by the Advisory Committee that there should be a requirement for one credit in French second language for the purpose of obtaining the Nova Scotia high school completion certificate.

Mathematics [Recommended in June, 1987 - 1 credit]

In order to obtain the Nova Scotia high school completion certificate, the Advisory Committee had recommended that one credit in mathematics be required. Some respondents stated that at least two compulsory credits should be required in mathematics.

Today's society expects schools to ensure that all students have an opportunity to become mathematically literate, to be capable of extending their learning, have an equal opportunity to learn, and become informed citizens capable of understanding issues in a technological society. Being mathematically literate means that an individual has the ability to explore, to conjecture, and to reason logically, as well as to use a variety of mathematical methods effectively to solve problems. Students need to learn more, and often different, mathematics if they are to function effectively in a world where mathematics is rapidly growing and is extensively being applied in diverse fields.

Under these circumstances, it is again recommended that one credit in mathematics be required in order to obtain the Nova Scotia High School Completion Certificate. It is emphasized that this is the minimum requirement and that students should be encouraged to continue taking additional mathematics courses whenever possible.

It is noted that this will have the further effect of making mathematics compulsory in grade 9.

Science [Recommended in June, 1987 - 1 credit]

Respondents recognized the need to prepare today's high school graduates to live in a complex and ever-changing technological world by providing a strong foundation in science and technology education. It was agreed that

students need also to appreciate the influence that science plays in their lives and in the workplace and that emphasis on science-technology-society interactions should be an important focus for student learning.

The understanding and appreciation of science are essential components of a comprehensive education. Students need to question, explore, wonder about, reflect upon, and strive to solve problems associated with natural phenomena. This stimulates students to probe for reasons why the natural world is structured as it is. Science should be treated as a collection of developing ideas, a way of systematically thinking about the universe and a complex human enterprise.

The ever-increasing influence of science and technology in our society requires that students be given opportunities to develop confidence and competence in the use of technology as an effective tool for life-long learning. The ability to select, manipulate and apply information to new situations is essential to preparing students for the workplace. In addition, students need to practise strategies for creatively applying technology to solving problems and for critically evaluating science and technology innovations and their relationship to basic individual and societal needs.

The Committee had recommended that the choice of a compulsory science be one of physics, chemistry and biology, because these are the foundation of further scientific study, with physical science recommended as an alternative for students who might require a more general understanding of basic scientific principles.

All other sciences, such as geology, would continue to have full recognition as approved credits. It is expected that students will continue to take more than the minimum number of science credits in many cases, and it is recommended that they do so whenever possible.

It is therefore again recommended that one compulsory science credit be required for high school completion from physics, chemistry, biology and physical science. All other sciences currently prescribed as part of the public school program will be recognized for credit as in the past.

Social Studies [Recommended in June, 1987 - 2 credits]

Since Canadian studies are now covered

May 1, 1988

extensively in the elementary and junior high grades, culminating in the new grade 9 Maritime Studies/ Etudes Maritimes program, and since there is a need for a broader outlook at the high school level, the Committee recommended that Canadian studies need no longer be a compulsory requirement for the high school completion certificate. However, it was recommended that there be a compulsory credit in global studies, plus one additional compulsory credit from geography, history or economics.

This recommendation met with general approval, but concerns were voiced by respondents about the nature of the proposed global studies course. The Committee wishes to confirm that this will be confined to designated social studies courses such as world history and world geography, that meet the criteria of expanding the student's knowledge of global issues and concerns, and of fostering awareness of the growing interdependency of nations. Existing social studies courses which qualify as global studies, may be supplemented by newly developed courses.

The Committee accordingly recommends that there should be two compulsory credits in social studies, with one to be selected from geography, history and economics, and one from a designated global studies category.

Fine Arts [Recommended in June, 1987 - 1 credit]

The recommendation of the Advisory Committee was that there be a compulsory fine arts credit to be selected from either drama, music, art, or another as approved.

This recommendation was well received by cultural organizations as well as by parents and educators.

Education in the arts assists us in perceiving, analysing, and interpreting ourselves, our community, our environment and our cultural heritage. The study of the arts provides the opportunity to see the world through the eyes of others. It adds a new dimension to the students' abilities to see the world, perceive problems and take action towards their solution. Art mirrors and influences the human conditions reflecting our origins, our history and our aspirations.

Education in the arts should be an essential part of the development of every child. Participation in art, drama, and music provides a unique mode of experience that

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stimulates creative and intuitive thought while developing the intellect. Arts education assists in perceiving and responding to the environment through the senses. It also helps in achieving self-discipline, experiencing success, and in realizing personal potential. Learning through the arts provides a fuller understanding and enjoyment of life. It also provides opportunities for students to explore careers in the fine arts.

In making the original recommendation for one fine arts credit, the Committee took care to consider the situation of smaller schools with fewer resources, often in areas remote from centres of the arts, and ascertained that they would have the resources to offer drama or some other aspect of arts education. While all questions raised about staffing and facilities have not been addressed, it is believed that the resources possessed by even the smaller schools do provide a starting point and that school boards should be encouraged by the Department of Education to make appropriate provision in their long-term plans for additional opportunities. After reconsidering its original suggestion regarding recognition of extracurricular courses, the Committee did not find this to be feasible at present.

The Committee therefore recommends that there be one compulsory credit in the fine arts, either drama, music, or art, for high school completion.

Practical and Technical Arts [Recommended in June, 1987 - 1 credit]

In the belief that high schools should offer the opportunity to complement the theoretical aspects of education with selected practical/technical offerings, the Committee had recommended the choice of one credit from a list of eight possibilities, including home economics, industrial arts, life skills, computer studies, business education, physical education, career studies and health education.

An objection raised was that business education consists of individual courses, as well as being a distinct program in itself. As such, it is greatly valued by students and employers, and it should be preserved as a diploma program. The Advisory Committee concludes that the business education program should be reviewed separately by a sub-committee comprising the Department of Education consultant in business education and representatives of the standing advisory committee on the public school program.

The place of physical education in the curriculum was queried by many, most of whom felt that high school students should be required to take one credit in physical education. Some respondents also urged that health education should have a special emphasis in the high school curriculum.

The Advisory Committee recognizes that there is a pressing need for Nova Scotia high school students to be more physically active and more physically fit, as confirmed by recent national studies of the health attitudes and behaviors of young Canadians.

The Committee also accepts that the school cannot ignore the larger social issues that affect the daily lives of its students and considers it as a duty of the school to provide high school students with guidance and assistance, to help them make informed and wise personal and career decisions.

The Committee recommends that a course or courses be developed in accordance with Department of Education guidelines, to be comprised of physical education and life skills. Alternatively, credit could be available for two half-courses, one in physical education and one in life skills.

The life skills component should be an extension of the new course in Personal Development and Relationships and should be aimed at the needs of the maturing high school student, covering decision-making, communication, health, relationships, career planning and independent living.

The physical education component should focus on activities in which individuals can continue to participate throughout their lives, and should emphasize the value of maintaining fitness and an active lifestyle.

The Committee believes that its previous designation of "practical and technical arts" is not now appropriate. It recommends that the new compulsory component comprise independent living skills and physically active lifestyles.

Acadian Schools [Recommended in June, 1987 - 12 compulsory credits]

The high school experience of Acadian students must provide them with a firm foundation in their first language, in which they have chosen to be educated, and which they should be helped to maintain.

To incorporate these essentials, and in
Education Nova Scotia

order to keep alternatives open for those graduates who might wish to have a choice of college or university in Nova Scotia or elsewhere, or who would work in the private sector, the Committee recommended that students enrolled in Acadian school programs take three French Language and three English Language credits.

As pointed out by some respondents, this would mean that graduates of Acadian schools would require 12 compulsory credits out of the recommended total of 18, thus narrowing their optional subjects to 6, instead of the current 9. In addition, there are other criteria that must be met in designated Acadian schools, with respect to the percentage of subjects to be taught in French.

Although the Committee gave further consideration in its review of recommendations to the effect of reducing the number of compulsory English credits required for the Acadian school certificate, it came to the conclusion that this could be detrimental to Acadian students, given their already unique circumstances and needs.

A sub-committee of mainly Acadian educators was established to provide further advice and assistance. The initial advice received is that Acadian high school students should continue to be required to take three English credits as recommended, but that the Acadian high school program as a whole should be the subject of continuing review and recommendation by the Acadian community.

The Advisory Committee affirms that the Acadian high school program has the same aims as the Nova Scotia high school completion program, but recommends that the unique characteristics of the former be taken into account, and that the Comité Avisoire des Ecoles Acadiennes be asked by the Minister to consider the proposed new requirements for high school completion as they affect the Acadian schools, and to recommend any adjustments or changes judged to be necessary.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 2 NUMBER OF CREDITS REQUIRED FOR NOVA SCOTIA HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION

- (a) *It is recommended that the number of credits required for Nova Scotia high school graduation be increased from 16 to 18, and that this recommendation be implemented for students entering grade 10 in September, 1989. [This will not take effect until 1990. See note, p. 11]*

May 11, 1989

- (b) *It is recommended that the Department of Education, in particular the Curriculum Development/Élaboration de Programmes divisions, and the Inspection Services division work closely with school boards to supervise and monitor implementation of this requirement.*

Number of Credits: Responses to Committee's 1987 Recommendation

At present, 16 credits are required to obtain a Nova Scotia high school completion certificate. However, to allow for the proposed increase in the number of compulsory credits, and to provide a high school completion program that would allow Nova Scotian students to participate in post-secondary education, a wide range of career possibilities, and the varied aspects of an active, rewarding life, it was recommended that the minimum number of credits for high school graduation should be raised from 16 to 18.

The rationale for this proposed increase was accepted by nearly all who replied, although some doubts were raised as to whether this would have the effect of increasing the length of the high school program for a number of students. There were also administrative concerns expressed about the need to change established timetabling procedures and about the possibility of having to add to staff in some cases.

Some respondents claimed that a combination of timetabling and the desire to leave a margin for failure might lead to students having to take 21 courses, just as many at present take 18. It was also suggested that this could lead to a four-year program for many more students than at present.

Number of Credits: Committee Review and Rationale

As it had not been intended that the recommendations should result in a four-year high school program, the Committee requested the aid of its Research Working Group in carrying out a second survey of the most recent high school graduates at the end of the 1987-88 school year. Conducted in collaboration with the Research Section of the Department, the results of this survey were considered and compared with the earlier 1985-86 survey.

The results of the study reaffirmed that the majority of students would not

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the proposed complement of 18 courses.

It is also the Committee's continuing belief that at least 18 credits are necessary to provide Nova Scotia students with opportunities equal to those of graduates of other provinces and to ensure that their high school education will give them the necessary foundation of knowledge, skills and social awareness.

Timetabling samples were reconsidered, and further studied. It again appears to the Committee that related problems should be able to be resolved, given a suitable framework for planning.

The Committee therefore recommends that the number of credits required for high school completion should be 18, with school boards being permitted up to five years to assemble the necessary resources for full implementation of French, fine arts and the new independent living skills and physically active lifestyles components. Courses in fulfilment of the requirements in English, mathematics, social studies, and science are already available and should be compulsory for students entering grade 10 in 1989-90. [See note, p.1]

RECOMMENDATION NO. 3 NUMBER OF HOURS FOR CREDIT

It is recommended that courses approved for full credit for the purpose of a Nova Scotia High School Completion Certificate shall be of a minimum of 120 hours, and that this shall not preclude school boards from offering additional hours as circumstances permit.

Number of Hours for Credit: Responses to Committee's 1987 Recommendation

The Advisory Committee had recommended that the minimum hours for credit should be raised from 120 to 140 in the case of English, French first language, and mathematics, and should be established at 100 hours for the fine arts and practical and technical arts. All other subject areas should remain at 120 hours.

Although a number of school boards already allot extra time for some subjects, there were objections to the inflexibility introduced by formalizing such arrangements.

Several school boards felt that it would present an administrative problem, considering the additional credits they prefer to schedule to provide students with some flexibility. Subject teachers, including English teachers, believed that there are other priorities to be

considered before that of extra time, one of which is quality of teaching.

Some respondents pointed out that since time on task has been shown to effect improvements in student progress in several subjects studied to date, and since all the subjects in the curriculum should be regarded as being of equal intrinsic worth, then all deserve the same allocations of time.

Number of Hours for Credit: Committee Review and Rationale

The Committee accepted this judgment by educators and administrators in the field and agreed to amend Recommendation No. 2 to the effect that all courses should require the same minimum amount of time for full credit, as at present, and that 120 hours should continue to be the required minimum in all cases.

The compulsory independent living skills and physically active lifestyles may be offered as two half-credits of 60 hours each, in accordance with Recommendation No. 1.

The Committee wishes to emphasize that 120 hours should be the minimum approved for allocation for credit by the Department of Education, as at present, and that this recommendation does not preclude school boards from offering additional hours as circumstances permit.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 4 INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

It is recommended that the Minister of Education change the current regulations to clarify the difference between instructional time and the length of the school day, and to ensure that a minimum of 300 minutes of instructional time per day is provided in every senior high school.

Instructional Time: Responses to Committee's 1987 Recommendation

The Committee had recommended that the Regulations under the Education Act be changed to clarify what is meant by "instructional time", to help ensure that a minimum of 300 minutes of instructional time per day is provided in every senior high school.

The Committee was concerned that the informal survey that it had conducted with respect to instructional time indicated that the current regulation is not being construed uniformly by administrators and that the

minimum 300 minutes of instruction are not being provided in every case.

The Committee believed that it would not be possible for a high school to offer the additional credits recommended unless the requisite minimum 300 minutes of instruction were available to high school students equally throughout the Province.

Respondents generally accepted this recommendation and its rationale. However, some administrators expressed concern that major rescheduling of buses might be necessary, with the possibility that additional vehicles might be required in some rural situations.

Instructional Time: Committee Review and Rationale

Although not wishing to cause unwarranted administrative disruptions, the Committee maintains that schedules and busing are administrative services provided in support of the program. As such, they do not direct the program, but must be directed by it.

Knowing that it is the intent of the existing regulation that a minimum of 300 minutes of instruction per day be provided at the senior high level, it is recommended that school boards ensure that the current regulation is fully observed.

To facilitate adherence by school boards to the regulations governing the length of the school day, the Committee recommends that the regulations under the Education Act be clarified to indicate that recess, lunch hour, time to change classes and other such breaks should not be counted as instructional time.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 5 COURSE CODING SYSTEM

- a) *It is recommended that most high school completion courses be designated "academic", with the exception of English, French, mathematics, science, and social studies, in which areas some specific courses may be designated "preparatory" by the Department, and taught in greater depth and at a higher level of abstraction, in order to prepare students to be able to continue their study of these subjects beyond high school.*
- b) *It is recommended that the course coding system be further simplified as follows:*

May 1, 1989

first three letters (ENG) - name of course (English)

first two digits (10) - year in which (grade 10) course is normally taken

letter P if required - denotes a preparatory course

additional letter(s) or digits, if required - denote(s) special circumstances, such as Academic program (A), immersion (I) etc., or two or more courses in the same discipline, offered in the same grade

- c) *It is recommended that immediate consideration be given by all concerned to a further reduction of the multiple levels that remain in high school courses, to be accomplished within a period of ten years. Such a development should ensure that the high school experience more closely resembles that of the elementary levels, with less segregation of students of different abilities, and with the attention to individualized instruction and flexible teaching methods that characterizes the earlier school years.*

Course Coding: Responses to Committee's 1987 Recommendation

The Advisory Committee had recommended changes in the course coding system to clarify the existing system, to reflect the changing composition of the high school student body, and to encourage the corresponding adaptation in teaching methods demanded by such a change.

Under the present coding system the first three letters designate the subject; the first digit indicates level of course, i.e., 5=honors, 4=university preparatory, 3=open category, 2=high school completion; the second digit designates year in which course is taught, i.e., 4=grade 12, 3=grade 11, 2=grade 10; and the third digit distinguishes between different courses, in the same subject, and at the same level. The Committee was told that students and their parents often found this system difficult to understand. Complaints were also made that the current 300 or "open" courses are rarely acceptable for post-secondary entrance or other further purposes, which has led to much pressure to have them redesignated "up" to 400. In 1981 the Department of Education first permitted these changes to take place upon application by school boards. The same course taught at the same level by two different boards may now be

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found to be designated 300 in one case and 400 in another.

Respondents did not favor the existing inequality. Some persons, however, responded that the better solution would be to revoke the permission previously granted and to return to a 300 level all those courses that are not offered as part of a continuum or as the foundation for further study or training, but that are intended to be "open" to all students.

Other respondents were disturbed by the fact that the Committee had made no mention of the course coding of certain disciplines, e.g., a language other than English or French, and the future status of such disciplines was not made clear anywhere in the interim report.

A number of respondents, including representatives of youth in the Youth Advisory Council, responded that the recommendations did not go far enough in considering the needs of the growing numbers of students who are staying in or returning to high school but whose aim is not university entrance.

Course Coding: Committee Review and Rationale

In view of these objections the Committee gave extensive further consideration to the available options.

It is clear that the advent of technology into all aspects of living and into the workplace has undeniable implications for education. Employers are seeking graduates with a sound knowledge of mathematics, good communication skills and demonstrated technological aptitude or awareness. Post-secondary institutions also place a heavy emphasis on communications skills and science. Global interdependence and the need to analyse the output of the various news media on national and international affairs speak for the importance of the various branches of social studies. French and English are becoming civic imperatives in our country, likely to be required by an increasing number of future aspirants to political office, or other public positions. Other languages are also gaining a larger place in Canadian society, whether they are the traditional "heritage" languages of early settlers, or the newer languages of more recent immigrant groups, or reflections of changing trends in global trade and commerce.

All sectors of society, including students themselves, favor a well-rounded education, of a high standard, for every high school student. Any who started at a disadvantage, or have special needs, should have the added attention they may need. All courses should be of equal value and all should be taught effectively.

Some circumstances, including the need to meet the academic criteria of post-secondary entrance, require graduates to show a record of their abilities and their aptitude for more complex or more abstract study. There are high school completion courses available for such purposes, which may be so designated. However, serious consideration should be given to further reduction of the differentiation in high school courses that this creates. Teachers should be encouraged, through in-service and professional development as necessary, to focus on students with their individual needs. This approach should make it possible to move into a one track system within the next ten years, in a continuation of current practice in elementary and junior high grades.

There are 140 courses currently available under the Nova Scotia high school completion program. Other courses developed locally and approved by the Department of Education may be taken as elective credit courses. It is recommended that all high school completion courses be regarded as preparing high school students for entry into work, society and further study as required, and that this should be reflected in the manner of teaching of every course. In addition, some courses in English, French, mathematics, science and social studies designated by the Department of Education also may be offered as "preparatory" courses, designed to meet the requirements for some post-secondary entrance or other options for further study.

It is further recommended that the current system of course coding be simplified to indicate the name of the course (3 letters), the grade level at which normally taught (10, 11, 12), followed by additional letters as required, whether to indicate "preparatory" or to distinguish between courses in the same subject, at the same grade level. A letter may be added to designate a course with some other distinguishing feature, e.g., in an Acadian or immersion program, or taught in a Francophone school.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 6 RELATED CONCERNS

It is recommended that the Minister follow up the discussions of the Steering Committee on Alternatives by establishing a Task Force with the mandate to develop alternatives to enhance the learning opportunities of students entering high school, particularly those who have difficulty meeting the criteria of current program offerings.

A number of submissions and responses referred to issues which were related to the high school program, but were outside the specific mandate of the Advisory Committee with regard to the credit system.

One problem that seemed to the Committee to be particularly pressing, in view of the increasing retention rate of students entering high school, is the evident lack of suitable alternatives to meet the needs of some students, including those from the adjusted program.

The adjusted program was originally intended to lead to employment or, possibly, to an intermediate industrial or other vocational option. At present, however, the demand for higher qualifications, and the difficulties in finding employment without these, make it increasingly difficult for many young people without high school completion to find jobs.

Some students have more limited opportunities for admission to vocational programs than previously, because of growing competition, and the gradual raising of standards of entry to these programs. Their place in the new community college system in Nova Scotia is as yet unclear. However, they are remaining in or returning to high school in greater numbers than ever before, as is reflected in the current Nova Scotia high school retention rate of 79 percent from P-12, which rises to over 90 percent when students of high school level vocational programs in community colleges are taken into account.

Currently, a significant number of such students are now enrolling in the 250 level courses, although the latter were not designed for their needs. Furthermore, the education of the students for whom the 200 level courses were intended was being adversely affected in some cases by the influx of a growing group of students who require additional time and resources.

The Advisory Committee was concerned by these facts and recommended that consideration be given to the development of alternatives as required, to meet the needs of high school students.

The Advisory Committee is pleased to note the support of the Minister for its recommendation to establish a steering committee to review these concerns. The steering committee has been established, and will recommend the terms of reference for development of the required alternatives.

The Advisory Committee is pleased to confirm that several of the other related issues that were brought to the attention of the Minister in its first report have been acted upon as follows. The remaining items are recommended for future action, as described.

- a) Review of the need for a special education high school completion certificate in recognition of the efforts of the special education students who are attending high school.

Action Taken: The Minister has since approved and introduced a high school completion certificate as recommended.

- b) Consideration of guidelines (to school boards) for credit to be given for certain out-of-school, employment-related experiences, such as work experience, and certain community-based learning experiences that complement the school curriculum.

Action Recommended: The Committee recommends that the Minister continue to consider various out-of-school community experiences which complement delivery of school curriculum, and which would serve to broaden the students' knowledge and skills.

- c) Review of the role and training of guidance counsellors to ensure that they are able to assist fully in the successful implementation of the proposed new credit system.

Action Taken: Along with the appointment of a guidance consultant, whose mandate included a review of the role of the guidance counsellor, the Department of Education published new guidelines for guidance counsellors which help define their responsibilities more clearly in this regard.

- d) Consideration of recognition for summer school funding of remedial and study skill courses.

Action Taken: This has been referred to the Department of Education for consideration.

- e) Review of the role of honors courses.

Action Recommended: The Committee recognizes that honors courses may be one means of challenging some highly motivated and gifted students, and recommends that school boards should continue to be permitted to offer these courses. However, it is acknowledged that this is only one answer to serving such pupils. Individual boards should be encouraged to seek alternatives to help gifted students achieve their potential. The Department of Education should also examine how the needs of this population can be met and should be prepared to assist school systems to more effectively address these concerns in a manner consistent with a student-centred learning approach.

- f) Reconsideration of the intended role of daily physical activity in the high school.

Action Taken: A committee has been established by the Department of Education to review daily physical activity.

- g) Emphasis to be given to oral communication in the language arts program.

Action Recommended: It is recommended that the concern about the need for attention to oral communication in the language arts program and its implementation be referred to the Curriculum Division of the Department of Education for investigation and action.

- h) Continuing review of subject content and methodology related to the recommended changes, as part of the established curriculum development procedures of the Department of Education.

Action Recommended: It is recommended that the Department of Education review the requirement for education in the arts, French, global studies and independent living skills and physically active lifestyles, and develop new courses and guidelines as required to ensure the effective implementation of the recommendations on the Nova Scotia high school completion program.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 7 PUBLICIZING RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that these recommendations be made public, along with the Minister's response.

The Advisory Committee thanks the Minister for making the interim report available, as a discussion paper, to school boards, educational administrators, teachers, parents, municipalities, universities, other educational institutions, and the general public.

The Committee also wishes to express its gratitude to the many respondents who called, wrote letters, came in person, and/or prepared submissions with respect to the original report and its recommendations.

The interest in these recommendations displayed by citizens in all walks of life, and the quality of the responses, indicate that a challenging high school education for all is a priority in Nova Scotia.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 8 IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTIONS

It is recommended that the Minister request school boards to develop their projections on implementation of the recommendations and to submit these plans of action through the Inspector of Schools, within six months of the date of adoption of these recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 9 COMMUNICATION

In the implementation of those recommendations which are adopted by the Minister of Education, the Advisory Committee on the Public School Program recommends that there be assistance to and continuing communication by the Department of Education with all responsible for effecting these changes.

In the opinion of the Advisory Committee, continuing communication on the high school program should involve not only those in the field of education, but also employers, business people, and the public at large, who all have a stake in the effective delivery of a well-considered, excellent high school education for the young people of Nova Scotia, in a school environment which will help students to learn, grow, thrive and excel.

APPENDIX C

NSTU EXECUTIVE MOTION
(NOVEMBER 3, 1989)

Executive Motion

November 3, 1989

The following motion was passed by the NSTU Provincial Executive at its meeting on November 3, 1989.

1. That the Provincial Executive initiate an ad hoc committee to assess independently the proposed changes to the public school program and that this committee meet as required to produce a report for presentation to the April, 1990, Provincial Executive meeting.
2. That the committee be empowered to gather information from teachers and administrators from across the province, to invite and accept input or briefs from all interested parties and to seek further clarification from the Department of Education.
3. That the NSTU use the information gathered by the ad hoc committee as well as other pertinent data to formulate recommendations regarding the proposed changes to Nova Scotia's public school program.
4. That the committee be comprised of two members of the Provincial Executive and four members at large (ensuring reasonable geographic representation).
5. That at least four of the six committee members be junior/senior high school classroom teachers.

APPENDIX DRECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC
SCHOOL PROGRAM

Recommendations

of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Public School Program

Credit Hours

Whereas current regulations require that each full credit course be a minimum of 120 hours duration and

Whereas the requirement recognizes a generally accepted link between student learning and the time a student is involved in the teaching/learning situation

1. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU support the policy that each credit course be of 120 hours duration.

Instructional Day

Whereas many high schools currently operate on a 300 minute instructional day and

Whereas consideration should be given to additional time required for student travel to and from school and

Whereas in a number of school settings the planned activities of homeroom periods are an integral part of the instructional day

2. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU support the policy that each high school operate for 300 minutes of instruction time daily provided school boards are authorized to approve homeroom periods as instructional time as they deem appropriate.

18 Credits

Whereas serious questions exist with regard to the cost implications of the proposed change in credit requirements and the willingness of the Provincial Government to provide additional dollars and

Whereas concerns exist with regard to the impact on the number of years many students might have to spend in high school in order to graduate and

Whereas it is predicted that many smaller high schools in the province would have particular difficulty meeting the demands of an 18 credit system and

Whereas the rationale for moving from 16 to 18 credits has never been firmly established

3. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU not support the proposal that the number of credits required for a high school completion certificate be increased from 16 to 18.

7 Compulsory Credits (effective 1993)

Whereas there is general recognition of the value of students undertaking study in a range of subject fields and

Whereas enrolment data indicates that most students are currently meeting the requirements of this proposed change (with the exception of global studies) and

Whereas a range of courses, appropriate to different abilities and aptitudes, have been developed in the required subject areas and

Whereas students' understanding of and appreciation for the world can potentially be enhanced through taking a global studies course

4. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU support the proposal that the number of compulsory credits be increased from 4 to 7 and that these compulsories include:

- i) 3 English
- ii) 1 Mathematics
- iii) 1 Science
- iv) 2 Social Studies
 - a. one 'global studies'
 - b. one of history, geography or economics.

10 Compulsory Credits (effective 1996)

Whereas serious questions exist with regard to the cost implications of this proposed change and the willingness of the Provincial Government to provide additional dollars and

Whereas the precise nature of a number of the courses remains unknown and

Whereas there is difficulty in reconciling a further increase in the number of required credits with a student-centred approach to education and

Whereas there is desirability in allowing students to select their own program on the basis of their interests, aptitudes and abilities

5. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU not support the proposal that :
- a) the number of compulsory credits be increased from 7 to 10;
 - b) that the additional compulsory credits include:
 - i) 1 Fine Arts
 - ii) 1 French
 - iii) 1/2 Physically Active Lifestyle
 - iv) 1/2 Independent Living Skills.

Academic and Preparatory Designations

Whereas the proposed language (academic and preparatory) suggests a polarization of course and program offerings with differing status and

Whereas current multiple level offerings and corresponding nomenclature (200, 300, 400, 500) tends to reduce the grouping of students into particular program tracks (see Tables p. 28 - 30) and

Whereas multiple level offerings appear to be meet the variety of students' needs, interests and future post-secondary and/or occupational goals

6. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU support the continuance of the practice of offering courses at multiple levels.
7. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU discourage the use of such labels as general, academic and preparatory in identifying course and/or program levels.

A Single Track System

Whereas teachers envisage significant difficulties in attempting to meet the varied individual needs of all high school students in a single-track system and

Whereas a review of educational reform movements would suggest that the single-track system (at the high school level) is largely an untested approach and

Whereas it would appear from a study of data on individual course selection that many students, through their high school years, choose courses at more than one level and

Whereas many boards across the province have invested a great deal of time and resources in the development of alternative courses, programs and services and

Whereas the NSTU believes that "children with special physical, intellectual or emotional needs benefit from learning in the most enabling environment, characterized by flexibility, responsiveness and support." (NSTU Integration Policy, 1987)

8. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU not support the establishment of a single-track system for the high school.
9. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU support the provision of alternative courses, programs and services at the high school level to enhance the learning opportunities for students whose individual needs are not being met by current programs.
10. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU support initiatives to ensure flexibility in student course selection/placement practices .
11. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU support initiatives to create inclusive environments in high schools which provide students with many shared common experiences.

A Research Proposal

Whereas the informal studies conducted by the ad hoc Committee yielded data which was deemed useful in considering the issues surrounding change proposals and

Whereas sound knowledge of what currently exists should precede attempts to bring about change

12. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU support a comprehensive study of current program offerings and patterns in individual student enrolments in the high schools of the province with a view to determining among other things:

- i) the nature and range of program offerings;
- ii) the current opportunities for "common shared educational experience";
- iii) the degree of rigidity and/or flexibility in student selection/placement practices.

Teaching and Learning in the High School

Whereas teachers support the view that the focus of classrooms and schools should be on learning and

Whereas our understanding of the processes of learning and knowing are continually evolving and

Whereas it would appear essential that "curriculum be regarded as a means of building learning skills and fostering individual strengths and of producing active learners, as well as a means of transmitting knowledge and information." (PSP Report, p. 10) and

Whereas the educational experiences of students entering the high school have changed, to varying degrees, as new approaches and methodologies have been adopted by elementary and junior high teachers and

Whereas the Minister's Advisory Committee on Teaching Effectiveness is now focusing its initiatives in the area of teaching strategies

- 13. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU support the view that schools be learner-centred.
- 14. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU support the ongoing efforts towards professional renewal and growth among high school teachers.
- 15. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU, in acknowledging the importance of ongoing professional renewal, recognize in particular the value of school-based development programs.

Educational Change

Whereas teachers and administrators have indicated their concerns about the process of change surrounding the introduction and proposed implementation of the new high school program and

Whereas "lack of recognition that successful change requires a clear vision of where one is going, careful planning of the implementation strategies and responsiveness to the needs of those

individuals being asked to change all contribute to the downfall of the effort". (MacKay, 1990)

16. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU encourage all stakeholders in education to give greater attention to the process of change and to the guiding principles arising from research on successful change practices.
17. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU establish the necessary mechanisms to further elaborate a vision of the future direction of the high school.

Funding Educational Change

Whereas it is viewed as highly objectionable that while proposing major changes to the high school the provincial government embarked on a severe program of restraint and

Whereas the NSTU recognizes that changes to the high school which it views as valuable involve additional costs in areas such as staff development, textbooks, reduction of class size, development of curriculum materials and resources etc.,

18. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the NSTU urge the Government of Nova Scotia to fully fund the educational reform of the high school in order to ensure an enhancement of the service provided to the young people of this province.

APPENDIX E

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS- NOVA SCOTIA'S PSP

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS- NOVA SCOTIA'S PSP

Recommendation No. 1

- (a) For the purpose of the Nova Scotia High School Completion Certificate, it is recommended that there be 10 compulsory credits:

Compulsory Credits

- 3 English Language Arts
- 1 French Language Arts (Acadian Schools- 3 French)
- 1 Mathematics
- 1 Science from:
 - Physics
 - Chemistry
 - Biology
 - Physical Science
- 2 Social Studies:
 - 1 Global Studies
 - 1 from Geography
 - History
 - Economics
- 1 Fine Arts from
 - Drama
 - Music
 - Art
- 1/2 Independent Living Skills
- 1/2 Physically Active Lifestyles

Total = 10 Compulsory credits (Acadian Schools - 12)

- (b) It is recommended that school boards be allowed up to five years to permit the resources to be assembled for full implementation of the compulsory French, fine arts, independent living skills, and physically active lifestyles credits. Students entering grade 10 in September, 1990 will be required to take 16 credits and to fulfil the compulsory requirements in English, mathematics, social studies, and science. Compulsory credits in French, fine arts, and independent living skills and physically active lifestyles will be required of students entering grade 10 in September, 1996.
- (c) It is further recommended that the high school completion program for students in Acadian Schools *continue to be reviewed* as to the implications of these changes, with the assistance of a Minister's Comité Avisoire sur l'Éducation, involving representatives of the Acadian community.
- (d) It is recommended that the role of business education be reviewed by the sub-committee on business education of the Advisory Committee on the Public School Program, and that this review be considered at an appropriate time by the standing advisory committee.

Recommendation No. 2

- (a) It is recommended that the number of credits required for Nova Scotia high school graduation be increased from 16 to 18, and that this recommendation be implemented for students entering grade 10 in the following years:
September 1993- 17 credits
September 1996- 18 credits
- (b) It is recommended that the Department of Education, in particular the Curriculum Development/Elaboration de Programmes divisions, and Inspection Services division work closely with school boards to supervise and monitor implementation of this requirement.

Recommendation No. 3

It is recommended that courses approved for full credit for the purpose of a Nova Scotia High School Completion Certificate shall be of a minimum of 120 hours, and that this shall not preclude school boards from offering additional hours as circumstances permit.

Recommendation No. 4

It is recommended that the Minister of Education change the current regulations to clarify the difference between instructional time and the length of the school day, and to ensure that a minimum of 300 minutes of instructional time per day is provided in every senior high school. (Must be met by the 1993-1994 school year).

Recommendation No. 5

- (a) It is recommended that most high school completion courses be designated "academic", with the exception of English, French, mathematics, science, and social studies, in which areas some specific courses may be designated "preparatory" by the Department, and taught in greater depth and at a higher level of abstraction, in order to prepare students to be able to continue their study of these subjects beyond high school.
- (b) It is recommended that the course coding system be further simplified as follows:
- | | |
|---|--|
| first three letters (ENG) | = name of course (English) |
| first two digits (10) | = year in which course is normally taken (grade 10) |
| letter "P" if required, additional letter(s) or digits, if required | = denotes a preparatory course |
| | = denote(s) special circumstances, such as Acadian program (A), immersion (I), etc., or two or more courses in the same discipline, offered in the same grade. |

- (c) It is recommended that immediate consideration be given by all concerned to a further reduction of the multiple levels that remain in high school courses, to be accomplished within a period of ten years. Such a development should ensure that the high school experience more closely resembles that of the elementary levels, with less segregation of students of different abilities, and with the attention to individualized instruction and flexible teaching methods that characterizes the earlier school years.

Recommendation No. 6

It is recommended that the Minister follow up the discussions of the Steering Committee on Alternatives by establishing a Task Force with the mandate to develop alternatives to enhance the learning opportunities of students entering high school, particularly those who have difficulty meeting the criteria of current program offerings.

Recommendation No. 7

It is recommended that these recommendations be made public, along with the Minister's response.

Recommendation No. 8

It is recommended that the Minister request school boards to develop their projections on implementation of the recommendations and to submit these plans of action through the Inspector of Schools, within six months of the date of adoption of these recommendations.

Recommendation No. 9

In the implementation of these recommendations which are adopted by the Minister of Education, the Advisory Committee on the Public School Program recommends that there be assistance to and continuing communication by the Department of Education with all responsible for effecting these changes.