

French-immersion students score much higher on English tests than core students Teachers spokesperson says streaming exists in provincial schools, despite inclusion policy

Description

Standardized test results released last week show wide discrepancies between students who are in French immersion and those who aren't, the president of the New Brunswick Teachers Association says.

Ninety-four per cent of Grade 9 immersion students did well on their English-language assessments compared with 74 per cent of students in the core program.

George Daley said the test results highlight the need for more resources in non-immersion classrooms and the role classroom composition plays in learning.

He suggested French-immersion has created de facto streaming — a system of grouping students according to their levels of academic achievement — despite a policy against it.

We've got a policy on inclusion that says we can't stream, but French immersion has created the biggest streaming in my career," he said.

He called on the province to "guarantee equity in education" and put resources into non-immersion classrooms.

Although he supports French immersion, Daley said it's important non-immersion students be treated equally, and more needs to be done in that area.

The majority of students in non-French immersion classrooms struggle academically, he said.

"I'm continuing to see some classrooms in this province, as a result of all of the students who have struggles, being congregated into one area," he said.

This makes for challenging learning environments for students and creates difficult teaching loads for educators, Daley said.

How to fix it

As a result, Daley said, more teachers are needed in non-French immersion classrooms.

Last year, teachers ratified a five-year agreement with the Liberal government that called for adding 250 teachers to classrooms that face challenges related to the range of intellectual and physical abilities found in classrooms,

Daley said that when they negotiated for extra teachers and resource teachers, he was also hopeful

that government would help address classroom composition by breaking up classes.

“The best resource we could have in this province is a teacher in front of classrooms with smaller classroom numbers,” he said.

“If we can do that, those classes that are particularly struggling, if we could split some of them and put some extra folks in there ... it’s going to help those situations.”

Test results would improve as well, he said.

The association has also been calling on the province to change its inclusion policy to create a more equal learning environment for students. Daley said he believes Education Minister Brian Kenny is willing to work with the association on the issue.

New Brunswick’s policy of inclusive education, which was last updated in September 2013, requires all students be with their peers in a “common learning environment” and that instruction be provided primarily by the classroom teacher.

“The bottom line for us all is we want the best learning environment for every individual child in the province,” Daley said.

CBC News requested an interview with Kenny, but the department said he was unavailable.

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Date Created

2018-01-23