



MODULE ONE Why Focus on School Programs?



Everyone can succeed at offering school programs—this includes all students and all museums. Despite its rural location, le Village historique acadien de la Nouvelle-Écosse is a popular location for schools to visit. Interpreters facilitate learning about the Acadians through hands-on, minds-on activities like planting the garden.

**TOOLBOX^{FOR}
MUSEUM
SCHOOL
PROGRAMS**



MODULE ONE

Why Focus on School Programs?

This module explains the importance of school programs at museums in Nova Scotia today.

Audience: Program Developers.

At the end of this module, readers will:

- Better understand why museums need a school program.
- See how the IMP (Interpretive Master Plan) supports school programs.
- Understand that school programs can help build brand loyalty.

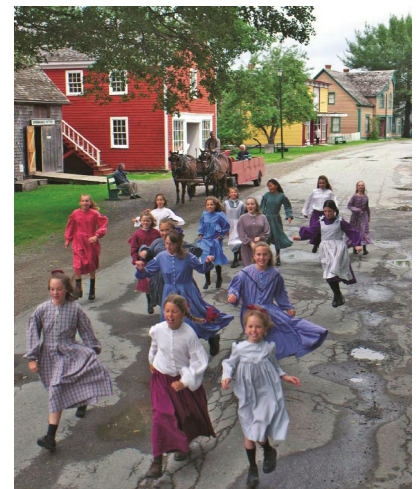
Glossary:

- Chaperone
- Collection
- Engagement
- Facilitation
- First-Hand Experiences
- Formal Learning
- Hands-on, Minds-on
- IMP (Interpretive Master Plan)
- Inclusive
- Informal Learning
- Interpretation
- Interpretive Working Group (IWG)
- Lifelong Learning
- NSM (Nova Scotia Museum)
- School Program
- Student
- Tour
- Website and Online Initiatives

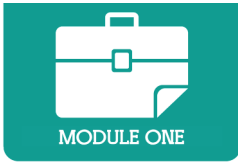
It is a longstanding tradition in Nova Scotia that every spring museums welcome [students](#) for a [tour](#), a picnic, and maybe a few organized activities. These fieldtrips formed the base of how museums met their education goals.

Times however are changing, as are the realities for museums and schools. Many museums have seen this change reflected in the demand for their [school programs](#). For some museums this has meant a decrease in attendance for programs that received positive reviews for decades. For other museums this has meant changing what they offer schools and when it is offered. What is certain however is that staying the same, while maintaining the same attendance, is not likely. Change is coming. Change, with a new focus on school programs, is an important step in a museum's interpretive renewal.

School programs allow museums to connect to their community and their youth, while fostering an appreciation of natural and cultural history. [Goal 3](#) of the Nova Scotia Interpretive Master Plan ([IMP](#)) states that museums should ensure [interpretation](#) is authentic, relevant and [inclusive](#) for all audiences. For students, this means presenting strong school programs. This toolbox will help museums achieve this goal.



The Hands-on History program at Sherbrooke Village provides an experience that can be the highlight of the school year for students and teachers.



History and Current Status of School Programs

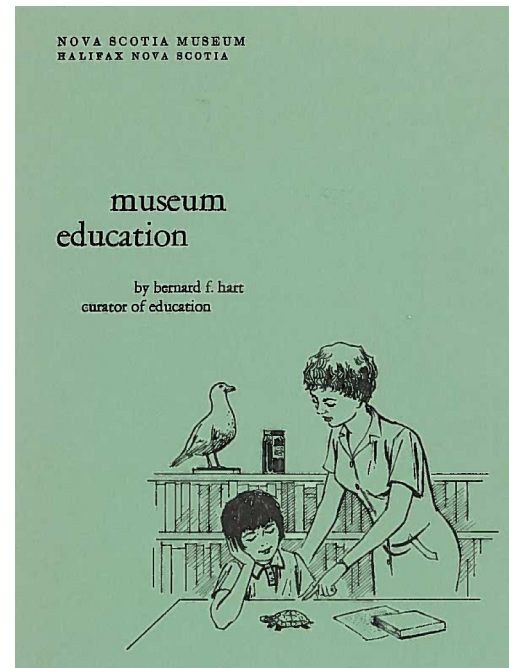
As one of Canada's oldest museums, the [Nova Scotia Museum \(NSM\)](#) has a long history of working with schools and has been considered a leader in successful school programming.

During its early years the NSM did not conduct school programs although it did regularly welcome teachers to conduct their own classes at the museum. In the 1940s Donald K. Crowdis, who had formerly been a teacher, became the curator of the NSM. This began the NSM's practice of offering programs specifically for schools, including on-site programs and the school loans program.

By 1959, the demand for quality museum school programs was so high that the NSM began offering full-day training sessions to prepare staff to develop and present school programs. By the time the NSM celebrated its one hundredth birthday in 1967, the museum had created a full-time position of curator of education. The curator of education was responsible for assisting all NSM sites (branch museums) create quality education programs as well as liaise with school officials. Since this time, the NSM has continued to support its sites with school programs.

In the last ten years, many museums in Nova Scotia have experienced a significant decrease in school visits. There are many reasons for this decline, including programs not changing when curriculum changed, lack of funding available to schools for field trips, challenges with transportation (buses), increased options for field trips, and school board policies regarding [chaperones](#).

Despite these challenges, museums are poised for success. In 2014, the Association of Nova Scotian Museums did a study on how Nova Scotia perceive museums. They found that 82% of Nova Scotians agreed that museums are a valuable learning experience. The public rated museums as more trustworthy than books, schools, [websites](#) or family stories. This has exciting implications for museums and their role in providing educational experiences to schools. Already in Nova Scotia, museums that have adapted their programs to the needs of the modern classroom are succeeding, proving that museums still have an important role to play.



In 1967, for the 100th anniversary of the NSM, a report was published on the history on the museum's education programs. As the NSM approaches its 150th anniversary in 2017, this toolbox will continue to help NSM sites with this important work. These images are from the 1967 report.





Hands-on, minds-on learning can be understood as learning through doing. Learning through doing has a long tradition. Just as the daughters at Cossit House would have learned to make lace from their mother, in school programs, students can learn by doing activities facilitated by interpreters.



Sutherland Steam Mill is able to reuse components of their school programs during the summer. All summer long they offer free visits to children staying at the Tim Horton Children's Camp in Tatamagouche. This allows the museum to give back to their community and for children from across Canada to experience Sutherland Steam Mill.

Poised for Success

Successful school programs combine the classroom's [formal learning](#) with a museum's [informal learning](#) experiences. Programs are a bridge from classroom curriculum to archives, [collections](#) and heritage experiences. Many of the experiences teachers are looking for can be found in a museum setting, such as:

- Providing [hands-on, minds-on](#) learning experiences.
- [Facilitating](#) an experience in which students further develop the skills learned in the classroom.
- Showing how classroom curriculum applies to "real life."
- [Engaging](#) students with the stories of their communities, environment and heritage.
- Inspiring career choices.
- Influencing how students want to spend their free time.
- Encouraging [lifelong learning](#).

The immersive and interactive learning experiences provided by museums allow all students to succeed. Because nobody "fails a field trip", learning becomes more accessible to all students.

A Worthwhile Investment of Time and Resources

The success of a good school program can spill into other interpretive products. Many museums find that they can reuse components, and sometimes even the whole school program, to address the needs of other audiences, including day camps and youth organizations (for example, Scouts and Guides), as well as special programs for adults.

Part of Your Community

The impact of school programs goes beyond meeting curriculum outcomes and creating admissions revenue for museums. Successful programs demonstrate that museums are vital to the communities they serve. Just as museums are moving to become gathering places and centers of community celebration in their broader interpretive renewal, school programs should spark dialogue, encourage social engagement, and aim to provide students with the skills they need as modern citizens.

Being part of a community also means that the development, presentation and marketing of programs is not something a museum should do alone. Museums are more successful when they work with schools, libraries, archives and other community groups. (See [Module Six](#) for more information on working with partners.)



Earn A Badge

Field trips are one of the most memorable experiences students during the school year.

1. Think back to when you were a student and remember the best field trip you went on. It doesn't have to be to a museum. Maybe it was the fire station, the water treatment plant, the town hall, a farm, or a sports facility.
2. What made this field trip "the best"? Was it the presenter? Was it the bus ride with your classmates? Was it having a picnic lunch? Was it doing something you couldn't do in the classroom?
3. How did this field trip change your perspective? Did it inspire a hobby, a family vacation or your career?
4. How could a school program at your museum create this type of lasting memory for students?



Current Status of Education in Schools (2016)

In January 2015, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development released the "The 3 Rs: Renew, Refocus and Rebuild, Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education" to provide the direction of education from primary to grade twelve for Nova Scotian students.

The plan comprises of four pillars, each interconnected and considered essential to student success. The pillars are:

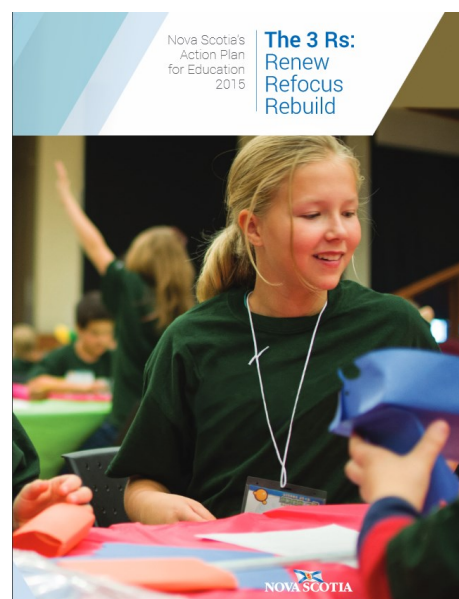
1. A modern education system
2. An innovative curriculum
3. Inclusive school environments
4. Excellence in teaching and leadership

Each of these pillars came with specific goals for the next five years that will change the way education will be addressed in Nova Scotia Schools.

This plan has already been put into action, with the first update being released in June 2015. The primary to grade six curriculum has been refocused on literacy and mathematics, integrating other subject areas into yearly, unit, and daily plans. Social Studies sees an increased focus on Nova Scotia's founding cultures (Mi'kmaq, Acadians, African Nova Scotians, and Gaels). The grade seven to twelve focus will be determined in the 2016-18 school years.

Museums should be aware of the plan, its updates, and its implications on how museums work to reflect the four pillars in their school programs.

The full plan as well as updates can be found online on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's website: www.ednet.ns.ca



Nova Scotia's Action Plan for Education 2015 "The 3 Rs: Renew, Refocus and Rebuild" is online:
[www.ednet.ns.ca/files/2015/
Education_Action_Plan_2015_EN.pdf](http://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/2015/Education_Action_Plan_2015_EN.pdf)



Nova Scotia's Interpretive Master Plan is online:
museum.novascotia.ca/about-nsm/interpretive-master-plan

Earn A Badge

Read the full descriptions of the IMP's Interpretation Policy Guiding Principles ([IMP Appendix E](#)).

For each principle consider:

1. How does this principle apply to our current school programs?
2. How could I better apply this principle to our school programs?
3. Choose which guiding principle you would most like to improve in your own interpretation. Write a SMART goal for yourself, which you will work towards incorporating in your school program.

What is a SMART Goal? Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-Bound.



The Nova Scotia Interpretive Master Plan

All Nova Scotia Museum (NSM) interpretive products, including school programs, are guided by the Nova Scotia Interpretive Master Plan (IMP). This document, available online, provides best practices, audience research and suggested content for interpretation at all NSM sites. The IMP should guide the development of all interpretive [first-hand experiences](#), including school programs. The IMP and interpretive renewal is championed by the Interpretive Working Group (IWG), which any NSM site can be a member of.

Unsure what story your school program should explore?

Check out your museum's specific mandate and topic page ([IMP Appendix C](#)) to find out what content your museum should maintain, enhance and develop. School programs are a good place to pilot content that might not be included in your current interpretive products.

Encourage best practices by using the interpretation policy. Follow the 11 guiding principles in the IMP's interpretation policy to ensure programs are working toward being examples of best practice ([IMP Appendix E](#)).

The interpretation policy provides a full description of each guiding principles, which include:

1. Inclusive Interpretation
2. Diversity of Interpretive Strategies
3. Authority and Engagement
4. Research
5. Best Practice and Innovation
6. Training and Skills Development
7. Multi-Disciplinary Approach
8. Evaluation
9. Use of and Respect for the Collection
10. Support for Collection Development and Management
11. Partnership Opportunities

