On February 19, 2014, our Minister of Education initiated an Education Review to provide an opportunity for all Nova Scotians to have a voice on the state of education in our province. Six panel members were asked to identify how to better adapt the education system to ensure success of all students in the changing environment. The panel published their report on October 30, 2014, after consultations with students, parents, teachers, support staff and community members. They identified seven areas for improvement: curriculum, teaching, transitions, inclusion, school climate, health and well-being, and a modern structure for the system. The Minister’s Action Plan for Education was released on January 29, 2015 – The 3 Rs – Renew, Refocus and Rebuild our Education System. The focus of the Action Plan is twofold: (1) math and literacy and (2) readiness for school and eventually readiness for the workforce. The plan itself is designed as four pillars – A Modern Education System; Innovative Curriculum; Inclusive School Environments; and Excellence in Teaching and Leadership. It is a plan that is ambitious, aggressive and far reaching in scope. How will this impact our Board for the school year 2015-16? Firstly, there will be an increased emphasis on the preschool years to ensure students have a strong foundation to begin school. The Action Plan cites our Early Years Centre at Jubilee Elementary for the valuable partnerships with the Cape Breton Family Resource Centre as well as other community agencies. In early fall, an Early Years Demonstration Site, sponsored by the Cape Breton Family Place Resource Centre, will work collaboratively with existing service providers to provide additional opportunities for families with young African Nova Scotian children. Both of these centres provide opportunities for families to come together, learn, and grow with the full support of their community. In addition, a growth and development guide for four year olds is in progress and will be made available to parents, daycare centres and preschools. The Action Plan anticipates a complete revision of the present curriculum but, for September 2015, the focus will be on grade primary to grade three. Our Director of Programs and Student Services, Ms. Susan Kelley, is the executive lead on this revision and our principal of Middle River School, Ms. Angela Currie-Simms, is a teacher lead. Their work to date, along with teachers from across the province, has been truly amazing. They are in the process of streamlining the number of outcomes while integrating technology and assessment into the curriculum. The focus of curriculum delivery in P-3 will be literacy and math. There will be more time built into the school day for these subjects with an integration of other subjects like science and social studies. In addition, there will be more time for physical activity. On May 20 and 21, one P-3 classroom teacher from every school site across the province, as well as school...
administrators, attended a professional development session on the new curriculum in Halifax. Upon their return, they will facilitate a session at each school focusing on the streamlined curriculum for 2015-16. There will be an additional professional development day in September for all P-3 teachers. Inclusive education is a valuable focus of the Action Plan. Provincial criteria will be developed for placing a student on an IPP. Once placed on an IPP, criteria will also be developed for monitoring student progress. Other initiatives that are emerging from the provincial commitments include a class cap of 25 (with flexibility) for students in grade four, an increase in the number of reading recovery teachers and math mentors, as well as a new position to provide early intervention math support for students. In addition, there will be a new program for grade 9 students at Riverview High School â€“ Discovering Opportunities. The focus is to help students make the connection between learning and work opportunities in this transition year. It is designed for students who are academically capable but feel discouraged with school. An additional exciting new program that will be introduced in our Board is Brilliant Labs â€“ a platform to empower teachers to support creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. This program is designed to make learning both fun and relevant to students by using technology in new ways to solve every day challenges. By working in close partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Education on these initiatives, as well as others articulated in the 3Râ€™s, it is our hope that we can better prepare our students both for their experiences in our school system and also their eventual transition into the world of work.