

2023 progress report to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Addressing the recommendations in
*Kindergarten Through Grade 12 Education in
Yukon*, the 2019 Report of the Auditor General of
Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly

Department of Education
February 28, 2023



Response to the 2019 Report of the Auditor General of Canada

This report provides an update on the department's ongoing work to address the recommendations in *Kindergarten Through Grade 12 Education in Yukon – Department of Education*, the June 2019 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Message from the Deputy Minister of Education

The Department of Education is unwavering in its commitment to implement the recommendations in the 2019 Auditor General's report.

This document provides summary updates on actions the department has taken to address the recommendations since the public hearing called by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in January 2022.

The department is committed to making significant system change so all Yukon learners recover and thrive as we look beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to rethink how we are assisting students and delivering timely, effective supports for their learning needs. We are taking action to create safer and more inclusive schools where students are ready and supported to learn.

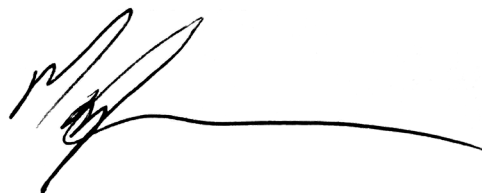
Since December 2019 we have maintained student learning during a global pandemic and have made progress on several initiatives to address system inequities and achieve better student outcomes.

Here are some highlights:

- Launching the Universal Child Care model and continuing to invest in quality, accessibility and affordability. This program is supporting positive outcomes for children and helps to close the gap in student achievement (see page 3).
- Enhancing early Kindergarten and full-day Kindergarten in rural communities to provide children with opportunities to engage in developmentally appropriate, play-based curriculum for longer periods (over two years), which fosters deeper understanding and development of solid foundational skills as they enter grade one (see page 3).

- With the Chiefs Committee on Education, the First Nation School Board Interim Governance Committee, and officials of the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, launching the school board in February 2022 and working to support a successful start to the 2022-23 school year for the eight schools and students transitioning to the school board. Now working with the elected Trustees, a second referendum process was initiated and we look forward to supporting the First Nation School board to continue on its path (see page 17).
- Finalizing the Collaboration Framework in February 2022, which outlines how the department and Yukon First Nations will collaborate to address their joint education priorities and potentially track progress on collaborative initiatives (see page 14).
- Completing the Review of Inclusive and Special Education and advancing the Reimagining Inclusive and Special Education (RISE) work plan developed with Yukon First Nations and education partners. Progress has been made on:
 - » Developing criteria for prioritizing assessments, as well as contracting professionals to conduct educational psychological assessments and speech language pathologist assessments (see page 11).
 - » Launching Ready-to-Learn Schools (R2L), based on groundbreaking work of Dr. Bruce Perry, which supports educators to build and implement a common understanding of how to take a positive behavioural and brain-based approach to working with students (see page 11).
 - » Developing a comprehensive mental health approach, which includes prevention and promotion of positive mental health, as well as intervention supports and responses in and out of school (see page 12).
- Releasing publicly available student data reports; providing schools their 2022-2023 School Profile reports, which provides an overview and analysis of the school's student assessments, attendance and enrolment; and distributing schools' student data dashboards (see page 3).
- Completing phase one of engagement to develop a Student Outcomes Strategy, nearing completion of phase two of engagement in Spring 2023, and working towards finalizing the strategy for implementation in time for the 2023-24 school year (see page 2).

Continue to read on for more details of the work completed and underway. We look forward to continuing to report on our progress.



Mary Cameron
Deputy Minister of Education

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Theme One:
EDUCATION OUTCOMES
FOR YUKON STUDENTS

Auditor Recommendation

The Department of Education should develop and implement a strategy to address the long-standing gaps in student performance and improve student outcomes, particularly those of Yukon First Nations and rural students. The strategy should include:

- analyzing the root causes of poor student outcomes,
- defining performance targets,
- developing and implementing actions to reach those targets, and
- evaluating the effectiveness of these actions to improve student outcomes.

(Section 42)

The department is working with Yukon First Nations and other education partners to develop and implement a strategy to improve student outcomes, particularly for Yukon First Nations and rural students.

It is important that we take the time to do this work in a meaningful way so that we are united in our collective understanding of the outcomes we want from Yukon's public education system.

Student Outcome Strategy

What we have done

- Work is underway to develop a Yukon student outcome strategy to address the long-standing gaps in student performance and improve learning outcomes for First Nation students, rural students and students with diverse learning abilities.
- The Student Outcome Strategy will help us develop a deeper understanding of how we can best support Yukon students and make evidence-based decisions that will ensure every student in the territory has an opportunity to succeed.
- At the request of First Nation governments, the department contracted Tosh Southwick from Inspire Reconciliation Potential (IRP) Consulting to engage on a government-to-government basis, for phase one of the development of the draft student outcome statements.
- Phase one of this work was completed in 2022.

Where we are at

- Phase two is currently underway, with IRP Consulting:
 - » Engaging with youth, students, families, educators, education partners and stakeholders, including the Advisory Committee on Yukon Education and the First Nation Education Commission.
- This feedback and engagement will inform an updated version of the student outcome statements, which is estimated to be completed by spring 2023.

Where we are going

- Phase three will be the finalization of outcome statements and strategy and implementation of the new Student Outcome Strategy in time for the 2023-24 school year.

Closing opportunity gaps: Universal Early Learning and Child Care

What we have done

- The Department of Education is working to address gaps in opportunity along the learning continuum that are known to be associated with later gaps in student achievement. One such gap is access to quality early learning and child care opportunities.
- The Government of Yukon implemented the Universal Early Learning and Child Care program in spring 2021 to ensure that Yukon's early learning program is affordable, accessible and of the highest quality, and supports positive outcomes for children and helps to close the gap in student achievement.

Where we are at

- **Affordable:** Families on average pay less than \$10 per day for each child in licensed full-time care, greatly increasing opportunities for children to participate in early learning programs. We also offer a subsidy program to further reduce child care fees for low-income earners. Teen parents and grandparents with primary responsibility for their grandchildren are provided free child care. Universal child care results in yearly savings of up to \$8,400 for families for each child enrolled in licensed child care.
- **Accessible:** Since April 2021, more than 200 new spaces have been created, which includes spaces in Whitehorse, Dawson, Ross River and Pelly Crossing. Increased investments for Child Development Centre that supports inclusion for developmentally diverse children from 0 to school age in all licensed centres.
- **Quality:** We offer a minimum wage of over \$30 an hour to fully qualified educators – one of the best rates in Canada. We also introduced new funding options for employee benefits programs, professional development, bursaries and developing culturally rich and inclusive early learning environments.
- We have partnered with Yukon First Nation Education Directorate and the Early Years Program to offer a course called Understanding the Early Years. Once successfully completed,

participants will receive a level one educator certificate. We are funding Yukon University to provide enhanced course offerings in rural Yukon communities and to provide a flexible accelerated Professional Diploma Pathway program to help educators with level three equivalent certification reach full level three status.

- We introduced enhanced early Kindergarten in the majority of rural communities in fall 2021, providing children with opportunities to engage in developmentally appropriate, play-based curriculum for longer periods (over two years), which fosters deeper understanding and development of solid foundational skills as they enter grade one.
- All Yukon schools now offer full-day Kindergarten programming.

Where we are going

- We are continuing to work with First Nation governments and community groups to expand and develop child care spaces in rural Yukon Communities.
- The Early Learning and Child Care Unit has established a program-level advisory committee with early learning representatives from Yukon First Nations governments, Whitehorse and rural communities, to seek their advice, views and feedback on supporting and developing high quality early learning and child care programs.
- We continue to work with Yukon First Nations and other partners to enhance early learning and child care programming in the Yukon, as we move toward a future in which all families have access to high-quality early learning and child care that is affordable, accessible and inclusive.

Data, analytics and reporting

What we have done

- In the spring of 2018, the Department of Education created a Data and Analytics unit and implemented a new student data analysis system which includes: new software, data management and analytical tactics. This analysis system enables comparative analysis of segments (e.g., comparing students such as Yukon First Nations and non-Yukon First Nations, urban to rural and subsets like urban

Yukon First Nations to rural Yukon First Nations) and trend analysis. The analytical system targets student outcomes at key milestones in a child's learning, which include but are not limited to school readiness at Kindergarten, Literacy and Numeracy, as well as graduation and attendance. The new system also enables better access to information through data dashboards.

- To support transparency and accountability, the department now develops and publishes yearly Yukon-wide reports, which include comparative student segmentation and trend analysis. These reports are publicly available online, and are published each March for the previous school year. Reports are currently available for school years 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21, with the 2021-22 school year report to be published on March 10, 2023.
- In 2020 the department entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chiefs Committee on Education and established a Yukon First Nations Data Working Group to collaborate and share Yukon First Nations student data and to engage in research and analysis relating to program performance.
- The department and the Yukon First Nations Data Working Group has co-designed the 'How Are We Doing' report. The department builds and distributes this report to the Yukon First Nations Data Working Group and First Nation Education Committee. The department has finalized the 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2021-22 'How Are We Doing' reports and is currently gathering and analyzing information for the 2022-23 'How Are We Doing' report.
- In the fall of 2022, schools received their 2021-2022 School Profile reports which provides an overview and analysis of the school's student assessments, attendance and enrolment.
- The department is currently working with the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate to update the Data Sharing MOU.

Where we are at

- The department is using its modernized student performance data systems to now develop, evolve and distribute school student data dashboards. These dashboards were shared with administrators in October 2022 and show

current and historic information of the students and support administrators in making evidence-based decisions at the school level.

Where we are going

- The department will work with each Yukon First Nation and the First Nation Education Directorate to provide them access to their student information and analysis through student data dashboards.
- The department will continue to work with schools and school councils, staff and Yukon First Nations to better understand and support their evolving analytic needs.

Supporting Adult Learners

What we have done

- We are providing individual adult learners with flexible supports and funding that best meet their needs.
- We recognize that every individual's journey and needs are different and encourage any Yukoner to come in and talk to the Training Programs team to discuss the support available to them.

Where we are at

- We offer Yukon apprentices and their employers' guidance, advice, and support to register in their programs.
- In addition to financial supports, Yukon apprentices have access to the Virtual Learning Strategy program for tutoring and exam preparation support.
- Working Up is a flexible funding program that provides broad support for individuals to advance toward their career goals.

Where we are going

- Per [the 2021 Confidence and Supply Agreement \(CASA\)](#), the department is working with Health and Social Services and Yukon University to support careers in health and social services in the communities.
- We are reviewing the way we communicate with clients and are focused on improving and enhancing our communication with current and future adult students.

Auditor Recommendation

The Department of Education should implement its required oversight mechanisms to provide summary reports to the Minister and complete teacher evaluations.

(Section 47)

The department is revising its process to provide the Minister of Education with an annual summary of the goals, data trends, and objectives from School Growth Plans. School Growth Plans are an important way to focus on student success and the impacts of school-level strategies to improve student learning outcomes and engagement.

The department has an improved process for annually monitoring the completion of teacher evaluations.

School Growth Plans

What we have done

- Introduced a new teacher evaluation process in 2018-19, and have implemented this Yukon Framework for Teacher Growth.
- Despite the continued impacts of the pandemic, all schools engaged in the School Growth Planning process in the 2020-21 school year, and reported their progress to central administration by May 15, 2021.
- Compiled School Growth Plan “snapshot” summary report for 2020-21 and 2021-22 where each school responded to the following prompts:
 - » What is the focus of your School Growth Plan for 2020-21 and 2021-22?
 - » School Growth Plan activities this year:
 - » What is the effect and how do we know?
 - » What’s next?
- Shared 2021-22 School Data Profile and data dashboards in October 2022 to support Administrators in guiding the School Growth Planning process. This School Data Profiles contains a wealth of information that will aid schools in understanding where their learners are at in their learning as we continue to work and plan for COVID-19 pandemic recovery.

Where we are at

- We are finalizing a revised School Growth Plan Handbook and standard template and will complete the implementation of an updated process for School Growth Plans, including incorporating data and evidence-based approaches into school growth planning, starting in March 2023 for 2023-24 school year (delayed due to COVID-19).
- Supported by the School Data Profile and data dashboard, goals will be data informed with clear measurable indicators of success reported on the standard template.
- Supporting the process for School Growth Plans to be developed in collaboration with staff, school councils, First Nations partners and the wider school community.

Where we are going

- We continue to refine the School Growth Planning process, we will continue to update external reporting procedures with the Advisory Committee on Yukon Education and Yukon First Nation Education.
- School Growth Plan processes will be communicated on an ongoing basis with school staff via professional development opportunities and individual conversations.

- Plans will be formally shared with First Nations partners and school councils. The school community will receive updates via newsletters, social media and information sessions.
- The School Growth Planning Process for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years is being aligned with the Yukon Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Pandemic Recovery Plan.
- The student outcome strategy developed in collaboration with Yukon First Nations and other educational partners will help define areas of focus that every school will use in their School Growth Plans.

Teacher Performance Evaluations

What we have done

- Introduced an updated teacher performance evaluation process in 2018-19 and implementation of this Yukon Framework for Teacher Growth.
- Expectations for teacher evaluations are reviewed with all administrators in the fall and are followed up in regular area meetings with superintendents.
- Implementation of an online process for tracking teacher performance evaluations, and annual Teacher Learning Plans.
- Compiled an annual summary report of Teacher Performance Evaluations and Teacher Learning Plans.

Where we are at

- Working with the Association of Yukon School Administrators (AYSA) to develop an efficient and effective system for managing Teacher Learning Plans.

Where we are going

- We are working to strengthen professional responsibility and capacity for effective supervision of teaching.
- Developing a Learning Plan model for Educational Assistants, which is further supported by the [2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement](#), which commits us to provide a one-year training plan for Educational Assistants (and TOCs) by 2024 in collaboration and consultation with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon and Autism Yukon.

Theme two:
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Auditor Recommendation

The Department of Education should conduct a full review of the services and supports for inclusive education. It should exercise a leadership role by, for example, engaging with teachers, parents, and specialists to determine how the department can help teachers maximize student success. The review should include examining how best to:

- evaluate whether its approach to inclusive education is working,
- determine whether services and supports are having the desired effect,
- determine whether sufficient resources are in place to support inclusive education,
- prioritize students for specialized assessments,
- assess and track specialist recommendations, and
- assess and track teachers' use of recommended strategies and supports for inclusive education.

(Section 70)

We are working with our partners and stakeholders to reimagine and create schools that are safe and inclusive, that build on student strengths and ensure that every child feels connected and supported to thrive.

Reimagining Inclusive and Special Education (RISE)

What we have done

- To evaluate the current approach to inclusive education and determine the effectiveness of services and supports, the department engaged Dr. Nikki Yee to conduct a Review of Inclusive and Special Education. The review was released to the public on June 1, 2021.
- This report was informed by information gathered through 31 focus groups, 26 individual interviews, and more than 73 written submissions and 500 stories and comments gathered through a custom online tool.
- In October 2021, the Department of Education assigned a full-time Director of Inclusive and Special Education to coordinate its response to recommendations in the final report.
- We worked with the First Nation Education Commission and partners in education through the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education (AYCE) to identify areas of focus and create a work plan to address the recommendations of the review and the Child and Youth Advocate's Report on Student Attendance. The work plan was updated in fall 2022 and has received feedback from ACYE and First Nations Education Commission (FNEC).
- The work plan includes, but is not limited to, activities to address recommendations such as:
 - » Creating a revised Inclusive and Special Education budget.
 - » Developing new definitions for inclusive and special education.
 - » Updating and implementing revised Individual Education Plan (IEP) templates and processes.
 - » Coordinating holistic supports for learners and their families.

- » Establishing norms for engaging across differences and using these to shape the workplace culture at the Department of Education.
- » Expanding or enhancing experiential learning programs, including cultural camps.
- » Defining the role and qualifications for Learning Assistance Teachers.

Communities of Inquiry

What we have done

- We established eight working groups to address the areas of focus from the final report.
- These working groups are called communities of inquiry (COIs). They are using an evidence-based and disciplined inquiry approach to develop actions and track success on recommendations from the final report.
- Each community of inquiry provides the opportunity for Yukon First Nation representatives, community organizations (e.g., LDAY Centre for Learning and Autism Yukon) school councils, school-based staff and other partners and stakeholders to get involved in the work from the start to improve inclusive and special education services and supports.
- Timelines for individual COIs vary based on the subject matter and the direction of COI members.

Where we are at

- Communities of Inquiry Updates: to date we have received a number of recommendations from the community of inquiries.
- Recommendations have been shared with our partners, the First Nation Education Commission and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education
- Some communities of inquiry are still sitting, and are expected to complete their work between spring and fall of 2023
- We are currently working on an implementation plan for the recommendations we have received to date which will include a timelines and estimated budget.
- We are also working on a series of short videos about the Ready-to-Learn (R2L) Schools initiative.

Where we are going

- We continue to work on the communities of inquiry that have not completed recommendations.
 - » We will align the 2021 Confidence and Supply Agreement (CASA) commitment to provide all students in need of special education with the option of an IEP with our work to update and implement consistent IEP templates, processes and structures that incorporate student voice and create accountability.
- We are developing an implementation plan for all recommendations; where changes can be made, work will begin immediately.
- We continually monitor and evaluate our approach to inclusive education and make changes when necessary.
- We provide flexibility in our services and supports so that we are effective in meeting the needs of our students.
- We are reviewing and updating our policies and procedures and monitor data, and are always looking for ways to improve. We will monitor our resources to make sure that we have sufficient resources are in place to support inclusive education.

RISE Communications

- Quarterly updates are provided to the First Nation Education Commission and Advisory Committee on Yukon Education. Last updates were on November 24 and December 8, 2022.
- We updated school council members at the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees annual general meeting in November 2022.
- Bi-weekly updates are provided to the For the Children group (Yukon First Nation Education contacts and Superintendents).
- We are currently updating the Reimagining Inclusive and Special Education website.

Communities of Inquiry	Current Status
<p>#1. Engage with the community to co-construct definitions of Inclusive and Special Education in Yukon and a vision of an “Inclusive Classroom” that includes Elders and Knowledge Keepers.</p>	<p>Recommendations received. Vision statement of Inclusive Classroom, definition and key elements developed. Identifying policy issues.</p>
<p>#2. Compile and collaboratively review policies and procedures that relate to inclusive and special education. Purposefully and collaboratively coordinate policies to facilitate Yukon’s vision of inclusive and special education</p>	<p>This group is contingent on COI #1 advancing. Reviewed the Response to Intervention Framework.</p>
<p>#3. Explore effective professional collaborative development structures where educators can learn how to structure learning options that will benefit students through more inclusive classroom practices</p>	<p>In progress, recommendations expected in spring 2023.</p>
<p>#4. Establish norms for engaging across differences, and use these to shape the workplace culture at the Department of Education</p>	<p>Recommendations received. Reviewing and developing response.</p>
<p>#5/6. Implement consistent competency-based Individual Education Plan (IEP) templates that incorporate student voice, and create accountability structures around IEPs, Student Learning Plans and Behavioral Support Plans. Strike partnerships with Yukon First Nations, other government departments, and organizations to create coordinated and holistic supports for students and families</p>	<p>In progress. Recommendations expected in spring 2023.</p>
<p>#7. Examine budgets, funding models, staffing allocations to determine how they can be better aligned with student needs and actions taken in response to the Review</p>	<p>Preliminary recommendations received. Reviewing and developing response.</p>
<p>#8. Extend existing outdoor, experiential learning programs, cultural camps, and other hands-on activities as a way of teaching students with learning challenges</p>	<p>Preliminary recommendations received. Reviewing and developing response.</p>

Formal Assessments

What we have done

- A two-day workshop was held in July 2022 with Student Support Services staff and external partners. Ten recommendations were developed and provided to the Director of Reimagining Inclusive and Special Education (RISE).
- In November 2022 we facilitated a workshop with internal and external partners to work on the first three recommendations. We have received the final report (with recommendations on next steps) and have shared the report with our partners.
- A new manager of Student Support Services started in January 2023. Priority for the manager will be implementation from the November workshop and work with the RISE manager on remaining recommendations.
- Student Support Services received funding of \$150,000 for assessments. Contractors have been hired to conduct 30 educational psychological assessments by March 31, 2023; we have also contracted for speech language pathologist assessments.
- Communication went out to all school administrators seeking information on students who are recommended for formal education psychological assessments. Based on responses additional assessments may be required.

Where we are at

- We are engaging with a specialist from UBC to make changes to how we conduct assessments, and to bring an Indigenous lens to our processes, specifically around Psychological Assessments.
- We are working on a communication plan on the current process for getting an Individualized Education Plan (IEP); what assessments are, and what they aren't, types of assessments, etc. This information will be shared with school staff and publicly online.

Where we are going

- We are student-centred and apply a strength-based approach, and we look at the whole child, including their social, emotional, physical and spiritual development.
- We collaborate with student, parents and caregivers, schools and partners to support our students.

- We will work to prioritize students for specialized assessments and that any assessment recommended is done in a timely manner (no later than six months). As per the Confidence and Supply Agreement we will provide, complete, and deliver the final report for psycho-educational assessments necessary to obtain an IEP within six months of referrals from teachers, administrators or physicians. If the Government is unable to provide the assessment directly within this time frame, it will cover expenses incurred by parents to obtain the assessment externally.
- We will have a system in place where we are able to assess and track specialist recommendations; and assess and track teachers' use of recommended strategies and supports for inclusive education.
- As per the 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement (CASA), we are increasing the allocation of Educational Assistants and Learning Assistance Teachers starting in the fall of 2023.
- We will provide a one-year training plan program for Educational Assistants and Teachers on Call by 2024 in collaboration and consultation with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, and Autism Yukon.

Ready-to-Learn Schools

What we have done

- Ready-to-Learn Schools (R2L) is a universal support program for all Yukon students. It will be phased into Yukon schools over the next three years.
 - » It views relationships between staff and students as critical to all learning.
 - » Teachers and other staff are taught about the underlying brain processes that influence human functioning and behaviour.
- R2L has been implemented at: Takhini Elementary, Selkirk Elementary and Nelnah Bessie John School
- R2L is now being introduced at: Jack Hlland, Grey Mountain, and St. Elias Community School
- A Community of Practice for Administrators has been created, led by Gary Morgan from Takhini Elementary. Four sessions are planned between October 2022 and June 2023.

- A Community of Practice for Educational Assistants has been created, led by Lisa Evans at Takhini Elementary. Four sessions are planned for between October 2022 and June 2023.
- R2L consultants delivered a presentation at the administrators' conference in Dawson in September 2022.
- We offered two information and training sessions to internal and external partners on October 26 and November 15, 2022. These partners included BGC Yukon, LDAY Centre for Learning and Autism Yukon.

Where we are at

- Pre-engagement has begun to with schools that are planning to implement R2L in the 2023/24 school year.
- We are developing a training plan for internal capacity development over the next three years and beyond.
- Developing a series of Ready-to-Learn information videos to be shared to our partners, school councils, and school communities.

Where we are going

- Every school and classroom in the Yukon has implemented R2L.
- We will continue to provide R2L training and support to our teachers and schools.
- We are a trauma-informed school system that meets all kids where they are at.

A comprehensive mental health approach

- The department is creating a foundational document that provides an inventory of the mental wellness supports that are available in all communities. We are also working to enhance current school supports and to identify gaps in supports and determine how to close the gaps. Part of this work is ensuring that we address student wellbeing from a Yukon First Nation traditional perspective.

What we have done

- We delivered a presentation to an administrators meeting on December 1-2, 2022.
- We developed 10 questions to help guide the discussion with internal and external partners.

- We met with Autism Yukon, LDAY Centre for Learning, Advisory Committee for Yukon Education, Youth Achievement Centre, Aurora Virtual School in January 2023.
- We reached out to all First Nation education and government contacts on December 12, 2022 with additional follow up in January 2023 to engage and ask questions.
- We met with BGC Yukon's Mental Health Action Team and the Yukon government's Sport and Recreation Branch in December.
- We are reviewing and evaluating the school counsellor position and its broader role within the school community.
- We met with other agencies in January and February 2023 (Health Promotion Unit, Yukon Worker's Health and Safety Board, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, Skookum Jim, MCHA-FN Mental Wellness Strategies Initiative, Child Development Centre, Inclusion Yukon, YFNED, Queer Yukon, Outreach Van, Gender and Women's Equity Directorate).
- We are developing a Comprehensive Mental Health Approach document based on the feedback and data we have collected.

Where we are at

- We continue to reach out to our partners and stakeholders.
- We compiled a draft document of what we have heard to date. This information will inform our work to develop themes and recommendations about immediate steps we can take.
- We will continue to engage with First Nations governments to gather ongoing feedback.

Where we are going

- We will provide multiple approaches to student and teacher mental wellbeing.
- We continue to educate about mental wellness, focusing on both prevention and intervention.
- Per CASA, we will create dedicated wellness counsellors or similar positions in all schools, dedicated specifically to addressing the need for comprehensive mental health and wellness approaches.
- The Yukon government has committed an annual investment of \$1 million to improve mental health outcomes for youth. These funds will support initiatives within the departments of Education and Health and Social Services.

Theme three:
YUKON FIRST NATIONS
CULTURE AND LANGUAGES

Auditor Recommendation

The Department of Education should complete and implement its policy to collaborate with Yukon First Nations to meet the *Education Act's* requirements. It should also develop a strategic action plan with specific, measurable actions and timelines to support its work with Yukon First Nations.

(Section 89)

Collaboration with Yukon First Nations governments on education priorities is essential to ensure that Yukon schools meet the needs of Yukon First Nations students and offer all Yukon students real opportunities to learn about Yukon First Nations languages, cultures, perspectives, and traditional knowledge.

Collaboration Framework

What we have done

- The Department of Education developed a framework for working in partnership with Yukon First Nations. The framework was endorsed by the First Nation Education Commission (FNEC).
- The Department of Education/Yukon First Nation Collaboration Framework for Education (Collaboration Framework) was approved by FNEC on February 17.
- This framework outlines how the department and Yukon First Nations will collaborate to address their joint education priorities, and may be used as a tool to track progress on collaborative initiatives.
- The framework complements the priorities of the Joint Education Action Plan.

Where we are at

- Working with Education staff and school administrators to ensure they have knowledge and understanding of the Collaboration Framework.
- Provided an overview of the Collaboration Framework to the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees.

Where we are going

- Working with the First Nation Education Commission to develop an Implementation Plan to ensure we continue to highlight the collaborative work between the Department of Education and Yukon First Nations governments and organizations.
- Working with superintendents to plan to attend meetings to share knowledge and understanding of the Collaboration Framework, Joint Education Action Plan and how schools and school councils can support the work under these agreements.

Collaborating with First Nations

What we have done

- Since 2019 we have worked collaboratively with the Chief's Committee on Education and made progress on a landmark agreement with the Chiefs of 10 Yukon First Nations governments to establish a Yukon First Nation School Board.
- Signed new three-year Transfer Payment Agreements with all 14 Yukon First Nations, allocating \$1.5 million (2022–2025) among the 14 Yukon First Nations.

- Increased funding to the First Nation Education Directorate to \$735,000 to support the First Nation Education Commission, which was established to guide the implementation of the Joint Education Action Plan (JEAP).
- Increased funding to Council of Yukon First Nations for the Yukon Native Language Center, to support language revitalization and planning for more First Nation Language teacher training.
- Worked with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council to identify joint education priorities and develop bilateral relationship agreements.
- Worked with the Chiefs Committee on Education (CCOE) to implement and complete the priorities under the CCOE/YG Education Action Plan 2021-2022.
- We are working with the First Nations Education Commission and the Government of Canada to develop an Implementation Plan in preparation for a new Joint Education Action Plan in 2024.
- We continue to meet with Yukon First Nation governments to explore opportunities to jointly advocate to the federal government for financial resources to support language, culture and heritage in K-12 programming in Yukon schools.
- We are working with the Chiefs Committee on Education to identify joint priorities for the 2023-24 fiscal year.

Where we are at

- Work to renew Education Agreements is well underway. Meetings have been held or will be planned to set priorities and goals.
- Each year, the department provides \$1.5 million to support the community-level education priorities of the 14 Yukon First Nations.
- Discussions are underway to clarify a core funding request for the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate for the implementation of collective education priorities, such as areas of the Joint Education Action Plan.
- We are working with Yukon Native Language Center (YNLC) and Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) to develop a three-year Memorandum of Understanding to support Yukon First Nations language fluency.
- We attend regular bi-weekly meetings with Yukon First Nation education directors, monthly meetings with the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate executive director, and monthly meetings with the YNLC/CYFN executive director.
- We continue to meet monthly with the Chiefs Committee on Education.

Where we are going

- We continue to work with Yukon First Nation education officials to identify opportunities to work with community schools to improve educational experiences and outcomes for First Nation students and all Yukon students.

Auditor recommendation

The Department of Education should meet regularly with Yukon First Nations to assess the status of the Joint Education Action Plan's initiatives and determine how and when to complete those that remain.

(Section 93)

The four priority areas in the Joint Education Action Plan for Yukon First Nations students remain relevant; they will continue to be prioritized and addressed through collective and community-level agreements.

Those priority areas are:

- K-12 culture and language.
- Authority, control and responsibility.
- Sustainability, supports and success.
- Closing the academic achievement gap.

What we have done

- Worked with the Chiefs Committee on Education to establish the Yukon First Nation School Board.
- Implemented the First Nation Education Action Plan 2021-22, which includes a review of the First Nation Initiatives Branch and the duties of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the First Nation Initiatives branch.
- Each year, the Government of Yukon provides \$1.5 million to support community-level education priorities of the 14 Yukon First Nations, as well as \$735,000 to the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate for the implementation of collective education priorities, such as areas of the Joint Education Action Plan.
- Worked with the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council on implementing an Indigenous Academy at F.H. Collins Secondary School.
- In 2021-2022, the department increased funding by \$59,000 to the Council of Yukon First Nations for the Yukon Native Language Center, to support language revitalization and planning for more First Nation Language teacher training.
- Core funding for the Yukon Native Language Centre is \$1.19 million each year.
- In 2021-2022, the department provided one-time additional funds in the amount of \$38,000 to support the Youth Today, Language Leaders Tomorrow project.

Where we are at

- We are working on renewing Education Agreements with Yukon First Nations. Meetings have been or will be held with First Nation governments.
- We are working with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council to identify joint education priorities and develop bilateral relationship agreements.
- Continue to meet regularly each month with the Chiefs Committee on Education (CCOE) to ensure continued progress on joint education initiatives in the CCOE/YG Education Action Plan.
- We worked with Yukon First Nation partners to revise the job descriptions and duties of the Assistant Deputy Minister and staff with the First Nation Initiatives branch.

Where we are going

- The Joint Education Action Plan is set to expire in 2024. The Yukon government will work with Yukon First Nations and the federal government to determine next steps for the renewal of the agreement. Early conversations have started with signatories.
- We are working with the Chiefs Committee on Education to identify new joint priorities for the CCOE/YG Education Action Plan.

First Nation School Board

What we have done

- Worked with the Chiefs Committee on Education to establish the Yukon First Nation School Board for the fall of 2022-23.
- An appointed Interim Governance Committee led the First Nation School Board through its first nine months of work from February 2022 to the school board trustee election in November 2022.
- This is a key example of our commitment to working with Yukon First Nations to advance commitments of the Joint Education Action Plan to provide Yukon First Nations more authority and control over the education of their citizens and to support Yukon First Nation language and cultural learning in Yukon schools.

Where we are at

- The First Nation School Board held its first election November 2022, and now has 5 elected trustees: Shadelle Chambers, Erin Pauls, Dana Tizya-Tram, Jocelyn Joe-Strack and Gillian Staveley.
- The following school communities voted in 2022 to have their school councils dissolved and replaced by the First Nation School Board (FNSB):
 - » St. Elias Community School (Haines Junction);
 - » Johnson Elementary and Watson Lake Secondary Schools (Watson Lake);
 - » Ross River School;
 - » Chief Zzeh Gittlit School (Old Crow);
 - » Grey Mountain Primary and Takhini Elementary Schools (Whitehorse); and
 - » Nelnah Bessie John School (Beaver Creek).

- In February 2023, the following four schools held referendums to join the First Nation School Board:
 - » Del Van Gorder School, Faro
 - » Eliza Van Bibber School, Pelly Crossing
 - » Ghùch Tlâ Community School, Carcross
 - » Kluane Lake School, Destruction Bay

Where we are going

- The department meets regularly with officials and Trustees from the First Nation School Board to provide ongoing support for the board's success.

Auditor Recommendation

In partnership with Yukon First Nations, school boards, and school councils, the Department of Education should develop policies and guidelines to support First Nations language learning. While developing these policies and guidelines, the department should:

- work with these partners to determine the language goals for individual schools;
- consider a range of approaches – for example, exposure classes to full immersion programs – that depend on the specific language, student population density, and community interest; and
- identify options to support Yukon First Nation languages both during regular school hours and outside the regular classroom.

(Section 99)

The department supports Yukon First Nations in their commitment to restore and revitalize their languages as a critical priority. The department recognizes that revitalizing languages and restoring Yukon First Nations control over and responsibility for their languages are essential components of true reconciliation.

Revitalizing language, culture and heritage in Yukon Schools

What we have done

- The Department of Education increased funding for the Yukon Native Language Centre in 2021-22 by \$59,000 in addition to its core funding \$1.19 million, part of which is to support planning for more First Nations language teacher training.
- In addition, the department provided an additional \$38,000 (2021/22) to support the Youth Today: Language Leaders Tomorrow language training program, which will support 20 Yukon First Nations youth in full-time study of their language.
- The Government of Yukon continues to support First Nations in developing their education capacity. The Department of Education currently has four employees (some of whom are Aboriginal Language Teachers) seconded to Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations.
- The department established a Language Coordinator position within the First Nations Initiatives branch which supports language revitalization and Yukon First Nation Language Teachers.
- We sent a Yukon delegation to Council of Ministers of Education of Canada (CMEC) Symposium on Indigenizing Education in July 2022 to learn and engage in national conversations about how to Indigenize education.

Where we are at

- Restoring First Nations' control over and responsibility for their languages is an essential part of the Government of Yukon's work towards reconciliation.
- For language revitalization efforts to be successful, Yukon First Nation communities

must lead and direct the revitalization of their First Nation languages.

- We continue to work with First Nations governments to support language revitalization initiatives.
- We continue to work closely with the Yukon Native Language Centre and Council of Yukon First Nations on programs that promote First Nations language learning, as well as supporting the revitalization of Yukon First Nation languages.
- We presented draft outline to the First Nations Education Commission for a plan to support Yukon First Nation Language Teachers to take education leave to further develop their language proficiency or classroom management skills.
- Meeting monthly with Council of Yukon First Nations Executive Director to discuss ongoing work at the Yukon Native Language Center and opportunities for collaboration to support .
- Starting in fall 2022, the department initiated conversations with First Nations governments and the federal government regarding capacity and resources to advance language, culture and heritage initiatives in Yukon public schools.

Where we are going

- The Minister is currently meeting with Yukon First Nation leaders to better understand how we can work together to support the revitalization of languages in their community and improve programming in Yukon schools to ensure all Yukon students have opportunities to learn Yukon First Nation languages, culture and heritage.
- We are working with partners, including the Yukon Native Language Center, Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, First Nation School Board and First Nations Education Commission (FNEC) to address the recommendations in the 2019 Auditor General report.
- With feedback from FNEC on path forward to support Yukon First Nation Language Teachers, First Nations Initiatives is planning to work with individual schools and Yukon First Nation language teachers and Yukon First Nation education departments to hear what professional development and learning looks like for them.

Auditor Recommendation 109:

The Department of Education should determine the human resources and training required to develop sufficient classroom support and materials to help teachers implement the new curriculum as it pertains to Yukon First Nations culture and languages.

(Section 109)

Training, professional development, support, and materials are critical for successfully implementing the curriculum. The department will continue to develop and distribute modernized guidelines and materials to educators each year to support the learning of Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing.

Training, professional development and support for educators

What have we done

- The department has a number of ongoing initiatives to continue to provide educator resources and training to support the delivery of the curriculum, including resources and training relating to Yukon First Nations cultures and languages developed with Yukon First Nations.
- Yukon schools are working with cultural inclusion standards developed by FNEC to integrate Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing and being into school programs
- All grades in Yukon schools are now using Yukon's modernized school curriculum and the new graduation program, with Yukon and Yukon First Nations content and resources.
- We have delivered the following professional development to our educators:
 - » Social Studies 10 Indian Residential Schools training.
 - » Modern Treaties and developing a classroom pilot for Modern Treaty Simulation.
 - » Understanding Sites of Indigenous Displacement and Resistance in Whitehorse.
 - » Sustaining Indigenous Land Knowledge in the Whitehorse area.
- We have collaborated with several First Nations and Schools to develop and/or update credentialed courses that incorporate local Yukon First Nations perspectives, including:
 - » Yukon First Nations leadership 12 (Yukon First Nation Education Directorate).
 - » First Fish 10 (Carcross/Tagish First Nation).
 - » Ancestral Technology 10 (First Nations Initiatives branch).
 - » Ancestral Technology 11.
 - » Field Studies 12.
 - » Climate Change 10.
 - » Climate Change 12.
- We worked with the Curriculum Working Group to create sample units for K-12, integrating Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing and being for educators.
 - » A new Grade 5 unit about residential schools has been tested and is in final development.
 - » Sample units for K-12 educators on integrating Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing and being have been drafted.
- Worked with a number of Yukon First Nations to provide schools with resources and professional development opportunities to support integrating Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing, and being. The following resources are available to teachers:

- » Indigenous Commemorative and Awareness Days (professional development for teachers).
- » Blanket Exercise facilitated for staff.
- » Localizing Curriculum (professional development for teachers).
- » Oral Traditions: How to embed First Nations story into curriculum (professional development for teachers).
- » Connected North resource provides virtual field trips that foster student engagement and education outcomes in remote Indigenous communities.
- » Tluuwaay 'Waadluxan Mathematical Adventures resource with localized Yukon First Nations examples to support teaching mathematics.
- » Ethnographic, Cultural and Historical Overview of Yukon (ECHO) was distributed to schools and incorporated in professional development for teachers.
- » Kwanlin Dun: "Our story in our words" was distributed to schools and incorporated in teacher professional development sessions.
- » Aboriginal Peoples of Canada resource with localized Yukon First Nations examples distributed to schools as a secondary resource to support Yukon First Nations studies 12.
- » English First Peoples resources as suggested in First Nations Education Steering Committee resource available for schools.
- » Kits for Dene Games, fire kits, atlatl, and fish traps.
- » Indigenous Atlas of Canada distributed to all schools.
- » Oral Narrative professional development for teachers.
- » Important Indigenous dates – professional development for teachers.
- » Collaborated with Yukon Teacher Education Program on land-based experiential programming with Elders from Teslin Tlingit Council.
- We collaborated with schools and First Nations to support place-based field trips including, but not limited to:
 - » A chum salmon project at Kluane Lake with Kluane First Nation.
 - » A moose hunt with the Individual Learning Centre in Beaver Creek with White River First Nation.
 - » A camp on Crow Mountain in collaboration with Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.
 - » Wood Street educators are collaborating regularly with local Elders and Knowledge Keepers.
- Established common dates for professional development and non-instructional days for Whitehorse schools starting in the 2019-20 school year:
 - » Schools are expected to have a professional development day dedicated to Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing and being.
 - » In 2021-22 school year, two school professional development days were on addressing the Review of Inclusive and Special Education.

Where we are at

- Working on recommendations from Community of Inquiry #4 as part of the Reimagining Inclusive and Special Education (RISE) initiative on ways to decolonize the Department of Education.
- Hosted session with administrators on Decolonizing Possibilities, with steps for administrators to take back to their schools to educate teachers and influence classroom practice with respect to integrating Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing, and being.
- We continue to invite First Nations partners to collaborative working groups including Yukon Culturally Responsive Literacy Strategy and Yukon Culturally Responsive Numeracy Strategy working groups, and Developing Assessment for Early Kindergarten.
- A Learning Network focused on place based learning was launched in January, 2023. This brings new teachers together to connect with the land and water and engage in the spiral of inquiry process that investigates and works towards improving learner outcomes – academic, social and well-being. This initiative involves partnering with Yukon First Nations elders and knowledge keepers. There are four learning networks scheduled this school year.

- First Nation education consultants continue to support classrooms and programs in schools such as Indigenous Academy and day to day classroom practice.
- We continue to work with various Yukon First Nations to provide schools with resources and professional development opportunities to support integrating Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing, and being.
- Yukon First Nations orientation training is being provided to new staff, and existing staff are taking the Yukon First Nations 101 course, with the intention for all staff to complete this course or an equivalent.
- The department has increased the frequency of the Educator Update newsletter to twice per month during the school year. Additional resources and curriculum support materials are being added on a continual basis to the Educators' Place, the online resource portal for Yukon teachers.
- Two Communities of Inquiry (connected to RISE) will inform this area as part of responding to the findings of the Review of Inclusive and Special Education:
 - » One is looking at existing outdoor, experiential learning programs, cultural camps and other hands-on activities as ways of teaching students.
 - » The other is exploring effective professional development structures where educators can learn how to structure learning options that will benefit students through more inclusive classroom practices.
- We presented draft outline to the First Nations Education Commission for a potential path forward to support Yukon First Nations Language Teachers to take education leave to further develop their language proficiency or classroom management skills that is specifically for Yukon First Nations Language Teachers.
- Department senior officials partnered with Trondëk Hwëch'in Education officials to deliver a 17.7 Self-Government Agreement workshop for the Robert Service School PD day in January 2023.
- We have recently launched culturally responsive literacy strategy and numeracy strategy working groups.

Where we are going

- We are working to implement recommendations put forward by Community of Inquiry #8 (RISE) about experiential learning programs, cultural camps and other hands-on ways of teaching students.
- A resource will be developed for teachers to implement the new curriculum as it relates to Yukon First Nations cultures and languages and ensure school programs and curriculum reflect Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing, and being including guidelines, training and materials to support educators.
- A draft Yukon First Nations credit policy has been developed; engagement with First Nations partners will begin in the near future.
- With feedback from First Nations Education Commission on a path forward to support Yukon First Nation Language Teachers, First Nations Initiatives is planning to work with individual schools and Yukon First Nations, language teachers and Yukon First Nation education departments to learn more about what professional development and learning looks like for them.

2023 progress report to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

**Department of Education
February 28, 2023**

