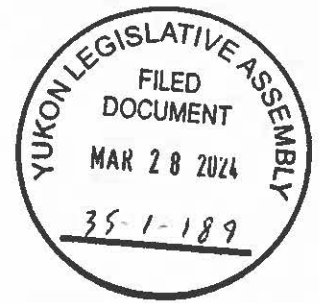


WHISTLE BEND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNCIL
P.O. Box 30135
Whitehorse, YT
Y1A 5M2



"School Council would like to acknowledge that we are on the lands of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and thank them for allowing us to live and work on their traditional land."

December 5, 2023

Government of Yukon
P.O. Box 2703
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6

Attention: Premier Ranj Pillai, and Honourable Minister of Education, Jeanie McLean

Dear Mr. Pillai and Mrs. McLean,

We trust this letter finds you well. We are writing to you as concerned citizens, School Council members and advocates for inclusive education in the Yukon. Our purpose is to draw your attention to critical issues that have come to light in our recent school site visit of Whistle Bend Elementary School. Observations made at the visit directly contradict the "Review of Inclusive and Special Education in Yukon", basic human rights and the "Ready to Learn" schools initiative.

The aforementioned reports highlight the importance of fostering an inclusive approach in our education system, ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have the opportunity to learn in a safe and accessible environment. Education is a fundamental human right and it is crucial that we provide the necessary resources and support to create and inclusive learning environment for every student.

Unfortunately, observations from a recent school site visit indicate a concerning lack of resources and a gap in the implementation of inclusive practices. It is disheartening to learn that some students cannot receive the support they need to thrive academically due to these deficiencies. Specifically, the sensory room provided within the school has been found to be unsafe, triggering, trauma inducing and akin to a hold room. The room is inadequately sized to accommodate one dis-regulated student. The presence of a glass door to the room raises additional concerns, as it may compromise the dignity of a dis-regulated child working through their struggles. As a result, the principles of equity and inclusivity, which are integral to a fair and equitable learning environment, will be compromised.



We urge your office to prioritize and address the following key concerns identified by School Council.

1. **Sensory Room:** The sensory room as identified to the School Council is an inadequate size and does not promote inclusivity and regulation. This is a serious concern for the School Council as the current allocated space will not adequately serve any student requiring use of a sensory room.
2. **Resource Allocation:** Allocate additional resources to schools to ensure that they can adequately support students with diverse learning needs. This includes funding for specialized staff, assistive technologies, and professional development for educators.
3. **Training and Awareness:** Implement comprehensive training programs for educators to enhance their understanding of inclusive teaching methods and strategies. Promote awareness among school staff, students and parents about the benefits of an inclusive education system.
4. **Infrastructure Accessibility:** Ensure that schools are physically accessible to all students, including those with mobility challenges. Invest in necessary infrastructure improvements to create an environment that accommodates the needs of every student.
5. **Regular Review and Feedback Mechanisms:** establish a system for regular reviews of the effectiveness of inclusive education policies. Encourage feedback from educators, parents and students to continually refine and improve the inclusivity of our education system.
6. **Fencing:** Address concerns about the safety of the school environment by examining the adequacy of fencing. Ensure that the fencing is secure and provides a safe boundary for all students. Currently there is a four foot fence slated to be installed next to the wetland – adjoining the soccer field. The School Council would like to know more about safety planning and how the height of the fence was determined.
7. **Glass and Aluminum Garage Doors in the Gym:** Assess the safety and appropriateness of garage doors in the gym. Evaluate if modifications are necessary to ensure a safe and suitable learning space for students. Active space free of hazards and obstructions.

- 8. Sinks/Handwashing Outside Toilet Rooms:** Examine the accessibility and hygiene of sinks and handwashing facilities, particularly those located outside toilet rooms. Ensure that students have access to clean and convenient handwashing facilities or sanitization stations inside toilet rooms. To prevent students from having to open the door after using the washroom without the ability to do so with clean hands (higher risk of germs spreading)

- 9. Library/Common Area as a Quiet Space:** Address concerns regarding the use of the library/common area as a quiet space. Evaluate if modifications or additional spaces are needed to provide a conducive and quiet environment for students to read and learn.

- 10. Adequate Parking:** Evaluate parking facilities to ensure the capacity, safety and accessibility of the school premises for both students and staff.

- 11. Staffing:** Assess staffing levels to determine if additional resources are required to adequately support students with diverse learning needs. School Council has concern staffing numbers are not being accurately reflected as numbers are not based on hard data. The School Council is requesting information on projected number of students and staff allocation.

- 12. Teacher Hubs Over Desk In Classroom:** School Council has concerns about the lack of a teacher designated space within the classroom. Removing the teachers workspace from the classroom removes the teacher from the classroom and may prove inefficient. Why was this decision made and were teachers consulted?

- 13. Consultation with First Nations:** To what extent were the First Nations consulted during the development of designated spaces within the school. Ensure that their perspectives and needs are considered in creating an inclusive learning environment.

In conclusion, the urgency of these matters cannot be overstated and we trust that your office will take swift and decisive action to address the pressing concerns outline in this letter. The well-being and educational progress of our students depend on it.

We expect a comprehensive response from your office within one week from the date of this letter. This timeline will allow the School Council and concerned stakeholders to take the necessary steps based on your proposed course of action. The gravity of these issues demands a timely and effective resolution, and we trust that you share our commitment to the well-being and success of every student in the Yukon Education System.

Thank you for your immediate attention to these matters. We look forward to receiving your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Whistle Bend Elementary School Council
wbeschoolcouncil@gmail.com;

cc: Honourable Minister of Health and Social Services: Tracy McPhee
Chief Sean Smith, Kwanlin Dün First Nation
Krista Strand, Education, Kwanlin Dün First Nation
Chief Amanda Lean, Ta'an Kwäch'ään Council
Ben Monkman, Education, Ta'an Kwäch'ään Council
Shadelle Chambers: Exec. Director, CYFN
Annette King, Yukon Child and Youth Advocate
Scott Kent, Yukon Party, Education Critic
Currie Dixon, Yukon Party Leader
Lisa Evans, Vice Principal, Takhini Elementary School
Elaine Taylor, Exec. Director, AYSCBC
Alayne Squair, Exec. Director, Child Development Centre