

**Response to written questions  
from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts  
about the 2019 Report of the Auditor General of Canada  
“Kindergarten Through Grade 12 Education in Yukon –  
Department of Education”**

Recommendation 89 - No policy or strategic action plan to collaborate with Yukon First Nations

The Auditor General found that the Department of Education established some partnership structures to work with Yukon First Nations but the Department was not meeting its legislative responsibility to reflect Yukon First Nations culture and languages in education programs.

In paragraph 89, the report recommends that the Department “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.”

In its response to the recommendation the Department stated that it has “established the position of Assistant Deputy Minister, First Nation Initiatives.”

**1. How many rural schools has the new Assistant Deputy Minister visited to date?**

The ADM has contacted all 14 Yukon First Nations to work on their education priorities, and has met with or is arranging meetings with the following Yukon First Nations governments:

- Kwanlin Dün First Nation
- Carcross/Tagish First Nation
- Kluane First Nation
- Liard First Nation
- Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation
- Ross River Dena Council

- Teslin Tlingit Council
- White River First Nation
- Trondek Hwechin
- Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation
- Selkirk First Nation
- Champagne and Aishihik First Nations
- Ta'an Kwach'an Council
- First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun

The ADM has been working to establish relationships with First Nations and will be attending community meetings at rural schools in the new year. She has presented at an Administrators' Meeting, with all school principals in attendance; at an Immersion teachers' forum and at multiple First Nations Education Commission meetings.

The Assistant Deputy Minister has visited Robert Service School and was unable to land in Old Crow for her January visit to Chief Zzeh Gittlit School. Staff from the First Nations Initiatives Branch have made the following visits to rural schools since the beginning of the current school year:

- Khàtinas.àxh Community School in Teslin as part of the First Nations New Teacher Orientation at Brooks Brook
- St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction for the Senior Rural Experiential Model in September 2020
- In-service training for rural teachers in Whitehorse on curriculum about Residential Schools

The ADM and First Nations Initiative Branch staff have visited most Whitehorse area schools.

## **2. How will the Department evaluate the success of the new ADM position?**

The selection committee agreed that the department and the Chiefs Committee on Education would together evaluate the duties and responsibilities of this new position through a joint review after a two-year period. Yukon First Nations are welcome to provide any interim feedback on this position during this period for consideration in the joint review in two years' time.

The department will work with the Chiefs Committee on Education on the process for this joint review, and whether the duties and responsibilities of this position are effectively addressing the intended system and student outcomes, including consideration of Yukon First Nations' priorities in education, the department's responsibilities under the *Education Act*, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call to Action for this position to support Indigenous content in education.

**3. What outcomes, objectives and metrics will be used to assess the efficacy of the position and should it prove successful, is there potential for expanding the resources and staff available to this position?**

The department will work with the Chiefs Committee on Education on the process for this joint review, and whether the duties and responsibilities of this position are effectively addressing the intended system and student outcomes, including consideration of Yukon First Nations' priorities in education, the department's responsibilities under the *Education Act*, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Call to Action for this position to support Indigenous content in education.

As noted in the department's response report, we are working to establish a position in this branch focused on Yukon First Nations language education. As this branch matures, we will continue to consider what additional financial or human resources may be needed for this branch.

*Recommendation 109 - Insufficient supports, resources and cultural training*

*The audit determined that "although the Department's new curriculum aimed to better reflect Yukon First Nations culture, it did not have a human resource plan that identified the current and future resources needed to do so." (Paragraph 100)*

*In paragraph 109, the Auditor General recommends that the Department "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."*

*The Department agreed and committed to "improve educators' access to supports and materials over the 2019–20 school year."*

*The responses stated that "In the 2020–21 school year, the Department will gather feedback from educators on the implementation of the new curriculum. This feedback*

*will determine what further training and supports are needed to ensure educators have the skills and knowledge they need to effectively deliver the modernized curriculum.”*

**4. Can you explain further how the department will determine human resources and training required to develop classroom support and materials to help teachers implement the new curriculum as it pertains to Yukon First Nations culture and languages? Will the Department be hiring more FTEs in anticipation of increased workload?**

We want to ensure that schools meet the needs of Yukon First Nation students and to offer all students opportunities to learn about Yukon First Nations histories, cultures, languages and ways of knowing, doing and being in all Yukon schools. The new curriculum offers localized learning opportunities and guides Yukon educators in connecting learning outcomes to community resources and local First Nations’ cultures, histories and languages.

We provide and offer professional learning relating to the new curriculum to educators each year. The budget for professional development and training for Yukon educators in 2019-20 is approximately \$1.67 million, an increase compared to last year’s budget of \$1.63 million for these activities.

Included in both these amounts is the Government of Yukon’s significant contribution of \$475,000 to the Yukon Teachers’ Association Professional Development Fund. This funding is established under the collective agreement to provide opportunities for educators to pursue their individual professional learning needs and interests.

In 2019-20, based on current research on professional learning and feedback from teachers, paraprofessionals and principals; senior officials delegated the planning authority for the six professional development and non-instructional days each year to Principals, with input from their staff and School Councils. Schools are expected to base these professional learning days on a list of themes relating to the modernization and indigenization of curriculum and instructional practice. This included a requirement to have one day dedicated to Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing and being.

We are also working to address the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including developing greater partnerships with Yukon First Nations, more culturally inclusive schools and curriculum and training for staff.

Some of the recent actions we have completed to improve how we support Yukon First Nations culture and language in schools include:

- Drafted sample units for K-12 integrating Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing and being for educators.
- In partnership with Yukon First Nations, delivered a Yukon First Nation orientation for new teachers at Brooks Brook in August 2019.
- Purchased and distributed Indigenous atlases for each school to help integrate Yukon First Nations ways of knowing and doing and being in the classroom.
- Increased communication and access to curriculum materials and supports in the 2019-20 school year by issuing the Educator Update newsletter, which we use to share curriculum resources with teachers, twice per month during the school year starting in September 2019.

We are also working on the following:

- Piloting a new Grade 5 unit about the history of the Indian Residential Schools system in the 2019-20 school year in seven schools, and updating existing Grade 10 curriculum materials on the subject.
- Principals leading the planning for their annual school professional development plans, connected to school growth plans and cultural inclusion with their teams, based on student and staff learning needs.
- Having all staff take the Yukon First Nations 101 course from Yukon College on a rolling basis, with the intention being for all staff to complete this or an equivalent course.
- Adding additional local resources and curriculum support materials on a continual basis to the Educators' Place, the online resource portal for Yukon teachers.

We will continue to work with Yukon First Nations and education partners, including the Yukon Teachers' Association, to utilize promising teacher professional learning approaches and resources to support Yukon educators in ensuring the success of students and support the implementation of modernized curriculum and instruction.

At this time, our primary focus is to ensure that we are effectively using the resources we currently have. We are gathering information about what is going on for our learners and working to align our human and financial resources to ensure we are effectively using them to meet the learning needs of all Yukon students.

We are making a shift at every level of the department to organize for effectiveness, by reflecting on and assessing the outcomes of our actions, as this audit addresses the

core work of our department. Leaders, at every level of the department, are expected to be aware of the human and financial resources they have available to them and given the tools to manage effectively and be empowered to make and be accountable for decisions at the local level. Going forward, by organizing for effectiveness, we will make informed decisions about how to effectively use current resources and any additional resources that may be needed.

To improve how we support the implementation of the new curriculum and learning about First Nation cultures and languages, we have made changes in the department's organizational structure by prioritizing existing resources. These changes included establishing the new First Nations Initiative Branch and ADM of First Nations Initiatives. We have also worked within existing resources to establish our Performance and Analytics Unit, which gathers system data and generates and analyzes student performance data and evidence to deepen our understanding of whether or not the actions we have taken are improving outcomes for Yukon students.

As indicated in [exhibit 10](#) submitted during the audit hearing, we will be conducting a review of inclusive and special education programming for Yukon students, which we expect to take place from January to June 2020. We will use the initial recommendations and feedback gathered from this review to guide and inform decisions about effective student supports and improved delivery and monitoring of service to students with special education needs in Yukon schools at the system, school and student levels.

Any additional changes to budgets will be made through the Government of Yukon's regular budget planning process.

## **5. What's the timeline for implementation?**

The department is committed to working with students, educators, families, education partners, and Yukon First Nations governments to address the issues and recommendations contained in the Audit Report, to ensure students have the supports they need to succeed at school, and to improve student outcomes. The department is using the audit's recommendations to guide its plans and decisions to improve and modernize learning supports for Yukon students, with Yukon First Nations and our partners in education.

We have addressed some priority areas to improve how we support the implementation of the new curriculum and First Nations culture and language learning

in schools, including providing schools with more control over professional development and establishing the new First Nations Initiatives Branch.

The department has a number of ongoing initiatives to provide additional educator resources and training to support the delivery of the curriculum, including resources and training about personalized (differentiated) learning, and Yukon First Nations cultures and languages developed with Yukon First Nations.

In the 2020-21 school year, we are planning to gather feedback from educators on the types of training and support they find most beneficial in their learning and in implementing the new curriculum, including for how it pertains to Yukon First Nations language and culture.

The response report provided for the hearing includes further actions and timelines to address related priority areas for us to improve the educational services we deliver to Yukon students.

**6. Does the department have any plans if the feedback on the implementation of the new curriculum is not as good as the department had hoped?**

Yukon's curriculum redesign is the most significant shift in program delivery over the last 50 years. B.C. and Yukon's modernized curriculum are based on leading practices in education across Canada and internationally.

The use of BC's curriculum, with Yukon and Yukon First Nations content, was originally recommended by partners through Yukon First Nations and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education in 2016. Yukon will continue to use BC's curriculum. The next phase of this curriculum implementation will be to deepen system-wide understanding and application of the underlying principles of the redesign, which are: personalized and flexible learning; project-based instruction; student-centered assessment and Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, doing and being.

We have planned since the start of this work, in 2014, to have ongoing training and support for teachers and have worked to put in place structures, such as professional learning networks and inquiry-based growth planning, to support teachers over time. In the 2020-21 school year, we are planning to gather feedback from educators on the types of training and support they find most beneficial in their learning and in implementing the new curriculum, including for how it pertains to Yukon First Nations language and culture. We will hear from teachers on what is working and the different

supports they may need to effectively deliver the curriculum and meet the learning needs of Yukon students.

We will make adjustments based on what we hear, and will continue to provide, each year, the resources and training needed to realize the modernized and indigenized learning and instruction that is the aim of our new curriculum.

Further, the report deals broadly with capacity issues within the Department of Education and specifically with the teachers. We saw that the engagement survey saw an increase in negative answers since 2016 on the following statements: “My workload is manageable”, “My work-related stress is manageable”, and “I feel support during times of change”.

**7. How does the Department plan to implement the recommendations of the Auditor General without increasing the strain on an already strained public service?**

The Government of Yukon surveys employees every two years, and this provides an opportunity for employees to share ideas, suggestions and concerns about their work, their job satisfaction and the overall organization. We value this feedback and observe that stress and workload are ongoing concerns for many of our employees. Survey results for the [department](#) and [schools](#) can be found at [yukon.ca/en/employment/ethics-behaviour-and-culture/employee-engagement](http://yukon.ca/en/employment/ethics-behaviour-and-culture/employee-engagement).

We are taking steps to create a positive, inclusive and healthy work and learning culture, including supporting mental health and psychologically safe work places by providing resources and training across the department, such as mindfulness tools and mindset awareness.

This audit focuses on the core work of our department, and many of its recommendations relate to improving how we do this core work, which aligns with the implementation of our new curriculum. We are taking a close look to ensure that we are effectively using our resources and that we are providing effective supports for students and staff to improve student outcomes.

The department’s focus is to use disciplined inquiry and evidence to assess where our work is effective and where we may need to adjust our approach or allocate resources differently as part of organizing for effectiveness. This includes identifying what we must stop doing as well as start doing. For example, we worked within existing financial and human resources to establish both the First Nations Initiatives Branch and



the Performance Analytics Unit. Through the review of inclusive and special educational programming, we will consider our service model and resources and how to more effectively deliver supports to Yukon students.

#### **8. What additional staffing costs does the Department anticipate with regards to the implementation of the recommendations?**

This audit focuses on the core work of our department and many of its recommendations relate to improving how we do our core work. To make informed decisions about future funding needs, we are first taking a close look to ensure that we are effectively using our existing financial and human resources to improve student outcomes.

Working within our existing resources, including staffing, the department's initial focus is assessing where our work is effective and where we may need to adjust our approach or allocate resources differently as part of organizing for effectiveness.

We are using the recommendations from the audit, the review of inclusive and special education as well as discussions with Yukon First Nations to ensure we:

- take effective actions to provide quality learning environments;
- provide effective supports to students to improve outcomes; and
- use evidence to validate that actions taken are having the desired impact.

Any additional changes to budgets will be made through the Government of Yukon's regular budget planning process.

#### **9. What will the department be doing to prioritize the recommendations of the Auditor General?**

The Department of Education has accepted all of the recommendations contained in the 2019 Auditor General's report, and provided its initial response to those recommendations. The department is committed to working with students, educators, families, education partners, and Yukon First Nations governments to address the issues and recommendations contained in the Audit Report, to ensure students have the supports they need to succeed at school, and to improve educational outcomes for Yukon students.

The department is using the audit's recommendations to guide its plans and decisions to improve and modernize learning supports for Yukon students, with Yukon First Nations governments and our partners in education.

We have provided our draft plan for responding to the audit's recommendations in the Response report document. This report includes actions and timelines to address priority areas for us to improve the educational services we deliver to Yukon students. Work to respond to the audit's recommendations has also been prioritized for each Department of Education ADM and their branches.

Recommendation 89 - No policy or strategic action plan to collaborate with Yukon First Nations

In its response to the recommendation in paragraph 89 of the report, the Departed stated that it has "established the position of Assistant Deputy Minister, First Nation Initiatives."

**10. How many rural schools has the new Assistant Deputy Minister visited to date?**

Repeat of Question 1

**11. How will the Department evaluate the success of the new ADM position?**

Repeat of Question 2

Previous report

The Office of the Auditor General previously examined public school programs with a performance audit in 2009 that found that the Department's data "showed gaps between First Nations and non-First Nations students on standardized math and language arts tests" and "the Department did not adequately analyze root causes, prepare action plans, or take corrective measures to help close those gaps."

(Paragraphs 19-20 of current report)

**12. What are some of the more significant changes that have taken place in the department since the 2009 audit?**

## **Modernization of K-12 education**

Since 2014, the department has been working on the redesign of the K-12 school curriculum with the BC Ministry of Education, Yukon First Nations and partners in education through the Advisory Committee on Yukon Education.

This has included a gradual, multi-year implementation in schools as we provided families and educators with information, support and resources so they could understand these changes, which are based on leading practices in modern learning and culturally responsive education from around the world.

Yukon educators helped develop the redesigned curriculum with the B.C. Ministry and the department is working with Yukon educators and Yukon First Nations to continue to embed more Yukon-based and Yukon First Nations content and resources for all grades and subject areas.

The new curriculum maintains high academic standards. Each grade level and subject area in the curriculum has proficiency standards to measure students' performance and progress.

## **Strategic planning**

Since 2009, the department has been working to improve its practices in strategic planning, including: consistency; alignment with mandate, commitments and strategic priorities; partner engagement and identification of joint priorities; and regular check-in's with managers on progress at regular meetings.

## **School Growth Planning**

After 2009, the department updated the school growth planning process and developed a policy as per the 2009 audit's recommendations to ensure schools were focusing on supporting student outcomes and aligned with priorities identified by their school communities.

More recently, after collaboration with partners and Yukon First Nations, the department is completing revisions to the School Growth Planning Process and Policy for June 2020, to roll out in the 2020-21 school year. This work was highlighted in [exhibit 6](#) submitted during the audit hearing.

## **Student performance data**

Since 2009, the department has made system-wide data more accessible by publishing it directly online and not just in the Annual Report, and by developing with Yukon First Nations a 'How Are We Doing' report on First Nations student performance.

While the department collects a fair amount of student performance data, we have not done enough to analyze that data, as pointed out in this audit. We are taking action to do this analysis more effectively, with our new Performance and Analytics Unit, modernized system and processes for student data management, and collaboration process with Yukon First Nations.

We are also working with the Council of Yukon First Nations and Chiefs Committee on Education to develop a data sharing agreement and working to identify how to share Yukon First Nations student data with their respective First Nations governments. We expect to have this strategy initially in place by August 2020.

### **Teacher evaluations**

In 2018-19, after working with partners and Yukon First Nations, the department introduced a modernized teacher evaluation process, the “Yukon Framework for Teacher Growth”. The updated evaluation process reflects best practices in adult and professional learning featuring performance scales, constructive feedback opportunities and strength-based professional growth and development.

As of the 2019-20 school year, a process for tracking teacher evaluations is now in place, including notifications to school principals about staff evaluations that are due. As an additional oversight measure, a report on the completion of these evaluations will be provided to the Minister by July 1, 2020

### **13. How will these changes address the shortcomings this audit has identified?**

All the changes and actions underway are focused on understanding and taking ownership of the responsibilities we each carry, with students at the centre of our decision-making and by continuing to work to build strong effective relationships with partners and Yukon First Nations.

The themes we have seen in the 2019 audit are similar to some from the 2009 audit – that the department needs to focus on:

- Supporting student learning needs and improving student outcomes, especially for First Nations students, rural students and students with special educational needs;
- Quality assurance, including monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of actions taken; and

- Supporting staff learning needs, to ensure educators have the training and resources they need for modern instruction and assessment in our new curriculum, for First Nations education and for inclusive and special education.

The department has to work to do, and is building on some of the work done after the 2009 audit in order to improve student outcomes and Yukon’s public education system.

With the curriculum redesign, Yukon students are learning more about Yukon and Yukon First Nations – their education is becoming connected to their communities and experiences, making it more relevant and engaging.

The department is now better positioned to do root cause analysis on student performance with a Performance and Analytics Unit, modernized system and processes for student data management, and collaboration process with Yukon First Nations.

As we move forward, our focus is on understanding what is happening for our learners so that we can identify specific strategies to improve student outcomes. We want to be effective in our response so that we are confident that we are doing the right work. By building key relationships and aligning these strategies with system-wide planning and community level planning such as School Growth Plans we will become more effective and efficient, respectively.

#### **14. Was this analysis performed?**

- **What were the results, and what actions were taken in response to it?**
- **In light of the recommendation, why were no actions undertaken?**

While the department has collected a fair amount of student performance data since the 2009 audit, we have not done enough to analyze that data, as pointed out in the 2019 audit. We have taken action to do this analysis more effectively with our new Performance and Analytics Unit, modernized system and processes for student data management, and collaboration process with Yukon First Nations.

As noted in the response report, we are working this year with the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education and Yukon First Nations to refine Yukon student outcome indicators and performance targets, which will inform the department’s strategy to improve student outcomes.

There are key learning points for students that are significant to their success as they progress through their learning journey these include: the transition into Kindergarten; the development of literacy and numeracy skills in the primary grades (K-3), the

transition to secondary school at Grade 8; and the transition into the graduation years at Grade 10. We are focusing our attention on these key points in order to have a greater impact on supporting student success and improved student outcomes. To this end we are focused on leading indicators such as student performance in key areas like Kindergarten "readiness to learn", Grade 4 and Grade 7 reading, writing and numeracy through the Yukon Foundation Skills Assessments, and the Grade 10 numeracy and literacy proficiency assessments which show us where students may need different supports.

A change in this area will be our increased ability to track cohorts or groups of students to see if what we did to support them did in fact result in improved outcomes. For example tracking Grade 4 students as a group into Grade 7 and enabling schools to reflect on assessment results to determine if the actions taken have resulted in improved outcomes. The department has processes in place, such as School Growth Planning, Professional Learning Networks and partner advisory committees, that will enable us to share our stories of the successful actions taken support and improve student outcomes as we scan and analyze Yukon student performance data.

The department is developing a strategy to improve student outcomes with Yukon First Nations and partners in education. We expect to have an initial strategy in place by August 2020.

*Paragraph 18 of the 2009 report called for “Better identification, analysis, and reporting of student performance results and appropriate corrective plans”.*

### **15. What measures were implemented to increase identification, analysis, and reporting of student performance? Could you speak to each of the 3 points?**

#### **Identification**

Following the 2009 audit, the department made changes and expanded the student performance data and indicators that it tracked in order to better identify student performance results, as follows:

- 5-year Graduation Rate – how many students who graduate with a Dogwood diploma from the cohort of Grade 12 students are eligible to graduate as of the start of that school year.
- 6-year Completion Rate – how many students from a Grade 8 cohort graduate with a Dogwood Diploma within six years.

- Moved to using Grades 4 and 7 Yukon Foundation Skills Assessments, which indicates how students at these key points are doing in foundational skills for learning in reading, writing and math. As of spring 2019, reporting on students who are emerging or unknown to focus attention on those most in need of support.
- Moved to using the Boehm Test of Basic Concepts and the Early Years Evaluation to assess students' readiness for learning as they enter Kindergarten.
- Student attendance – the department has worked to improve the policy and practices relating to student attendance, such as how partial days and cultural/community activities are accounted for.

We are working this year with the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education and Yukon First Nations to refine Yukon student outcome indicators and performance targets, which will inform the department's strategy to improve student outcomes.

## Analysis

The 2009 and the 2019 audit found and the department acknowledges that it has not done enough to understand the root causes of the long-standing gaps in student outcomes.

The department did review the student performance data it began to generate following the 2009 Audit and noted that there were significant gaps in student performance between rural and urban students, and between First Nations and non-First Nations students. We are working to do this analysis more effectively, with our Performance and Analytics Unit, modernized system and processes for student data management, and collaboration process with Yukon First Nations.

There are key learning points for students that are significant to their success as they progress through their learning journey these include: the transition into Kindergarten; the development of literacy and numeracy skills in the primary grades (K-3), the transition to secondary school at Grade 8; and the transition into the graduation years at Grade 10. We are focusing our attention on these key points in order to have a greater impact on supporting student success and improved student outcomes. To this end we are focused on leading indicators such as student performance in key areas like Kindergarten "readiness to learn", Grade 4 and Grade 7 reading, writing and numeracy through the Yukon Foundation Skills Assessments, and the Grade 10 numeracy and

literacy proficiency assessments which show us where students may need different supports.

A change in this area will be our increased ability to track cohorts or groups of students to see if what we did to support them did in fact result in improved outcomes. For example tracking Grade 4 students as a group into Grade 7 and enabling schools to reflect on assessment results to determine if the actions taken have resulted in improved outcomes.

## **Reporting**

The department has reported its student performance data and results on its website, in its annual reports, and in the 'How Are We Doing' Report for First Nations student performance.

We also developed and distributed school data profiles to principals, which is a summary of student performance data specific to each school. These profiles are one source of evidence that will help school staff understand what is happening for their students, identify needs of the students who may need different support and develop strategies in their School Growth Plans to address those needs.

The department has work to do, and will build on the work done after the 2009 audit in order to improve student outcomes and Yukon's public education system.

*The 2019 report states that gaps between students remain significant. The Auditor General found "that 10 years after [the] previous audit, gaps in student outcomes continued to exist between First Nations and non-First Nations students" and the report "also found that gaps in student outcomes existed between rural and urban students." (Paragraph 23)*

## **16. What actions were taken to reduce these gaps in the last 10 years?**

Many factors contribute to a student's success at school, including skilled instruction, engaging learning, regular attendance, and support networks for students in and outside of school. The data tells us that some First Nations and rural learners need different supports to be successful at school.

There is research to suggest that the achievement gap can also be viewed as a gap in opportunity. It is from this lens that, in 2012 the department took action to begin to address the needs of rural students and the inequity of opportunity. Often rural



students do not have access to the same range of social, emotional, physical and academic supports that are available to students in Whitehorse, which contributes to a lack of equity of opportunities and conceivably achievement outcomes. Living in rural and remote areas of Yukon also creates challenges in terms of infrastructure and capacity. Actions to date, have focused on supporting rural students through expanded programming options, where students can work together in larger groups across communities; access shared resources and staff; and study more arts, trades, and other specialized courses.

Actions taken included:

- The Rural Experiential Model, which is an intensive week-long program of study for rural students to gain two of four required credits in Fine Arts and Applied Skills.
- Rural high school and alternative programming, which focused on developing rural high school programming as well as alternative program options at individual rural schools based on the Whitehorse Individual Learning Centre model.
- Trades and apprenticeship programming, such as the mobile trades training trailer run by Yukon College's Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, which offers dual credit programs to rural students.
- The department also coordinates other school programs and services to support rural students, such as Positive Behaviour Intervention Supports like self-regulation.

Since the 2009 audit, the Department of Education has worked to improve data collection and how it uses student data. We made efforts to move toward system-wide assessment tools that we could use to support student learning and classroom instruction as well as system-level reporting. We introduced tools such as the Foundation Skills Assessments, School Wide Writes and District Assessment of Reading Team (DART) and made efforts to incorporate them into School Growth Planning. We also began work with the Council of Yukon First Nations and First Nation Education Commission to develop a report on Yukon First Nation student achievement.

We need a deeper understanding of what is happening for Yukon learners in order to make better evidence-based decisions to address root causes and student learning needs in order to improve student outcomes. We need to focus on the learners who need our support the most in order to succeed; with this in mind our data and targets

are now focused on students who are 'Emerging or Unknown' in relation to grade level learning outcomes because improvements made in learning for these students will result in increasing the number of students who are 'on track' or 'extending'.

'Emerging or unknown' indicates students that demonstrate an initial or partial understanding of the concepts and competencies relevant to the expected learning for their grade level. The department is working to decrease the number of students 'emerging or unknown' as part of its student outcome performance targets.

We have begun working with Yukon First Nations and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education to refine student outcome indicators and performance targets for graduation rates and key indicators, including early years' literacy and numeracy with an eye to develop an overall framework with student outcome indicators and performance targets to improve student outcomes.

### **17. Why was the implementation of these actions unsuccessful?**

We acknowledge we need to do things differently to improve the delivery of educational services to all Yukon learners, especially rural and First Nations students and those with special education needs.

Though we took action to address gaps in student outcomes, we did not do enough to understand the root causes for these gaps and to assess our student performance data to understand if these actions were improving student outcomes. While we have worked to gather and publish student performance indicators about Yukon students in K-12, including data about urban, rural and Yukon First Nations students, we have not yet implemented a comprehensive strategy for measuring and analyzing differences in student outcomes and targeting initiatives to address these differences.

We have begun discussions with Yukon First Nations and the Advisory Committee on Yukon Education to develop and implement an overall strategy to improve the gathering and distribution of system data with a focus on getting at root causes, taking informed actions and evaluating the effectiveness of the actions we take.

The strategy will include performance improvement goals to track and measure student success; clarify outcome indicators; and outline a framework of performance targets both system-wide and community level to inform the planning, implementation and evaluation of strategic actions. The purpose of identifying strategic actions will be to better assist students who may need more support to succeed at school, and will be focused particularly on Yukon First Nations, rural students and students with special learning needs.

This includes working with the Council of Yukon First Nations and Chiefs Committee on Education to develop a data sharing agreement and working to identify how to share Yukon First Nations student data with their respective First Nations governments. We expect to have this strategy initially in place by August 2020.

We also did not do enough to evaluate the department's performance. In 2014, as we began working closely with British Columbia on the new curriculum development and implementation, the department entered a period of significant professional learning and system change. During this time, we realized that some of the systems and processes we had initiated, as a result of the 2009 audit, could be improved in terms of their effectiveness in improving student outcomes.

This led to further revisions to School Growth Planning and teacher evaluation, etc. during a time when system change was already underway in several program areas. Senior officials, at that time, put the School Growth Planning process on hold in the 2016-17 school year as it was revised, and we acknowledge that the existing process should have continued until the new process was fully implemented. We also acknowledge that we had a responsibility to continue this type of monitoring and reporting while we redesigned our processes.

We are now into the implementation of these improved processes to help us address the issues raised in the audit. We will leverage the work that has been done to develop and train educators on disciplined inquiry and School Growth Planning and formative Teacher Evaluation approaches to support actions in response to the audit's recommendations. These new tools are aligned with promising practices in teacher professional development and adult learning and provide a structured approach for school staff to focus on student learning needs in order to improve outcomes, including addressing root causes.

*Paragraph 39 of the 2009 report recommended that the Department “determine what performance data it needs to gather” and “analyze data to identify critical trends and significant performance gaps”.*

**18. In 2009, the only performance indicator available for First Nations students were the Yukon Achievement Test results for those students. What other performance indicators have been tracked in the last 10 years?**

The department now tracks the following student outcome indicators system-wide:

**Learning readiness**

- Boehm Test of Basic Concepts – This indicator is used to assess Kindergarten students on their ability to understand language. The department reports on the percentage of Kindergarten students who need either investigation or classroom intervention to support the development of their ability to understand language.
- Early Years Evaluation – This indicator is used to assess Kindergarten students' development in the following areas: awareness of self and environment; social skills and approaches to learning; cognitive skills; language and communication; and physical development (fine motor and gross motor). The department reports on the developmental average of Kindergarten students in each of these areas.

These are two assessments we do at this time. However, we do acknowledge that we have heard from First Nations concerns about whether these tools are culturally relevant and appropriate assessments for all students.

### **Elementary school performance**

- Grade 4 Yukon Foundation Skills Assessments - indicates how students at this key point are doing in essential skills for learning: reading, writing and math.
- Grade 7 Yukon Foundation Skills Assessments - indicates how students at this key point are doing in essential skills for learning: reading, writing and math.

### **High school performance**

- Yukon-wide literacy assessment (Grade 10 and 12)
- Yukon-wide numeracy assessment (Grade 10)

### **High School completion**

- Graduation rates for students enrolled in Grade 12 (Dogwood Diploma) - percentage of students who entered Grade 12 in the fall and then graduated that spring
- Six-year completion rates (Dogwood Diploma, includes Adult Dogwood Diploma) - percentage of students who graduated from a Yukon school within six years of starting Grade 8. Note this does not include students on IEPs that complete a School Completion Certificate (Evergreen).

The department does track First Nations student performance for these outcome indicators, which has been published in the How Are We Doing reports and other sources.

**19. Given the recommendation in 2009 to track additional points of data in order to better understand the gap between Yukon students, why weren't more performance indicators tracked?**

The department did make changes to the student outcome indicators that it tracks system-wide since 2009. For example, we use the Boehm Test of Basic Concepts and the Early Years Evaluation survey instead of the former Early Development Instrument (EDI) because they provide more specific information about important developmental areas for Kindergarten students.

Similarly, we shifted from subject-based assessments in elementary and high school performance to skills-based assessments. Schools and teachers use these assessments to adjust learning approaches for students, to identify where specific supports are needed and to inform the focus of their school growth plan.

We are working this year with the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education and Yukon First Nations to refine Yukon student outcome indicators and performance targets, which will inform the department's strategy to improve student outcomes. For example, we are interested in adding a student outcome indicator that reflects student voices about education and their experiences as learners in the system.

At the same time, we want to ensure the student outcome indicators we do track are focused on key points of the learning journey for student success and become stable data sets, so that we are able to see longer-term trends for analysis over time.

**20. What plan is there currently to begin tracking more data concerning students at risk of underperforming?**

There are key learning points for students that are significant to their success as they progress through their learning journey these include: the transition into Kindergarten; the development of literacy and numeracy skills in the primary grades (K-3), the transition to secondary school at Grade 8; and the transition into the graduation years at Grade 10. We are focusing our attention on these key points in order to have a greater impact on supporting student success and improved student outcomes, so our

current indicators are focused on Kindergarten, Grade 4, Grade 7 and Grade 10 assessments.

Focusing on key leading indicators, like student performance in key areas such as literacy and numeracy through the Yukon Foundation Skills Assessments, shows us where students may need different supports. We have shifted how we report on the Foundation Skills Assessment to focus on students who are emerging or unknown as these are students most in need of our attention and support. Schools and teachers use these assessments to adjust learning approaches for students, to identify where specific supports are needed and to inform the focus of their school growth plans.

We are working this year with the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education and Yukon First Nations to refine Yukon student outcome indicators and performance targets, which will include considering additional outcome indicators to track. For example, discussions to date suggest we are all interested in adding a student outcome indicator that reflects student voices about education and their experiences as learners in the system. In this case, it could yield some additional data regarding the degree to which the learning environment is inclusive.

We are also working with Yukon First Nations on a data sharing agreement and establishing a joint working group on data to collaborate on outcome indicators, performance targets and root cause analysis affecting First Nations student outcomes.

The department has to work to do, and will build on the work done after the 2009 audit in order to improve student outcomes and Yukon's public education system. At the same time, we want to ensure the student outcome indicators we do track are focused on key points of the learning journey for student success and become stable data sets, so that we are able to see longer-term trends for analysis over time.

*Some programs were implemented since 2009. Notably, the Rural Experiential Model was brought on as a hands-on learning experience for rural students.*

**21. What findings were used in implementing the experiential model? Was the basis of the curriculum built around pre-existing experiential models, as those seen at the Wood Street Center?**

As mentioned, rural students may not have access to the range of social, emotional, physical and academic supports that are available to students in Whitehorse, which has contributed to a lack of equity of outcomes and opportunities. On average, rural Yukon students have lower attendance and academic achievement rates, and First Nations

students have significantly lower attendance and achievement rates as compared to non-First Nations students. Living in rural and remote areas of Yukon also creates challenges in terms of infrastructure and capacity.

The Rural Experiential Model (REM) was introduced to begin to address these inequities. The program is aimed at supporting rural students and offers expanded opportunities for programming where they can work together in larger groups across communities; share resources and staff; and study more arts, trades, and other specialized courses.

The REM was designed to address issues, including how rural students, many of whom are First Nations citizens, do not have access to the wide variety of social emotional, experiential and academic opportunities available to urban students. REM provides students from small communities with opportunities to make friends and learn from students outside their communities, and have access to a wider variety of programming.

All Yukon schools follow BC's curriculum, and high school students participating in Senior REM earn two credits for either Fine Art or Applied Skills that are required for graduation. The REM aims to build relationships and increase engagement among rural teachers and students. It is intended to support equity in education for rural students by delivering a more diverse range of high quality learning opportunities to rural students and encourage students to be engaged in their learning.

Rural Experiential Models were first introduced for Grades 10-12 students in the fall of 2013. The Junior REM for Grades 7-8 students was introduced in 2016.

## **22. What review was conducted to measure the success of the implementation of the Rural Experiential Model? What were the results?**

We acknowledge more work needs to be done in evaluating program outcomes. We want a deeper understanding of what is happening for Yukon learners in order to make better evidence-based decisions on actions to improve student outcomes.

We have made some efforts to survey students about their experiences at the Rural Experiential Model (REM). We have seen a high level of satisfaction from students participating in REM. From surveys and experience, we know rural school communities are excited to participate in the Rural Experiential Model (REM) each year. They are excited to learn, to rise to meet challenges; embrace Yukon First Nations' ways of knowing, doing and being; and develop hands-on skills.

We need to do more to assess if what we are doing is addressing root causes and improving rural student outcomes overall. We have begun working with Yukon First Nations and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education to refine key outcome indicators and performance targets to improve student achievement outcomes. This work on outcome indicators and performance targets will help us build a deeper understanding of what is happening for Yukon learners and target actions in response.

We have begun and will continue to invest in professional learning and inquiry-based training to implement a system wide approach of disciplined inquiry as a means to focus in on what is going on for our learners, identify root causes and take action. Whether collectively or at the individual school level, we are deepening our understanding of our learners and developing our evaluation skills by learning to use data to inform actions and evaluate their effectiveness, such as assessing how effective REM has been in improving rural student outcomes.