



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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## STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**Public Proceedings: Evidence**

**Wednesday, December 11, 2019 — 9:00 a.m.**

Chair: Stacey Hassard

## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**Chair:** Stacey Hassard

**Vice-Chair:** Paolo Gallina

**Members:** Ted Adel  
Don Hutton (substituting for the Hon. Richard Mostyn)  
Wade Istchenko  
Kate White

**Clerk:** Allison Lloyd, Clerk of Committees

**Witnesses:** **Office of the Auditor General of Canada**

Karen Hogan, Assistant Auditor General

Jo Ann Schwartz, Principal

**Department of Education**

Nicole Morgan, Deputy Minister

Lori Duncan, Assistant Deputy Minister, First Nations Initiatives

Kelli Taylor, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy and Partnerships

Michael McBride, Director, Policy and Planning

Jackie McBride-Dickson, Director, Finance, Systems and Administration

**EVIDENCE****Whitehorse, Yukon****Wednesday, December 11, 2019 — 9:00 a.m.**

**Chair (Mr. Hassard):** I will now call to order this hearing of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

The Public Accounts Committee is established by Standing Order 45(3) of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. This Standing Order says: “At the commencement of the first Session of each Legislature a Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall be appointed and the Public Accounts and all Reports of the Auditor General shall stand referred automatically and permanently to the said Committee as they become available.”

On January 12, 2017, the Yukon Legislative Assembly adopted Motion No. 6, which established the current Public Accounts Committee. In addition to appointing members to the Committee, the motion stipulated that the Committee shall — quote: “... have the power to call for persons, papers and records and to sit during intersessional periods.”

Today, pursuant to Standing Order 45(3) and Motion No. 6, the Committee will investigate the Auditor General of Canada’s report entitled *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Yukon — Kindergarten Through Grade 12 Education in Yukon — Department of Education*.

I would like to thank all of the witnesses from the Department of Education for appearing. I believe that Deputy Minister Nicole Morgan will introduce these witnesses during her opening remarks.

Also present today are officials from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. They are Karen Hogan, Assistant Auditor General, and Jo Ann Schwartz, Principal.

I will now introduce the members of the Public Accounts Committee. I am Stacey Hassard, the Chair of the Committee and the Member for the Legislative Assembly for Pelly-Nisutlin. To my left is Paolo Gallina, who is the Committee’s Vice-Chair and the Member for Porter Creek Centre. To his left is Kate White, Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and further left is Ted Adel, Member for Copperbelt North, and to the far left is Wade Istchenko, Member for Kluane. Finally, behind me is Don Hutton, Member for Mayo-Tatchun, who is substituting today for the Hon. Richard Mostyn.

The Public Accounts Committee is an all-party committee with a mandate to ensure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in public spending — in other words, accountability for the use of public funds. The purpose of this public hearing is to address issues of the implementation of policies, whether programs are being effectively and efficiently delivered, and not to question the policies of the Government of Yukon. In other words, our task is not to challenge the government policy, but to examine its implementation. The results of our deliberations will be reported back to the Legislative Assembly.

So, to begin the proceedings, Ms. Schwartz will give an opening statement summarizing the findings of the Auditor

General’s report. Ms. Morgan will then be invited to make an opening statement on behalf of the Department of Education. Committee members will then ask questions.

As is the Committee’s practice, the members devise and compile the questions collectively. We then divide them up among the members. The questions each member will ask are not their personal questions on a particular subject, but those of the entire Committee. After the hearing, the Committee will prepare a report of its proceedings, including any recommendations that the Committee wishes to make. This report will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

Before we start the hearing, I would ask that questions and answers be kept brief and to the point so that we may deal with as many issues as possible in the time allotted for this hearing. I would also ask the Committee members, witnesses, and officials from the Office of the Auditor General to wait until they are recognized by the Chair before speaking. This will keep the discussion more orderly and allow those listening on the radio or on the Internet to know who is speaking.

So, with that, we will now proceed with Ms. Schwartz’s opening statement.

**Ms. Schwartz:** Mr. Chair, we are pleased to be in Whitehorse today to discuss our audit report on education. This report was submitted on June 18 to the Yukon Legislative Assembly. I am accompanied by Karen Hogan, Assistant Auditor General.

In this audit, we looked at whether the Department of Education assessed and addressed gaps in student outcomes. We also looked at whether the department delivered education programs that were inclusive and reflected Yukon First Nation culture and languages.

This audit is important because education is a path to helping youth become productive and participating members of society and communities. Of equal importance is that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, which documented the history and impacts of the Indian residential school system, called for improving education levels and success rates for aboriginal peoples and for eliminating education gaps between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians.

Overall, we found that the department did not know whether its programs met the needs of students, particularly those with special needs and those from Yukon First Nations. We found that 10 years after our previous audit, gaps in student outcomes continued to exist between First Nation and non-First Nation students. We also found that gaps in student outcomes existed between rural and urban students.

Our latest audit showed that the Department of Education had done little to identify and understand the root causes of these long-standing education gaps. Without this knowledge, the department had no way of knowing whether its supports for students were working to improve student outcomes or whether it was focusing its time and resources where they were needed most.

We also found that the department had no performance measurement strategy to set targets and guide its actions in closing the gaps and helping students achieve their maximum potential. This lack of strategy was a further obstacle that

prevented the department from addressing the root causes of education gaps and improving student outcomes.

The department has stated that it is committed to inclusive education. It defines “inclusion” to mean that all students are entitled to equal access to learning, achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. With respect to inclusive education, we found that the department did not monitor its delivery of services and supports to students who had special needs, nor did it monitor these students’ outcomes. As a result, the department did not know whether its approach to inclusive education was working or whether it needed to focus more attention on certain schools, groups, teachers, or subject areas.

We found that, although the department had responsibilities for and commitments to providing education programs that reflected Yukon First Nation culture and languages, it did not do enough to create a partnership with Yukon First Nations that would allow it to fully develop and deliver culturally inclusive programs. We also found that the department did not provide enough direction, oversight, and support to help schools deliver culturally inclusive programming.

The Department of Education has agreed with all of our recommendations. The successful implementation of these recommendations will be important to improving the department’s ability to provide inclusive education services and supports to Yukon students.

This concludes my opening statement. We would be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

**Ms. Morgan:** Good morning. Dännch’e. Bonjour. I would like to acknowledge that we are here this morning on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta’an Kwäch’än Council.

With me today I have: Kelli Taylor, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy and Partnerships; to my left, Lori Duncan, Assistant Deputy Minister, First Nations Initiatives; at the far end, Jackie McBride-Dickson, Director of Finance; and just to her left, Michael McBride, Director of Policy and Planning.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to speak on the Auditor General of Canada’s report on kindergarten through grade 12 education in Yukon. Through this audit, seven recommendations have been made for the Department of Education to improve how we deliver educational services to Yukon students. The Auditor General of Canada’s audit has highlighted that there are areas for us to improve how we deliver services to meet student needs, especially the needs of rural students, Yukon First Nation students, and students with special educational needs. We have accepted all seven recommendations. These recommendations have been incorporated into the department’s short- and long-term objectives and are reflected in the department’s plans and initiatives going forward.

We are using them to focus our efforts and improve modernized learning supports for Yukon students, including getting to root causes and building effective working partnerships with Yukon First Nation governments and our partners in education.

The department welcomed this audit as an opportunity for direction on improvements in student learning across the entire education system and we ensured the full cooperation of the central administration staff and schools throughout the review. It is important for us to know whether we are doing the right work so that all students can achieve their academic and personal goals with dignity and purpose. These recommendations show us a way forward.

The department is taking immediate actions and is undertaking long-term plans with partners to improve the education system in supporting student success. We are making changes to better understand at every level — from the classroom to the senior management of the department — what the intended student outcomes are; where our students, school staff, and leaders are at; where they are going and why; and how they will get there. This means focusing on student outcomes and quality assurance, developing an overall strategy that will include a performance framework for the department — including schools — to plan, implement, and evaluate strategic actions using student performance targets and outcome indicators to track our efforts to support the success of students, particularly Yukon First Nation and rural students.

We are working to improve how we use our annual student data to make positive change and to track cohort groups and student performance over time. A deeper understanding and analysis of what is happening for Yukon learners will provide evidence to guide actions and address the types of supports that students need to succeed at school.

We are working to improve staff understanding and ownership of their roles and responsibilities. This is critical to focusing on student outcomes and ensuring oversight — for example, by responding to the audit recommendation that we report on school growth plans to the minister and complete teacher evaluations and by ensuring school growth plans and teacher evaluations are completed and are tracked each year. Taking ownership also means looking at how we are supporting students and staff in their learning, including a review of inclusive and special education programs and services this year. Inclusive education means students with diverse abilities learning together in the same class, with varying supports for their learning needs directly in that class, and teachers and school-based teams identifying and implementing learning plans and individual education plans for students with advice and training from student-support service consultants such as educational psychologists.

We know and acknowledge that there are challenges with the current approach and delivery model for inclusive education and special education programs and services, and we want to ensure that all students receive timely, effective supports for their learning needs and that the approach is consistent across the system and aligned with modern learning approaches that inform Yukon’s curriculum redesign. Supporting staff learning needs means checking in with educators on the curriculum implementation and developing additional materials and training to support them in enhancing their professional learning networks.

Using the recommendations from this audit and working with our partners, we are identifying actions that will help us get to where we need to go. This audit has highlighted that Yukon First Nation governments are significant partners in education. Last year, the department undertook significant action in this area in response to the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. We worked with the Chiefs Committee on Education to establish a new position, an assistant deputy minister of First Nations Initiatives. This position is now filled at the Department of Education. This senior-level role leads the new First Nations Initiatives branch, which is building and sustaining collaborative relationships with Yukon First Nations, leading integration and strong understanding of the 14 Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nations' ways of knowing, doing, and being throughout the Department of Education and developing First Nation curriculum resources through the First Nation Programs and Partnerships unit. As you know, Lori Duncan is here with me today and she has been in this role since June 2019. Her role and her branch are supporting the department's work with 14 Yukon First Nation governments both at the community level through education agreements and collectively on the joint education action plan through the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Chiefs Committee on Education.

These partnerships with Yukon First Nations include working to ensure that Yukon First Nations are informed about student outcomes and the learning performance of their citizens, including sharing performance data. The department also continues to work with partners in education through an advisory committee called the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education. This is the central table for partners to address some of the challenges in engagement and capacity that partners have identified, and it provides an ongoing forum to share perspectives and input into education while we continue to recognize and respect at the same time the unique relationships including government-to-government with Yukon First Nations.

In conclusion, these are just some highlights of the actions that we have taken and will take to respond to the Auditor General's recommendations. We will seek to understand root causes through collaboration with our partners and focusing on what is happening for our learners with an eye to improving student outcomes. This work is complex and important, and it will be guided by the recommendations from the Auditor General.

I appreciate the dedication of our staff, partners, and Yukon First Nation governments in supporting Yukon students. I would like to thank the officials from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada for their work to help us better understand the opportunities to improve the services that we provide to students in the Yukon.

Thank you to the members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for the opportunity to speak directly to the Auditor General's recommendations and how we are responding.

Thank you. Shaw nithän. Merci.

**Chair:** We'll start the questions with Mr. Gallina.

**Mr. Gallina:** Good morning, everyone. I would also like to thank the officials from the Office of the Auditor General for joining us today, as well as witnesses from the Department of Education. As mentioned, the audit is important to help the department improve educational outcomes. I would also like to reiterate the importance of public hearings on performance audits — in particular, this one. Hearings help the public understand opportunities for improvement, as we have just heard from the deputy minister — in this case, within our school programs.

Mr. Chair, the first questions that I have are for the officials of the Office of the Auditor General. Two questions: (1) Can you please explain how the Office of the Auditor General of Canada selected kindergarten through grade 12 education as a matter for evaluation and (2) can the OAG tell us how schools were chosen for the audit and why were other schools not chosen?

**Ms. Hogan:** I will answer the first question and then Ms. Schwartz will answer the second.

Education is an important topic. It affects both individuals and Yukon as a whole. Well-educated citizens are more likely to be healthy, contributing members of the community, and those with limited education face lesser opportunities for jobs and civil participation. Therefore, in education, it is critical that the system works well for all its students, whether they be aboriginal or non-aboriginal.

At the OAG, we go through a rigorous process in order to identify and select audits and that process usually focuses in on three aspects. The first is that we look for impact on Canadians. The second would be that we would focus on residual risk, so we would identify any risks that are left over after a department has set up controls and processes to monitor and implement the programs that it has. Third, we would look at where we can add value to Canadians and to the department. Education is one of those issues that we felt hit all three areas and hence drove a lot of the scope that we used in our audit.

I will ask Ms. Schwartz to answer how we selected those schools.

**Ms. Schwartz:** As part of the planning phase of our audit, we considered many factors when we decided which schools we would visit. This included but was not limited to recommendations from the department and stakeholders, as well as schools with a large First Nation population and schools with both a high and low number of individual education plans.

As part of the examination phase, we wanted to look closer at how services and supports were delivered at the school level. To do this, we chose a targeted sample of schools, and then we randomly selected student files within those schools with the help of our internal sampling specialist. These were files in which students with individual education plans had been identified as needing services and supports.

We selected the schools we reviewed files in based on a combination of factors as well, including but not limited to recommendations from the department and stakeholders, schools with a high population of Yukon First Nation students, and schools with a high number of individual education plans.

We wanted coverage of both secondary and elementary schools as well as we wanted to make sure we had schools that were within Whitehorse and outside of Whitehorse. In addition, we had to consider our own resources in terms of time and travel. In total, throughout the audit, we visited eight schools and we looked at student files within five of those eight schools.

It's important to note that our audit recommendations and our audit conclusion are not specific only to the schools we visited. They are for the Department of Education overall.

**Mr. Gallina:** Education outcomes for Yukon students — the Office of the Auditor General previously examined public school programs with a performance audit in 2009. The 2009 report noted in paragraph 38 that student achievement can be adversely affected by absenteeism. What does the department do to ensure students attend school? Secondly, is there correspondence between students and parents to address this issue?

**Ms. Morgan:** What does the department do to ensure students attend school? Of course, there are many factors that contribute to student success at school. Attendance is one of those that is a priority because we know that when students miss school, they miss important learning opportunities. When they miss school a lot, they struggle in their ability to succeed at school.

Each school does identify ways to improve student attendance. As an example, they have targeted initiatives for groups of students whom they have identified as needing support. They typically do this through their school-based team. Also, individual teachers work collaboratively with parents to try to address student support for attendance.

It's important to note too that we are modernizing learning in Yukon schools as part of the curriculum redesign. So, we are working to make school more engaging. We know that sometimes attendance is linked to boredom at school or feeling like you don't fit in anymore at school, so when we talk about modernizing and having a student-centred learning environment, it is a place where students feel like we are meeting them where they are at in their learning.

When it comes to attendance, sometimes students miss school for valid reasons like illness, family circumstances, or participation in cultural activities. These are the students who will benefit from a learning environment that is more flexible. Sometimes students miss school because they are disengaging from their education. These are the students who will benefit from a learning environment that is personalized.

Other initiatives that are underway as part of this work — and I think that this is a good time to explain that we did bring some exhibits to help understand and show you some of the work that we're doing, so Committee Clerk has a little box there, and she is going to pass around the first exhibit. I thought this would be helpful for folks to see how, in the new process, we are using guidelines to report on student achievement and classroom learning. One of the things that we are doing as part of that work is keeping the classroom mark based on the student's learning and separating out the behaviours for success that we know students need to demonstrate in order to be successful at school. The exhibit that you have before you

shows what a "behaviours for success" report looks like. This would be a conversation that the teacher, parent, and student have as part of the informal reporting on classroom achievement and learning. You will see that attendance is on that list and that it is an important part of the student's responsibility to be successful at school. This is how, in our new curriculum, we have these conversations with students and their parents. On the final written report card, we do still report attendance there.

Other things that we are doing — we work with Victoria Gold, so we have the Every Student, Every Day initiative that is still a big part of our work with partners. We have recently increased the funding for that organization, so we now match the fundraising that they do to \$30,000 per year. There are a number of initiatives that schools bring forward and they use funding from that Every Student, Every Day initiative to help support their efforts in improving attendance for targeted groups.

**Mr. Adel:** Just a quick question — the schools you audited for this report — were they the same ones as 2009 or were they different? Did they overlap?

**Ms. Schwartz:** The schools that we visited as part of this audit in 2019 — we didn't do a cross-comparison to see if any of the same schools were a part of the 2009 audit. This was a separate, independent audit. We didn't set out to do a direct follow-up — although, as you can appreciate, there was some overlap with some of the issues we discussed.

**Mr. Gallina:** Just on the correspondence between students and parents — maybe if you could just elaborate a little more — the "behaviours for success" outline that you've just shared with us — does that have to be shared with the parent and signed off and then returned? Are there other reports where parents have to be included so that they're aware of student participation?

**Ms. Morgan:** The short answer is yes. The overarching goal is to make sure that parents are aware of where their child is at not only physically in the day, but in terms of their overall behaviours for success. In the work that we've been doing around changes to how we report on student learning in the classroom, the surveys that we've been doing with parents — parents are telling us that they want to continue to know this information. They're very interested to know: Does their child have the behaviours for success and where are they at in that?

We also know that parents — in our most recent second survey of parents — parents are telling us that they do like the informal reporting that is giving them this type of information as well as the achievement on where their child is at. This is part of that process. They do have to include this in their informal meetings with students and parents.

The other thing I would say on the awareness piece is that we have — also, schools have started to use an automated system for letting parents know whether or not their child is at school. So currently, there are 13 schools that have started using this automated attendance calling system. It's just a really quick and informative way that parents can just know if their child was at school that day.

I can certainly provide for you the list of schools that are using that messenger system. They use it for different purposes, so we are just trying out this new system. It does enable us to talk to parents about where their student is at in terms of attendance, but also, we can do safety updates and send out notifications to parents. It is important to us to improve that communication between school and home.

**Ms. White:** Just in follow-up to the absenteeism — we often hear from educators that they are tapped out; they are spread thin as they are. Was this developed in conjunction with educators?

**Ms. Morgan:** Yes, I am assuming that you are referring to the “behaviours for success”. That work is coming from our assessment committee and that committee is formed of — I am just going from my memory here — 40 members, the bulk of whom are teachers from across the system who are working to develop these tools.

**Mr. Adel:** One more follow-up question on the behaviours for success. How often is one of these given out to the parents, or how often — does the teacher drive this? Is it quarterly or twice yearly? How often do they go over this to see the progress or not?

**Ms. Morgan:** If I could just clarify the question. How often does the teacher go through —

**Mr. Adel:** How many times is it used in the course of the year to inform the parents and the students of where they are going?

**Ms. Morgan:** Thank you. In terms of communication with the parents, we are telling schools that they are required to use this tool around behaviours for success. Each school has the flexibility now to put together their assessment plan of how they are going to do their informal communication with parents and they need to do that a minimum of five times per year. Schools will then determine what they are focusing on in each of those moments — so it would be dependent on each school how often they are speaking directly to the behaviours for success. They do need to provide, two times in the year, their written interim, and at the final reporting period, they will use the “behaviours for success” sheet.

**Mr. Hutton:** I have a question about Victoria Gold. I recognize their Every Student, Every Day program. I’m really happy that Yukon government has decided to support them along with it, but Every Student, Every Day implies — why wouldn’t we have automatic attendance notification in every school in the territory?

**Ms. Morgan:** So, the automated system that we’re using is a new system that schools are piloting. The schools that are not using that system have other ways that they are communicating with parents. It really depends on the context of the school community how they would do that. In some, the teacher will just call in to the parents and let them know if their child was at school or not that day. The automated system may not necessarily work well in every community. For example, we know that, in Old Crow, we need to look at different ways of how we use technology around informing parents of what’s going on because the technology is just simply not the same as it is in larger communities. But schools do know and do stay in

touch with parents. Sometimes they’ll do that through, as I mentioned, the school-based team. Individual teachers typically follow up with parents if they have concerns about a student not attending. Some will do that on a daily basis; some will do that on a weekly basis.

**Mr. Hutton:** How do you track that those calls have been made?

**Ms. Morgan:** Again, each school is going to have a different process for how they do that. Some will use a call log where the teacher is logging when they called home or they left a message. Other schools will just leave it to the teacher to keep their own log of how they’re communicating with parents. If the attendance issue is something that is going through the school-based team, the school-based team will have a process for how they are keeping track of communication with parents.

**Mr. Adel:** One more question on the behaviours for success: Who is ultimately responsible for overseeing that the schools follow through with this? I think it’s a great-looking tool, but who does that rest with so that we make sure it gets done?

**Ms. Morgan:** The short answer of that is the school principal, who is of course responsible for making sure that all of the requirements under the guidelines for reporting on student learning and classroom learning are being followed.

**Ms. White:** According to paragraph 35 of the current report — the department’s data — and I’m quoting: “... indicated a higher percentage of rural than urban Kindergarten students, particularly those from Yukon First Nations, needed more support in two or more areas of early learning. This analysis allowed the Department to see that, to some extent, the differences in assessment results might relate to whether students attended rural or urban schools.”

What will be done to identify the underlying causes of the long-standing gaps in student outcomes between students in rural and urban schools? Given that the gaps still exist between rural and urban students, what strategies will be implemented to reduce this gap?

**Ms. Morgan:** I think to start to answer this question, I might start from the place that we are working on putting together a strategy around how to address performance gaps. One of the first places that we’re starting is digging into research to understand these performance gaps because they’re not unique to Yukon. They happen in jurisdictions all across Canada. Our research to date indicates that groups that experience student performance gaps typically include First Nation students, English language learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families.

This research also tells us that the achievement gap in education can also be described as an “opportunity gap” because children from these groups may not have had the same opportunities to support their learning that other children do, which affects their achievement levels.

We know, in terms of working with Yukon First Nations, that a large part of that conversation has been working with educators in the Yukon education system to understand the impacts of the intergenerational effects of residential school and how those impacts are continuing in communities today.

When we start from that lens to try to understand how we need to move forward, we have started to think about it around how we can provide more opportunities for these groups of students to start to address the underlying causes which are presenting themselves as an achievement gap.

In terms of our data, then, it means that we do need to continue to look at breaking out our data by groups of students so we can see what is happening for Yukon First Nation students. We are doing that work with the Chiefs Committee on Education, we have established a data working group, and we are very close to finalizing — Kelli can speak better to this — a “how we are doing” report that is specific to providing data around what is happening for Yukon First Nation students. We also track and report out what is happening for rural Yukon students. As the auditor has pointed out, we need to do more work to really dig into this data set because we need to understand more clearly if what is happening for those students is a rural phenomena or if it is connected to the higher number of First Nation students who are in rural schools. So, we have more work to do to separate out data there.

Then we have a data set that is missing. In all of these groups that we have separated out, we have not separated out students with IEPs to see what is happening for them. Do students come off of IEPs at some point? Do students with IEPs graduate with their Dogwood certificate or do they typically have a leaving certificate from school? So, we have work to do in those areas with Yukon First Nations and with the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education — our partners — to look at — we know we have current data that we can use right away, but we also know that we need to know what pieces of data we’re missing which are going to deepen our understanding.

**Ms. White:** One of the challenges that I see just as a member of the public is that early childhood education is housed in Health and Social Services, but every indication says that early access to early childhood education — equitable early childhood education — improves learning outcomes for students. There was the announcement about K4, but at this point in time, we are not incorporating this into all schools. So, will the research look at students who have had access to early childhood education and those who didn’t to see if the outcomes are reflective of that opportunity?

**Ms. Morgan:** The short answer is yes.

We know — the research is very clear — that early learning has a significant impact on future outcomes for students. We know that, if students are not reading to learn by grade 3, their likelihood of graduating is significantly reduced. If they are not reading to learn by grade 3, they have a less than 20-percent chance that they are going to get back to grade level, even with interventions in the school system. So, we do appreciate that we have, within our mandate going forward, a focus on early learning.

Yukon First Nations have been having this conversation and bringing this forward to the department as an area of importance. We do want to start to focus on this within our data strategy, because these are leading indicators. Our focus in this area and work in this area are going to start to change outcomes. When we are focused on lagging indicators or exit indicators

like graduation — yes, it’s important to know the exit of students from the system, but we have very little impact now that they are graduating. They have already run that breadth of experience. So yes — part of our data strategy and the conversations that we are having are absolutely getting focused in this area.

We are working with Health and Social Services, because the other thing that we know — from working with the Council of Ministers of Education Canada and the equivalent body that Health and Social Services participates in — is that the responsibility for early childhood cannot sit in one department or the other. If it’s going to be effective, it needs to be a collaboration across multiple departments.

We are in very early days, but we have started conversations with Health and Social Services around how, if we take the breadth of early development — so Health and Social Services will look at it from prenatal all the way through. Where it comes to us is right in that pre-kindergarten stage — so they are about to transition into kindergarten. Instead of waiting until they come to kindergarten, we want to partner together and really look at what’s happening with pre-kindergarten — that is leading us into early kindergarten — and what we can do in this area. As you know, we have, in our mandate, to focus on rural Yukon schools first as a priority because we know from our data that we need to provide additional support in this area for rural communities. That will be our starting point.

When we look at Whitehorse overall, the pre-kindergarten work doesn’t necessarily have to happen inside a school. So, this is why we want to have more conversations with Health and Social Services about how we can influence this transition that is happening between the two and use data to see whether or not we’re having an impact.

**Mr. Adel:** Is there any indication, going forward with this collaboration and partnership, that we will start assessing kids for reading to learn before grade 3? I mean, if you’re saying “at grade 3” — being the parent of a student who had a learning disability that was not recognized until grade 3, I appreciate the struggle after that. So, are we going to move this to a kindergarten level and so on where we start dealing with these students much earlier?

**Ms. Morgan:** I appreciate that question. This has historically been one of our struggles, and I think this is what the Auditor General was talking about when the observation was made that the department has no idea whether or not what we’re doing is making a difference.

We have these data sets. We do assess students when they come in at kindergarten. We use the Boehm and Early Years Evaluation as tools. I do want to acknowledge that my learning from Yukon First Nations is that it is questionable whether those tools are culturally relevant and appropriate assessments for all students.

I do want to acknowledge that, but suffice to say, we do an assessment. What are we doing with the data in between? Well, we start doing reading assessments and writing assessments in grade 2. In grade 1, we do the reading recovery program and observing where they’re at, but tying those pieces together so



that we are doing two things. One is to give schools a trend of what their data looks like over time, which we have not historically done. This year, for the first time, our school profiles are giving the schools a trend.

The other thing that we are going to start doing — we have a new tool that we're using to process our data. We need to follow the cohort group so that when students in a school write in the fall — they are going to do their Yukon foundation skills assessment. They're going to be tested on reading and writing, and it's happening in the fall. That means that you have come back from the summer as a student, and what did you retain? Where are you at from your end of grade 3? That assessment is significant.

What we want to be able to do is say to the school, "Okay, this is where they were at in kindergarten. What did you do to help them?" None of our schools are so big that we don't actually know the names of the kids at the school level. They know the names of the students, and they do this work. We just haven't put the story together so that they can see whether or not what they have been doing is effective and at what point they could have shifted what they were doing to have greater success.

That is the kind of work that we have to really dig into, and we have to support schools — the central building has to support schools in helping them with this data so that they can see readily where their efforts are showing for the students.

**Ms. White:** Members of the Legislative Assembly have recently received a number of concerns from rural Yukon teachers that insufficient teacher housing in rural communities is impacting teacher retention. What structural gaps is the department filling to address concerns such as teacher housing in rural communities?

**Ms. Morgan:** Thank you for that question. The department certainly recognizes that some rural communities have no private housing market and that the availability of housing has a role in staff recruitment and retention. Currently, 58 educators are in staff housing, 53 are in Government of Yukon housing units, and five are in leased units from other owners.

For Yukon communities that do not have private market housing, we work with the Yukon Housing Corporation and community contacts to identify options for staff housing on a case-by-case basis. To meet the growing demand for housing in communities, the Yukon Housing Corporation is supporting the development of new rental housing and home ownership in Yukon through the municipal matching rental construction grant and housing initiative. These are some of the broad strokes of where the Department of Education meshes with the Yukon Housing Corporation, which looks after a lot of that housing.

If this is helpful, we can provide a written return. I have it here with me, but obviously it is probably painful for me to read what each school community has going on, but we can give you a breakdown by community: if it is identified as having no private market, what the current housing needs are for the school staff, and any vacancies that are at the school.

**Ms. White:** I think written is fine.

Has the department looked at all to Yukon Housing for their new rental policy? Now, for example, for teachers in rural communities who are in Yukon Housing buildings, rent is increasing and so is shortening the allowable amount of time that they can be in housing in the communities where there are no private market rentals. Essentially, we're looking at, I guess, a three-year time limit before a teacher will time out of Yukon Housing. Has the department looked into how that new policy from Yukon Housing will affect rural teachers?

**Ms. Morgan:** We certainly have — in terms of the three years — heard a number of concerns about that restraint potentially creating a situation where — okay, three years, and now I'll just leave the community.

What we know is that, in any of the communities — in particular, those that are identified as having no private market — the deputy minister can work with the public service to have that extended.

**Mr. Adel:** Exhibit 1 in the report is a graph illustrating the percentage of grade 7 students who met or exceeded expectations on the Yukon foundation skills assessment for the school years from 2013-14 to 2017-18.

The next question is directed to both officials from the Office of the Auditor General and the department. Can you tell us why you believe the results of First Nation students improved in the Yukon foundation skills assessment for reading between 2016 and 2018, for writing between 2015 and 2018, and why numeracy remained the same for 2014 through 2018?

**Ms. Schwartz:** As part of our audit, we didn't analyze why there had been an improvement in that area, so it would be a question better suited for the Department of Education. That would be an example of something that they could be analyzing to get a better handle or a better understanding on fluctuations that they're seeing in terms of student outcomes.

**Ms. Morgan:** I would agree with the auditor's comments. I could speculate; I shouldn't speculate. I know that everybody here is going, "Read your notes, Nicole; don't speculate."

That being said, I feel compelled to try to answer the question. Here's an example of how we need to get better at knowing if what we're doing is making a difference.

I did a little research back and what was going on at this time — I do know two things. First of all, the Department of Education, as part of the redesign of the curriculum, was working quite intently at that time on implementing a balanced literacy approach. This was to address literacy gaps and work with teachers to say that literacy doesn't just happen in English class — you are learning the language throughout all of the subject areas — working on this type of approach.

That being said, I also looked into the annual reports of the department. In 2014, Eliza Van Bibber School was working, through their school growth plan and through the school community, to set a goal around improving students' writing. They were doing that through their school-wide writes, and they wanted to reduce the number of students who were "not yet meeting" by 10 percent. They did a number of initiatives that I could tell you about if you want to hear more — but to get the point and be brief, the short of it was that they did make

a significant improvement. It is reported in the 2014 annual report of the Department of Education.

So, two things going on — we don't know: Did they both have an impact? Did just one have an impact? It speaks to, again, that earlier conversation about how we need to be presenting data, using it at the school level, and then keeping the trend going. What happened at Eliza Van Bibber — again, personnel changes, and nobody really followed what was going on with that initiative and where it is at today.

**Mr. Adel:** Paragraph 32 of the report mentions that the gaps in student performance can start appearing as early as grade 4. What indicators are being used to measure the students' performances from grade 4 and onward? Is the plan for remediation of the gap in student performance specific to each year or grade? How can a long-term strategy be successful if the strategy itself doesn't account for each year of learning?

**Ms. Morgan:** I feel like I got ahead of myself because I have already talked a bit about this, but it's a good opportunity to go a little bit deeper into that conversation and say that, in terms of the data that we have at our hands and that we could look at in terms of student achievement, the central administration building is collecting data on grade 4 foundation skills assessments, and in grade 7 — and we have coming in for kindergarten and exiting at graduation.

Schools, on the other hand, have different sets of data at their fingertips and they are able — as I shared in the Eliza Van Bibber example — they do, from grade 2 to grade 9, DART and school-wide writes. The DART is a district reading assessment. They do these year over year. So, at the school level, they do have this ability — and many schools do use these assessments — to track what is going on for students in between the larger system-wide check-ins.

The system-wide assessments are of particular value in a different way because these are assessments that come to us. We have developed these with the BC ministry — so Yukon teachers have developed with British Columbia the assessment tools that are part of the new curriculum. What is helpful is that we are using performance measures so that we can see how we are doing with BC students, so it gives us a larger sample group to see how Yukon students are doing.

So, there are two different stories that come together — how Yukon students are faring in a broader system-wide assessment that can be — if we want to — and this comes out of the data strategy — to see how we do as compared to BC, and we can see how BC does as compared to the rest of the world. Then at the local level, year over year, what is going on for those learners who are in your school? So, who are the students who need the support the most? Who are the students who are meeting, exceeding, or on track?

**Mr. Adel:** We are going to keep on the same sort of vein here. Paragraph 33 notes that, in 2017-18, Yukon Foundation Skills Assessment statistics showed that grade 7 students — 68 percent of First Nation students — met or exceeded reading level expectations compared with 85 percent of non-First Nation students in the same year, and that 44 percent of First Nation students met or exceeded numeracy level expectations compared with 77 percent of non-First Nation students. The

question is: What will be done to identify the underlying causes of long-standing gaps in student outcomes between First Nation and other Yukon students?

**Ms. Morgan:** Thank you for the question. I will maybe start at 30,000 feet and work our way in.

I would just reiterate that the work that we are doing with the Chiefs Committee on Education establishing a data working group with Yukon First Nations — I think is very important work because these are unique conversations that are specific to the challenges with this persistent gap that we see with Yukon First Nation students. Again, I would acknowledge my learning from Yukon First Nations — that many would say that is our perception of a gap. The notion that we view students from a deficit model is also troublesome, but we will talk about that, I think, in some later questions.

That being said, the intergenerational impacts from residential school history have to be acknowledged. Yukon First Nations are telling us that we have to start with the truth part of reconciliation — start from there and then build our actions of how we will work together around reconciliation. So, when we get to the truth piece — this is the work that we are doing with the data working group, and they are helping us to develop specific reports that they want to see about how their citizens are doing and asking questions like “Why do we see twice as many students — Yukon First Nation students — with IEPs than not?” — taking those kinds of data sets and asking, “How does that then connect to the achievement in the classroom and attendance?” — and working together on addressing some of those underlying causes.

So, for example, working with the First Nations Education Commission on that conversation around attendance has resulted in us changing the school attendance policy to recognize cultural activities as reasonable reasons for a student to be away from school, and they should not be marked absent.

It is through this type of work that we are starting to understand our responsibilities to Yukon First Nation students. So, instead of “You're just absent. You should be here. Get caught up on your work.” it is an acknowledgement of, yes, why does school start in the fall when you are now with your family in your traditional territory harvesting, and then you are expected to come back to school and catch up?

The school system and the work that we're trying to do should be flexible enough to meet that student where they're at and provide them the opportunity to catch up on their learning without penalty for being away.

It's these kinds of conversations that we need to have. It's the data that helps us understand the shift that we need to make.

**Mr. Istchenko:** In paragraph 42, the Auditor General recommends that “... The Department of Education should develop an 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 these targets; and evaluating the effectiveness of these actions to improve student outcomes.”

The department agreed with the recommendations and committed to collaborate with Yukon First Nation governments during the 2019-20 school year to develop and implement an outcome management improvement strategy. So, a couple of questions: What groups, including First Nations, have been consulted and how were they chosen? How many have taken place to date and how many meetings are anticipated?

**Ms. Morgan:** Thank you for that question. I think we have an exhibit for this one. It should be a blue paper that has “Education” on the front of it. Yeah, that one there.

The first part of the question on what groups have been consulted and how we are doing this work — we are working with the data working group for Yukon First Nations. That work is happening with the Chiefs Committee on Education, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the First Nations Education Commission at the collective level.

There are also conversations at a government-to-government level through education agreements — an example with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and their recent education agreement. They also are speaking with us about some initiatives that they would like to see around data specific to their citizens.

Then we also have the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education. That committee reconvened last year in the fall. We had a working group that was starting to look at performance indicators. We were really having a conversation at that point. It was really about: What is the data that we’re missing?

So, we know that we need to work on identifying some adult data to be able to talk about the transition after graduation — where are students going? This is particularly important to Yukon First Nations and relates to the conversation around students upgrading and being able to transition to post-secondary or employment.

Then the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education, which is formed by our partners in education — so the Yukon Teachers’ Association, school councils, Yukon College, the CSFY — they’re all part of that committee — we spoke quite a bit about needing student satisfaction data. We’re very interested in gathering the voice of students to be another piece of information that is going to help us. So, who are we talking to? We want to talk to students about this and we’re talking to our partners and we’re working with Yukon First Nations on multiple levels.

The performance exhibit that I have just passed on to you — this was some initial work to try to set a target based on the current data that we’re collecting. So, you can see here that — I believe this one is from the fall of 2018, but you can see where we have identified high school graduation targets. The little arrow shows the target that was provided. The Department of Education provided that target to inform this performance plan. But what we would like to do going forward is to develop these targets with partners and then to be able to have a data strategy that’s part of those targets saying that this is what schools are doing to reach those targets. This is what the central administration building is doing to reach those targets. That’s the work we want to achieve with our partners so that it is a

strategy that’s going to help us identify what’s actually working and what’s not.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Thank you for that. So, in your response to the recommendation, the department had stated that the strategy it will develop will identify programs and activities to better assist students who may need more support to improve their learning outcomes at school. It also says that it will also provide a framework of policy indicators and targets to track and measure student success and to evaluate program effectiveness.

So, can you explain a little bit further how the department will address the recommendations in line 42 for developing and implementing a strategy to address the long-standing gaps in student performance and improve student outcomes, particularly those of Yukon First Nation or rural students? Who will be tasked to identify First Nation students’ education needs? How will the effectiveness of these actions be determined, and what is the basic timeline for building and implementing the programs?

**Ms. Morgan:** Currently, in terms of what the framework is going to look like, we did a jurisdictional scan to see what other ministries and departments across Canada are doing. We liked British Columbia’s approach. They have what we would call a “business plan” — this is the work that the ministry is doing — but before that, they have priority areas, and they are identifying right in there that these are the targets we are trying to hit. We liked BC’s because BC is using student satisfaction to say whether or not these items that they are working on make a difference.

In terms of who is actually responsible, we are saying everybody — our partners with the senior officials in the department, as well as the teachers and the principals in the schools through their school growth planning process — we are all responsible for getting focused on making sure that these processes that we have for planning and developing actions are connected back to improving the outcomes for Yukon students.

Of course, setting those targets for Yukon First Nation citizens will primarily be led by Yukon First Nations in that regard.

Knowing, though, that at the school level — that example of Eliza Van Bibber again — in an ideal setting, the school community and the school are identifying their goals together — because we know that, if the whole community is involved, there is tighter support for students in reaching those goals.

**Ms. White:** Looking at the Yukon indicators, it says that high school graduation — we can see the disparity. We have 54 percent of Yukon First Nation students graduating. The Department of Education often talks about lifelong learning, but we know that the last Auditor General’s report mentions the shortcomings of First Nation education.

If we look at 10 years on, our 14-year-old student is now 24 years old without the formal education required to progress. The question is: What do they do, where do they go, and how does that change? The reason why I want to highlight this is that the ILC is great for people who learn independently, but it’s not for everyone. Then, if we do a cross-jurisdictional check — I will use Manitoba as an example. Manitoba has the adult

learning and literacy program. It is free adult education. I don't need to quote everything from the website, but what it does is offers the opportunity for the student — my understanding is that, if you aged out of high school without getting the required education, this was an opportunity.

Is Yukon looking at something similar? So, adult learning centres where you actually get foundational skills to build toward — we talked about the ability to fully participate in society, the workforce, and the rest of it.

Just knowing that we have that 10-year gap — we had a 14-year-old student who now is 24 without that education. I realize that this is outside of grade 12, but is the Department of Education looking at how to capture the people who we have missed?

**Ms. Morgan:** Yes, we are. We are primarily because, in our work with Yukon First Nations — the First Nations Education Commission or in conversations around individual education agreements and also through the Yukon Forum — it has been made very clear to us that we have a responsibility. We are now working on creating an education system that is going to be more reflective of Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing and being, but what about the students who have been let down previously?

A couple of things that we have done to date — and I think you are probably familiar with them — were changes to the student financial assistance and the community training fund that allow for an additional 68 weeks of funding without penalty to the Yukon grant for students who need upgrading. Of course, it is not ideal to need upgrading, and for many students now, they don't want to upgrade. They want to actually get the Dogwood Diploma.

We have some tools where the deputy minister can override the age limit of 21. It says that, at that point, you can no longer be in a K-to-12 public setting.

I am overriding that age limit on a regular basis for the ILC and also for the Aurora Virtual School, which are taking in students who are 23- to 26-years old and need one or two courses to actually get their Dogwood. We are doing that, and then the other thing that we are doing right now is that we have an internal review going on around our alternative learning programs and our high school setting as part of the curriculum redesign.

Now I am jumping all over the place. There is an exhibit — a document that has an orange cover. It is just an overview of the redesign of the curriculum that we haven't passed out in a while. She is going to bring it to me, and I am going to pass it to you.

It is so important because it talks about environments needing to be personalized and flexible. This is a big, big shift for our high schools. We are kind of saying that high school now needs to start looking like an alternative learning environment, and an alternative learning environment has lots to share with — I can't talk and look at the same time, so I am going to pass this to one of you guys to find the handout on the curriculum redesign.

We need to blend the practices of the alternative learning environment to help high schools be more flexible so that we

don't have so many students feeling like they need to leave high school to find that flexibility — and at the same time, working with those alternative learning environments to expand their mandate so they can support students who are over the age of 21, don't really want to be in a high school setting, want an alternative environment, but want to get their Dogwood. They want to be able to say that they have completed their graduation. Often, those students need one or two courses — they were very close to graduating when they stopped — out of school.

**Chair:** Just for those listening either on the radio or via the Internet, we will be posting these exhibits that the deputy minister is talking about so that people will be able to access them through the website as well. The website is yukonassembly.ca, of course.

**Mr. Hutton:** My questions are going to relate to recommendation 47 on inadequate oversight. School growth plans set goals and monitor students' progress to help improve students' learning. They are developed with parents, students, teachers, and local First Nation communities.

The report found that the department did not submit a summary report of the school growth plans for the 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 school years to the Minister of Education as the department's policy required. The department also did not complete most teacher evaluations that it identified as required.

In paragraph 47, the Auditor General recommends that the Department of Education implement its required oversight mechanisms to provide summary reports to the minister and complete teacher evaluations. The department agreed with the recommendation and noted that it is currently revising its school growth planning policy.

Over the course of 2019, the department will implement an improved process for annually monitoring the completion of teacher evaluations. The revised process will align with the new collective agreement with the Yukon Teachers' Association and will include requirements for completing and tracking teacher evaluations.

My first question is: How is the department carrying out the implementation of this school growth planning policy?

**Ms. Morgan:** Thank you for that question. The school growth planning process was one area that was part of the Auditor General of Canada's recommendations in the 2009 audit. In response to that, the department developed and implemented an improved process involving greater community input and an appreciative inquiry model that really focuses on what school communities could build on to support the success of students.

In the spring of 2016, this process was placed on hold while a committee was formed to update the school growth process to align with Yukon's significant curriculum redesign. At this point in 2016, each Yukon school would have been through two evaluations since the 2009 audit.

Where we are today is that the committee did do its work. This is going to be helpful — two more exhibits to share with you.

The committee did do its work, and they identified a process for Yukon schools that would form the revised school growth planning process. That process is based on the spiral of inquiry. The spiral of inquiry is designed to be iterative so that schools just continue to work through their inquiry, and it's designed to get at root causes and ensure that the actions that are being taken are actually effective in that work.

Where we are right now in terms of implementation — and we are going to look at the exhibit, because I feel that this one is really important in terms of the department being able to show how we think we can get to some of these root causes.

Where we are right now is — we've been working with the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education to determine how we would do the external review portion of the school review process. This year, we are going to try what the committee has identified as a good way of doing external reviews, and that is by having each school principal — the school administration — share their inquiry with others. They will present what they've been doing as part of their school growth plan. Hopefully, this is going to create a community of learning and sharing best practices.

I really think it's important for us to just have a look at this spiral. You can see that the whole school growth process starts with these three questions: What is going on for our learners? How do we know? Why does it matter?

Schools start there. They receive, of course, a school data profile from the main administration building. They also have their own things that they have been collecting. Some schools do a survey with students called "tell them from me". They will have their own classroom data, they will have information from teachers, and what they are doing is putting together all of the information that they can to understand what is going on for our learners. They should be doing this in community — so conversations with the school council, the local First Nation — to really understand what's happening in their community and what's going on for their learners, and then you just follow the spiral.

Then they focus on: What can we do? Where can we have our biggest impact? What is happening for our students in our school? Then they move toward developing a hunch — what is leading to this situation? So, these are the kinds of questions that are going to lead them to what other kinds of information they need. They might want to pull in the health behaviours survey and start to look at some of the health behaviours of students in Yukon schools, asking questions about how they are, as school staff, contributing to what is going on for their learners.

They then move their way next toward: What learning do they need to do? It does take the lens of — if we are really going to address root causes, then there is probably some learning here that teachers, school administration, and maybe the school council will need to do, and then: How are they going to do this learning? Then they take a hunch. They take action toward what they can do to make a meaningful difference, and this becomes the basis of the school growth plan. What is the action? Then the spiral continues. They check in: Have we made enough of a difference and how will we know?

What we are seeing in terms of this spiral of inquiry — we have connected with school districts across Canada and BC that are using this disciplined spiral of inquiry. They are seeing changes and results for their students within a year of going through this process. Many of them find that, when you get to the end of the spiral, you just have more questions. Many just continue the spiral again, but now they have deeper questions and they are really getting to the heart of the matter.

We feel like this new school growth process is a foundational piece to informing that broader data strategy around: How are we going to get to root causes? How are we going to take actions that are actually connected to that data and that we will be able to monitor to know whether or not it has made a difference?

**Mr. Hutton:** Before I get to my next question, I would just like to make a few comments.

Born and raised in the Yukon, I represent three rural communities. I can't tell you how disappointed I am to see that we are here talking about gaps. We are talking about people from my communities who have missed out on opportunities in education for over 50 years here now in the territory.

I certainly didn't understand in 1962, when I attended grade 1, how our whole education system was slanted toward non-native people, but when I had a class of 31 people in grade 1 and only 15 of us made it to grade 2 — lo and behold, the vast majority of those 15 were all folks who were non-native.

So, it's fine to talk about steps right now. How big a priority is this, though — to catch up for the past 50 years where you have let down rural and First Nation students in the communities?

So, my question: Can you explain further how the department will implement its required oversight mechanisms to provide summary reports to the minister and complete teacher evaluations? Who will do these evaluations? My experience with the Yukon government was that supervisors do evaluations, and they are required to do them annually. Goals and objectives are set in the early part of the year and people's performance is measured against those goals and objectives over the course of the year, with possibly some reviews in between. It is not surprising that we have these terrible outcomes if this process has not been working. If the teacher evaluations are not getting done, that is a huge issue.

The final part of the question: How will the results be implemented with respect to the collective agreement? How will the results be reported?

**Ms. Morgan:** I thank you for that question, and I certainly want to acknowledge that I hear your words. We have work to do.

In terms of teacher evaluations and the required oversight — we have communicated with and are working with our school principals on a timeline to ensure that they are actually going to get these evaluations done. I am getting a bit ahead of myself, but we will talk further down about the culture shift that we are making from the department in our expectations that people need to know their roles and responsibilities and what their authorities are, and we need to start taking ownership. That is what — this audit, to me, is a bit of a tale of start the

work, but we are not making sure that it is happening and it's getting all the way through to the front lines.

That means that every one of us across the Department of Education has to take ownership. We are holding superintendents, principals, staff at the main administration building — we're holding people to that expectation. Much in the same way that we work in a classroom with students — this is the expectation. There might be a lot of things happening, but the bar doesn't drop. We have to stop dropping the bar. Hold the bar where it is and expect that folks are following through on these things.

I have some exhibits to give you on this so that you can see the communication that's going out and we are being very clear about timelines around teacher evaluations — that they need to be completed — that we will be submitting a summary report. There are two pieces here. The school growth process — we will leave with you the exhibit of the updated policy. You will see there is an added piece that schools will understand that a summary report will be created by the superintendent. The principals are feeding into the superintendent. The superintendent has the clear expectation from the deputy minister that they will be providing a summary report that I will be providing to the minister. That will be on teacher evaluation as well so that we are checking in.

To help schools and to make sure that we are following through with the teacher evaluations, we have a checkpoint coming up in January where we are checking in with our schools to say, "Where are you at with teacher evaluation?" It matters, because it connects to the collective agreement. So, we have just put together language around probationary and temporary teachers. We now have a time frame for when your probationary period starts and ends and, as the temporary teacher, when you become permanent after two years. So, there is a connection to a time frame that's built into the collective agreement to motivate the system to make sure that we are following through with the teacher evaluations and making sure that work gets done.

I just want to add — and it's to acknowledge that teacher quality matters — we know. There's a fair bit of research on this. The quality of the teacher matters. We want to support all of the educators in the Yukon to have the support they need to be high-quality educators and the tools they need.

The new teacher evaluation process — the Committee Clerk is passing it around for you. I just wanted to show you a bit of what this looks like. There is a cover page that has these four domain areas that talk about what we mean when we talk about a "quality educator". In the past, a checklist — no. Now it's more — we get that everybody is on a growth journey, so here are the four areas. What is really interesting is — there is a larger handout that looks like this — that teacher professional learning starts to look like exactly what we're talking about for students in the classroom. We get that there is a range of performance. That is why teachers have a 10-year — a pay grid — right? The thinking behind that is that, the longer you teach, the more experienced you become.

We are clearly saying what it means to be a quality teacher. Those descriptions are over here. As part of the evaluation

process, school principals are working with the staff who they are evaluating and saying, "Where are you on this range? Wherever you are, figure out where you need to go and how we can support you to get there." It's going to really help us to be clear about our expectations for teachers in schools, to create a process that is more meaningful to both the school principal and the teacher, and then, again, there is that connection to the collective agreement in making sure that, as teachers move through their probationary period, they are actually being evaluated and supported in their development.

**Chair:** Moving on to recommendation 70, "inclusion" is defined by the Department of Education to mean "... all students are entitled to equal access to learning, achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education."

The Auditor General found that the department "... did not know whether its approach to inclusive education was working..." In paragraph 70, the report recommends that the department "... conduct a full review of its 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."

So, the department agreed with the recommendation and committed to collaborate with Yukon First Nation governments to conduct an in-depth review of its services and supports for inclusive education. So, the question is: What groups and which First Nations have been consulted on this initiative? How will success be determined?

**Ms. Morgan:** In terms of what groups have been involved in developing how we're going to work with the review, we've had three primary groups that we've been in conversation with. One is the Chiefs Committee on Education and also the Council of Yukon First Nations through the work that they do with Jordan's Principle. We had a member from the First Nations Education Commission who also volunteered to help plan some process. We also have had conversations with the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education. We've also been working internally with the staff of Student Support Services, the assistant deputy minister of Schools and Student Services branch.

How will we measure success? Again, I think that maybe there is the broad — and then there's getting right down to targeted data. I have already mentioned that I do think that we need to start looking at a data group around what's going on for students who have IEPs. That's one piece when we're really into the details of what's happening.

In terms of success from that broader systemic area, we know that what we're doing currently is not working. We know that because we don't have to go very far to have evidence that school personnel are frustrated, parents and students are

frustrated, and partner groups are writing to us saying, “You know, your students are coming to us for help because they can’t get it at school.” All of those are strong indicators that we need to take a very serious look at our model for how we provide inclusive education and support for students with special education needs.

In these conversations that we are having with partners, we are getting ourselves to a place where we are close to figuring out how we are going to do the review. I have an exhibit for you that is currently where we are at in this planning, but — as this handout is coming around, I will just continue to speak — at that very high level, what we want to achieve with the review of student support services — and it’s really through the work of the Chiefs Committee on Education with their technical group that we are understanding that there is work to be done to, first of all, clearly communicate what the current system is. There are a lot of misunderstandings about what the process currently is — and then identifying where it is that we want to go to. Where we want to go to is, again, around alignment of the broader changes that we’re making with the redesign and with the modernizing of learning in Yukon. We have a model right now for student supports that is built on deficit. The whole model starts with: What do these students not have? What is their “dis-ability”? Then, we work to explain how they don’t fit into the system so that we can figure out how to support them to get through the system.

Where we would like to go and what we have been learning from other jurisdictions is that a strength-based model that starts with the student at the centre and says, “These are their strengths; this is where they are at. Now build on those to help them move through the system and their learning.” The changes that have happened with the curriculum redesign make this even more possible for us, especially in terms of literacy and numeracy and some of those broader changes that have happened within the curriculum redesign.

I think, by now, you have received the handout. The purpose of the review would be: first, to identify options to improve the consistency and effectiveness of inclusive education programming and services for successful learning outcomes for Yukon students; and second, to identify options to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of special education programming and services for successful learning outcomes for Yukon students.

The methodology that we are proposing with partners — and we have all agreed on this point. We need an external consultant to help us with this work. We don’t have that expertise here in Yukon. In conversations with Student Support Services, they too would acknowledge that we don’t know what we don’t know. We appreciate having an external expert who can come in and help us understand what some of the promising practices are that are happening in other parts of Canada.

We also feel very strongly that this review has to include the voices of school staff, of parents, and of students who receive these services — for them to be able to share their stories about what the experience has been. I think that is important, because the hunch is that there are some systemic barriers, and if we could just hear these stories, there are

probably some things that we could do to clear up barriers between Education and Health and Social Services, access to the hub and the integrated model that Health and Social Services has helping to support communication between school and home and helping to connect with other supports that Yukon First Nations provide to advocate for families and to support Yukon First Nation students. We have a hunch that there is a lot of miscommunication happening that could really help with that, and we want those stories to come forward as part of this work.

You can see here that we have identified what we think the essential qualifications are for an external consultant to do this work. In our conversations to date with the Council of Yukon First Nations and with the Chiefs Committee on Education, they have indicated that, for capacity reasons and over-engagement, there are two things. They would like a First Nation consultant to be part of this work, and they are working to determine how they would like to see that happen and, at the same time — instead of engagement on each aspect of the audit — if we could do a broader First Nation engagement on the audit overall.

So, we will of course respond and provide that opportunity to Yukon First Nations as they would like to see that happen.

If you flip over the page, you will see the timeline that we are proposing. I fully acknowledge that, in conversations to date with Yukon First Nations, they feel like the timeline is aggressive. What we’ve said is, “If we need to make adjustments, we are open to making adjustments.” That being said, we have this other pressure that is: Do we let another school year go by before we start to make some changes? We think that we can — in particular, around some of the broader systemic changes that need to happen — get some recommendations. Our target right now is that we would start work with this external consultant in January. We are already in some early conversation. We would start work in January with a goal of getting to some recommendations in June. We are still working through to determine how to do the engagement part of the work. It doesn’t mean that one aspect has to slow down the other. We will make sure that, as we determine what that engagement would be, we provide the time to make sure that it’s effective engagement and not just rushed through.

Here’s what we have in terms of a timeline right now: We would start that work in January and then in June get some recommendations from the external consultant and then in June we would meet with the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education, meet with the Chiefs Committee on Education and the First Nations Education Commission to start to look at those recommendations with the eye to starting with some implementation in September 2020.

We know that there will be multiple actions that come out of this review, so we’re not thinking that we’ll just implement everything in September and that will be done. We know that we’re going to have probably a series of recommendations, that there are some things we can get at early on, some things that are in the mid-term, and some things that are probably going to be a little bit longer term. Our goal is to try to start that work

by the start of the next school year and not have another school year go by.

**Chair:** Thank you. I think you have answered my next question fairly well, but I'll throw it out there anyway in case there's something that you want to add. The question was: Can you explain further how the department will conduct a full review of its services and supports for inclusive education as per the recommendations made by the Auditor General? Who will lead the evaluation and who will be involved in the prioritization of students for specialized assessments — whether it will be parents, schools, First Nations, et cetera?

**Ms. Morgan:** I will just take a moment to see what I can add. I think that the only thing that I will add is that it's not like we're waiting for this review to start to have conversations. So, I can tell you that we have engaged with the school principals and we are working with them to make sure that they are following the current processes. As the auditor pointed out, there are some schools where the IEPs — as part of their audit, they found that, in some schools, the IEPs were not being actioned. We have worked with the principals to say, "Okay, it is your responsibility to make sure that these are happening, so you need to take ownership of that, but we're here to tightly support you. Help us understand where things are breaking down for you. How can we help you?"

One of the things that we've learned is that, of course, there is a fair bit of turnover, especially in rural communities, with principals and school staff. So, things like just going through individual schools and walking them through what the process is helps to make sure that, right away, we are starting to tighten up that expectation that we have to action these IEPs. We will hold schools responsible for making sure that this gets done.

**Ms. White:** Just when we talk about the processes to help inclusion — but I think that one of the questions is: Does the department have the teaching staff and the support staff to carry out these recommendations? An example is that Whitehorse Elementary School just recently lost two teachers and an EA. We hear resoundingly, including in the report, that teachers are — again, they have reached their max. We use the line "tightly support you", but how do you support an education staff that just doesn't have any more capacity? I mean, there are stories of children coming out of the CDC — recognized as needing supports through the Child Development Centre — entering kindergarten and not receiving an individual education plan or the support there. So how do we reconcile those two? You know, we want to support the process. We will support the school. These things are important, but we are losing education staff, and I think, sometimes — often — due to stress, honestly.

**Ms. Morgan:** I appreciate the comment, and of course, there is no simple answer, but I will try to do my best to share some of the things that we have come to understand. For tightly supporting schools — we have questions around — we have to collect data to see if the supports we do provide are actually making a difference for those students. We do question — for example, EAs — we have significantly increased the number of EAs over the last five years. We don't see the corresponding improvements. So, it is not to say that we don't need as many EAs. That is not what I'm saying. I am saying that we need to

ask, then, what does that support look like at the school level, and how do we make sure that it is effective so that it is addressing some of that pressure that teachers are feeling?

The other thing that we know is that we have to give more tools to the schools to be able to respond quickly, as opposed to waiting for somebody from the central administration building to travel out to see you or you are in a rotation and you are waiting — so, this sense that you can't do anything until somebody arrives. We do want to build some general expertise.

Student Support Services is very much working from this lens right now to say: What are the types of training that we can provide to school staff so that they can do some of this initial work? Then the more targeted assessments and things can happen more quickly. They are working at looking at those kinds of efficiencies.

But as part of the review, we have this very broad question. We have this conversation with the Chiefs Committee on Education and certainly with the folks at CYFN who work around Jordan's Principle. We think that there might be other supports that we need to be bringing in — so, looking at, for example, the work that we're doing with Carcross/Tagish First Nation. They identified, through just their own school data and what they know about what's happening, that instead, what they really wanted from Health and Social Services was a trauma-informed counsellor who can work with students at the school. In some cases, we're hearing that the desire is to have a cultural support resource or youth support where students will make those connections more than they would with an adult in the school — and just trying to help them continue on their path toward success.

Our mind is wide open to what all the possibilities could be. We're trying to go into this review from that lens and not trying to say, no, this is what we think it is and shape the review that way. We're trying to keep it to — we need to learn what the other types of supports are. What are the most effective supports, and who can we learn from?

**Chair:** I have a question regarding individual education plans, or IEPs. There are two parts to it, I guess.

The first would be: How are these plans tracked between teachers in regard to priority?

Also, I have heard over the past couple of days that IEPs are being changed or phased out. Is there something changing with IEPs as well?

**Ms. Morgan:** I can give you a very specific answer as a written return of what the changes are. Yes, there are some adaptations that are being made to the IEPs so that they will align with the curriculum redesign.

Students with IEPs are also following the same process as all students in the school in terms of being able to talk about where they are at on their competencies — their abilities to communicate and their abilities to think critically and creatively. Students with different learning needs still have those competencies. We want to make sure that the IEPs are reflecting those same processes. There is some work underway there.

We also continue to move into our new student information system. We started that work — I need to be careful, but I



believe it was in 2017 when we started the implementation into the new student information system. The IEP lives inside of that system as well, and so there are adjustments that are being made.

I'm happy to provide a written response with more detail on that if you would like.

**Chair:** The other part of that question was how these plans are tracked between teachers in regard to priority. I'm not sure if I heard a complete answer to that.

**Ms. Morgan:** Thank you for reminding me; I appreciate that.

They are tracked. Schools have a learning assistance teacher — most schools do. Smaller schools that do not — typically, it is a staff member, and most often the principal, who is identified as tracking IEPs and making sure that they are being completed.

We do also have a process with the Yukon Teachers' Association through the diversity committee that, in the fall, we sit down and share the number of students who are on IEPs, in which school, and then what the nature of the IEP is so that we get a sense of what the makeup is of different classrooms across the territory. They are tracked at the school level.

But, as the Auditor General discovered in some of the schools that they visited, that tracking process was not very rigorous and IEPs were not actioned.

**Mr. Adel:** This is — I'm going to follow along on Mr. Hutton's line — a little bit more of a personal experience, but I have a question.

One of my children had an IEP, and they were following it through the system, but what we found was that it was quite often blocked. What was thrown back at us was that it was a privacy issue that one teacher couldn't find out what the IEP was from the other one, or it wasn't passed on because of privacy issues. Has that been addressed? It seemed rather odd to me that you have an IEP for a student — does it live in this new system that you are talking about where all teachers can access it? We had that experience where teachers had no idea that my child had an IEP.

**Ms. Morgan:** That is a troubling comment. Of course, there is not a privacy issue for the school staff. All school staff who work with a student with an IEP need to be provided the information about what the student's IEP says so that they know what adaptations or modifications they are making to support that student in their learning. There is no privacy issue there in terms of sharing with the school staff. Sharing out — definitely, there are privacy issues.

In terms of what you see inside of the student information system, the student information system is designed so that each teacher sees only their students, but they would see the information about the students they have. Schools are also very different in how they are putting that information into the system in terms of who is the staff member putting that information in. I would say that probably the most typical is that it is the learning assistance teacher who is putting the information about the IEP into the system, and then the teacher, in their view, is seeing the student's information from there. This is not to say that the information system is the only way

that they can share. They also have access to paper copies that they can print.

**Mr. Adel:** Do resource staff, like librarians and other people to whom these IEP learners have to go, have access to those as well?

**Ms. Morgan:** To the information system? No, it is just the teacher.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Chair, just to follow up on that, there are a number of glaring things that were highlighted. In paragraph 69 of the current report, it just says that: "Our finding that the schools did not monitor progress on individual education plans was particularly troubling, given our previous finding 10 years ago that the Department did not formally measure students' progress on these plans."

If we go back to paragraph 33 in the 2009 report, it highlights it again. When you just said that schools are very different in how they record that information on IEPs, one would think that a standardized or consistent approach to recording that information might help the department in the tracking of that information.

Is that something that is being looked at?

**Ms. Morgan:** Yes, that is something that was in numbers 1 and 2 of that review. Our goal is that we want to have a more consistent process across the system.

**Chair:** The department has said that it is conducting a review starting in 2019 with recommendations by spring 2020 and implementation starting in the 2021 school year. I know that you have answered this partially as well, but I will continue with the question and you can add to it.

What interim measures is the department implementing to ensure that students who need immediate attention, or who are in the later stages of their high school career, receive the support that they need?

**Ms. Morgan:** Currently, we are continuing with the process that we have in place, and I acknowledge that there is not a consistent understanding of what that is — but just to say that the first step for a student who potentially is needing an IEP is that it will be identified at the school level. It can also be brought forward by the parent, and then the school-based team begins their work to informally assess the student's learning needs. Then, if they feel like they have a student who needs some additional classroom support, they begin their work with Student Support Services to determine how they can provide that support in the best way.

Unlike some jurisdictions, Yukon students do not need to have a formal assessment in order to receive support at school. I know that, in our recent conversations with the Chiefs Committee on Education, this is seen as a potential opportunity because there is a question of whether or not some of these formal assessments are culturally appropriate. While we continue to look at the cultural appropriateness of some of the tools that are used to assess students, we would provide support regardless of whether or not that official assessment was there.

Then I can go through — there is a parent guide and I can provide some examples of parent support that we have to help them understand where decisions are made, how decisions are

made, and where their rights are to appeal decisions. I can provide that to you maybe as a written addition.

I can go through the whole referral process. It's two pages long. But again, I'm happy to provide it as a written —

**Chair:** Yeah. That would be great if you could provide that.

**Ms. Morgan:** Yeah, it's a commonly asked question and so we're happy to provide that if you would like.

**Mr. Gallina:** It was outlined in the audit that, while the department was implementing a number of quality programs to reduce gaps and improve outcomes, it was not adequately tracking the programming to understand whether or not it was having the desired effect.

Of 82 individual education plans examined in total, only five percent showed that the services and supports recommended by specialists or school staff had been delivered. Does the department have a plan to ensure that 100 percent of the recommended supports and services are delivered?

Assuming the department is able to reach 100 percent service delivery, what increases in both cost and staff hours are anticipated to implement those recommendations? How will the department evaluate whether its approach to inclusive education is working? How will it prioritize students for specialized assessments?

**Ms. Morgan:** I think this question brings in an observation that the auditor made which was getting to the definition of a student's "maximum potential" and what that means. We certainly see that as part of defining that more clearly as part of the review of inclusive and special education programming.

Currently, we look at the model of how we provide support for students with different learning needs and how that fits within inclusive education — to say to teachers that not every student needs an IEP, but many students have different learning needs. In the lens of our new curriculum, when we talk about that personalized and flexible piece of education and service delivery of classroom learning — that the teacher is able to personalize the learning for students so that you know where students are at in their learning and every student has their own personal learning goals and they're working toward those goals.

That actually is quite realistic. I know for some teachers, it feels like it's not, but having been an educator in the classroom, I can describe what that looked like in my English 11 classroom. I had some students who were advanced and they know how to make paragraphs and they know how to write a multi-page essay and they're really working on refining their work — vocabulary, trying to make complex sentences. Then I had a group of students over at the other end of the scale who still, in grade 11, are struggling to make paragraphs, so I know those students are going to need my attention the most. Then there's this group in the middle — they're right on track; they make paragraphs; they're just really working on getting some more meaning and meat on the bones of their writing. In that way, they all have different learning goals. I can instruct the class and support them.

If we look at it from that lens, this is where we start to need the definition around what is the student's maximum potential. Where are we leading all of these students to? For students who have IEPs, they are typically going to be students who are receiving some modification or adaptation to their learning. For some, they may not be on a path toward graduating; they may be on a path where they have some individual goals that are going to take them as far along in their reading as possible. It might be facilitating them toward a transition from school that is leading to employment — that is leading to whatever the next step is for those students.

From that lens, we do want to reach 100 percent. We don't think that's an absurd goal because we should be able to have a system that's flexible enough that we know where students are at, where they're going, and how we're supporting them to get there. It's going to happen in the classroom as well as very specifically for students who have specific learning needs as identified in their IEP.

In terms of, then, resources and what do we need — what are the additional resources? I think we'll have a better understanding of what that looks like after we go through the review of student support services.

I think a few things are going to happen. There is going to be some organizing for effectiveness with the resources that we do have. There is some training and support that probably needs to continue and there is probably some new training and support that we're not even aware of yet that will need to be part of this process. Then there is the whole conversation of: Are there other supports that are needed and, if so, what do those look like and where do we get them? Are they supports that come from the community? Are they supports that come from other departments? Are they supports that come from our partnerships — whether they be with Yukon First Nations, organizations like LDAY — the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon?

So, I think it's premature at this point to say what those will be, but we fully expect that we are probably doing some realigning and then we're looking at where we go from there.

**Mr. Gallina:** Thank you for that. Just to follow up and maybe have you elaborate a little bit more — I appreciate that the review of student support services is going to define some of the strategies moving forward and that there may be some change and evolution. But how will the department evaluate whether its approach currently to inclusive education is working? How will it prioritize students for specialized assessments? I would like you to elaborate more on that.

**Ms. Morgan:** Yes, thank you. I always miss a part.

I think that this gets back to how we need to start paying attention to what is happening for students who have individual education plans and tracking to see what actions are taken right at the school level, right at the very front line, of the things that we provided and we see that the support is working — then that these are the supports that we need and we can't find, so there's a barrier there. I am looking at Ms. White because we are fully aware of a situation that we're working on right now where we are trying to find the support. It's not an easy support to find, but we are working on it. So, what do we do in the meantime to

continue to support that student? Then it's really looking at — I think it's really important for us to be able to talk about and understand: What is the transition out of the system for students with IEPs? We are often looking at graduation — and to be honest, we are not tracking right now how many of those graduates are students with IEPs and achieve their Dogwood and what portion are students who are on the leaving certificate pathway.

There are some students who we know will not graduate. Those conversations happen with parents as part of their IEP. What is their transition plan?

**Mr. Hutton:** So, 82 individual education plans were examined. Only five percent showed the services and supports recommended had been provided, so responsibility is on the principal to do the IEP. Whose responsibility is it to provide the support and services? You create a huge expectation — a hope with the child and the parents and the teacher — that they've done this plan and their education outcome is going to get better because of it. It can't possibly when only four people out of 82 got the required supports that they needed.

I guess my first question is: Who is responsible for providing those supports once the IEP is completed?

**Ms. Morgan:** At the end of the day, the Department of Education — who at the Department of Education? The Deputy Minister of the Department of Education is responsible for making sure that every aspect of the *Education Act* is being followed through and that we are providing those services.

Of course, we work our way through to the assistant deputy minister, to the superintendent, to the principal at the school level. There is a piece here where everybody needs to take ownership. I'm hoping that what you're hearing in my words today is that, at the very highest level of the department, we are saying, "It's time to take ownership of who is doing what and when things are getting done." In the case of where supports are being identified as part of an IEP and they're not being provided, we need to know why they're not being provided. Are they not being provided because the IEP wasn't actioned? Are they not being provided because we're waiting for somebody to come out to the school like a speech and language therapist or some type of support? Or are they not being provided because we don't have access in the territory?

All of those have different scenarios, but all of those are possible reasons why an IEP would not be actioned. So, we have to be able to understand and hold one another accountable right from the front line of the teacher understanding what is going on, the principal knowing what the supports are that are required, and what the school-based team and Student Support Services are doing together and the superintendent being aware that these IEPs are actually being followed through on so that, at every level, we are doing that work.

We do know that the territory is small and that we — even in Whitehorse — don't have the access to some types of very specialized services. I was quite surprised, at the Council of Ministers of Education meeting in the summer, to hear that a jurisdiction as large as British Columbia — that they were working on a mental health strategy and they are finding that they too cannot get enough access to specialists. One of the

actions that they are taking to is have more highly trained generalists.

These are the kinds of conversations that we need to have when we run up against a situation where we don't have enough capacity to provide a service — then what are some of the other ways that we can get to that service — always with the eye to providing the service. In cases where we struggle and we have to find that service from outside the territory, those are the ones that should be coming up to the deputy minister's attention, and then how are we working to get that service into the Yukon or supporting that student to be able to access the service in a different way?

**Mr. Hutton:** It seems like you have a real challenge ahead of you trying to determine whether these IEPs have any value at all. You have no way of measuring what impact they have, because you didn't provide the supports along with the IEP that would have perhaps changed the outcome. At some point, these IEPs were approved as a tool to be used, but it seems like they haven't been adequately funded to do the job that they were intended to do. Would you care to comment on that?

**Ms. Morgan:** Thank you for that comment. We have come to that same realization as we have gone through this audit process — that the Student Support Services unit in the central administration building, they are the group that — their consultants are working with schools and identifying, yes, this student needs an IEP. These are the kinds of services.

Then we now know that we have to do a better job of tracking, through that unit, what the IEPs are for. Are they behavioural IEPs? Are they IEPs related to different learning challenges? So, we are going to start collecting that kind of information so that we are making sure that we know who has IEP, we can say with assurance that those IEPs are being actioned, and we can identify the ones where it's a specialized service that we're struggling to provide.

**Mr. Hutton:** Of the 82 IEPs that were done, how many of those were in rural communities versus Whitehorse?

**Ms. Morgan:** I'm not sure that we have that data. My understanding is that number provided as part of the audit was not separated out by school and so some of the schools were urban and some were rural. My understanding is we wouldn't be able to identify which ones were rural.

**Ms. White:** I think this highlights what Mr. Hutton has brought forward. It highlights again the discrepancy between the 2009 recommendations, the response from the Department of Education — and again, we have a response saying we're going to collect data and we're going to improve.

The one thing I just want to highlight is that the Department of Education in 2009 is the Department of Education in 2019 and will be the Department of Education in 2029. I highlight regularly that the Yukon government of 2009 is the Yukon government, and it continues on. I remain optimistic and hopeful that what we'll see is a difference as education moves forward. But I think — as my colleague has highlighted — there is a shortcoming. I'm hopeful that the next time the Auditor General comes through, that what we will see

is there will be a change, and we won't be talking about the same recommendations that remain from 10 years previously.

**Ms. Morgan:** I am not sure there was a question there, but I would say that I share that same observation. This is where the department is as I find it today. My focus is taking ownership. My observation is that lots of things that were tried were not followed through on. I am asking the leadership of the system across the system to take ownership and follow through, with students at the centre of everything we do.

**Ms. White:** That could be like the end wrap-up.

We are moving on to Yukon First Nation culture and languages. In Recommendation No. 87, it says, "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 legislated responsibilities to reflect Yukon First Nation culture, language, and 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." We heard high-level points of this position in the opening remarks. It is important to note that some of these aspirations have been reflected previously from the department. So, what is the new assistant deputy minister position doing differently from the past? I don't need a retelling of the opening statement; I am able to read that and reflect on that. What is different now than the aspirational comments that have been coming out of the department previously?

**Ms. Morgan:** I thank you for that question. It is interesting that you added that piece because I was going through some of my preparation last night and looked at the response to this question, thinking, "How do you explain what the difference is?" I want to share that, for me, it is interesting being the deputy minister of an education system that I started in, in kindergarten. I feel like I have this full 360 lens now. What I have learned in my journey along the way is that the education system that I was part of did not prepare me for this job that I have.

It certainly did not prepare me to be a teacher in the Yukon education system because, while I was prepared for post-secondary — I was an honour student my first year in post-secondary education — what it didn't prepare me for was how to live and work in the Yukon. I didn't have the full history of the territory. I did not have any understanding of Yukon First Nation culture, and ways of knowing and doing. I'm very grateful to the many Yukon First Nation teachers that I have had along the way who have helped me to shore up that blind spot that I had. I know that I am an infant in my learning journey of how to work with Yukon First Nations.

If that's my story, I'm sure that's the story of many people who work in Yukon government and in other organizations

throughout the territory where they have stayed here in their home and are working. We count on and need Yukon First Nations to help us learn and understand how to do this work. That to me is the most fundamental difference that the ADM of Yukon First Nations — this position — brings because, at the most senior level — where the department is making decisions about budget, about FTEs, about how we are moving forward with our business plan — with everything we do, we have a strong voice at that table that is guiding us and reminding us of what it means to work with Yukon First Nations to be in partnership, to work in reconciliation. It's very important. I can tell you that the department sees that as well.

The shift in how we value Yukon First Nation ways of knowing and doing is very palpable. Just yesterday I was with Lori and her branch — with the First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit — and we were talking about the difference in being a unit that's somewhere buried in the department and anything that has to do with First Nations — just send it over to those guys — to what is now — where you are a branch and your direct supervisor is sitting with the deputy minister on a weekly basis hearing about the work that you're doing and learning with and from the folks in that branch.

To me, that is the most significant difference. That shift tells everybody in the system that we value Yukon First Nations. We value learning about Yukon First Nation culture, history, languages, and ways of knowing, doing and being.

**Ms. White:** I am going to veer off my list here for a second. I really appreciate what you have just shared about your own journey. The Member for Mayo-Tatchun and I will have different experiences, although we both grew up in the territory.

How do we make sure that this sensitivity is shared with people from Outside? Again, it is important that, at the top, we understand, so we have an ADM, which I appreciate. We have signalled the importance. I appreciate that we have a deputy minister who has shared that, but how do we make sure that educators throughout understand the importance?

I use the example often of myself. I grew up here. I didn't understand, when I was in elementary school, the challenges that were facing my classmates. I went to Whitehorse Elementary. At that point in time, it had one French immersion class, and the rest was an English stream — often indigenous children — but I didn't understand. I could see that there were problems. I didn't understand where they stemmed from, and it wasn't until I went through the correctional training to be a cooking instructor in the correctional facility that I actually did the residential school training — this huge understanding — and I was actually quite upset that I didn't learn about it until I was in my late 20s, because that would have informed my childhood self to better understand what was happening.

How do we make sure that people — even people who grew up here — understand what that reality is?

**Ms. Morgan:** That is such a paramount learning journey. We want to make sure that we have mandatory training and support in place because we know that this is a journey that, regardless of whether or not you were born here in the Yukon or come from another part of Canada, you have to take. It is that

part of truth and reconciliation and really starting to understand, anyway, the place where you are now.

Some of the things that we have done — we have made the First Nations 101 course mandatory. That course is mandatory for all new staff who come into the Department of Education — the central building — and all new teachers will take the mandatory course.

The challenge for the Department of Education is, then, access to the First Nations 101 course for large groups of staff. If we just pick on the largest school in the Yukon, F.H. Collins — and they are going to try to train approximately 70 staff all at once — so they take a PD day, or they need 70 substitute teachers. They are going to use the PD day, and then Yukon College tries to figure it out — that's a much bigger class than we typically deal with.

We're looking on a school-by-school basis how we rotate them through their training around that, but all of the schools are working, as part of their work around cultural inclusion, to make sure that all staff have the mandatory training. Of course, the central administration building is making sure that all new teachers and all staff within the central administration building are taking that course.

We also offer to the new teachers — and as part of our welcome week for new teachers coming into the territory — they do a full-day orientation provided by First Nations Programs and Partnerships in partnership with First Nation community leaders. This year, that happened at Brooks Brook, and it was actually two days. So, we are building that into the work.

The other piece that we do provide as well as part of the residential school program — so we have, in grade 10, a unit, and now we are introducing piloting resources this year for grade 5 residential school learning outcomes. As part of that training, we built in a cultural awareness piece to support educators in teaching that particular topic. For lack of a better word, it is intimidating for a lot of teachers who want to do that work in a good way. They just are sometimes unsure of how to go about that, so we do have mandatory training for all teachers who do teach those units.

**Ms. White:** Just in noticing the time, I'm just going to read these questions into the record and ask for a written response so that I can move on.

How many rural schools has the new assistant deputy minister visited to date? How will the department evaluate the successes of the new ADM position? What outcomes, objectives, and metrics will be used to assess the efficacy of the position? Should it prove successful, is there potential for expanding the resources and staff available to this position? I will just thank you for a written response to those.

**Mr. Adel:** Recommendation 93 — slow implementation of the joint education action plan. The joint education action plan was established five years ago and included among its priorities incorporating the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Yukon First Nation people in the curriculum and having the First Nation students meet and exceed academic requirements. The Auditor General — quote: "... found that the Department did not implement many of the partnership actions it was

responsible for in the Yukon First Nation Joint Education Action Plan." That is in paragraph 90.

In paragraph 93, the report recommends the department — I quote: "... 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."

The department responded that it would — quote: "... seek without delay to resume meetings with Yukon First Nations and federal government representatives on this plan."

My question is: How many meetings have taken place to date with the First Nations? Which First Nations did they meet with? How many meetings have taken place with the federal government?

**Ms. Morgan:** Thank you for that question. This one, I will read off my notes because I want to make an effort to give you some important dates.

We know because there was a joint education action plan — so I'm just going to refer to it as JEAP. That's the acronym for it — joint education action plan.

There was a JEAP implementation team that was meeting on a fairly regular basis up until December 2016. It was the director at the time — of the First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit — who, in 2016, was responsible for pulling those meetings together.

There was a change in personnel, and the meetings stopped. Then there were further changes in personnel at the Department of Education. Some of those changes led to strained relationships with Yukon First Nations. All of this is to say that we found ourselves in a place, as the audit was underway, where we were unsure — "we" being Yukon First Nations and the Department of Education — as to what was happening with the joint education action plan.

This led to, on May 30, 2019 — just prior to the release of the audit report at the Yukon Forum — the executive director of CYFN and me, as Deputy Minister of Education, delivering a joint presentation on the JEAP. We're going to pass around to you, as an exhibit, that presentation.

What you will see in that presentation is that we acknowledged that the joint education action plan was not without challenges. So, there are two pieces that you will see where, together, we talked about: challenges around initiatives being worked on by the Yukon government and First Nations Education Commission and being sort of from the side of the desk; initiatives needing to be funded by the Yukon government; what Canada's role is; and for some initiatives, difficult-to-achieve consensus at the collective Yukon-wide level and just generally being unsure of how we would be able to address that; there was a question about Canada's role; and then confusion around how the individual education agreements that we have, government-to-government, connect with the work of the joint education action plan.

What we also identified was that there are possibilities and that perhaps the problem is not so much the joint education action plan itself, but our commitment to it.

From that meeting, it was agreed that the joint education action plan was still supported by many First Nations and by

the Yukon government as something that we wanted to keep going.

On June 18 — I believe that was the day the audit was released — the minister and senior officials from the Department of Education and Aboriginal Relations met with the Chiefs Committee on Education to discuss moving forward and working together. This included discussion of the JEAP and also a draft framework agreement with the Chiefs Committee on Education.

At this meeting, a commitment was made to establish a technical working group that would meet to discuss with Canada a framework agreement providing greater authority and control to Yukon First Nations over education priorities and also a data working group to work on Yukon First Nation student performance data. These were discussed at that meeting, and they are both joint education action plan priorities.

If you look at the document that is the overview of the action plan, you will see that, in the yellow column, greater authority and control is one of the overarching areas, and then, under “Sustainability, Supports and Success”, item 3.4 is “Accountability, Assessment & Evaluation”, and you see there the reference to “How are We Doing Reports”.

From that meeting, we were starting to action some of the action priorities that are identified in the joint education action plan. From there, there were a number of meetings. There are several dates here. If the Committee so chooses, we will certainly provide the dates that they occurred, but essentially, from this time, a Chiefs Committee on Education technical group was established, and these meetings have been ongoing since — and discussions around framework agreement. We are hopeful that we will reach — let’s say this: The timeline around the work that is happening around the draft framework agreement is scheduled for, I believe, September 2020 — that we will be at a point where we have some actions out of that work.

Also at this time, on November 25, 2019, the joint education action plan senior officials group met, and that senior officials group is the Council of Yukon First Nations executive director — also, there has been a resolution passed by CYFN establishing the Chiefs Committee on Education as the lead for education. So, the lead technician for the Chiefs Committee on Education attended this meeting, as well as Canada — so the regional director joined us — and also me, as the deputy minister of the Government of Yukon Department of Education. During this meeting, we agreed that those broad four areas of the joint education action plan are still the priorities, that we can continue to view the collective work that we are doing as well as the individual work through government-to-government agreements and local agreements, and that those agreements will have some connection to those broad areas of the joint education action plan. We will get back together in April 2020 to see where we are at in determining next steps for an implementation group. That is where we are at.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Recommendation 99 — “No policy developed for Yukon First Nations language instruction.” It was suggested and recommended that the Department of

Education develop policies and guidelines to support First Nation language learning, so the department has agreed with that recommendation. Can you explain how the department will work in partnership with Yukon First Nations, school boards, and school councils to develop policies and guidelines to support First Nation language learning? Who is going to lead and be responsible for the implementation of these policies? The big one is: Will the policies be ready for the 2020-21 school year?

**Ms. Morgan:** Thank you for that question. I think that, first and foremost, the Department of Education is supportive and is working as an ally with Yukon First Nations to support the revitalization efforts of their languages, which are endangered here in the Yukon. The department has been meeting with the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Native Language Centre to discuss language programming and the transfer payment agreement that we have with the language centre to provide services to train and certify language teachers. That agreement is \$1.1 million that we provide to the Yukon Native Language Centre.

The focus of these discussions has been seeking collaboration to develop a policy that supports both the Yukon Native Language Centre’s current work — which is to develop more fluent community speakers — and the department’s obligation under the *Education Act* to provide Yukon First Nation language learning to Yukon students. As part of these conversations, the challenge that we have is the lack of fluent speakers. First Nations are leading the way in telling us how we can support them in their efforts to develop more fluent speakers at the community level.

Each community is approaching this work in different ways. We are taking our lead from them. Saying a certain timeline — that this is going to occur at this time — is challenging on this file.

That being said, to support this collaboration, we are working on a position within the Yukon First Nations Initiatives branch that would be focused on First Nation language learning — so they would be part of Lori’s team. We are working with the language centre to develop the job description for this position. We want this position to be a conduit between the Department of Education and the language centre to help us to continue to work toward a language policy that we can lay out for schools.

We just have to be very aware that anything we do around the language file really hinges on having speakers who can do that training. Really, the priority right now is: How do we support the development of more fluent speakers in all eight language groups?

**Mr. Istchenko:** In the department’s response, they make mention of the government’s commitment toward reconciliation. What specific actions is the department taking in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s education calls to action under the territorial responsibility?

**Ms. Morgan:** There are a lot of things that I could read here for you. I’ll just do some high-level — and certainly, if you want me to provide more detail, we can do that.

One of the most significant things that we have done — actually, there are a few. We have already talked about call to action 62 and the establishment of a senior-level position within government. We are also working on curriculum and resources within the curriculum. I'm just going to move myself through all of my notes. We are providing different resources to teachers. We've already talked about the grade 5 residential school curriculum. The grade 10 curriculum is already in place, but we continue to update and provide training.

We also provide to the schools a blanket exercise. That's where the First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit has adapted a blanket exercise as part of their workshops that deepens participants' understanding of how federal policies and programs impacted the lives of indigenous peoples.

I think I've already put on the record the pieces around training for teachers and what is mandatory.

Also, under the joint education action plan, we are working with schools. One of the things under that action plan that we did with the First Nations Education Commission was to develop cultural inclusion standards. Schools are working on implementing those right now. They are required to report on what they are doing on that through their school growth plan process. Of course, a big part of that is getting additional training.

We're also working with the chiefs committee on data sharing. We talked about that.

We are also working with other parties, as I've mentioned, to sustain our focus on the four pillars of the joint education action plan.

In the post-secondary and labour market, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission call to action 11 calls upon governments to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nation students seeking post-secondary education. We have made changes to Yukon's financial assistance program. That happened in 2016. Its intent is to ensure that more First Nation students in Yukon are eligible for post-secondary financial assistance.

The department also supports various training-related employment services. The Youth Employment Centre and community outreach service at Skookum Jim Friendship Centre provides youth ages 16 to 30 with employment skills, knowledge, and work experience. Kwanlin Dün First Nation's House of Learning has an education and employment training program that provides education upgrading, employment and trades-specific training, certificates and tickets, career and personal counselling, and personal growth programs. That is supported through the labour market. Also, the building northern apprenticeship program with Yukon College and First Nation governments provides opportunity for rural apprentices to access technical training in home and in their communities.

So, I am just checking if there's anything I have missed. I have mentioned the cultural training.

Call to action 63 calls upon the ministers of education in Canada to maintain an annual commitment to aboriginal education issues, including developing and implementing kindergarten to grade 12 curriculum and learning resources. We do participate at that table just to say that, as part of our

curriculum design, we do have right now in draft a kindergarten to grade 10 curriculum where Yukon First Nation ways of knowing and doing outcomes are identified for Yukon educators to see where they can work to make those connections in our current curriculum. We have also developed integrated units that show teachers how they can integrate Yukon First Nation ways of knowing and doing into their planning and the learning opportunities that they provide students.

The assessment committee's work was also designed at the start to include Yukon First Nation culturally appropriate guidelines for assessing. There is a chapter within that Apple book that is specifically targeted toward assessment practices that are culturally responsive.

I think that maybe I will just stop there, but the list goes on.

**Chair:** As you know, we had 11 questions, I believe, that we were going to submit to the department to receive written responses. I realize that this has been a very complex morning with a lot of questions and a lot of supplementary questions. In light of the time, there are eight more questions that we had anticipated asking this morning. Maybe I will just read those questions into the record now so that we have them on record and, when the department is providing the Public Accounts Committee with the responses to those other 11, we could also receive responses to these eight as well.

With regard to Recommendation No. 109 — insufficient supports, resources, and cultural training — we had three questions: Can you explain further how the department will determine the human resources and training required to develop classroom support and materials to help teachers implement the new curriculum as it pertains to Yukon First Nation cultures and language? Will the department be hiring more FTEs in anticipation of the increased workload? What are the timelines for implementation? 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?

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".

How does the department plan to implement the recommendation of the Auditor General without increasing the strain on an already strained public service? What additional staffing cost does the department anticipate with regard to the implementation of the recommendations? What will the department be doing to prioritize the recommendations of the Auditor General?

Two questions regarding the previous report from 2009: What are some of the more significant changes that have taken place in the department since the 2009 audit? How will these changes address the shortcomings that this audit has identified?

With that, I would just give Ms. Morgan a chance to maybe make some closing remarks.

**Ms. Morgan:** I feel like I have to start with again expressing my gratitude to all of you — in particular, providing questions to us so that we could make every effort to answer your questions here today. We certainly understand and we've accepted all of these recommendations with the full intention that this is the work of the Department of Education moving forward. Thank you very much for that.

Thank you to my staff who are here today supporting. They have done the lion's share of this work behind the scenes, so thank you very much.

Finally, my gratitude — to Joanne in particular — but the Auditor General's office for helping us to respond to the audit in a good way and for all the learning that we've done with you. Thank you very much as well.

**Chair:** Thank you. Are there any closing remarks from the Auditor General's office?

**Ms. Schwartz:** I think that this hearing has been very useful. We did note that the department accepted all seven of our recommendations. But today I think that we definitely heard that actions are being taken to implement those recommendations, and so we feel very positively about that.

I would like to thank the department for their cooperation and collaboration throughout the audit. As auditors, we make many demands on departments on top of the jobs that they already carry out, and we definitely had great cooperation and collaboration from the department, so we thank them for that.

I would also like to thank the Committee for giving our performance audit on education in Yukon the attention that we think it deserves, and we hope that, in the future, our performance audits will have hearings like this so that we can continue to debate some of the important audits that we bring forward for the territory.

**Chair:** Before I adjourn this hearing, I would like to make a few remarks as well on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

First of all, I would like to thank all of the witnesses who appeared before the Public Accounts Committee this morning, and I would also like to thank the officials from the Auditor General's Office for their help, obviously.

The Committee's report on this hearing will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly and we invite those who appeared before the Committee and other Yukoners to read the report and communicate to the Committee their reactions to it.

This morning's hearing does not necessarily signal the end of the Committee's consideration of the issues raised in the Auditor General's report on education in the Yukon. The Committee may follow up with the department on the implementation of the commitments made in response to the recommendations of the Auditor General and of the Committee itself, and this could include a follow-up public hearing at some point in the future and further status update reports.

With that, I would again thank all who participated in and helped to organize this hearing. The Public Accounts Committee will return at 1:00 p.m. this afternoon for a hearing on the Yukon Public Accounts.

I now declare this hearing adjourned. Thank you.

*The Committee adjourned at 12:02 p.m.*