



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

January 14, 2021

Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee
Minister of Education
P.O. Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Dear Minister McPhee,

Over the past few weeks a number of Yukoners have reached out to me regarding the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) issue in our schools. They have concerns with the move away from IEPs to Student Learning Plans (SLPs) and what that will mean for their children's education and success.

As you are aware the IEPs are specifically referenced in the Education Act while the SLPs have been designed to assist students who require a lower degree of intervention to be successful. This has raised concerns from families and stakeholders that the protections offered for IEPs in the legislation are not there for SLPs.

I understand the decision to move students from IEPs to SLPs was made in the Fall of 2019. It has been reported that students on IEPs are unlikely to graduate from high school. During Public Accounts hearings in December, 2019 on the Auditor General Report on K-12 Education MLA Hassard asked the following question:

"...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?"

The Department responded in writing with the following:

"Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are a priority for the department. IEPs continue to be an important and mandatory tool to support students with special educational needs. The current and continuing process for IEPs is based on the eligibility parameters provided in the Education Act. If a student is eligible for an IEP, then the school staff have 60 days to develop and begin to implement and evaluate an IEP for the student. The IEP must be reviewed with all relevant parties three times throughout the school year.

The Schools and Student Services Branch has been working to clarify the process for developing IEPs to ensure that practices at the school level are aligned with the Education Act, and that IEPs are used for cases where students have intellectual, behavioural, physical or multiple challenges that make them unable to meet the curriculum goals and require a modified plan to set personal expectations and outcomes geared for a student's unique needs.

Alternative tools, such as Student Learning Plans, are used to support students who may need adaptations in order to meet curricular learning standards, either at or below their grade level. The Student Learning Plan provides documentation of the adaptations that are in place as a student transitions between grade levels and teachers to ensure the student has continued access (as needed) to the adaptations and the student's performance is assessed using these supports.

IEPs are responsive to the changing needs of students, and are updated three times a year to assess current goals and how success has been demonstrated. In Yukon's new curriculum, staff can now develop personalized and flexible learning goals for students with IEPs to demonstrate their learning and development, and support students with IEPs to meet the curriculum's broader core competencies of communication, thinking, and personal and social responsibility in a way that is meaningful to the student. We can then adjust the IEP over time as the student progresses in their learning.

Within a school, principals are responsible for ensuring the learning goals of IEPs are being met, and that the plans are evaluated and updated at least three times a year. The Learning Assistance Teacher (LAT) case manages IEPs within the school, and tracks IEP progress as a student moves between different grade levels and teachers. If a student moves schools, the new school's principal will become responsible for the IEP and the LAT in the new school will case manage the plan along with existing IEPs in the school. All IEPs hold equal priority.

Students with IEPs and their learning goals are tracked in the student information system. Teachers are responsible for the implementation of an IEP's goals and objectives and can access and view a student's IEP through the system.

The new Communicating Student Learning guidelines that are part of Yukon's curriculum redesign also inform communicating about learning progress and goals for students who have IEPs. In fall 2019, updates based on parent and teacher feedback, were made to the Communicating Student Learning Teacher Resource and Professional Development AppleBook. This tool includes updated supports for teachers to help them identify meaningful ways to assess students with Student Learning Plans learning. Using this guide, we are helping teachers provide meaningful assessments for students with IEPs so these students can demonstrate success in a way that is personalized to the student's needs and aligns with the Dogwood Diploma and Evergreen Certificate pathways."

There appears to be no reference in this response to moving students off of IEPs and that those on IEPs were unlikely to graduate. However, at the time it was my understanding that this decision had already been made. The 2019 Education Annual Report states there are 538 students with IEPs. Can you tell me how many students are currently on IEPs as well as how many students were on SLPs in 2019 and how many are currently on SLPs?

I have had discussions with families as well as representatives of the organizations that sent a letter to the Premier in early December regarding the review of Inclusive Education. A concern they have that I share is the process used for arriving at this decision. I'm hopeful that you can tell me who the Department consulted with prior to making this change? Also, why was the change made prior to the conclusion of the inclusive education review currently being conducted by Dr. Yee?

The 2019 Education Annual Report also has the following section on a strategy to improve student outcomes.

"The auditor's recommendations included that the department should develop and implement a strategy to address student performance gaps and improve student performance, particularly Yukon First Nations students, rural students and students with different learning needs. We are working to develop this strategy, in collaboration with Yukon First Nations and our partners in education.

We have begun discussions with Yukon First Nations and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education about a framework of student outcomes and performance indicators, to develop and implement a strategy to look at system data, focus on root causes affecting student performance, set targets with specific actions to support improvement, and evaluate their effectiveness. The department expects to have an initial strategy in place by August 2020."

Are you able to provide an update on this strategy development and if it is in place? If it is not in place when do you expect it to be done and what consultations have taken place with partners up to this point?

Thank you for your time and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Scott Kent
MLA Copperbelt South