



Yukon Department of Education

Annual Report 2015

Note

This report fulfills the requirement of ss. 5 (h) of the *Education Act*, which requires the Minister to table an annual report on the state of education in Yukon. It reports on the activities of 2015 and reflects information current as of December 2015.

This report focuses on the activities of the Public Schools Branch and related support from the Corporate Services Branch.

Student and school performance indicators and statistical data are available online on the Department of Education website: <http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/performance.html>

Information on the Advanced Education Branch can be found in the “Labour Market Framework Report” and other reports available on the Yukon Education website at: <http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/publications.html>

All photos are Government of Yukon photos.

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Message from the Minister

As Minister of Education, I am pleased to present the Yukon Department of Education's 2015 Annual Report.

One of the most important jobs we have as a government and as a society is to prepare our children to be the community and business leaders of tomorrow. Investing in education is an investment in our future. Thank you to all the school and department staff for your hard work and service to Yukon students this year. Thank you for everything that you do for Yukon students, whether you are with them in schools or helping to coordinate and support programs behind the scenes.

This report looks at the past year – its challenges, progress and opportunities. Let us use it as a foundation for looking forward to what we want education to be. We know there is room for improvement. Let us build a new vision, together, for public education in Yukon.

Our courses of study need to meet the needs of our students in order to support them in being successful citizens. They need flexible learning programs that put them on the pathways to university, college, business, trades and employment. They need engaging and relevant classes that teach them reading, writing and math skills. They also need to learn about the history and culture of Yukon and all of its peoples. They need guidance and support from the whole community as they develop their personal, social and emotional skills, and we all share in the responsibility to teach them.

We have established a process and a steering committee in order for us to work with our partners to collectively build and implement a new vision for education in Yukon, a process in which you can share your ideas with us and our partners as we shape the future of education in Yukon together.

I look forward to continuing to discuss and develop this new vision and to take action together to move forward with all of our partners - students, teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, parents and school councils, the Yukon Teachers' Association, First Nations governments and communities, the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, Yukon College and many others.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Doug Graham'.

Hon. Doug Graham
Minister of Education



Message from the Deputy Minister

The Department of Education's Annual Report reflects on our goals, our work and our progress over the past year and looks ahead to where we are going with public education in Yukon.

This year marks some important milestones along our journey: a new partnership process to build a new vision for education, a new collective agreement with the Yukon Teachers' Association, a new student information system, a Joint Education Action Plan with Yukon First Nations, an expanded French Immersion program and much more.

I am very proud of the work that our staff do in Yukon schools and in the main office. My thanks to everyone for the time and effort that they put in every day to support early to adult learners in Yukon.

I also want to recognize and thank all of our partners in education for their input and their support of our school communities – students, parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, principals, vice-principals, school councils, Yukon First Nations governments and communities, Council of Yukon First Nations, First Nations Education Commission, Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, Yukon Teachers' Association, Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards & Committees, Catholic Education Association of Yukon, Community Education Liaison Coordinators, Education Support Workers, Yukon College and others.

I encourage everyone to continue to work with us to improve education and learning outcomes for our students.

Sincerely,

Judith Arnold, Ed.D.
Deputy Minister
Department of Education



At a glance

Public schools	30*
Students in K-12	5251
Rural	1010
Whitehorse	3854
Female	2496
Male	2686
First Nations	1666
French First Language	244
French Immersion	694
With Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)	636
Teachers	483.98 FTE
Paraprofessionals	221.7 FTE
Aboriginal Language Teachers	39
Average spending per student in K-12 (estimate)	\$18,897**
Registered apprentices	574
Receiving student financial assistance for postsecondary studies	986
Average amount of student financial aid	\$4319

* includes Aurora Virtual School and the Individual Learning Centre

**includes all direct operation and maintenance costs for Yukon schools, including salaries for school-based staff, materials, supplies, equipment, security, groundskeeping and utilities.

Student and school performance indicators and data are available online on the Department of Education website:
<http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/performance.html>

GOAL: Improved outcomes for all Yukon students



Public education in Yukon

Part of the mandate of the department under the *Education Act* is to deliver accessible and quality education to Yukon learners, which we do by working with our partners in education and school communities to continually develop and improve programs and practices.



Early and primary learning

The Department of Education compiles and reports on two assessments of Kindergarten students, the Boehm Test of Basic Concepts and the Early Years Evaluation Survey (EYE). The Boehm Test of Basic Concepts is used to assess students in Kindergarten in their ability to understand language through 50 basic concepts, matching words to pictures. The Boehm Spring 2015 found that 26 per cent of Yukon's 399 Kindergarten students need classroom support and 33 per cent of the students' results needed further investigation. The EYE survey measures a student's development in areas such as self-awareness, cognitive and social skills and physical development. According to the 2015 survey, social skills, cognitive and language skills were the areas in most need of improvement. All the Kindergarten indicators showed that rural and First Nations students particularly need more support for primary learning.

More student and school performance indicators and data are available online on the Department of Education website: <http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/performance.html>

Supporting young students during the transition to school

Our Student Support Services team continued to assist with bridging students with special needs from the Yukon Child Development Centre (CDC) to school and Kindergarten.

The CDC identified 51 urban and 20 rural student clients to the department for monitoring and/or further intervention as they moved from the CDC to Kindergarten. Student Support Services staff attended many transition meetings in spring 2015 for those parents who had requested early collaboration and planning with us and with the school-based teams to prepare their children for a successful transition.

Learning Together

Learning Together programs are designed to help families get ready for Kindergarten. Young children and their caregivers are introduced to school routines in social learning environments. In 2015, Learning Together programs were offered at Johnson Elementary School in Watson Lake; Eliza Van Bibber School in Pelly Crossing; and at Selkirk Elementary School, Hidden Valley Elementary School and the Dusk'a Headstart Family Learning Centre in partnership with Kwanlin Dün First Nation in Whitehorse.

Focus on foundational literacy skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking)

The skills and concepts from the Kindergarten assessments are some of the basic knowledge a child needs to be prepared for formal education. An important milestone in a child's education is "reading to learn." We know that when students can read to learn at an early stage in their education journey, they are more likely to graduate secondary school. If a student has trouble reading and writing, it affects their ability to learn across all subjects and limits their success at school.

Early intervention pilot project

As the Kindergarten assessments show, a significant number of Yukon students entering Kindergarten need support in the areas of oral language and social development so that they can be successful in school. Working with the Yukon Teachers' Association, we have begun an early intervention pilot project for seven Kindergarten classes across three schools in Whitehorse (Elijah Smith Elementary, Takhini Elementary and Jack Hulland Elementary) and one in Carmacks (Tantalus).

In this project, the participating teachers and educational assistants receive special training to assist their students in developing school readiness skills (like self-regulation, executive functioning and oral communication) to support their students in developing reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

The EA assigned to each class will stay with their class of students as they move on to Grade 1, and then to Grade 2 and the progress of the students will be tracked annually and cumulatively over the three years of the project.

Parents, school councils and First Nations have important roles in supporting this project as well, such as weaving in First Nations cultures and perspectives and assisting these students in learning the foundational skills through school community events and at home.

Kindergarten-Grade 12

Literacy at all grade levels

In August 2014, the department developed a Balanced Literacy Approach: Supporting Student Success in Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking, which can be found here: <http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/publications.html>

This document provides Yukon educators with instructional guidelines to help students to become competent readers, writers, speakers and listeners. We will continue to support Yukon educators in literacy instruction at all grade levels by modeling balanced literacy instruction in the classroom, providing professional coaching support and developing more resources to support literacy instruction across subjects.

Technology and education

Christ the King Elementary School became the first school in Yukon to use Google Apps for Education, a set of free online tools for collaboration in schools used around the world. Teachers and students can create, edit and share files in a network. This school received a donation of 30 Chromebooks – laptops that store all documents and apps in a network or cloud – when its principal, Marj Hlady, was named one of Canada's Outstanding Principals in spring 2014. As a pilot project to explore the uses of Google Apps for Education, a Grade 5 class worked on their Yukon/Stikine Heritage Fair projects in winter 2015 on the Chromebooks.

Coming changes to curriculum

In spring 2015, the Premier of Yukon announced a new vision for education based on renewed partnership with students, parents, educators, school councils and Yukon First Nations. An expected outcome of this new vision is that Yukon's curriculum will move toward courses of study that include more Yukon content, more locally developed learning opportunities and more flexible learning pathways to support the success of Yukon students.

In fall 2015, we met with our partners to determine the process for working together and move forward on building this new vision for education in Yukon and curriculum has been a major focus of our conversations.

Yukon's curriculum, like that of B.C. and other regions of Canada, will reflect current instructional and learning principles to help students develop the thinking, communication, reading, writing, math and personal and social awareness skills they need to be successful citizens and lifelong learners. We will still focus on essential skills in reading, writing, math and problem solving, and will include Yukon First Nations perspectives across all subjects. The curriculum will be based on good practices here in Yukon and in other regions and will meet international standards for education.

French language education

According to the 2011 Statistics Canada census, more than 4,500 Yukon residents speak French, which represents nearly 13 per cent of the territory's population. Yukon has the third-highest percentage of French speakers in Canada (after Quebec and New Brunswick).

The department encourages Yukon students to become fluent in both of Canada's official languages. During the 2014-15 school year, 2,482 Yukon students participated in French Second Language programs, while 224 studied in French First Language programs. These numbers reflect an ongoing trend of increasing enrolment in French programs within Yukon schools.

GOAL: Effective delivery of French language programs and services

The department works with the Yukon Francophone School Board (Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon – CSFY), l'Association franco-yukonnaise (AFY), Canadian Parents for French and other French advisory groups in developing French language programs and initiatives, such as courses of study, cultural and community activities for students and in-service training for French teachers.

French First Language

French First Language educational programs at École Émilie Tremblay and Académie Parhémie are the responsibility of the Commission Scolaire Francophone du Yukon (CSFY), Yukon's only school board. The department supports CSFY and its responsibility to deliver French First Language programming in Yukon. CSFY is provided with an annual operations and maintenance budget to manage its programming costs.

In 2015, a new Executive Director was appointed for CSFY, Marc Champagne, who taught at École Émilie Tremblay for over 16 years. The department welcomes the new director and thanks the out-going director, Natascha Joncas, for her work over the past year.

CSFY publishes an annual report, and the 2014-15 report is available at: <http://commissionscolaire.csfy.ca/publications/>

French Second Language

Yukon schools offer various French Second Language programs, including Core French, French Immersion (early and late), Intensive French, Post-Intensive French and Option Plus French. They also offer French cultural activities, such as the 10 French language assistants ("French monitors") from the Odyssey program who visit Yukon schools throughout the school year to lead games, plays, songs and other French activities for students.

Celebrating French education

Almost 400 secondary students from six Yukon schools participated in the half-day talent show "Secondaire en spectacle" in May 2015, organized by Canadian Parents for French, l'Association franco-yukonnaise and the Department of Education.



In spring 2015, a new *French Second Language Assessment Matrix* was developed, which includes system-wide literacy assessments in both French and English language achievement in reading, writing and oral language in Grades 2-9.

In September 2015, an Early French Immersion class was added at Selkirk Elementary School to meet the growing demand for this option. A full K-7 Early Immersion program will be developed and offered at Selkirk Elementary School over the next few years.

In fall 2015, we conducted a parent survey and hosted focus groups to gather feedback and ideas as we move forward with the expansion of French Second Language programs and future program planning in winter 2016.

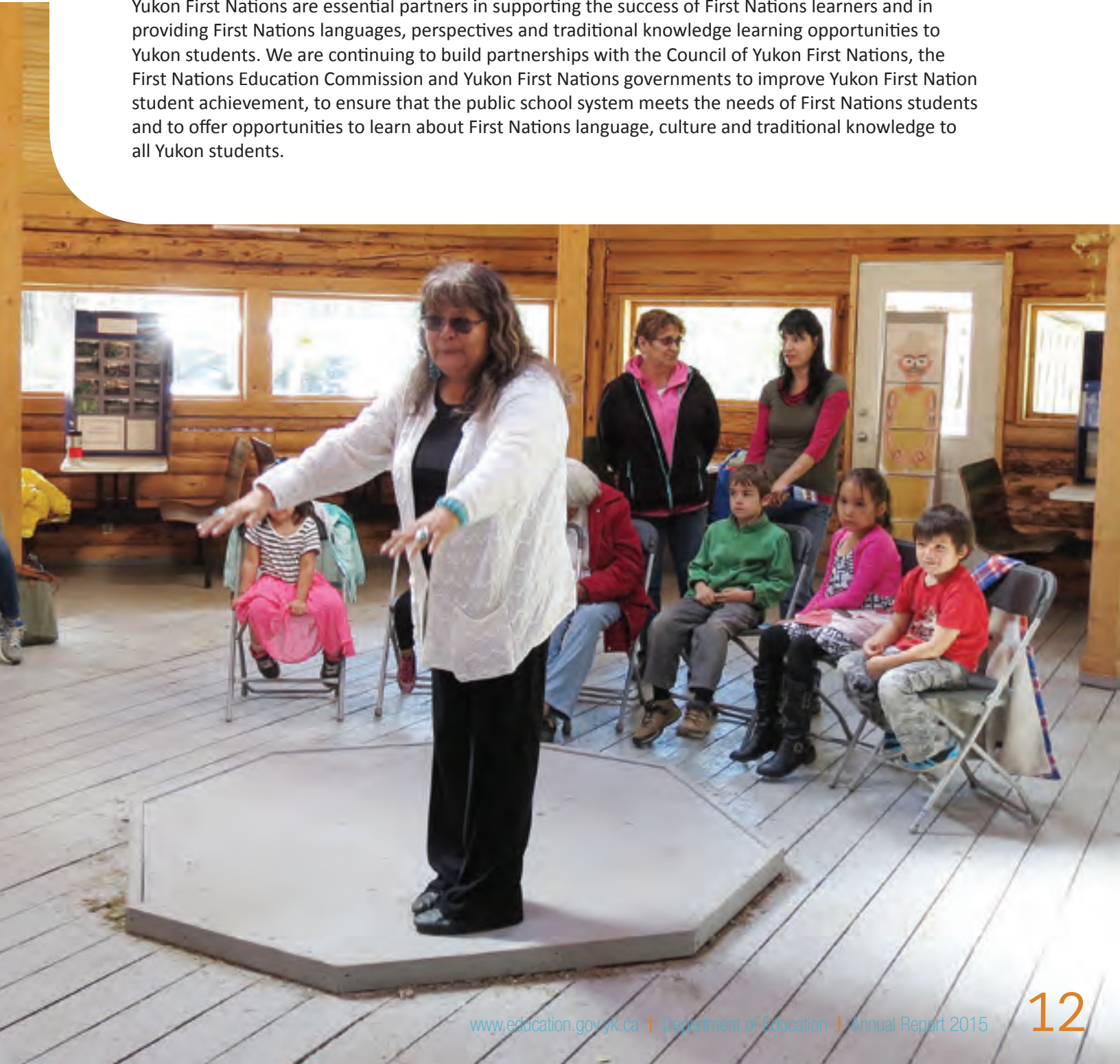


Learning for and about First Nations

According to Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey, the number of Yukon residents who self-identified as Aboriginal was 7,710 – accounting for more than 23 per cent of Yukon's total population.

Our data, available on the Department of Education website, continues to show a gap in achievement and learning outcomes for First Nations students.

Yukon First Nations are essential partners in supporting the success of First Nations learners and in providing First Nations languages, perspectives and traditional knowledge learning opportunities to Yukon students. We are continuing to build partnerships with the Council of Yukon First Nations, the First Nations Education Commission and Yukon First Nations governments to improve Yukon First Nation student achievement, to ensure that the public school system meets the needs of First Nations students and to offer opportunities to learn about First Nations language, culture and traditional knowledge to all Yukon students.



GOAL: Effective education partnerships with Yukon First Nations

We will continue to work together to improve outcomes for First Nations learners and to provide all Yukon students with opportunities to learn more about Yukon First Nations.

Education agreements with Yukon First Nations

The department recognizes that Yukon First Nations are diverse peoples with unique needs and cultures. In developing school programs, the department works with organizations like the Council of Yukon First Nations and the First Nations Education Commission. It also engages directly with Yukon First Nations to determine how they prefer to work with us at the local school level. These discussions have led in some cases to specific education agreements with individual First Nation governments.

Joint Education Action Plan (JEAP)

Yukon government has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding on Education Partnership with Yukon First Nations and the Government of Canada, which has led to the creation of the Joint Education Action Plan (JEAP). In 2014, the department worked directly with Yukon First Nations and CYFN to develop an implementation plan for the Joint Education Action Plan. This plan focuses on culturally inclusive schools, First Nations community priorities and capacity building, collaboration on protocols and evaluation and closing the academic achievement gap through foundational support.

One of the first steps of the Joint Education Action Plan was to dissolve the Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee (YFNEAC) and to re-establish the First Nations Education Commission (FNEC). A report on Yukon First Nations student achievement is being developed for the Yukon First Nations Education Summit and to the First Nations Education Commission. We are also in the early drafting stage for a data-sharing agreement.

In 2015-16, the focus of implementing this plan includes:

- Establishing mandatory Yukon First Nations cultural awareness training for department staff, including school staff
- Creating a template for culturally inclusive schools to be used in school reviews
- Increasing opportunities and supports to promote First Nations language fluency and language and cultural activities
- Developing a process to report on the performance of First Nations students each year
- Encouraging parents to actively participate in school communities at all levels, from volunteering to school councils to school reviews and growth planning

With Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in

Under Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's Self-Government Agreement, we have signed a Section 17.7 education agreement, which helps us to jointly develop school curricula and programs, such as creating external credits for cultural camps such as First Hunt, First Fish and Spring Camp. In 2014-15, we together produced digital stories of intergenerational survivors and former students of residential schools and organized a half-day planning workshop for cultural inclusion programming and a full day for cultural awareness training for all new teachers. An in-school independent learning centre was staffed with a full-time coordinator.

With Selkirk First Nation

The department has also negotiated an agreement with Selkirk First Nation this year, which will focus on: literacy, a locally-developed land-based course, more Selkirk First Nation history for the Yukon First Nations 12 course and the promotion of fitness and student attendance.

With Kluane First Nation

We also signed an education agreement with Kluane First Nation in FALL 2015. Our shared priorities for discussion include: education programs to meet the unique needs of Kluane First Nation students, secondary school programming, language programming, student attendance, staffing, special education services and cultural awareness training for staff.

Supporting First Nations language programs

We are committed to supporting Yukon First Nations language programs in our schools. Revitalization of these languages is essential to ensure they are not lost. For this reason, we continue to invest in training for Yukon First Nations language teachers, the work of the Yukon Native Language Centre and language programs in our schools.

The department would like to recognize and thank the Aboriginal language teachers of Yukon and the Elders who have mentored them and shared their knowledge of their languages with the next generations, including Gwich'in, Hän, Kaska, Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Tlingit and Upper Tanana.

In Yukon schools

In all, 19 schools offered First Nations language programs in 2014-15, with six programs in urban schools and 13 in rural schools.

LANGUAGE	SCHOOL
Gwich'in	Chief Zzeh Gittlit School
Hän	Robert Service School
Kaska	Johnson Elementary School
	Watson Lake Secondary School
	Ross River School
Northern Tutchone	Eliza Van Bibber School
	J.V. Clark School
	Tantalus School
Southern Tutchone	Elijah Smith Elementary School
	Hidden Valley Elementary School
	Porter Creek Secondary School
	Selkirk Elementary School
	Takhini Elementary School
	Whitehorse Elementary School
	Kluane Lake School
	St. Elias Community School
Tlingit	Ghùch Tiâ Community School
	Teslin School
Upper Tanana	Nelnah Bessie John School

As of September 2014, 1,964 students were enrolled in First Nations language classes, which is about 38 per cent of Yukon students. These programs are well-established and well-attended in primary and intermediate grades; however, enrollment and retention are lower at the secondary level.

In fall 2015, 31 Aboriginal language teachers were teaching First Nations languages to students in 20 Yukon schools.

Yukon Native Language Centre

We also provide funding to the Council of Yukon First Nations to run the Yukon Native Language Centre.

This centre is a training and research facility that provides linguistic and educational services to First Nations people and the general public. It offers certificate and diploma programs for Aboriginal language teachers and partners with University of Alaska Fairbanks to offer a bachelor's degree.

Over the past 30 years, it has trained more than 150 speakers in Yukon First Nations languages, many of whom have gone on to teach in Yukon schools.

First Nations programs and resources

We believe that providing more culturally inclusive curriculum; supporting First Nations students; and promoting First Nations traditional knowledge, culture and language will engage these students and support their success in schools. First Nations traditional knowledge, language and culture represent a wealth of wisdom and learning opportunities for all Yukon students and are especially important in the development and success of First Nations students.

The First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit directly works with and supports Yukon First Nations to integrate First Nations perspectives into Yukon schools and to develop First Nations language and culture curriculum and resources. Yukon schools offer courses like Ancestral Technology 9 and 10, English First Peoples 10-12 and Yukon First Nations 12. Resources like Northwind's Grade 1 stories about Yukon First Nations people, Social Studies booklets for Grades 4 and 5 on clans, languages and traditional governance and more are available to Yukon students.

Curriculum about residential schools

The department is committed to recognizing the history, experiences and impacts of residential schools across Canada and continues to develop curriculum to educate younger generations about this difficult and complicated chapter of our history. A unit about residential schools is now part of Social Studies 10 courses in Yukon schools. It was developed by the First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit in partnership with First Nations, Elders, Yukon First Nations curriculum working group, former residential school students, health support workers and teachers.

In fall 2015, this unit and related training for teachers was provided to all Yukon schools, including a teacher's guide, a digital collection of stories, videos and electronic resources, a timeline of events, a collection of fiction and non-fiction books with a Yukon focus, including Tr'ëhuhch'in Năwtr'udàh'ą ("Finding Our Way Home"). Health support workers trained with the CYFN Health Commission, and the Committee on Abuse in Residential Schools (CAIRS) and Health Canada are available to support students and communities as this unit is introduced.

“Yukon should be proud of the progress and achievement in releasing the Grade 10 curriculum,” said Grand Chief Massie of Council of Yukon First Nations. “Yukon is leading the way in the development of residential school curriculum. With this Grade 10 Residential School curriculum, it’s a step to help all students to gain a better understanding about the history of colonization, and in particular the history of education for Indigenous people in Canada and Yukon.”

“This is an important step in bridging the knowledge gap between First Nations and non-First Nations,” stated Tosh Southwick, Co-Chair of the First Nations Education Commission. “It is exciting to see a part of our collective history finally being taught in our schools.”

Cultural inclusion program

The cultural inclusion program funds cultural programs, projects and activities coordinated by schools, school councils and First Nations. Examples of projects in the 2014-15 school year include:

- Porter Creek Secondary School – Culture and salmon fishing in Haines, Alaska, for Science and Social Studies English Experiential 9
- Elijah Smith Elementary School – Fall, Winter and Spring Camps with instructional activities and an Elder storyteller
- Vanier Catholic Secondary School – week-long intra-Yukon cultural exchanges with partner communities in rural Yukon that are predominantly First Nations (e.g., Old Crow, Ross River, Burwash Landing, etc.), with approximately 10 students participating



Learning on the land

Muskrat Camp is an annual collaborative event between Yukon schools, the Kluane First Nation Government and community members of Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay. During the camp, participants work with: Artist in the School, Dän Keyi Renewable Resources Council, geologists, biologists, First Aid instructors, Parks Canada, conservation officers, RCMP and Yukon Public Libraries. Hunting, gathering, traditional bush skills and preparing of the muskrats are taught to students by trappers, Elders and the community near Lake Creek on the traditional territory of Kluane First Nation.

Community, Heritage, Adventure, Outdoor and Skills program (CHAOS)

The Community, Heritage, Adventure, Outdoor and Skills program is an experiential learning program with a First Nations focus that is delivered by the Wood Street Centre in Whitehorse. It is open to all students in grades 9 and 10 and includes four subjects: English, Social Studies, Ancestral Technology and Outdoor Education. The program capacity is 16 students.

In 2014-15, 15 Grade 10 students enrolled and completed the program. Ten Grade 9 students enrolled and of those, seven students completed the program. Staff reported positive feedback from parents about their child's participation in this program and observed that students were demonstrating increased community involvement.

In the next year, we will focus on increasing program enrolment by looking at the range of programs available to Grade 9 students, assessing the strengths of CHAOS and developing a communications strategy to promote the program.

New Northern Tutchone cultural resources from the Dooli team

A great example of informal partnership with a First Nation is our work with Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation to purchase culturally authentic educational resources developed locally by the Dooli team. The Dooli team represents Elders and traditional knowledge keepers from Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and Selkirk First Nation who have documented the Northern Tutchone traditional laws, "Dooli." These English language resources about Northern Tutchone culture include posters, story booklets, a land atlas, stories about land claims, traditional laws, potlatch protocols and a video.

Teachers from the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program (Yukon College) at Tantalus School have worked with Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation to create lesson plans to accompany these resources. The department is providing these resources and has collaborated with Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation to provide in-service training in 2014-15 to all the Northern Tutchone area schools including Tantalus Community School, Eliza Van Bibber School and J.V. Clark School.

Teaching with First Nations about First Nations

J.V. Clark School, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and Yukon College organized a culture week in April 2015 for students and the community. Activities included traditional medicine and games, an Elders wall tent, photography and videography, gardening, sewing and beading, and Dooli lessons about the Northern Tutchone way of life.

"This was a wonderful event and we are glad that we can support the school and Yukon College to incorporate our Northern Tutchone values, culture and heritage into their activities. We must continue to work together today for our children." — *First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Deputy Chief Millie Olsen*

Other resources

A First Nations experiential learning consultant was hired in 2014. The consultant conducted 33 trips to schools and spent 64 days with students and staff to help integrate First Nations ways of knowing into experiential learning in the 2014-15 school year. Staff observed many students being more engaged and excited about learning in the experiential and First Nations programs.

The department recognizes that teachers need support in delivering more First Nations content in their classes as we increase opportunities to learn about First Nations language and culture in Yukon school programs. We established a First Nations Perspectives Review Committee in 2014-15 to help teachers to deliver authentic learning about Yukon First Nations. This committee reviewed and advised on 62 field trips with culture camps last year.

Supports for rural students

Rural Equity Action Plan

Our data and performance indicators continue to show that rural students are not achieving at the same level as urban students. Living in rural and remote areas of Yukon can create challenges in terms of infrastructure and capacity. Students may have access to fewer courses and other educational options compared to urban students.

The Rural Equity Action Plan is aimed at supporting these students and offering expanded opportunities for programming where they can work together in larger groups across communities, share resources and staff and study more arts, trades and other specialized courses. The department also coordinates other school programs and services to support the objectives of the Rural Equity Action Plan.

Rural Experiential Models (REM)

The Rural Experiential Model was developed under the Rural Equity Action Plan. REM offers rural students an intensive week-long program of study to gain two of four required credits in Fine Arts and Applied Skills. In April 2015, Watson Lake hosted its first REM, where 73 of 73 participants earned their two credits. In September 2015, Dawson City hosted its third REM, and 79 of 81 participants earned two credits.



Supporting rural learners – REM

Here's what students had to say about the Watson Lake REM:

“The REM in Watson Lake had some opportunities that I’m not usually offered, being from the communities.” – Brenna, *Grade 10 student from Haines Junction*

“Everyone assumes all small town kids are the same, but you come here (to the REM) and see all these different, amazing personalities.” – Olivia, *Grade 10 student from Dawson City*

“I’m interested in REM because credits are important for me to graduate. REM offered so many new courses.” – Keziah, *Grade 10 student from Dawson City*

“I’ve danced before and I stopped for a while because I wasn’t into it anymore. And then I started again and was like ‘I actually love this’. I would definitely like to start my career in dance and drama. I’m thinking about going into the MAD program (Music, Arts and Drama).” – Colton, *Grade 10 student from Pelly Crossing*

“It seemed like it was going to be really fun and I could use the credits. I was excited to see old friends and make new ones.” – Maureen, *Grade 10 student from Pelly Crossing*

Rural alternative high school programming

In 2015, the department visited alternative education programs in B.C. and gathered information about promising practices that could be used in Yukon. We continue to work with rural communities to support the growth of alternative high school programming based on the needs of their school and students. This includes working with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Outreach Learning Centre, the Teslin Learning Centre, a program at Chief Zzeh Gittlit School, Ghùch Tlâ Alternative Learning Centre and differentiated learning for Grade 10+ at Ross River School.

Trades and apprenticeship programming

The mobile trades training trailer run by Yukon College's Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining moved to Ross River this year, where one of the secondary students gained credits toward a Heavy Equipment Technician Diploma. It also traveled to Carmacks where the Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation, Yukon College and the Yukon Mine Training Association teamed up to offer an Essential Skills: Introduction to Plumbing and Heating program.

Distance learning and home education

Aurora Virtual School

The Aurora Virtual School is a hub of distributed, distance and online learning options for Yukon students, including home-educated, rural and urban students. Enrolment at the Aurora Virtual School was 147 students in 2014-15. Its programs are open to all Yukon students.

The school is staffed with four teachers to coordinate and deliver the following flexible options for learning to Yukon students:

- Distributed learning from B.C., in which students may work their way through courses online or by mail – the school offers all required courses for Grades 8-12 and a growing number of electives.
- The Aurora Virtual School program, which combines online course work with instruction from Yukon teachers via interactive technologies, such as videoconferencing or live webcasting of lessons and group projects.
- Home education registration, learning resources and support
- Cross-enrolment with Yukon schools, where a student may opt to take some courses at Aurora Virtual School and some courses at their local school

Based on the needs of the school, we moved its location to share a space with the Individual Learning Centre in September 2015 (for more information, please see the Capital Planning & Facilities section). Going forward, we will be developing school policies and will be seeking feedback from parents in the 2015-16 school year. We are refining procedures and practices for this school as it grows.

Home education

An interim Home Education Handbook was made available to parents in the 2014-15 school year, with information about the rights, responsibilities and support available for home educators. It outlines the process of creating a home education plan, teaching a child at home, assessments and the role and resources of the Aurora Virtual School. In May 2015, the Deputy Minister and department staff met with the Yukon Home Education Society to review the interim guidelines and seek feedback.

Parents can be reimbursed up to \$1,200 per year to cover the purchase of educational resources needed to complete their children's home education plan. Materials and services normally provided by parents for students in public schools (such as pencils and notebooks, private lessons or sports team fees) are not eligible. During the 2014-15 school year, more than \$39,000 was reimbursed to home educating parents.

Blended learning

Blended learning combines online instruction with teacher-delivered classroom learning activities. This approach creates a more flexible and responsive learning environment with more tailored learning support for students. It is a blend of learning from the teacher and from the computer, combining online learning tools like Moodle activities with teacher-led instruction like group work, field trips and projects.

Several schools are exploring blended learning models, which look different in each school: Watson Lake Secondary School, Robert Service School, St. Elias Community School, Tantalus School, Porter Creek Secondary School, Ross River School and Del Van Gorder School.

Blended learning is showing some positive results in student achievement, such as more Grade 10 students passing the B.C. Provincial Exams.

Based on feedback, we will be focusing on staff training to balance the online and in-person instruction time and on supporting students in developing their self-management skills.



Supporting student success

One of the department's strategic objectives is success for each learner. We recognize that, in partnership with each school community, we need to identify the challenges faced by our students and address the specific needs of students inside and outside of the classroom to support their success at school.



GOAL: Improving programs and teaching practices

Student engagement and attendance

Many factors can affect attendance, including illness, family obligations, events, lack of transportation, work or disengagement from school. When a student misses class, they are missing the learning opportunities of that day and social time with their peers and teachers. Regular attendance is also an indicator of how engaged a student is in their learning, and helps to develop important work-life habits such as time management, work ethic and personal motivation.

The Victoria Gold Yukon Student Encouragement Society is a joint initiative between the Department of Education and the Victoria Gold Corp. to fund school-based projects that encourage student engagement and attendance. More than \$46,000 was awarded to seven school projects for the 2014-15 school year to schools through this funding. Feedback from the participating schools was that these projects sparked the interest of many students. Staff observed positive results in many cases. Reports on six of seven 2014-15 projects indicated either improved attendance or increased engagement/academic achievement for the students who took part.

Early indicators suggest that having school staff work directly with students and families to help them address barriers to good attendance and understand the advantages and importance of regular attendance has a significant impact. For example, at F. H. Collins Secondary School, the positive alternative monitoring and family conferencing project reported that 11 of 19 student participants in 2014-2015 increased their attendance.

More information on the Victoria Gold Student Encouragement Society attendance project can be found at: <http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/attendance.html>

Student support services

Yukon schools are modeled on inclusive education, which takes a student-centred approach to teaching and is based on the belief that all students can learn together in different ways. A Student Support Services Parent Handbook, a guide for parents of children with special needs, is available on the Yukon Education website or in print through the department. Parents are always consulted before the Student Support Services unit undertakes any assessments or interventions.

In 2015, we began work to revise the delivery model for Student Support Services based on the concerns and questions that we heard in the 2014-15 school year.

Educational assistant (EA) Allocation Advisory Committee

In fall 2015, we established an EA Allocation Advisory Committee to look at the current allocation model for paraprofessionals in the territory and evaluate its merits and challenges. The goal of the committee is to look at developing a model of paraprofessional allocation that is fair and equitable for all Yukon schools and students and that addresses identified program and student needs that require paraprofessional support. The work of this committee will continue in 2016.

Individual Education Plan (IEP) review

A review of the IEPs based on the criteria was completed in June 2015. It was proposed that IEPs would be noted in the new student information system according to the criteria from this file review, as part of ongoing data collection on special education in Yukon.

In the fall of 2015, we heard concerns about whether criteria-based requirements for IEPs were an accurate reflection of the inclusive needs-based model for service delivery. In response, we created an IEP criteria group for further discussion. It is considering whether and what parameters, including those noted in the *Education Act*, could be used instead of criteria to reflect student needs and Individual Education Planning in a non-categorical system. The work of this group will continue in 2016.

Positive Behaviour Intervention Support (PBIS)

Under the new collective agreement with the Yukon Teachers' Association (YTA), the Yukon government and the YTA have agreed to put in place a collaborative Positive Behaviour Intervention Support initiative, including training and coaching over the next three years.

With this approach, schools will have a tiered model of behaviour intervention supports based on students' needs, with similar response options to those in the pyramid of intervention model currently used in schools. In fall 2015, we focused on and worked with the YTA for planning training and implementation of PBIS.

Self-regulation

The interventions within the PBIS model will include options such as self-regulation. Self-regulation is a philosophy that teaches students to practice observing and managing their thoughts, stress, emotions and actions – to extend the space between a stimulus and their response. It helps all children, including those who may struggle with social-emotional and behavioural control, to be ready to learn in the classroom. Examples of tools include slow starts to the morning, schedule movement breaks, spin bikes, noise-reducing headphones, snacks, gratitude circles and quiet zones.

Three schools were involved in the first phase of self-regulation in 2013-14: Ghùch Tlâ Community School, Teslin Community School and Takhini Elementary School. Five Yukon schools joined in the second phase of this initiative in 2014-15: Hidden Valley Elementary School, Whitehorse Elementary School, Ross River School, Johnson Elementary School and Robert Service School.

Staff feedback about self-regulation has varied. About half of the schools requested interventions in terms of class support or professional development and half did not. Some teachers felt it was time consuming and that it was yet another initiative making demands on their time. Many teachers were interested in this intervention approach and were keen to learn more, finding that their students were becoming more calm and ready to learn.



Safe and Caring Schools

The department is committed to providing a safe and caring learning environment for all Yukon students and staff. Under the Safe and Caring Schools Policy of 2008:

**“ALL STUDENTS AND SCHOOL STAFF HAVE THE
RIGHT TO BE TREATED IN A FAIR, RESPECTFUL
AND EQUITABLE MANNER IN A SAFE SCHOOL
ENVIRONMENT FREE FROM ALL FORMS OF
BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION.”**

The department provides schools with resources to act on this policy, such as a reporting process, access to specialists and consultants, professional development and training opportunities.



Counseling programs

Helping students understand their strengths, challenges and career options is an important way to guide and support their success in school.

The department had planned a review of counselling in 2014-15. However, due to staffing changes at the department, this review was put on hold.

Our partners in education have identified mental health and counselling as a priority area. We are currently exploring other models for counselling, as well as mental health initiatives in public schools.

We recognize there is a shortage of trained counsellors in Yukon schools and are currently looking at ways to offer counsellor courses for interested Yukon teachers.

Reporting incidents

Yukon school staff document and address any incidents of concern through the Workplace Risk Assessment (WRA) procedure, which determines the level of concern about a student's behaviours and provides an appropriate intervention to address the individual student's behaviours and the needs of any affected student(s) and/or staff.

This year, staff expressed concerns about the amount of paperwork required to document an incident. In response, Student Support Services staff and school administrators are working together to simplify the information needed for documentation.

Staff also indicated they needed clarification about what kind of incidents required documentation and when and how school staff should respond during a situation. To address these gaps, Student Support Services offered additional training and discussion with school staff, such as regular monthly training to all Yukon schools in Non-violent Crisis Intervention. Some schools requested this training as part of their professional development. Student Support Services also offered Level 1 and Level 2 training in Violence Threat Risk Assessment to administration and counselors in spring 2015.

In fall 2015, a working group was created to review the current Workplace Risk Assessment (WRA) procedures, including reporting timelines and requirements. We are also looking at streamlining the process and documentation of incidents to ensure schools can quickly and smoothly respond and are supported in their responses to incidents.

Health and safety

Safety is a responsibility shared among all department staff, students and clients.

GOAL: Provide a safe and healthy workplace for all employees

Staff who see a hazard or unsafe condition in the workplace have a responsibility to mitigate and report it. The department encourages staff, students and community members to report any and all health and safety concerns to their supervisor or school.

Roll out of the Department of Education Health and Safety Management System

This year, the department worked toward aligning the Department of Education Health and Safety Management System with the corporate system and began to roll out the Department of Education Health and Safety Management System to all staff.

This system includes ongoing hazard identification and mitigation, reporting, Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee activities, auditing, improvement and communication with all staff.

Training and professional development for educators

The department continues to provide a variety of professional development and training opportunities for school staff such as teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals.

Summer Academy

Summer Academy is an annual conference attended by all Yukon educators before the beginning of the school year. Approximately 850 school staff participated in the required in-service training and professional workshops over two days in 2015.



The 2015 Summer Academy offered sessions such as:

- Supporting students with different learning abilities
- Balanced literacy
- Integration of Yukon First Nations outcomes across curriculum areas
- Assessment of competencies and student-centred assessment (self-assessment and feedback)
- Aspen (student information system) training
- Self-regulation
- Physical literacy
- Digital resources and assistive technology

New YTA collective agreement

In June 2015, after productive and collaborative discussions, the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Teachers' Association ratified a new collective agreement for the next three years, which covers more than 880 teachers, educational assistants, remedial tutors and native language instructors in Yukon.

Training with Yukon First Nations

Providing staff with the training and knowledge to bring Yukon First Nations' perspectives into their teaching practice is an important part of improving First Nations education in Yukon schools. In August 2015, 24 new teachers and principals participated in the Yukon First Nations New Teacher Orientation hosted by Carcross/Tagish First Nation at the Skookum Jim camp near Carcross. At this training, staff learned about Yukon First Nations cultures and traditions.

In 2014-15, the First Nations Programs and Partnerships Unit also introduced the Blanket Exercise, an experiential exercise to increase awareness of the effects of colonization in Canada, including residential schools. All school administrators participated in the Blanket Exercise, and the debriefing session indicated a deep understanding of the effects in their school communities. This activity has also been held for:

- Students in Yukon First Nations 12 at F.H. Collins Secondary School and Social Studies 10 at Porter Creek Secondary School and Robert Service School in 2014-15
- Robert Service School staff, school council, community members and Tr'ondek Hwëch'in
- Eliza Van Bibber School staff, school council and Selkirk First Nation

In-service training during the school year

In 2014-15, the Learning Support Services unit provided Yukon educators with opportunities to deepen their understanding of modern pedagogies and curriculum redesign in B.C and across Canada through the Curriculum Redesign Learning Networks. Approximately 70 teachers across all grade levels representing all schools together explored modern instructional approaches, literacy and more through professional reflection and inquiry.

First Nations Programs and Partnerships organized a number of in-service training opportunities for Yukon teachers. For example, in October 2014 and October 2015, Grade 10 Social Studies teachers, along with health and social workers, First Nations education support staff and others participated in two-day training sessions on how to introduce and teach the new unit about residential schools. In 2014, the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) also hosted an additional day of health and support training to guide school staff, First Nations staff and First Nations community members on how to handle a variety of situations that may arise as the curriculum is delivered in the classroom.

In June 2015, the Grade 10 Social Studies teachers who introduced the new unit on residential schools during the school year attended a workshop to review the teaching resources such as the Teacher's Guide and the timeline resource. A lunch and appreciation event was hosted by the Committee on Abuse in Residential Schools (CAIRS) to highlight the introduction of these resources and was attended by teachers and First Nations partners.

The first joint training session between First Nations Programs and Partnerships Unit and the Yukon Native Language Centre was held in December 2014 on developing Northern Tutchone language resources and planning for experiential activities for language teachers at Eliza Van Bibber School. Training to introduce the new Northern Tutchone cultural resources from the Dooli team was offered at Eliza Van Bibber School in January 2015 and J.V. Clark School in April 2015. These one-day sessions were jointly hosted with Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation, Selkirk First Nation and First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.

Fifteen staff, including Aboriginal language teachers, had the opportunity to attend a two-day training on a neuro-linguistic approach to teaching First Nations languages this year.

This year, Student Support Services staff offered training sessions as part of the Safe and Caring School Policy support, including Nonviolent Crisis Intervention, Applied Suicide Intervention Training (ASIST) Restorative Practices training and crisis intervention training, including for Gadzoosdaa Student Residence staff. One-day conferences for counselors and Learning Assistance Teachers took place in February 2015.



New student information system

Yukon's student information system collects the information that teachers and administrators need to manage school programs and to report on student progress. It provides the department with the key data needed for decision making and policy development.

The previous software from Pearson Canada Inc. will be discontinued in 2016 and a replacement was required. In February 2015, the department announced the selection of a new student information system: Aspen, a web-based system offered by Follett and hosted by Fujitsu Canada. This program can be used on mobile devices and tracks student information, performance, class schedules, attendance and more.

The department would like to thank the working group of partners from the Yukon Teachers' Association, teachers, administrators, program staff, administrative assistants and the Information, Communications and Technology branch of the Department of Highways and Public Works for working together to review requirements for the new system and for recommending Aspen.

Aspen training for staff began in spring 2015 and has continued throughout the 2015-16 school year, including instruction sessions at Summer Academy 2015 and a full day of in-service training in fall 2015 for teachers. In spring 2016, further training on the advanced features of Aspen will be offered.

Student transportation

Since 2011-12, the number of students registered for transportation has increased 16 per cent. The department provided school bus service to approximately 2,000 students in Yukon in 2014-15.

Each year, there are a number of students who are interested in taking the bus who are not registered before the start of school. Additional buses and drivers have to be located and dispatched to pick up the extra children. Throughout September, bus routes and pick-up times are adjusted as these students are registered.

GOAL: Efficient and effective student transportation services

Changes to student transportation

The Student Transportation Committee, made up of representatives from school councils and the department, reviewed student transportation services in 2014. The department created new bus routes for the 2014-15 school year based on the committee's recommendations, such as separating elementary and high school students where possible, replacing some door-to-door service with designated bus stops to shorten drive times and adjusting the routes to make buses operate more independently.

In July 2015, after trying to work with Takhini Transport to bring them into compliance with the terms of their contract, the department ended their contract as the service provider for school busing. A three-year contract was awarded to Standard Bus Contracting to provide school bus service for Yukon students from 2015-18.

City transit passes for high school students

High school students can opt out of school busing and can register instead for a free transit pass from the City of Whitehorse. This option increases their access to transportation not just to school, but also to after-school activities, work and community events. The department increased the number of free city bus passes for high school students from 320 to 573 for the 2014-15 school year, and approximately 525 students per month registered for these passes, compared with approximately 325 students per month in 2013-14.



Capital planning & facilities

The Department of Education works with the Property Management Division of the Department of Highways and Public Works on the planning, monitoring and maintenance of Yukon schools as Yukon government facilities.

GOAL: Long-term facilities planning, monitoring and maintenance to ensure Yukon school facilities meet the needs of Yukon students and staff

Actions and results

Replacement of F.H. Collins Secondary School

The construction of the new F.H. Collins Secondary School building proceeded on schedule in 2015. The new school building was designed to support best and current practices for teaching and learning, with a variety of modern, flexible and technology-ready learning spaces.

Construction was completed in August 2015. In fall 2015, furnishing and finishing was completed and students and staff began to move into the new building in December 2015, with classes to begin in the new building in January 2016.

Ross River School repairs

Ross River School was built on permafrost, which can shift and stress the building. This movement can damage structural elements such as foundations, columns and beams, as well as creating superficial damage to building finishes such as drywalls and windows.

In January 2015, concerns about the condition of the Ross River School were reported first by the community and then by engineers hired by the Department of Highways and Public Works. The school was immediately closed for repairs.

A tender for the school repairs was issued and the bids came in over budget. The tender was cancelled and the Department of Highways and Public Works issued a direct award for the contract to Ketza Pacific Construction. Repairs on the structural foundation began in May 2015, with building re-levelling and repairs to interior finishes to be completed over the summer.

Working closely with the school community and Ross River Dena Council, a plan was put in place to have students continue their classes at alternative locations in Ross River. The Ross River community was updated regularly on the progress of the repairs.

The repairs were completed and the final engineering inspection and approval for occupancy was finalized in August. The school reopened in September 2015. The school building and permafrost cooling system will be inspected regularly by engineers to ensure the ongoing safety of Ross River School.

Removal of the old wing of Johnson Elementary School

The old wing of Johnson Elementary School has been disconnected. In fall 2015, the Department of Highways and Public Works issued the tender for the demolition of this wing, which is now complete.

School playground equipment upgrades

Yukon students need safe and fun places to play and learn outdoors. Many Yukon elementary school playgrounds have passed their recommended life-cycles and no longer comply with Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standards. Over two years, we have invested \$1.46 million to upgrade playground equipment at 18 Yukon schools.

The life span of the new equipment is 30 years and all equipment will be inspected on an ongoing basis by the Property Management Division of the Department of Highways and Public Works.

In 2014-15, playground equipment was upgraded at the following schools: Tantalus (Carmacks), Robert Service (Dawson City), Kluane Lake (Destruction Bay), St. Elias Community (Haines Junction), Eliza Van Bibber (Pelly Crossing), Christ the King Elementary (Whitehorse), Takhini Elementary (Whitehorse), Golden Horn Elementary (Whitehorse) and Elijah Smith Elementary (Whitehorse).

In 2015-16, playground equipment at the following schools was upgraded. With the exception of Ross River and Del Van Gorder, all upgrades were completed by the start of school.

Ross River School (Ross River)

Del Van Gorder School (Faro)

Ghùch Tlâ Community School (Carcross)

Hidden Valley Elementary School (Whitehorse)

Holy Family Elementary School (Whitehorse)

Nelna Bessie John School (Beaver Creek)

Selkirk Elementary School (Whitehorse)

Johnson Elementary School (Watson Lake)

Teslin School (Teslin)

Long-term lease for Teslin School

We are pleased to have signed a new 10-year lease for Teslin School, valid until June 2024. We have also signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the planning process for a new school to take place before the expiry of this lease. The Teslin School is located on Teslin Tlingit Council Settlement Land, with the land and the building owned by Teslin Tlingit Council.

Long-term lease for Individual Learning Centre and Aurora Virtual School

The Individual Learning Centre and the Aurora Virtual School are increasingly popular programs that have outgrown their current facilities. Housing the two programs at one location provides needed space, improved accessibility and more access to shared resources, such as shared meeting rooms and staff.

A tender was issued in April 2015 to lease a location to house these two programs together. Their new location is in Northern Vision Development Place (the old Canadian Tire building) at 4201 4th Avenue in downtown Whitehorse. Renovations to the space were completed by September 30, 2015.

School Revitalization Plan

A number of older school buildings in Yukon will need to be replaced or renovated over the next 15 years. In order to spread the cost of the upgrades and replacements over a reasonable period of time, the Departments of Education and Highways and Public Works are working together to develop a long-term School Revitalization Plan. This plan will help the Department of Education to determine whether the schools need replacement or renovation and when this work should take place based on the conditions of the buildings.

The conditions of Yukon school buildings were assessed in 2014, and the reports received in spring 2015. The School Revitalization Plan will be finalized in winter 2016, based on the Facility Condition Assessments, findings from the 2013 Seismic Evaluation Report from the engineering firm David Nairne + Associates Ltd., programming requirements and enrolment projections. Based on capital funding flow and this plan, the goal will be to upgrade or replace one school building every three years.

Milestones of progress for this plan over the next 15 years will include the preparation and completion of tender documents, architectural plans for the buildings, contract awards and the upgrades or replacements of these school buildings.

School planning

The 2009 Auditor General of Canada's report recommended that the department create a policy for individual school plans, including a process for planning, updating, evaluating and reporting.

GOAL: Develop a policy and process for creating individual school plans



Actions and results

School Growth Planning

The department developed a School Growth Planning Policy, which outlines the process by which each year school growth planning teams (made up of staff, school councils, the French school board [commission scolaire francophone du Yukon (CSFY)], parents, students and First Nations) work together to develop and improve individual school growth plans. This process involves annual school growth planning, evidence-based discussions at each school and school reviews every three years. School

reviews are completed by a team of department staff (including principals and teachers), First Nations education professionals and school council/board members. In 2014-15, eight schools and the Gadzoosdaa Residence underwent reviews. In 2015-16, nine schools will be reviewed.

School councils

School councils are important partners in public education. They are a forum for parents and the wider community to raise ideas and concerns about our schools and the education system. They decide on important issues, set the direction and atmosphere for Yukon schools and help families to get involved in their children's education. They have an important role in developing the school growth plans as members on the school growth planning teams.

School board

The CSFY is Yukon's only school board, and it participates in the school growth planning process as part of its responsibilities and role. For more information, please see the section on French language education in this report.

School growth plans

School growth plans are created each year based on observations, student achievement data and the recommendations made in the school reviews. The plans contain the school's context, educational goals, priorities and evaluation procedures for the current school year. They are the road maps to improvement for schools. These plans are reviewed each June for the upcoming school year, updated in September and monitored and adjusted throughout the year.

School growth plans are public documents and are available on each Yukon school website. School growth plans chart three years ahead.

This year, the school growth plans reflected a number of continuing trends and themes such as:

- Literacy – 12 schools have goals that focus on reading, writing and comprehension strategies
- Increased learning opportunities for students - three schools have goals focusing on expanding programming, e.g., individualized instruction, improved course transitions, project-based learning, etc.
- Student engagement and improved conditions for learning - eight schools have goals focusing on increased physical activity, community engagement, self-regulation, attendance, etc.

As part of working toward the goal of improving literacy, Christ the King Elementary School is focused on helping their students to improve their writing skills in order to meet or exceed expectations based on the B.C. performance standards and for their English Language Learning students to reach level three or four based on the assessment protocol. At Del Van Gorder School, staff are using the Balanced Literacy Approach: Supporting Student Success in Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking framework and the K-12 writing curriculum to meet their literacy goals. At Johnson Elementary School, staff are reviewing student writing samples each month to encourage progress toward meeting or exceeding literacy expectations for their grade level.

Early indicators of success: literacy at Eliza Van Bibber School

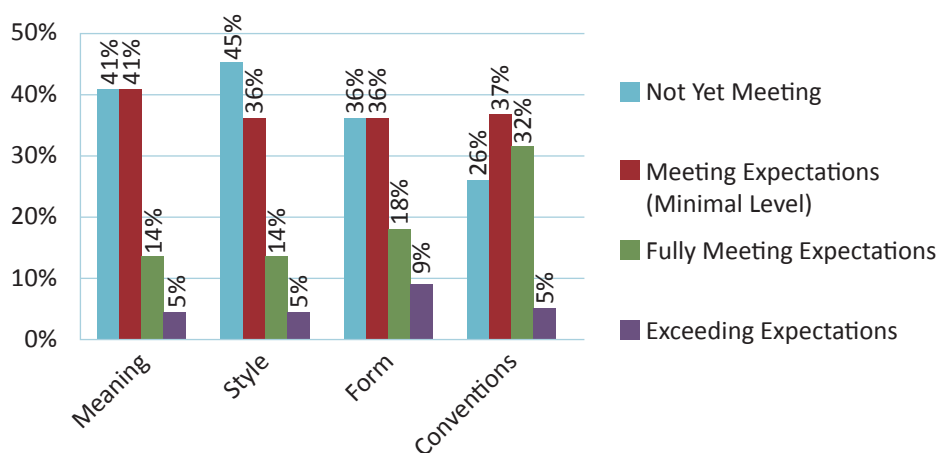
This year, there is a different feeling in the air at one of our rural schools, Eliza Van Bibber School in Pelly Crossing. The students' confidence and feelings about education have greatly improved, and it is a result of hard work and great growth and success in improving literacy.

In 2013-14, this school looked at its data and identified writing as an area to improve in its School Growth Plan. They set a goal of reducing the number of students who were not yet meeting expectations by 10 per cent by the end of the 2014-15 school year.

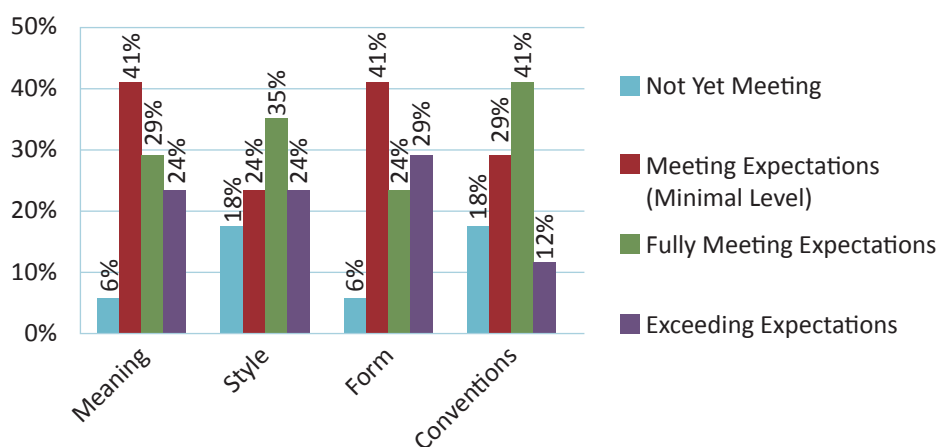
Students participated in focused writing opportunities, which were monitored and tracked every month. This data was compared and discussed at staff and school council meetings and with the community. The teachers and educational assistants provided regular feedback to all students on their work and helped students set goals in each class.

Results from Eliza Van Bibber School Wide Writes for Grades 2-8 in 2013-14 compared with 2014-15:

June: 2014



June: 2015



Students were asked why they felt they did much better this year. Their responses included: opportunity, focus on writing, practice, writing every day, love to spell, love to write and using letter sounds.

Staff observed contributing factors to students' success such as: culturally relevant topics, strong parent-community school ties, a student-centred learning environment, the practice of daily independent writing, staff efforts, support from administrator, curriculum consultants and the Reading Recovery program, high level of student participation, a balanced literacy approach and professional capacity.

A remarkable trend was that students demonstrated the most improvement in writing skills during the months when learning was focused on the local traditions and culture of Selkirk First Nation. This was an important lesson that the school staff and the curriculum consultants learned from the growth of their students.



Student financial aid

Access to student financial aid is an important factor in making post-secondary education affordable for students. According to Statistics Canada, students attending undergraduate studies at a Canadian university paid an average of \$5,959 in tuition fees in 2014-15.

GOAL: A more efficient and effective student financial assistance program

The department is proud to provide significant support for higher education through its student financial aid programs. In 2014-15, more than \$4.26 million was awarded to 988 Yukon post-secondary students. This funding was provided through the Yukon Grant, Student Training Allowance and Yukon Excellence Awards programs. Students are still required to make a financial investment in their own future, but these programs help to make post-secondary education more attainable.

A major focus of the past two years has been reviewing and revising our student financial aid programs, including the *Students Financial Assistance Act*, which governs the Yukon Grant and the Yukon Excellence Awards.

Review of the Students Financial Assistance Act

The *Students Financial Assistance Act* governs how the student financial aid provided by Yukon government, commonly known as the Yukon Grant, is awarded. Students who were eligible for the full amount of the Yukon Grant in 2014-15 received \$1862 per semester for tuition, living and books, plus an \$1800 travel amount if they were studying outside Yukon. Students who live in a rural Yukon community who travel to Whitehorse to attend their studies are also eligible for a travel allowance.

Issues and questions have come up over the years about the act providing consistent and fair access to student financial aid, such as:

- eligibility of Yukon students who may also receive financial assistance from the Government of Canada;
- eligibility of students who achieve high school equivalency in Yukon;
- differences in funding between students attending post-secondary education outside and inside the territory;
- review of student categories; and
- criteria for determining continuous residency.

In response to these concerns, the department is reviewing the act to ensure that the administration of this act is balanced, fair and fiscally responsible. In spring 2015, a targeted consultation took place to seek public input on these issues. An independent review team collected feedback from direct meetings, public sessions and an online survey held in May and June 2015. Direct consultation with Yukon First Nations continued over the summer.

The important feedback gathered from these consultations and findings from the review team will help the department to determine how this legislation can best serve Yukon students. It will help to inform decision making on eligibility rules, grant amounts and effective program administration.

The independent review team provided the findings of this consultation process to the department in fall 2015 for consideration and we will be proposing changes to the *Students Financial Assistance Act* to improve the application process and to ensure that financial assistance is awarded in a fair and flexible manner.

Changes to the Yukon Excellence Awards

The Yukon Excellence Awards are a great way to encourage Yukon secondary students to do well in their coursework and to pursue post-secondary education or training. Yukon students are eligible for up to \$3000 toward continuing their education through academic achievement in secondary school.

In 2014-15, the department made some changes to the Yukon Excellence Awards to allow more students and subject areas to be eligible for this program. For example, these awards previously focused on exam marks in language arts, mathematics, social studies and science and results from the Yukon Achievement Tests (which are no longer written).

Under the new criteria, the awards are based on overall performance and final grade in a course rather than just the exam mark. More subject areas are now included as eligible courses, such as art, music, shop, home economics and outdoor education. These new criteria can encourage students to explore more post-secondary options, such as trades.





Yukon Excellence Awards are earned by students in Grades 10-12 who achieve a final overall mark of 80 per cent or higher in up to five mandatory courses and five elective courses. These awards are worth \$300 per course for up to 10 courses, with a maximum of four Grade 10 courses, three Grade 11 courses and three Grade 12 courses.

A total of \$113,740 was claimed by 110 students through the Yukon Excellence Awards in the 2014-15 academic year.

GOAL: To support learners in developing the essential skills, knowledge and personal qualities that they need to thrive in life



Looking forward

Going forward, our focus is to support the success of each learner by working with all our partners in education to meet their needs.

A new vision for education

The Premier and Minister of Education announced a plan to build a new vision for education with our partners in Yukon in spring 2015. Yukon communities and Yukon First Nations have fundamental roles in supporting our learners.



We are engaging directly with students; parents; teachers; principals; vice-principals; First Nations; school councils; Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon; the Yukon Teachers' Association; the Council of Yukon First Nations; the First Nations Education Commission; the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards & Committees; the Catholic Education Association of Yukon and Yukon College, as well as with stakeholders, to build this vision together and to implement it over the next three to five years. We would like to thank our many partners and the members of the steering committee for their work and contributions to this initiative so far.

The guiding principles for this new vision include:

- Meet the diverse needs of all learners and foster development of the essential skills and competencies they need for life in and beyond school
- Identify the strengths and needs of each learner without pre-judgment or bias
- Integrate northern perspectives and Yukon contexts at all levels
- Embed Yukon First Nations cultures and world views in the curriculum at all grades and implement the education-relevant recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
- Celebrate Canadian diversity and use culturally relevant approaches to support the individual strengths and needs of each learner, school and community
- Engage students in their learning by providing a wide range of choices at school, on the land and in communities
- Value and support our educators and build the capacity of educators to work with learners and communities in a positive and respectful process, be flexible in approach and focused on competencies
- Be accountable, using research and evidence to ask questions, make decisions and celebrate successful practices in Yukon

The elements and areas of public education that will shift as we implement this new vision include:

- Curriculum and programs – what students learn reflects Yukon context and Yukon First Nations perspectives
- Assessment for learning – how students demonstrate learning and how we measure progress
- Teaching and pedagogies – how we facilitate learning and challenge and support our learners
- Student-centred learning – how students learn and using a holistic, strength-based approach
- Supports for learners – what students need to succeed and addressing individual needs and strengths
- Learning environments – where and when students learn inside and outside the classroom
- Supporting educators, families and community involvement – how we share knowledge and build relationships
- Governance and responsibility – how we work with our partners in Yukon communities and First Nations governments to hold one another accountable

The working drafts of the new vision and more information are now available on the Department of Education website at <http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/new-vision.html>

We invite everyone to provide feedback on the new vision and our actions to support Yukon learners as we move forward together.

Notes

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