



MEETING SD 107-20-26

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2026
DET'ANCHOGH KÚÉ - EAGLE ROOM
10:30 AM**

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Prayer/Reflection
3. Review and Adoption of Agenda
4. Declarations of Conflict of Interest
5. Public Matters
 - a) Public Briefing on Inclusive Schooling with the Honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment
6. In Camera Matters
 - a) Debrief
 - b) Correspondence
 - i. 2026-04-01 Honourable Minister of Education, Culture and Employment
 - ii. 2026-03-10 Honourable Minister of Health and Social Services
 - iii. 2026-03-11 Honourable Minister of Health and Social Services
 - iv. 2026-03-11 Honourable Minister of Health and Social Services
 - v. 2026-03-11 Honourable Minister of Health and Social Services
 - vi. 2026-03-11 Honourable Minister of Health and Social Services
 - vii. 2026-03-11 Honourable Minister of Health and Social Services
 - c) Workplan
7. New Business
 - a)
8. Date and Time of Next Meeting:
 - a) Friday, May 1, 2026 at 1:30 p.m.
9. Adjournment

**The Honourable Caitlin Cleveland
Minister of Education, Culture and
Employment**

**OPENING REMARKS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
ON INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING REVIEW**

Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to be here today to provide information on the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's review of Inclusive Schooling.

With me today I have:

- Jamie Fulford, Deputy Minister of Education, Culture and Employment,
- Shannon Barnett-Aikman, Assistant Deputy Minister, Education and Early Childhood,
- Nigel Wodrich, Ministerial Special Advisor, and
- Briony Grabke, Senior Advisor to the Deputy Minister

In 2020, the Office of the Auditor General reported that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) monitoring of inclusive schooling did not provide sufficient information about whether students on individualized learning plans received the necessary support and services, or how this affected their outcomes. In response to this finding, ECE committed to conducting a review of inclusive schooling in the NWT.

The objective of the review was to generate comprehensive information on inclusive schooling needs and practices, and to identify gaps and recommendations that can be used to guide changes to the NWT inclusive schooling system. Phase one, completed in 2024, involved a jurisdictional scan and document review; phase two, completed in 2025, gathered input from parents, guardians, and education partners. The review produced 11 recommendations, all of which the government accepts, and is implementing through a phased, multi-year approach.

Through engagement with parents, guardians, and educational partners, the review identified both the strengths and challenges in implementing Inclusive Schooling, as well as opportunities for growth and improvement.

Key actions flowing from the review include clarifying the application of the Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling and better integrating mental health, life skills, and flexible learning approaches. The review also emphasized the importance of strengthening early identification of learning needs and transition pathways so students can access support earlier. The Department will develop plain-language resources and improve coordination between departments to help families navigate available support.

The current staffing model and funding formula do not reflect the realities of today's classrooms. ECE will work with education bodies to develop a staffing approach that supports continuity, clarifies roles, and accounts for community context. Professional learning will be strengthened through coordinated, territory-wide efforts focused on instructional capacity and collaboration. ECE will continue partnering with Health and Social Services to advance the program design and coordinated transition of rehabilitative services for school-aged children and youth into the education system, while maintaining alignment on supports funded by Jordan's Principle and the Inuit Child First Initiative.

As part of the Government of the Northwest Territories' 2026 budget, the Department secured at least \$30 million in GNWT-managed funding to stabilize Inclusive Schooling supports across the territory. Funding parameters will be finalized through GNWT financial

processes, with the majority of funding expected to flow directly to education bodies where it can be applied to support continuity and stability. This funding provides a more predictable foundation for inclusive schooling and reduces reliance on short-term and uncertain funding sources.

ECE will also review and revise Inclusive Schooling plan types and templates, establish transition protocols, and create a monitoring framework with meaningful performance indicators to support accountability and improvement. A comprehensive system needs assessment will inform a review of the funding formula to ensure flexible and equitable funding.

Finally, improving access to rehabilitation services—including Speech-Language Pathology and Occupational Therapy—is a key priority. Beginning in the 2026-27 school year, the Department will advance research and planning leading to program design and a phased implementation of education-based rehabilitative services.

To support transparency and accountability as this work progresses, I have directed the Department to develop a public-facing Inclusive Schooling Action Tracker. This will allow families, educators, and MLAs to clearly see what actions have been completed, what is underway, and what comes next.

This concludes my opening remarks, Madam Chair. I look forward to answering any questions the Committee may have as we move from review to implementation. We have a short presentation prepared if Committee is in agreement.

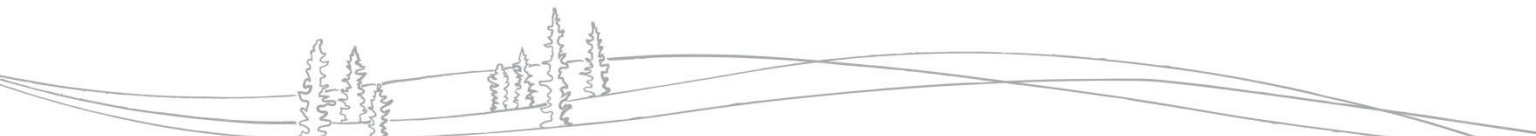


Inclusive Schooling Renewal: Findings, Management Response, and Next Steps

Presentation to the Standing Committee on Social Development

April 30, 2026

Government of
Northwest Territories



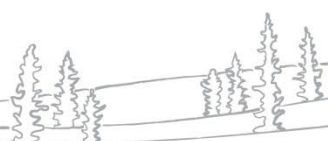
Inclusive Schooling Review Findings (2024-2026)

Barriers

- Increase in needs & limited staff
- Ability to consistently deliver supports (ECE/HSS)
- Misalignment between program plan types
- Unclear roles and responsibilities

Opportunities

- Capacity Building within the NWT
- Improved foundational components
- Desire for increased resources and training



What We Committed To: 11 System-Level Recommendations

The Government accepted all 11 recommendations of the Inclusive Schooling Review.

Together, these recommendations commit ECE to:

- Clarifying what inclusive schooling means in practice, including expectations for the common learning environment.
- Strengthening staffing, professional learning, and system supports for educators.
- Improving how families understand and navigate supports and services.
- Strengthening coordination with Health and Social Services for students with complex needs.
- Improving data, monitoring, and accountability.
- Aligning funding with student needs and system realities.

Implementation is sequenced and phased to ensure changes are clear, sustainable, and responsibly funded.



System Readiness Framework

Sequencing implementation to ensure clarity, capacity, and accountability

Phase 1: Stabilize and Clarify (Recommendations 1, 6, 7)

- Definitions, expectations, and transitions

Phase 2: Strengthen Roles and Tools (Recommendations 3,4, 6)

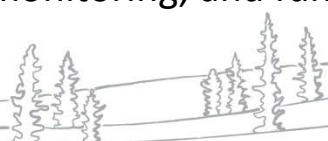
- Staffing, professional learning, and guidance

Phase 3: Make the System Easier to Navigate (Recommendations 2, 5, 7)

- Family pathways and service coordination

Phase 4: Improve Accountability & Funding Alignment (Recommendations 8, 9, 10, 11)

- Data, monitoring, and funding informed by need



Phases 1 & 2: Clarify Expectations and Strengthen Foundations

Phase 1: Stabilize and Clarify

- Clarify the inclusive schooling definition and “common learning environment”
- Review and modernize student support plan types
- Develop options to strengthen early identification of need and student transitions

Phase 2: Strengthen Roles and Tools

- Develop staffing approach options aligned with inclusive schooling expectations
- Strengthen professional learning coordination across education bodies
- Develop updated Inclusive Schooling Guidelines and supporting tools

Phase 3: Making the System Easier for Families to Navigate

Phase 3: Making the System Easier for Families to Navigate

- Improve how families navigate and understand inclusive schooling supports
- Advance early identification and screening options to support earlier learning
- Strengthen transition pathways at key points (early childhood, school-to-school).
- Advance implementation planning to provide for rehabilitative services for school-aged children within the education system.



Phase 4: Improve Accountability and Funding Model

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- Establish clear monitoring and reporting to understand student needs and outcomes.
- Strengthen accountability and continuous improvement across the system.
- Align future funding decisions with evidence on student complexity and service demand.

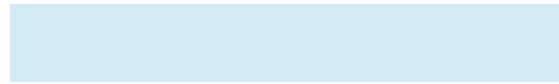


Inclusive Schooling Renewal Next Steps (Multi-Year Timeline)

2025-26 2026-27 2027-28 2028-29 2029-30

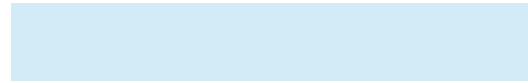
Phase 1: Stabilizing and Clarifying Systems and Structures

Recommendations 1, 6, 7



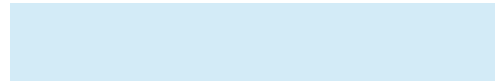
Phase 2: Strengthen Roles and Tools

Recommendations 3, 4, 6



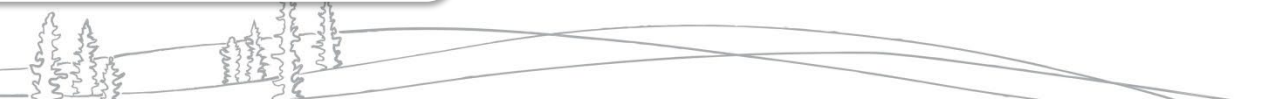
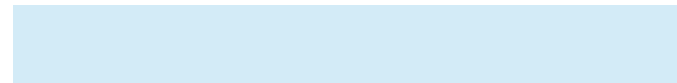
Phase 3: Making the System Easier for Families to Navigate

Recommendations 2, 5, 7



Phase 4: Improve Accountability and Funding Model

Recommendations 8, 9, 10, 11



Formal Decision Points

Recommendation	Decision Authority	Decision Focus
1 – Inclusive Schooling Definition	Minister	Approve revisions to the Inclusive Schooling Directive.
3 – Territorial Staffing Approach	GNWT	Approve staffing approach options and associated funding implications.
4 – Professional Learning	Senior Management	Approve Professional Learning Framework and SA training.
5 – Health–Education Coordination	Joint Ministers of ECE and HSS	Oversee coordinated implementation of the approved transition of rehabilitative services for school-aged children and youth to the education system.
6 – Student Support Plans	Minister	Approve changes to Directive-referenced plan requirements.
7 – Early Screening	Minister	Consider early screening and needs-identification options and provide Minister direction.
8 – Monitoring Framework	Executive / Minister	Endorse Logic Model and Performance Measurement Plan.
11 – Funding Formula	GNWT	Approve revised funding model through budget cycle.

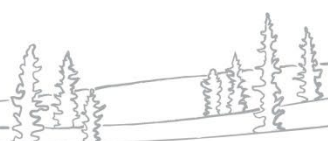
Next Steps: From Decisions to Action and Accountability

Immediate and Near-Term Actions

- Advance stabilization, clarity, and system readiness actions following public release.
- Develop and bring forward early screening options for Ministerial decision in Fall 2026.
- Upon Ministerial direction, begin implementation of approved early screening approaches within the 2026-27 school year.
- Continue implementation planning and phased delivery of rehabilitative services within the education system.
- Launch a public-facing Inclusive Schooling Action Tracker to report progress and next milestones.



**Mársı́ Kinanāskomitin Thank you Merci
Haj' Quana Qujannamiik Quyanainni Máhsı́ Máhsı́ Mahsı́**





Inclusive Schooling Review

FINAL REPORT

Department Of Education,
Culture and Employment
Planning, Research, and
Information Management Division
December 2025

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Background

In 2016, the *NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling* (the Ministerial Directive, the Directive) was renewed with a focus on providing quality inclusive education to the diverse student population of the Northwest Territories (NWT). The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE, the Department) is responsible for the monitoring, evaluation, and overall accountability of inclusive schooling in the NWT. In 2020, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada *Report on Early Childhood to Grade 12 Education in the Northwest Territories* stated that ECE’s monitoring of inclusive schooling did not provide sufficient information about whether students on individualized learning plans received the necessary support and services, or how this affected their outcomes. In response to this finding, ECE committed to conducting a review of inclusive schooling in the NWT.

To fulfil this commitment, ECE’s Planning, Research and Information Management Division carried out the Inclusive Schooling Review from 2024-25 to 2025-26. The overall purpose of the review was to assess how NWT schools have met the Ministerial Directive and how effective the Directive has been in providing quality, inclusive education to NWT students. The objective of the review was to generate comprehensive information on inclusive schooling needs and practices, and to identify gaps and recommendations that can be used to guide changes to the NWT inclusive schooling system.

The project was completed using a phased approach. Phase 1, completed in Fall 2024, involved reviewing existing data, including a jurisdictional scan of inclusive schooling plan types, and a document review of education bodies’ Inclusive Schooling Compliance Reporting Tools and Operating Plans/Annual Reports; and ECE’s JK-12 Performance Measures Reports. Phase 2 involved primary data collection with inclusive schooling partners from April to June 2025, in person and virtually. This included surveys, interviews, focus groups, and data interpretation meetings. The review gathered feedback from support assistants, classroom teachers, program support teachers, principals, regional inclusive schooling coordinators, superintendents, and ECE Education and Early Childhood staff.

The review was guided by the following questions:

1. How can inclusive schooling be defined in the NWT?
2. To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT meeting the needs of NWT students?
 - a. What do students and families need, expect, and want from inclusive schooling practices in the NWT?
 - b. To what extent do students’ and families’ experiences of inclusive schooling practices meet their needs, expectations, and wants?
3. What are the successes and barriers to inclusive schooling planning, implementation, and monitoring?

- a. What are the successes and barriers to effectively planning and implementing student supports?
- b. What are the successes and barriers to effectively monitoring student supports?
4. To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT supported by Jordan’s Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative funding?

1.2 Results

Question 1

Many participants agreed that the definition and vision for inclusive schooling included in the Directive reflected what inclusive schooling means to them. However, implementing inclusive schooling with this vision can be difficult to achieve in practice. Participants also expressed confusion around the concept of the “common learning environment,” stating that students’ needs might not always be best addressed within the classroom. Participants suggested expanding the definition and vision to include realities that are important for schooling in the North, such as the importance of mental health and cultural inclusivity.

Question 2

With regards to the inclusive schooling needs, expectations, and wants of families in the NWT, while many parents and guardians described positive experiences and appreciation for the inclusive schooling programs and supports offered by the school, they also expressed that the available supports do not always meet the needs of their children. Several parents and guardians stated that their children were building strong relationships and receiving the support that they needed. In addition, parents and guardians experienced strong communication and opportunities to discuss their children’s support plans and goals with educators. However, a lack of access to specialist services, systems navigation, and inclusive schooling resources were identified as gaps in meeting their children’s learning needs. Parents and guardians want consistent access to rehabilitation services, classroom supports, inclusive spaces and activities, and opportunities for their children to grow and experience a sense of belonging at school.

Question 3

The review found several successes and barriers related to inclusive schooling planning and implementation. Educators described seeing an increase in complexity and diversity of needs in their schools, which poses challenges to meeting students’ needs. Collaboration among staff was identified as a strength for planning and implementing inclusive schooling; however, barriers such as a lack of time and a lack of understanding and clarity on inclusive schooling roles, responsibilities, and authority can get in the way of effectively collaborating to plan and deliver student supports. This was reflected in the document review of education bodies’ Operating Plans/Annual Reports. Inclusive Schooling Staff knowledge of inclusive schooling was also identified as a barrier, with participants expressing a desire for more collaborative, inter-regional learning opportunities to build upon the strengths and knowledge that exist within the territory. The lack of access to specialist services in the NWT was identified as a significant barrier to address to ensure more consistent, timely, and integrated support for the diverse needs of the student

population. Clear processes for inclusive schooling plan types and transitions into, within, and out of the school system were also identified as priorities.

With regards to monitoring inclusive schooling, the review found that the existing mechanisms that the Department uses to fulfill its monitoring and evaluation responsibilities (education bodies' Operating Plans and Annual Reports) lack indicators to assess the quality or effectiveness of inclusive schooling practices across the territory. Participants described challenges with monitoring at the school and regional levels, including a lack of time and a lack of monitoring systems in place. Further work is needed to develop a monitoring framework and methods for inclusive schooling that are realistic and that capture the diverse perspectives of education partners, including students and families.

Question 4

Lastly, due to a lack of detailed data on Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative expenditures, the review team was not able to assess the extent to which these funds specifically support inclusive schooling in the territory. However, during engagement with educators and families, the review team heard that schools largely rely on these funds to support their inclusive schooling programs and services, and many are concerned about the impacts of cuts and/or changes to these funding programs. Participants also described concerns with the inclusive schooling funding formula provided by ECE and its ability to meet the needs experienced within NWT schools. Despite the large amount of funds accessed by education bodies from Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative, there are still gaps in the education system's ability to meet students' needs. In addition to addressing funding gaps, systems transformation is required to address the challenges identified by educators and families through this review.

1.3 Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Revise the inclusive schooling definition in the Ministerial Directive. This should include clarifying the meaning and application of the "common learning environment," including its scope beyond the classroom, and integrating key elements identified by participants, such as mental health, life skills, and flexible learning environments.

Recommendation #2: Develop resources and supports to aid parents and guardians with navigating inclusive schooling supports and services. This could include the development of a plain-language guide to explain supports (for example, plan types, access to Support Assistants, and rehabilitation services) and establishing a systems-navigator to assist families and schools.

Recommendation #3: Develop a territory-wide inclusive schooling staffing approach that better reflects the realities of inclusive schooling and ensures alignment between staffing levels and inclusive schooling expectations. This should include establishing a minimum staffing ratio for inclusive schooling staff; clarifying inclusive schooling roles, responsibilities, and authorities; and contingency planning for staff turnover.

Recommendation #4: Improve support and coordination for professional learning and capacity building in collaboration with Education Bodies. This includes establishing

opportunities for inter-regional collaboration to support educators through sharing inclusive schooling practices, challenges, and solutions that are grounded in NWT realities.

Recommendation #5: Work with the Department of Health and Social Services and the NWT health authorities to improve access to specialist services (e.g., assessment and rehabilitation services) by focusing on integrated service delivery models and reducing wait times for assessments and therapies. This includes working across the education and health systems to define roles, responsibilities and communication protocols for service referrals and follow-up, and explore platforms for tracking student referrals, assessments and service delivery.

Recommendation #6: Revise inclusive schooling plan types and templates. This includes removing or updating the MEP, developing clear guidelines for selecting appropriate plan types, and exploring territory-wide implementation of class support plans or class reviews.

Recommendation #7: Develop inclusive schooling protocols to clarify pathways for students transitioning within and outside the school. This includes strengthening early childhood screening and intervention to address learning challenges early on, and promoting a shared understanding of how support plans affect curricular achievement and graduation outcomes.

Recommendation #8: Develop a comprehensive monitoring framework for inclusive schooling. This includes developing a performance measurement plan (PMP) and logic model, identifying meaningful indicators to assess quality and effectiveness. Revise the reporting requirements in Operating Plans and Annual Reports as needed to ensure they are aligned with the PMP and logic model.

Recommendation #9: Develop data collection methods and processes for monitoring and evaluation of inclusive schooling. This includes researching and identifying methods that enable schools and education bodies to meaningfully monitor inclusive schooling in a way that is realistic, achievable, and not burdensome. This also includes identifying methods to capture student and family input.

Recommendation #10: Conduct a financial needs assessment for inclusive schooling in collaboration with education bodies and the federal government.

Recommendation #11: Review and revise the inclusive schooling funding formula to reflect student needs and complexities. This includes providing increased funding for inclusive schooling staff positions and flexible allocation of funds based on actual school needs.

2.0 Background

2.1 Inclusive Schooling in the NWT

The last comprehensive review of inclusive schooling in the NWT was conducted by an independent consultant in 2014. Following this review, in 2016, the *NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling* was renewed with a focus on providing quality inclusive education to the diverse student population of the NWT. The purpose of the Directive is to ensure that schools in the NWT implement inclusive schooling as defined¹ and as mandated by section 7(1) of the *Education Act* (1996). The Directive sets out the vision for inclusive schooling in the NWT, “to ensure access to quality education for all students by effectively meeting their diverse needs in a way that is responsive, accepting, respectful and supportive” (2016, p. 2).

The objectives of the Ministerial Directive are:

1. To ensure that all students have access to quality education programs within a common learning environment in the community in which the student resides.
2. To ensure that education bodies have direction on how to administer inclusive schooling supports and programming.
3. To ensure educators are provided with in-servicing to deliver inclusive schooling supports and programming.
4. To ensure financial accountability for inclusive schooling funding.
5. To ensure monitoring, evaluation and reporting of inclusive schooling supports and programming.

The Directive outlines the range of inclusive schooling supports that education bodies are required to provide. This includes the development, implementation and monitoring of various types of support plans for students who require them. The different types of support plans used in the NWT are as follows:

Type of support plan	Description (from the Ministerial Directive, 2016)
Modified Education Program (MEP)	A modified Education Program is developed for students who are documented as working significantly above or below grade level in one or more subjects, yet retains the learning outcomes articulated in NWT curricula. The curricular learning outcomes are selected from the working grade level and used to guide instruction for the Modified Program. The Modified Program is based on student strengths, needs and interests and may include modified individualized learning goals, instructional methods, methods of practice and evaluation procedures, consistent with the principles of differentiated instruction. The Modified Program is recorded in a Student Support Plan (SSP).
Student Support Plan (SSP)	A record of supports for learning which documents accommodations or modifications required for a student to best experience success with their programing. The SSP may change at any time to best reflect

¹ The Directive defines inclusive schooling as: “students access the education program, and required supports, in a common learning environment in the students’ home community.” (2016, p. 4)

	student needs and successes. Different kinds of Student Support Plans exist: Regular Education Program with Accommodations for Difficulty (JK-12); Regular Education Program with Accommodations for Enrichment (JK-12), Modified Education Program – Above Grade Level (JK-9).
Individualized Education Program/Plan (IEP)	An individualized Education Program is student-specific program outlined in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This plan is a comprehensive written education plan with annual student outcomes and shorter-term objectives, determined through a collaborative process, driven by the strengths and needs of the student; it may or may not include learning outcomes articulated in NWT curricula. A student on an IEP usually requires supports, accommodations, facilities, resources and/or equipment required beyond those required by his/her peers.

The Directive also identifies the specialized inclusive schooling staff for which ECE provides funding and position information to education bodies. These include:

Specialized inclusive schooling staff position	Description (from the Ministerial Directive, 2016)
Regional Inclusive Schooling Coordinator (RISC)	RISCs provide administrative and programming leadership at the regional level to support inclusive schooling based staff (Program Support Teachers and Support Assistants) support classroom teachers in meeting the needs of students.
Program Support Teacher (PST)	The PST is an experienced and skilled teacher who provides direct collaborative support to classroom teachers as they develop and use instructional strategies to meet the needs of students.
Support Assistants (SA)	Support Assistants work in the school to support teachers in meeting the needs of students.

Inclusive schooling extends beyond the responsibility of these specialized inclusive schooling staff. The *Guidelines for Inclusive Schooling: Supporting the NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling* (2016) (the Inclusive Schooling Guidelines, the Guidelines) outline the responsibilities of the principal, other school-based staff members, classroom teachers, superintendents, and ECE staff as they relate to inclusive schooling in addition to the above-mentioned specialized positions. The Guidelines also acknowledge the role of Health and Social Services system supports, community supports, and parents and families in meeting inclusive schooling needs.

2.2 Inclusive Schooling Funding

ECE provides education bodies with funding for inclusive schooling that must be used for the sole purpose of supporting students and teachers in accordance with the Directive. Education bodies must provide audited financial records to ECE showing how inclusive schooling funding was spent on a yearly basis, according to financial reporting regulations.

Education bodies also draw upon external sources of funding to support inclusive schooling, including Jordan’s Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative funding. Jordan’s Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative are federally funded programs that provide access to health, social, and

educational products, supports, and services for First Nations and Inuit children, respectively. Education bodies in the NWT apply for these funds to support a range of student needs, including inclusive schooling-related expenses.

2.3 Inclusive Schooling Accountability and Reporting

Sections 9.6.2 and 11.2.2 of the Directive state that the Department is responsible for:

- the overall accountability of inclusive schooling,
- monitoring and evaluating inclusive schooling in the NWT, and
- ensuring that inclusive schooling is functioning according to the Directive and an associated accountability plan.

To fulfill this, an Inclusive Schooling Compliance Reporting Tool was launched alongside the Ministerial Directive in 2016 to monitor implementation and compliance with the Directive and its associated guidelines. This tool was used to monitor increasing levels of compliance over a three-year period as the education system began implementing the Ministerial Directive. In 2018-19, inclusive schooling monitoring and reporting was transitioned into a dedicated section of education bodies' Operating Plans and Annual Reports through the Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Planning and Accountability Framework (JK-12 PAF).

In 2020, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG) Report on Early Childhood to Grade 12 Education in the Northwest Territories (OAG Report)² stated that ECE's monitoring of inclusive schooling did not provide ECE with sufficient information about whether students on individualized learning plans received the necessary supports or how this affected their outcomes. Some of the recommendations from the OAG Report included a review of inclusive schooling practices and spot checks on individualized learning plans.

With regards to monitoring and reporting on inclusion beyond the JK-12 education system, ECE commissioned a review of inclusive education practices in early learning and child care settings in the NWT³ by an external evaluator in 2024. ECE published a government response⁴ to this review in February 2025.

² https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/nwt_202002_e_43522.html

“Recommendation: The Department of Education, Culture and Employment should strengthen its monitoring of inclusive schooling. This should include conducting reviews of inclusive schooling practices, including spot checks on individualized learning plans; analyzing information (including information related to students' needs for specialist services) to assess whether students' needs are being met; making necessary adjustments to the education system.” (OAG Report, 2020, line 65)

³ https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/2025-02_-_malatest_final_report_-_eng_0.pdf

⁴ https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/2025-02_-_gov_response_to_elcc_inclusive_education_practices_-_eng_0.pdf

3.0 Purpose of the Review and Methods

3.1 Purpose, Rationale, and Scope

This review falls within a broader scope of work aimed at improving inclusive schooling and its associated policies, regulations, and legislation supporting it. The purpose of the review was to assess how NWT schools have met the Ministerial Directive and how effective the Directive has been in providing quality, inclusive education to NWT students. It also fulfills ECE's commitment to conduct a comprehensive review of inclusive schooling practices in response to the 2020 OAG Report on Early Childhood to Grade 12 Education in the Northwest Territories.

The objective of the review was to generate comprehensive information on inclusive schooling needs and practices, and to identify gaps and recommendations that can be used to guide changes to the NWT inclusive schooling system. This may include changes to the Ministerial Directive, regulations, policies, or otherwise. The work of developing and implementing those changes and updates is outside the scope of this project.

3.2 Review Questions

The review sought to answer the following questions and sub-questions:

1. How can inclusive schooling be defined in the NWT?
2. To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT meeting the needs of NWT students?
 - a. What do students and families need, expect, and want from inclusive schooling practices in the NWT?
 - b. To what extent do students' and families' experiences of inclusive schooling practices meet their needs, expectations, and wants?
3. What are the successes and barriers to inclusive schooling planning, implementation, and monitoring?
 - a. What are the successes and barriers to effectively planning and implementing student supports?
 - b. What are the successes and barriers to effectively monitoring student supports?
4. To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT supported by Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative funding?

3.3 Principles and Standards

The review adhered to the *Program Evaluation Standards*⁵ developed by Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) and the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) *Guidance for Ethical Evaluation Practice*.⁶ Additionally, all reporting activities are compliant with the NWT's *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (ATIPP).

⁵ Yarbrough et al. (2011). Sage Publications. See: <https://evaluationcanada.ca/career/evaluation-standards.html>

⁶ Canadian Evaluation Society (2023). <https://evaluationcanada.ca/career/ethical-guidance.html>

3.4 Approach

ECE’s Planning, Research and Information Management (PRIM) Division led the review, using a phased approach. PRIM met internally with a project team made up of ECE JK-12 Education System Services (JK-12 ESS) and Early Learning and Childcare (ELCC) staff throughout project planning for contextual information and guidance. Phase 1 of the review focused on reviewing existing data to assess compliance with the Ministerial Directive; strengths and challenges; and gaps in information and monitoring. Based on the results of Phase 1 and input from key education partners, Phase 2 focused on conducting engagement to hear perspectives directly from the field. The engagement approach, methods, and questions were shaped by input from the NWT Superintendents Association (NWTSA), Education Leaders, Regional Inclusive Schooling Coordinators, and ECE Education and Early Childhood staff, as well as consideration of the findings from the 2024 Review of Inclusive Education Practices in Early Learning and Child Care settings in the NWT. Recommendations were developed by the PRIM team based on the themes that were identified during data analysis.

Appendix A provides an overview of the review timeline and key engagements with education system partners.

3.5 Methods

The review utilized the following methods to answer the overarching review questions:

- Jurisdictional scan of inclusive schooling program types;
- Document review of education bodies’ Inclusive Schooling Compliance Reporting Tools and Operating Plans/Annual Reports, and ECE’s JK-12 Performance Measures Reports;
- Interviews with a sample of principals, including those early in their careers through to highly experienced administrators, and representing a range of school sizes;
- Interviews with a sample of parents/guardians of students on support plans, including a range of grades and community sizes represented;
- Focus groups with a sample of Program Support Teachers (PSTs), Support Assistants (SAs), and Regional Inclusive Schooling Coordinators (RISCs), including diverse lengths of service and experience across education bodies;
- Electronic survey sent to all classroom teachers via email; and
- Data interpretation meetings with Student Support Subcommittee (RISCs), NWT Superintendents Association, and ECE Education and Early Childhood programs staff.

The OAG Report suggested that ECE’s approach to monitoring inclusive schooling did not adequately assess the level and impact of support provided to students on support plans.⁷

⁷https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/nwt_202002_e_43522.html

“We found that the department did not sufficiently monitor whether schools were creating, monitoring, and updating individualized learning plans for students, as required by the Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling. Its monitoring of inclusive schooling did not provide it with sufficient information about whether students on individualized learning plans received the necessary supports, including specialized services, or how this affected their outcomes. This meant that there was a risk that students were not benefiting fully from these plans.” (OAG Report, 2020, line 60)

Therefore, this review sought to address that gap by prioritizing engagement with families of students with MEPs, SSPs, and IEPs. Targeted engagements with parents/guardians were coordinated with the assistance of RISCs, principals, and PSTs. RISCs also aided the review team with the coordination of SA and PST focus groups. A random sample of principals was invited to be interviewed via email. Participation in the survey, interviews, and focus groups was voluntary.

Engagements (interviews, focus groups, and data interpretation meetings) took place using a mix of in-person, phone, and virtual formats. In-person engagements took place in Behchokò, Fort Providence, Inuvik, and Yellowknife. With the inclusion of virtual formats, the engagement included participants from all education bodies. The engagement with educators (i.e., classroom teachers, principals, PSTs, SAs, and RISCs) included representation of a range of years of experience in their respective roles (e.g., both new and experienced principals), as well as a range of grades taught, school sizes, and community types (e.g., small communities and regional centres).

As the primary operational leaders of the education system, superintendents informed both the planning and findings of the review through meetings with the review team during NWTSA meetings at multiple points throughout the project (see Appendix A).

The following table summarizes the participation in the survey, interviews, and focus groups:

Participant Type	Engagement Format	Number of Participants
Classroom teachers	Online survey	110
Parents/guardians of students on support plans	In-person and virtual/phone interviews	21
Principals	In-person and virtual/phone interviews	9
Program Support Teachers	In-person and virtual focus groups	60
Support Assistants	In-person focus groups	55
Regional Inclusive Schooling Coordinators	In-person focus group	12
Total		267

The review team acknowledges that in the NWT, people wear many hats in their communities, and this includes the school community. For example, some PSTs also teach classes; principals who simultaneously play the role of PST; and education staff who are also parents. Therefore, in many cases, participants spoke to a range of experiences and perspectives given the multiple roles that they play in the school community. Hearing these multiple perspectives strengthened the review by providing deep insights into the realities of the NWT inclusive schooling system. The review team thanks all participants who took the time to share their perspectives to inform this work.

Qualitative data from engagements were analyzed using thematic analysis in NVivo 15 software. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in Microsoft Excel. The use of data

interpretation meetings⁸ with key education system partners, including RISCs, superintendents, and ECE Education and Early Childhood staff, provided contextual insights during the analysis, helping to ensure that the findings accurately reflect the NWT inclusive schooling context and realities.

3.7 Risks and Limitations

The risks and limitations that impacted the reliability and validity of the evaluation findings, as well as their mitigation strategies, are summarized in the table below.

Risk or Limitation	Mitigation Strategy
As one part of the broader NWT education system, there are many external factors and other ongoing initiatives (e.g. Education Act Modernization, JK-12 Curriculum Renewal) outside of the scope of the Ministerial Directive that may impact performance outcomes and the experiences of educators and families as they relate to inclusive schooling.	Data interpretation meetings with Superintendents, RISCs, and ECE Education and Early Childhood staff (see Appendix A), as well as reflective discussions among the review team enabled the consideration of how external factors may influence the evaluation results. External/contextual factors considered are noted throughout the report where appropriate.
Given the timeline, budget, and capacity for this review, it was not possible to engage all individuals who play a role in or are impacted by inclusive schooling in the NWT (e.g., families of students not on support plans; former students and educators) and groups (e.g., specialist service providers; non-government organizations with a vested interest in inclusive schooling).	To ensure a breadth of perspectives were represented, the review incorporated data from multiple sources (e.g., existing documents and primary data collection). The review team revised the Phase 2 Plan following feedback from superintendents and education leaders to incorporate the perspectives of a wide range of education staff in addition to families. The review team worked with RISCs to facilitate engagement with a purposive sample that reflects a range of experiences across the NWT.
The review process did not include hearing directly from students on support plans.	Parents and guardians of students on support plans were invited to bring their children to the engagements with the review team to hear their perspectives; however, the review team did not end up hearing directly from any students. The review team acknowledges this limitation and recommends further work to develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that capture the perspectives of students.
Insufficient financial data limited the ability to answer Review Question 4 (<i>To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT supported by Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative funding?</i>).	To mitigate this limitation, the review team discusses feedback from families and education staff related to Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Funding, and acknowledges this limitation within the report.

⁸ Data interpretation meetings involved the review team presenting preliminary findings to key education system partners and discussing those findings as a group to hear further input and context. Following these meetings, the review team incorporated meeting notes from the discussions into the in-depth analysis of qualitative data. See Pankaj & Emery (2016). <https://www.the-evaluation-center.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Pankaj-Emery-article.pdf>

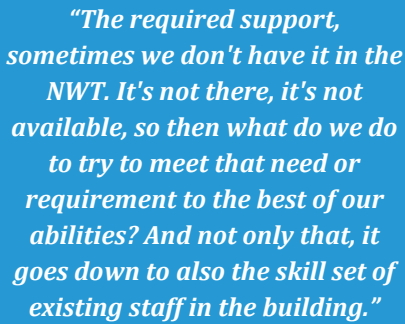
4.0 Results

Review Question 1: How can inclusive schooling be defined in the NWT?

The NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling defines inclusive schooling as “**students access the education program, and required supports, in a common learning environment in the student’s home community.**” The vision of the Directive “**to ensure access to quality education for all students by effectively meeting their diverse needs in a way that is responsive, accepting, respectful and supportive.**”

To ensure this definition and vision continue to meet the needs of students, families, and educators in the NWT, we asked participants if these statements accurately reflect what inclusive schooling means to them. The following themes summarize what we heard from the engagements with regard to defining inclusive schooling in the NWT.

Reality of Accessing the Required Supports in the Student’s Home Community



“The required support, sometimes we don’t have it in the NWT. It’s not there, it’s not available, so then what do we do to try to meet that need or requirement to the best of our abilities? And not only that, it goes down to also the skill set of existing staff in the building.”

-Principal

Many participants agreed that the definition and vision accurately represent what inclusive schooling means to them; however, many participants also noted that the definition and vision are difficult to achieve in practice. For example, participants appreciated that the definition and vision are student-centered and inclusive of all students. Yet, given factors such as access to funding, resources, health services, training, equipment, and technology, the inclusive schooling definition and vision do not necessarily reflect the reality of what inclusive schooling looks like and how inclusive schooling supports are experienced in the NWT.

Desire for Clarity on the “Common Learning Environment”

The Ministerial Directive defines common learning environment as “*an inclusive environment where instruction is designed to be delivered to students of mixed ability and with their peer group in the community school, while being responsive to their individual needs as a learner, and used for the majority of the students’ regular instruction hours.*” Many participants expressed confusion around the concept of the “common learning environment.” Educators expressed a need for clarity on whether the common learning environment refers to the classroom or the school as a whole.

“We want to know what the common learning environment is, because from our understanding we believe that inclusive schooling is having the student in a classroom, but that’s not necessarily inclusive schooling just because they’re in a classroom with their peers. What the student needs may be something outside of the classroom.”

-Program Support Teacher

Some participants noted that having all students in the same classroom with their peers helped build communication skills and connections between students. However, they also shared mixed feelings about whether the classroom as the common learning environment is what’s best for meeting students’ learning needs. For example, meeting some students’ needs might involve focused one-on-one support, sensory breaks, or work experience to build life skills outside of the classroom. Students may experience stigma when certain one-on-one support or interventions are implemented in the classroom. Educators also stated that having all students in the classroom as the common learning environment had, at times, led to disruptions or safety concerns if the classroom was not sufficiently supported to meet students’ diverse needs. To address this challenge, educators suggested considering the whole school as a common learning environment, stating that this expands the context and makes it more likely for students’ learning to be supported within and outside the classroom environment and by the whole school team.

Additional Feedback on Defining Inclusive Schooling

Some educators noted difficulty with implementing the inclusive schooling definition and vision in the high school context, stating that it can be challenging to fulfill the vision of effectively meeting students’ diverse needs while also meeting the curricular outcomes of senior secondary courses. It was suggested that more can be done to provide a clear definition of what inclusive schooling looks like in the high school setting.

In sharing what inclusive schooling means to them, several participants noted a desire to expand upon the inclusive schooling definition to reflect the realities of today’s school system, including elements such as mental health, cultural inclusivity, and trauma-informed practice. It was also suggested that the definition should be in plain language for clarity.

Recommendation #1: Revise the inclusive schooling definition in the Ministerial Directive. This should include clarifying the meaning and application of the “common learning environment,” including its scope beyond the classroom, and integrating key elements identified by participants, such as mental health, life skills, and flexible learning environments.

Review Question 2A: What do students and families need, expect, and want from inclusive schooling practices in the NWT?

Parents and guardians shared a range of their needs, expectations, and wants to meet the unique strengths and needs of their children. The suggestions are summarized below.

- Student-centered approaches to planning and implementing inclusive schooling (e.g., developing support plans, setting students' goals) that include figuring out what the student's unique needs and strengths are.
- Consistent access to rehabilitation services such as speech language pathology, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy, integrated with school-based supports.
- Consistent access to supports both in and outside the classroom, such as resources and technologies (e.g., mental health resources, effective learning strategies, self-regulation and sensory tools, communication technologies), trained support staff, and one-on-one support as needed.
- Inclusive spaces within the school, such as sensory rooms.
- Inclusive sports and activities beyond the classroom to promote a sense of belonging in the whole school community.
- Support for their children to grow and achieve; to gain confidence, courage, life skills, and independence; and to feel like they are a part of the school and community.
- Strong communication with the school to receive feedback on how their child is doing in school and to be kept informed of changes that may impact their child. This also includes being able to learn about their child's needs and to implement strategies their child receives from school at home.

"One of the things that I'm really hopeful as a parent is that the [support plan] is being honored and that in the classroom, the teachers are using the plans in order to support all the students in a good way."

-Parent

Review Question 2B: To what extent do students' and families' experiences of inclusive schooling practices meet their needs, expectations, and wants?

Many parents and guardians expressed positive experiences and appreciation for the hard work that educators put in to meet their children's needs. Several parents and guardians felt that their children were building strong relationships and receiving the supports that they needed (e.g., strong literacy supports, personalized planning, celebrating their unique skills and gifts). Several parents and guardians also reported experiencing strong communication with the school via phone, email, and in-person meetings. Parents and guardians appreciated receiving frequent updates from the school and opportunities to discuss and provide input on their children's support plans and goals.



However, many parents and guardians also expressed that their children's needs were not being met. Lack of access to assessment and rehabilitation services, such as educational psychology, physiotherapy, speech therapy, and occupational therapy, was the main gap identified by parents and guardians in having their children's needs met. The long wait times to access services and the lack of integration of services with the school system were identified as barriers to meeting students' needs. Parents and guardians described their challenges with navigating the school and health systems, and needing to advocate for their children to access the supports they need, which can be an overwhelming experience for many. Parents/guardians and educators alike were concerned that families with less systems knowledge or capacity to advocate were less likely to receive supports and services (such as access to assessments and one-on-one support). Parents and guardians expressed a need for more support with understanding and navigating inclusive schooling supports and systems.

Some parents and guardians also expressed concerns about the inclusive schooling supports offered within the school. This included concerns about the time it takes to implement supports, support plans holding their children back from meeting academic standards and graduating; and staff turnover impacting the consistency of supports.

Parents and guardians identified that in some cases, the school may not be in the best position to support their child due to being under-resourced. For example, many parents and guardians drew attention to a lack of funding as a potential reason why their children were not receiving supports such as one-on-one support from a Support Assistant or up-to-date technologies.

While many parents and guardians expressed gratitude for their experiences with inclusive schooling and staff's efforts and responsiveness; the gaps, needs and concerns described by parents and guardians indicate that improvements to inclusive schooling are required to further meet the needs of NWT students and their families.

Recommendation #2: Develop resources and supports to aid parents and guardians with navigating inclusive schooling supports and services. This could include the

development of a plain-language guide to explain supports (for example, plan types, access to Support Assistants, and rehabilitation services) and establishing a systems-navigator to assist families and schools.

Review Question 3A: What are the successes and barriers to effectively planning and implementing student supports?

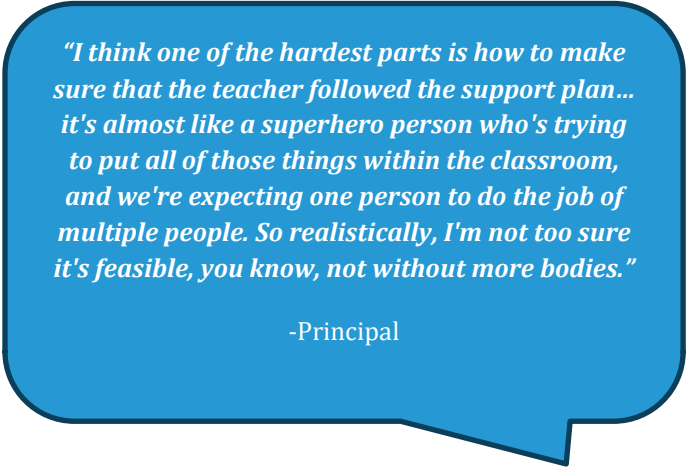
Six key themes were identified in the data regarding successes and barriers to effectively planning and implementing student supports. The relevant successes and barriers identified through the review are discussed under each theme.

Increased Complex Needs and Lack of Time and Capacity to Address These Needs

Many educators described seeing an increase in complex needs and an increase in the diversity of needs among the student population in recent years. This includes a range of social-emotional needs, cognitive and physical disabilities, behavioural needs, medical needs, and mental health needs.

Given the volume and diversity of needs increasing, educators reported that there is an increasing number of students requiring individualized programming and accommodations. This is often not feasible because teachers require more skills, knowledge, and time to plan and implement strategies to address these needs.

In the survey of classroom teachers, when asked what challenges and barriers they face when implementing support plans, the most commonly selected challenges were managing classroom complexity (selected by 75% of respondents), workload (64%), and lack of time (also 64%). This was echoed by other educators during the interviews and focus groups. Many participants described that in their schools, the volume of needs exceeded their staff capacity, which leads to SAs and PSTs focusing on addressing urgent needs, such as demanding behaviours and safety concerns, and therefore lacking the capacity to deliver academic supports.



"I think one of the hardest parts is how to make sure that the teacher followed the support plan... it's almost like a superhero person who's trying to put all of those things within the classroom, and we're expecting one person to do the job of multiple people. So realistically, I'm not too sure it's feasible, you know, not without more bodies."

-Principal

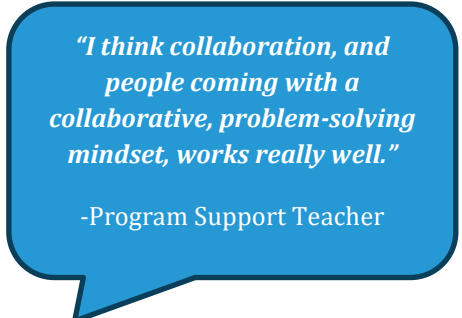
Participants identified several factors that they felt were contributing to the issues of increased needs and class complexity. Some participants noted that while in the past, families of children with complex needs may have moved out of the NWT to be able to access the supports they needed, we are now seeing more of these families staying in the North. Some participants noted a shift towards larger class sizes, which further amplifies the issue of class complexity and teaching to a wide range of needs and abilities within a single class. Some also noted that the new NWT adapted curriculum, which no longer involves streaming students into different courses at the high school level, contributes to increased class complexity as well. Education staff also noted that low attendance

impacts the ability to implement inclusive schooling practices, provide supports to students, and maintain continuity in implementation. Overall, participants expressed overarching concerns with regard to student wellbeing (i.e., mental health) and community wellbeing (i.e., violence and drug-related crime) and their impacts on inclusive schooling. The document review of education bodies' Operating Plans/Annual Reports also identified that events in recent years, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and evacuations, have led to increased needs within schools (e.g., need for more mental health supports) and have posed challenges for educators' abilities to plan and implement supports.

Given this multitude of factors contributing to increased needs within the schools, educators reported feeling spread thin. The increased workload and lack of capacity and time to address the needs presented within the school cause significant concern for educator burnout. Many respondents expressed a need for more inclusive schooling staff (e.g., SAs and PSTs) to be able to meet all students' needs within the classroom.

Some participants also drew attention to the importance of investing in early learning and early intervention to address the issue of classroom complexity by identifying and addressing students' needs early on. Participants also expressed a desire for improvements to the physical environment of the school, such as safe rooms/sensory rooms/quiet rooms, inclusive playgrounds and outdoor spaces, equipment and resources for inclusive schooling, and storage space for this equipment and resources, to better accommodate inclusive schooling needs.

Collaboration Among Staff and Understanding of Roles



"I think collaboration, and people coming with a collaborative, problem-solving mindset, works really well."

-Program Support Teacher

A strength identified by many participants that facilitates the planning and implementation of inclusive schooling is strong collaboration among staff. Educators identified that the school team being on the same page and working towards a common goal of supporting students is essential for effective inclusive schooling planning and implementation. The document review of education bodies' Operating Plans/Annual Reports also identified strong collaboration, openness, and leadership among School-Based Support Team (SBST) members as a strength for inclusive schooling planning.

Conversely, many participants also reported experiencing challenges with collaboration and supporting other staff. Staff reported not having enough time to properly plan and work with colleagues on inclusive schooling supports. Further, some participants noted that collaboration can be challenging when other staff are not open to collaboration, mentorship, or co-teaching, whether that is due to a lack of understanding of inclusive schooling, a lack of willingness to try new approaches, or being overwhelmed with their current workload.

Both the document review of Operating Plans/Annual Reports and engagement with educators identified logistical challenges with carrying out SBST meetings, including a lack of time, scheduling challenges, and a lack of substitute teacher/staff coverage for educators to be able to attend SBST meetings during the school day.

Participants also expressed a lack of clarity and understanding around roles, responsibilities, and power structures within the school system as barriers to effective collaboration among staff and implementation of inclusive schooling practices. Participants stated that in order for members of the school team to be on the same page and have strong working relationships, a common understanding of roles, responsibilities, and expectations as they relate to inclusive schooling is required, especially when it relates to developing and implementing support plans. Staff turnover was identified as a factor that likely impacts the consistent understanding of roles and responsibilities.

Further, participants noted that a lack of authority assigned to certain roles makes it challenging to fulfill their inclusive schooling responsibilities and ensure implementation of inclusive schooling practices. For example, PSTs are responsible for supporting and coaching teachers, yet they do not have a supervisory role or authority to ensure that teachers are receptive to coaching and follow through with planned student supports. RISCs are responsible for working with principals to ensure that school staff know and use effective inclusive schooling practices, and ensuring that required reporting is completed and submitted on time. However, RISCs do not have authority over principals, and therefore their ability to fulfill these tasks is dependent on the school leadership’s openness to collaboration, inclusive schooling buy-in, and understanding of roles and responsibilities.

PSTs in particular described challenges with a lack of clarity on what their role entails. The Inclusive Schooling Guidelines include a priority time-use chart for PSTs, which indicates that PSTs should dedicate 60% of their time to supporting teachers and strengthening instruction; 25% to supporting students; and 15% to planning and organizational duties. However, many PSTs described that this does not reflect the realities of their roles. PSTs described spending more time supporting students than the guidelines allocate. This includes spending a significant amount of time addressing immediate needs happening within the school, such as responding to students’ safety, self-regulation, and mental health needs. PSTs also described spending more time on planning and organizational duties within and outside their scope of work. This includes onerous amounts of paperwork involved in developing support plans, time spent liaising with specialist services, time spent on tasks added to their plates that are outside the scope of their positions as described in the Guidelines, e.g., supporting the rollout of the new adapted NWT curriculum. Thus, PSTs described having little time available to support teachers and engage in co-teaching.

Overall, participants drew attention to the importance of school and education body leadership understanding and supporting inclusive schooling. This includes having a clear understanding of inclusive schooling roles and responsibilities, showing support for staff training on inclusive schooling, and prioritizing time for staff to collaborate on inclusive schooling planning and implementation (such as dedicating time for SBST meetings). As one principal described:

“I think as principals we should all have a very solid understanding of what inclusive schooling is in order for it to live in our schools. If we don’t support it through leadership, then it’s not going to come alive in the school.”

-Principal

Recommendation #3: Develop a territory-wide inclusive schooling staffing approach that better reflects the realities of inclusive schooling and ensures alignment between staffing levels and inclusive schooling expectations. This should include establishing a minimum staffing ratio for inclusive schooling staff; clarifying inclusive schooling roles, responsibilities, and authority; and contingency planning for staff turnover.

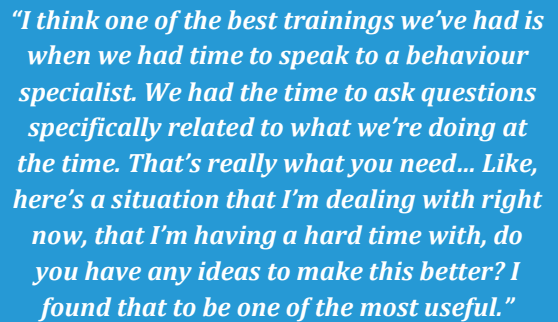
Staff Knowledge of Inclusive Schooling and Training

Participants noted that there is a learning curve when it comes to inclusive schooling. Educators described a lack of knowledge on specific complex needs that they are seeing in the schools (such as autism, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and ADHD), a lack of training on how to develop support plans, and a lack of knowledge on concrete strategies and accommodations to implement in practice.

Many classroom teachers reported feeling unprepared to support diverse needs and implement inclusive schooling in their classrooms. In the survey of classroom teachers, 58% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the training they've received on inclusive schooling has prepared them to support the diverse needs of students in their class. Further, 61% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the training they've received on inclusive schooling has prepared them to implement inclusive schooling practices that suit the grade level(s) they teach.

Participants expressed a desire for training that is tailored to the NWT context, and for support with transitioning learnings from training into practical applications.

SAs expressed a desire for increased training opportunities on topics such as trauma-informed practice, supporting students' mental health, staff safety and wellness, and training on the specific needs of the students they support. Participants also noted the importance of ensuring that SA training aligns with that of classroom teachers to support a shared understanding of how to best meet students' needs within their classrooms.



"I think one of the best trainings we've had is when we had time to speak to a behaviour specialist. We had the time to ask questions specifically related to what we're doing at the time. That's really what you need... Like, here's a situation that I'm dealing with right now, that I'm having a hard time with, do you have any ideas to make this better? I found that to be one of the most useful."

-Support Assistant

Despite these training needs and gaps in knowledge identified, there are also experienced educators across the NWT who hold a wealth of knowledge with regard to inclusive schooling in the NWT context. Participants identified getting to learn practical applications from colleagues and being able to ask questions and talk through situations and challenges as a strength that supports them in their inclusive schooling roles. More collaborative time and hands-on experiences were identified as ways to support this learning. Participants also expressed a desire for more inter-regional collaboration between education bodies to learn from other NWT educators and schools about what works well with regard to inclusive schooling in the NWT context.

Recommendation #4: Improve support and coordination for professional learning and capacity building in collaboration with Education Bodies. This includes establishing

opportunities for inter-regional collaboration to support educators through sharing inclusive schooling practices, challenges, and solutions that are grounded in NWT realities.

Access to Specialist Services

A significant concern expressed by all groups that participated in the review was the lack of access to specialist services such as mental health counselling, speech language pathology, occupational therapy, educational psychology, audiology, and social work services. The lack of service providers in the territory and wait times to access services is a barrier to planning and implementing inclusive schooling supports for students. This barrier was also identified by education bodies in their Inclusive Schooling Compliance Reporting Tools and Operating Plans/Annual Reports.

Parents and guardians described seeing fewer services available as their children grow older. They described waiting multiple years between assessments (if they are able to access an assessment), making specialists' recommendations less relevant as time passes. Some felt that their children were not able to access the supports they needed at school due to not having a timely assessment done by a specialist. Some parents and guardians took it upon themselves to access private services through their personal insurance or through applications to Jordan's Principle; however, this also led to challenges with coordinating between private services providers and the school. As described under Review Question 2B, parents and guardians expressed the need for support with navigating the education and health systems to access the supports their children need. For example, clearer information on who to contact to access assessments and services, plain language explanations of assessments and services and how they impact their child's school-based supports.

Educators stated that communication between the health and education systems posed challenges for accessing and implementing student supports. PSTs described the significant time investment that goes into coordinating specialist services and filling out the required paperwork. However, many PSTs stated that services are often not available when they put in referrals for students. PSTs described feeling like they had to put in referrals for services to demonstrate the need for those services, while knowing that those services were likely not to be delivered. Participants described that, given the lack of service, schools had to be creative in order to find ways to meet students' needs. Participants also noted that in the past, the Department of Health and Social Services trained education staff on how to support students with medical needs. However, this service is no longer available, and it is falling on schools or parents/guardians to coordinate and deliver.

Educators also described that when services are available, they are often recommendations for schools to implement and are not consistent for students. Following through on implementing these recommendations is challenging given the time, capacity, and training challenges previously described.

“We are doing as best we can with the information we have, but we are not speech therapists, and we are not occupational therapists, and we are not behavior specialists. And so, even if we can access those supports to some degree, they usually come in the form of recommendations rather than direct therapy... We don’t necessarily have the skills or knowledge to provide that direct therapy based on recommendations only, or based on our best guess if we can’t access the services.”

-Program Support Teacher

Some educators noted that they would prefer to use virtual services if it meant longer-term and more consistent supports. Some parents and guardians suggested that they would prefer to travel down south to access services rather than wait for services to be provided in the NWT. Many, however, noted the importance of increased service availability in students’ home communities, as reflected in the inclusive schooling definition.

Recommendation #5: Work with the Department of Health and Social Services and the NWT health authorities to improve access to specialist services (e.g., assessment and rehabilitation services) by focusing on integrated service delivery models and reducing wait times for assessments and therapies. This includes working across the education and health systems to define roles, responsibilities and communication protocols for service referrals and follow-up, and explore platforms for tracking student referrals, assessments and service delivery.

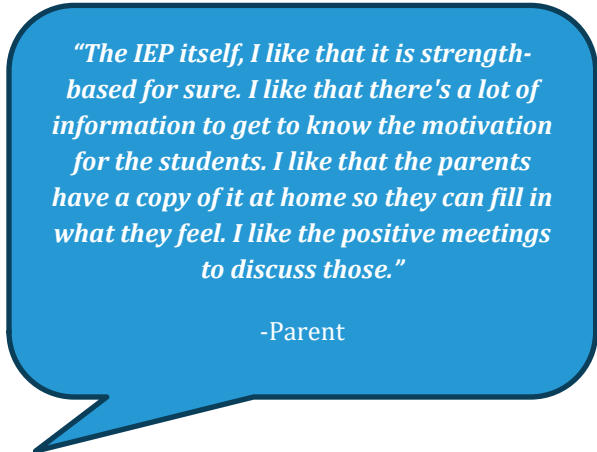
Inclusive Schooling Plan Types

Educators expressed a need for further clarity on inclusive schooling plan types to improve planning and implementation. Some participants described difficulty with knowing which plan type (MEP, SSP, or IEP) was best suited to each student. Participants also described that changes to plan types and templates over time could be difficult to follow, and that differing understandings and expectations among school staff, including school leadership, led to confusion and inconsistencies. Some participants also experienced inconsistencies with who has access to student plans (e.g., SAs not seeing or being involved in plans for students that they provide one-on-one support to).

Some participants noted concerns with the MEP and its fit within the curriculum and among other plan types. Some PSTs described feeling that there is a mismatch between the MEP and the NWT’s transition to using the British Columbia’s curriculum. Other participants, however, noted that there were already concerns and confusion with MEPs when the NWT previously followed Alberta’s curriculum, such as a lack of consistent use of the MEP across schools and education bodies. The jurisdictional scan of inclusive schooling plan types in Phase 1 of this review found that neither British Columbia nor Alberta use MEPs.

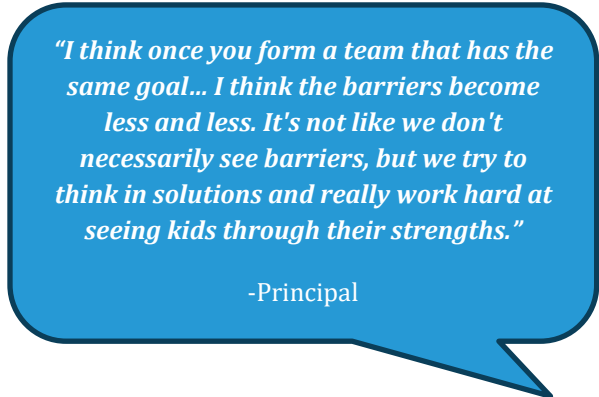
Educators expressed a desire for clear guidelines and concise templates to strengthen plan development. A success experienced by multiple regions was the development and implementation of class support plans or class reviews to support teachers in viewing student supports at the class

level and determining what the whole class needs. Participants shared that, given the high number of individual support plans on a teacher's or PST's workload, class support plans can be a fruitful way to consolidate information for easy reference, and a valuable tool for collaborative planning. Participants noted that class support plans can help to improve the allocation of resources across classes, follow-through with student supports, and universal design for learning.



"The IEP itself, I like that it is strength-based for sure. I like that there's a lot of information to get to know the motivation for the students. I like that the parents have a copy of it at home so they can fill in what they feel. I like the positive meetings to discuss those."

-Parent



"I think once you form a team that has the same goal... I think the barriers become less and less. It's not like we don't necessarily see barriers, but we try to think in solutions and really work hard at seeing kids through their strengths."

-Principal

Another success identified by participants was the importance of using strengths-based approaches when it comes to planning and implementing inclusive schooling, including the planning and implementation of support plans. Educators and parents/guardians alike shared the positive impacts that identifying and celebrating students' strengths can have on their school experiences and outcomes. Educators described that the increased use of strengths-based and competency-based IEP processes in recent years has helped staff to strengthen relationships with families and incorporate strengths-based thinking into other inclusive schooling processes, such as training and SBST meetings as well.

Recommendation #6: Revise inclusive schooling plan types and templates. This includes removing or updating the MEP, developing clear guidelines for selecting appropriate plan types, and exploring territory-wide implementation of class support plans or class reviews.

Transitions Into, Within, and Out of the School System

Participants drew attention to transitions into, within, and out of the school system as an important component of inclusive schooling supports. With regards to transitions into the school system, participants discussed the importance of early childhood intervention and the need to develop better relationships with the health system for schools to be able to hear about students' unique needs before they enter school, rather than relying on classroom teachers to identify needs during the school year.

Within the school system, participants again drew attention to the lack of specialist services as a barrier to implementing students' transition plans through grades. With regards to transitions out of the school system, participants identified a need for more concrete and realistic pathways for high school students to develop work experience and life skills in preparation for life beyond the JK-

12 system. Education staff also expressed concerns about being able to communicate to ensure parents/guardians understand how the different types of support plans impact their child's education path, such as the ability to obtain a high school diploma. As described under Review Question 2A, parents and guardians want their children to gain life skills and independence as they move through the JK-12 school system. Parents and guardians also described the importance of seeing a pathway and goals for their children to transition into the community following their JK-12 education.

Recommendation #7: Develop inclusive schooling protocols to clarify pathways for students transitioning within and outside the school. This includes strengthening early childhood screening and intervention to address learning challenges early on, and promoting a shared understanding of how support plans affect curricular achievement and graduation outcomes.

Review Question 3B: What are the successes and barriers to effectively monitoring student supports?

The document review in Phase 1 of this project identified limitations with existing Operating Plan and Annual Report data that ECE receives from education bodies annually. Limitations include a lack of consistency in reporting over time and across education bodies, and a lack of indicators to assess the quality or effectiveness of inclusive schooling practices.

During the Phase 2 engagements, principals and RISCs shared the current processes they use to monitor inclusive schooling in their schools and education bodies, which include but are not limited to:

- Academic assessments to monitor student success
- Monitoring behaviours through an incident tracking system
- Feedback from parents through meetings or surveys
- Feedback from teachers through discussions/meetings or surveys
- Talking to students
- Talking to SAs
- Collaborative meetings and discussions among members of the school team
- Reviewing and revisiting support plans multiple times per year
- Classroom observations/walkthroughs
- Inclusive schooling experts coming into the school to support monitoring through check-ins and debriefs with educators
- Conducting an audit of support plans

Strengths that support monitoring include the use of class support plans or classroom profiles, and having school and education body leadership that are knowledgeable about inclusive schooling to support monitoring efforts.

Challenges with monitoring, as reported by principals and RISCs, include not having a monitoring system in place, a lack of time to dedicate to monitoring, and challenges with bringing members of

the school team together for meetings. At the high school level in particular, it can be difficult to monitor and track support plan goals due to the number of different educators who work with a single student. Participants expressed a desire to identify and establish monitoring systems to be able to better respond to the needs of students, and to engage in more inter-regional conversations to enable the sharing of ideas and what works well for continual improvement.

Recommendation #8: Develop a comprehensive monitoring framework for inclusive schooling. This includes developing a performance measurement plan (PMP) and logic model, identifying meaningful indicators to assess quality and effectiveness. Revise the reporting requirements in Operating Plans and Annual Reports as needed to ensure they are aligned with the PMP and logic model.

Recommendation #9: Develop data collection methods and processes for monitoring and evaluation of inclusive schooling. This includes researching and identifying methods that enable schools and education bodies to meaningfully monitor inclusive schooling in a way that is realistic, achievable, and not burdensome. This also includes identifying methods to capture student and family input.

Review Question 4: To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT supported by Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative funding?

Beyond funds provided by ECE for inclusive schooling, education bodies in the NWT access external funding, including Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative funds to support inclusive schooling-related and other expenses. Education bodies, or families themselves, apply directly to Indigenous Services Canada to access these funds. As of the 2024-25 school year, education bodies in the NWT have collectively accessed over \$211.9 million in federal funding from Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative since 2018.⁹ This includes funds for a wide range of health, social, and educational products, services, and supports.

Originally, this review sought to determine to what extent education bodies in the NWT rely on Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative funding to support inclusive schooling through a programmatic cost analysis. However, upon reviewing education bodies' audited financial statements and requesting further data from Indigenous Services Canada, the review team found that the available data did not provide sufficient detail to assess how much of the funds accessed from Jordan's Principle go specifically towards inclusive schooling expenses. Additionally, while this review was underway, Indigenous Services Canada announced changes to Jordan's Principle that would impact education bodies' ability to access funds for school-related supports through the program. Outside of the scope of the review, ECE is taking action to mitigate the impact of these changes.

⁹ Standing Committee on Social Development Public Briefing on Education Supports.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9ZAIcVvfs&t=2s>

Despite not being able to draw conclusions about the monetary value of Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative that specifically supports inclusive schooling in the NWT, the review team heard input through engagement with educators and families regarding the extent to which these funding programs are relied on. Principals and superintendents indicated that schools largely rely on Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative to support inclusive schooling, including expenses such as rehabilitation services, lunch programs, staff training, support staff (e.g., community liaisons, coaches, interventionists), and a significant number of SA positions. Teachers, PSTs, and leadership further expressed concerns about the impacts that cuts to Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative, such as the loss of several SA positions, would have on the ability to meet students' needs, provide supports, and maintain a safe school environment. We also heard from parents and guardians who have applied for Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative funding directly, demonstrating that both schools and families have identified gaps in inclusive schooling supports that required accessing external funds.

Despite the large amount of funds accessed from Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative by education bodies since 2018, the review team heard from many participants that students' needs are still not being met. Participants expressed further need for more SAs to support the volume of needs in their schools, and that specialist services are still significantly lacking. The short-term nature of the funding also makes it challenging for education bodies to retain and provide secure, long-term employment opportunities for SAs.

In addition, participants expressed concerns with the reliance on Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First funding to support inclusive schooling, given that these funds are specifically intended to support First Nations and Inuit children, yet inclusive schooling needs are experienced by the diverse population of the NWT. In addition to addressing funding gaps, systems transformation is required to address the challenges identified by educators and families through this review.

Beyond discussion of Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First funding, participants expressed concerns with the funding formula provided by ECE. Participants described that the existing funding formula does not meet the current needs of schools, given that it provides funding based on school population, and not the volume of or complexity of needs experienced within the school. Participants expressed a desire for more SA and PST positions to support inclusive schooling needs and more flexibility within the funding formula.

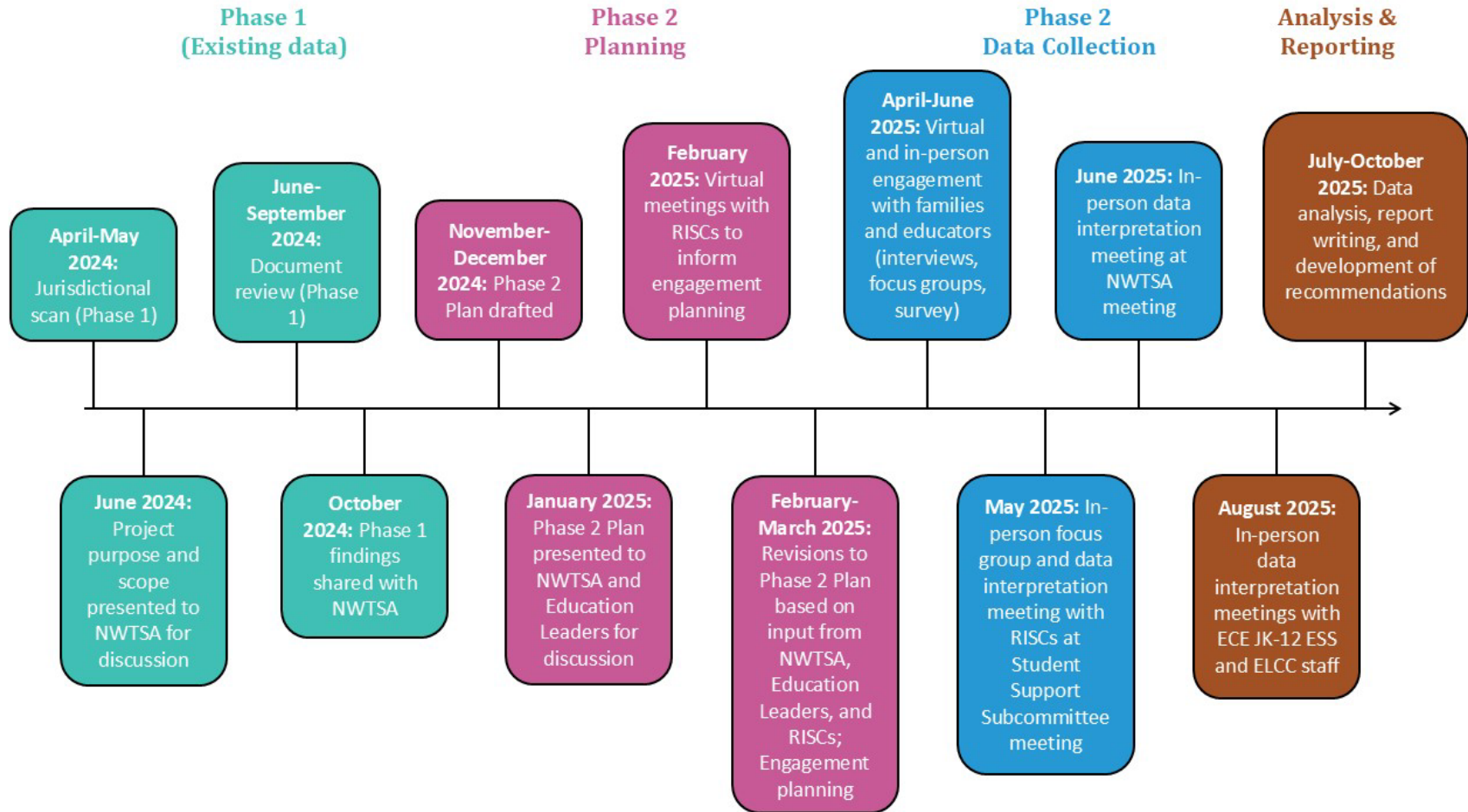
Recommendation #10: Conduct a financial needs assessment for inclusive schooling in collaboration with education bodies and the federal government.

Recommendation #11: Review and revise the inclusive schooling funding formula to reflect student needs and complexities. This includes providing increased funding for inclusive schooling staff positions and flexible allocation of funds based on actual school needs.

5.0 Conclusion

This review of inclusive schooling in the NWT highlights needs, expectations, strengths, challenges, and possible future directions for making changes and improvements in order to better meet the needs of NWT students. Through reviewing existing data on inclusive schooling through a jurisdictional scan and document review, and hearing from a range of inclusive schooling partners, including parents/guardians and education staff, the review explored strengths and barriers relating to inclusive schooling, including time and capacity to meet students' complex needs; collaboration among staff and understanding of roles; staff knowledge of inclusive schooling; access to services; inclusive schooling plan types; and transitions. While the review faced limitations in its ability to assess the extent to which education bodies rely on external funding from Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative for inclusive schooling expenses, perspectives shared by inclusive schooling partners indicate a need to address funding gaps and systemic barriers to strengthen the inclusive schooling system in the NWT. Going forward, the development of an inclusive schooling monitoring framework will help the department to fulfill its responsibilities with regard to monitoring and evaluating inclusive schooling.

Appendix A: Review Timeline





Government of
Northwest Territories

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
TO RECOMMENDATIONS IN
*INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING
REVIEW: FINAL REPORT*

February 2026

Management Response to Recommendations in *Inclusive Schooling Review: Final Report*

Executive Summary: *Inclusive Schooling Review Final Report*

Background

In 2016, the *NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling* (the Ministerial Directive, or Directive) was renewed with a focus on providing quality inclusive education to the diverse student population of the Northwest Territories (NWT). The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE, the Department) is responsible for the monitoring, evaluation, and overall accountability of inclusive schooling in the NWT. In 2020, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada *Report on Early Childhood to Grade 12 Education in the Northwest Territories* stated that ECE's monitoring of inclusive schooling did not provide sufficient information about whether students on individualized learning plans received the necessary support and services, or how this affected their outcomes. In response to this finding, ECE committed to conducting a review of inclusive schooling in the NWT.

Evaluation Design

To fulfil this commitment, ECE's Planning, Research and Information Management (PRIM) Division carried out the Inclusive Schooling Review from 2024-25 to 2025-26, using a phased approach. Phase 1, completed in Fall 2024, involved reviewing existing data, including a jurisdictional scan of inclusive schooling plan types, and a document review of education bodies' Inclusive Schooling Compliance Reporting Tools and Operating Plans/Annual Reports; and ECE's JK-12 Performance Measures Reports. Phase 2 involved primary data collection with inclusive schooling partners from April to June 2025, in person and virtually.

The evaluation was guided by the following four questions:

1. How can inclusive schooling be defined in the NWT?
2. To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT meeting the needs of NWT students?
 - a. What do students and families need, expect, and want from inclusive schooling practices in the NWT?
 - b. To what extent do students' and families' experiences of inclusive schooling practices meet their needs, expectations, and wants?
3. What are the successes and barriers to inclusive schooling planning, implementation, and monitoring?
 - a. What are the successes and barriers to effectively planning and implementing student supports?
 - b. What are the successes and barriers to effectively monitoring student supports?
4. To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT supported by Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative funding?

Evaluation Methods

Following the review of existing data in Phase 1 of the Review in 2024, evaluators from the PRIM Division collected data from inclusive schooling partners from April to June 2025, in person and virtually. This included surveys, interviews, focus groups, and data interpretation meetings. The review gathered feedback from support assistants, classroom teachers, program support teachers, principals, regional inclusive schooling coordinators, superintendents, and ECE Education and Early Childhood staff.

Results

1. How can inclusive schooling be defined in the NWT?

Many participants agreed that the definition and vision for inclusive schooling included in the Directive reflected what inclusive schooling means to them. However, implementing inclusive schooling with this vision can be difficult to achieve in practice. Participants also expressed confusion around the concept of the “common learning environment,” stating that students’ needs might not always be best addressed within a classroom. Participants suggested expanding the definition and vision to include realities that are important for schooling in the North, such as the importance of mental health and cultural inclusivity.

2. To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT meeting the needs of NWT students?

a. What do students and families need, expect, and want from inclusive schooling practices in the NWT?

With regards to the inclusive schooling needs, expectations, and wants of families in the NWT, while many parents and guardians described positive experiences and appreciation for the inclusive schooling programs and supports offered by the school, they also expressed that the available supports do not always meet the needs of their children.

b. To what extent do students’ and families’ experiences of inclusive schooling practices meet their needs, expectations, and wants?

Several parents and guardians stated that their children were building strong relationships and receiving the support that they needed. In addition, parents and guardians experienced strong communication and opportunities to discuss their children’s support plans and goals with educators. However, a lack of access to specialist services, systems navigation supports, and inclusive schooling resources were identified as gaps in meeting their children’s learning needs. Parents and guardians want consistent access to rehabilitation services, classroom supports, inclusive spaces and activities, and opportunities for their children to grow and experience a sense of belonging at school.

3. What are the successes and barriers to inclusive schooling planning, implementation, and monitoring?

a. What are the successes and barriers to effectively planning and implementing student supports?

The review found several successes and barriers related to inclusive schooling planning and implementation. Educators described seeing an increase in complexity and diversity of needs in their schools, which poses challenges to meeting students’ needs. Collaboration among staff was identified as a strength for planning and implementing inclusive schooling; however, barriers such as a lack of time and lack of understanding and clarity on inclusive schooling roles, responsibilities, and authority can get in the way of effectively

collaborating to plan and deliver student supports. Staff knowledge of inclusive schooling was also identified as a barrier, with participants expressing a desire for more collaborative, inter-regional learning opportunities to build upon the strengths and knowledge that exist within the territory. The lack of access to specialist services in the NWT was identified as a significant barrier to address in order to ensure more consistent, timely, and integrated support for the diverse needs of the student population. Clear processes for inclusive schooling plan types and transitions into, within, and out of the school system were also identified as priorities.

b. What are the successes and barriers to effectively monitoring student supports?

With regards to monitoring inclusive schooling, the review found that the existing mechanisms that the Department uses to fulfill its monitoring and evaluation responsibilities (education bodies’ Operating Plans and Annual Reports) lack indicators to assess the quality or effectiveness of inclusive schooling practices across the territory. Participants described challenges with monitoring at the school and regional levels, including lack of time and lack of monitoring systems in place. Further work is needed to develop a monitoring framework and methods for inclusive schooling that are realistic and that capture the diverse perspectives of education partners, including students and families.

4. To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT supported by Jordan’s Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative funding?

Due to a lack of detailed data on Jordan’s Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative expenditures, the review team was not able to assess the extent to which these funds specifically support inclusive schooling in the territory. However, during engagement with educators and families, the review team heard that schools largely rely on these funds to support their inclusive schooling programs, and many are concerned about the impacts of cuts and/or changes to these funding programs. Participants also described concerns with the inclusive schooling funding formula administered by ECE and its ability to meet the needs experienced within NWT schools. Despite the large amount of funds accessed by education bodies from Jordan’s Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative, there are still gaps in the education system’s ability to meet students’ needs. In addition to addressing funding gaps, systems transformation is required to address the challenges identified by educators and families through this review.

Recommendation 1:
Revise the inclusive schooling definition in the Ministerial Directive. This should include clarifying the meaning and application of the “common learning environment,” including its scope beyond the classroom, and integrating key elements identified by participants such as mental health, life skills, and flexible learning environments.

AGREE

The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, under her legislated authority to issue direction to education bodies, intends to consider revisions to the inclusive schooling definition in the Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling. ECE will support the Minister by providing analysis, engagement, and implementation guidance to ensure the definition reflects current educational realities and supports consistent understanding and application across the JK-12 system.

The Inclusive Schooling Review identified varying interpretations of “inclusive schooling” and the drivers of inclusive schooling, including curriculum alignment, instructional practice, and the role of the common learning environment, particularly regarding whether this concept applies solely to the classroom or more broadly to the school environment. While the common learning environment is an important context, inclusion is achieved through curriculum-aligned, evidence-informed instruction across a continuum of environments. The concept of the ‘common learning environment’ will be clarified to explicitly allow flexible placements, including alternative or specialized settings when necessary to ensure safety, therapeutic access, and effective learning.

	<p>Updating the definition will promote a shared understanding among educators, school leaders, and education bodies, and strengthen consistent application of inclusive schooling expectations. Participants also identified the importance of mental health, community living skills, and flexibility in learning environments as integral to meeting diverse student needs. Using participation-focused, strengths-based language will further reflect students as active learners and future community members.</p> <p>ECE will provide advice and support to the Minister to ensure any updated remains relevant, evidence-informed, and responsive to the social, cultural, and geographic contexts of NWT schools.</p>
<p>Management Response Planned Management Action</p>	<p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advise the Minister on revisions to the definition in the Ministerial Directive. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will prepare options for the Minister that clarify the meaning and application of the “common learning environment” (including its scope beyond the classroom) and integrate key elements identified through the Review (e.g. mental health, life skills, flexible learning environments). 2. Engage education bodies, where appropriate, to confirm clarity and usability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will seek input from education bodies on how the revised definition will be understood and applied in diverse school contexts, ensuring practicality and alignment with existing roles and responsibilities. 3. Align supporting guidance to support implementation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where needed, ECE will update related guidance (e.g. Inclusive Schooling Guidelines, companion tools) to reflect the revised definition and support consistent use across the JK-12 system.
<p>Timeframe</p>	<p>2026–27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide options and analysis to the Minister; engage education bodies to support clarity and practical application. <p>2027-28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pending the Minister’s decision, finalize and implement the revised definition and update associated guidance to support consistent implementation across the JK-12 system.

<p>Recommendation 2: Develop resources and supports to aid parents and guardians with navigating inclusive schooling supports and services. This could include the development of a plain-language guide to explain supports (for example, plan types, access to Support Assistants, and rehabilitation services) and establishing a systems-navigator to assist families and schools.</p>	<p>AGREE</p> <p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that families benefit from clear, accessible information and supports to help them understand and navigate inclusive schooling within the JK–12 education system, and that strengthening this area will support more equitable access to inclusive schooling supports across the Northwest Territories.</p> <p>Clear information supports family engagement and trust. The Inclusive Schooling Review found that while many families value strong relationships with schools, navigating inclusive schooling supports and services can be complex and overwhelming, particularly for families with limited system knowledge or who are new to the education system. Providing clear, plain-language information supports meaningful family engagement and shared understanding.</p> <p>ECE recognizes that inclusive schooling involves multiple roles, processes, and interfaces within the JK–12 system, and that families’ ability to navigate these supports varies. Strengthening navigation supports – while respecting existing school-based relationships – will help reduce inequities and improve consistency in family experiences across education bodies.</p> <p>This work will respect the roles and relationships of schools and education bodies as primary points of contact for families and will not replace or duplicate school-based engagement or decision-making within the JK–12 system.-.</p>
<p>Management Response Planned Management Action</p>	<p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop accessible, plain language resources to help parents and guardians understand inclusive schooling supports within the JK–12 system, including support plan types, roles of inclusive schooling staff, and how supports are accessed and reviewed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will work with education bodies, as appropriate, to ensure that family-facing resources are practical, accurate, and reflective of how inclusive schooling operates across diverse NWT contexts, including small schools and regional centres. • Resources will be designed to complement, not replace, communication between schools and families. Work with education bodies to ensure relevance and usability. 2. Explore feasible approaches to navigation support. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will explore options to strengthen navigation support for families that build on existing roles and structures, with the goal of improving coordination and clarity without creating additional administrative burden or duplicating responsibilities held by schools or education bodies. 3. Align resources with broader inclusive schooling improvements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will align family-facing resources and navigation supports with other inclusive schooling initiatives, including revisions to plan types, transition protocols, and monitoring frameworks, to support consistent messaging and understanding across the system.

<p>Timeframe</p>	<p>2026-27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop plain-language inclusive schooling resources for families. • Engage education bodies to review and refine materials for clarity, accuracy, and usability. • Explore feasible approaches to strengthening navigation support within the JK-12 system. <p>2027-28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize and implement family-facing resources. • Implement selected navigation support approaches and adjust as needed based on feedback and system capacity.
<p>Recommendation 3: Develop a territory-wide inclusive schooling staffing approach that better reflects the realities of inclusive schooling and ensures alignment between staffing levels and inclusive schooling expectations. This should include establishing a minimum staffing ratio for inclusive schooling staff; clarifying inclusive schooling roles, responsibilities, and authorities; and contingency planning for staff turnover.</p>	<p>AGREE</p> <p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that a territory-wide inclusive schooling staffing approach is required to better align staffing levels, roles, and expectations with the realities of inclusive schooling across the JK–12 system.</p> <p>Inclusive schooling expectations must be supported by appropriate staffing structures. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified increasing complexity of student needs and significant pressure on inclusive schooling staff, including Program Support Teachers, Support Assistants, and Regional Inclusive Schooling Coordinators. Strengthening alignment between staffing models and inclusive schooling expectations is necessary to support effective implementation and safe, supportive learning environments.</p> <p>Clarity and consistency support effective collaboration and sustainability. Variability in how inclusive schooling roles, responsibilities, and authorities are understood and applied has contributed to implementation challenges. A clearer, territory-wide approach – developed in collaboration with education bodies – will support shared understanding, continuity of practice, and more consistent support for educators and students.</p>
<p>Management Response Planned Management Action</p>	<p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a territory-wide inclusive schooling staffing framework. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will work with education bodies to develop a staffing approach that reflects the realities of inclusive schooling in the NWT, including consideration of baseline staffing expectations, regional variability, and the differing needs of small, medium, and large schools.

	<p>2. Clarify inclusive schooling roles, responsibilities, and authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECE will review and clarify territorial guidance related to inclusive schooling roles – including Program Support Teachers, Support Assistants, Regional Inclusive Schooling Coordinators, and school leadership – to support shared understanding, effective collaboration, and consistent implementation across the system. <p>3. Analyze ratios and flexibility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECE will analyze options related to territorial expectations for inclusive schooling staff – including scenarios that model different baseline approaches – informed by evidence, education body input, and system capacity. Any changes to staffing expectations would be subject to available resources, employer authorities, and required GNWT approvals; the analysis will identify approaches that allow flexibility for local context and student needs. <p>4. Strengthen contingency planning for staffing continuity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECE will work with education bodies to identify approaches that support continuity of inclusive schooling support during periods of staff turnover or vacancies, recognizing the recruitment and retention challenges present in the NWT. <p><i>Note: Any future adjustments to staffing expectations or funding mechanisms will be considered by the Minister and the GNWT through established planning and approval processes and are not pre-determined by this management response.</i></p>
Timeframe	<p>2026-27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage education bodies to identify staffing pressures, role clarity issues, and priority areas for improvement. Develop options for a territory-wide inclusive schooling staffing framework (including scenarios for baseline expectations and flexibility). Prepare advice for the Minister on potential updates to territorial expectations for inclusive schooling staffing (including roles/authorities guidance), for consideration. <p>2027-28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to the Minister’s direction and required GNWT approvals, finalize the selected approach and plan a phased implementation with education bodies. Support education bodies in applying any approved territorial guidance in a way that is manageable and aligned with local context. Update the Inclusive Schooling Guidelines and related materials as needed to reflect approved changes. <p><i>Note: Any adjustments with funding implications will proceed through established business planning and approval processes prior to implementation.</i></p>

<p>Recommendation 4: Improve support and coordination for professional learning and capacity building in collaboration with Education Bodies. This includes establishing opportunities for inter-regional collaboration to support educators through sharing inclusive schooling practices, challenges, and solutions that are grounded in NWT realities.</p>	<p>AGREE</p> <p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that strong instructional capacity and shared professional learning are essential to strengthening inclusive schooling practices across the JK–12 system and to supporting educators in meeting increasingly diverse student -needs. Building supports are essential to strengthening inclusive schooling practices across the JK–12 system and to supporting educators in meeting increasingly diverse student needs.</p> <p>Effective inclusive schooling depends on educator professional judgment, curriculum alignment, and the ability to adapt instruction based on evidence of student learning, rather than on centralized or prescriptive training. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified variability in educators’ access to professional learning and opportunities to build practical knowledge related to inclusive schooling. Strengthening coordination and collaboration will support more consistent understanding and application of inclusive schooling practices across regions and school contexts.</p> <p>Professional learning is most effective when it is educator led, sustained over time, and grounded in local context. Educators emphasized the value of learning from peers who understand the realities of northern, remote, small, and multigrade school contexts. Interregional collaboration provides opportunities to share practical strategies, challenges, and solutions that are relevant and immediately applicable within NWT -schools.</p> <p>This work will respect the roles of education bodies as employers and will focus on coordination, facilitation, and shared learning rather than centralized delivery or prescriptive training requirements. Professional learning efforts will prioritize instructional capacity over generalized “inclusion training,” recognizing limited instructional time and the expectation that professionals can independently access materials and apply locally developed procedures.</p>
<p>Management Response Planned Management Action</p>	<p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen coordination of inclusive schooling professional learning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will work with education bodies to improve coordination of inclusive schooling related professional learning and capacity building efforts, with the goal of reducing duplication and improving access to relevant learning opportunities across the territory. • Refocus professional learning to instructional capacity, shifting emphasis from broad “inclusive schooling training” to strengthening curriculum and instructional capacity. 2. Support inter-regional collaboration and knowledge sharing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will support opportunities for educators and inclusive schooling staff to engage in interregional collaboration, including sharing effective practices, problem solving approaches, and lessons learned that are grounded in NWT realities.

	<p>3. Leverage existing structures and expertise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure sustainability, ECE will prioritize the use of existing forums, networks, and professional learning structures, and will draw on the expertise of educators, Regional Inclusive Schooling Coordinators, and other system leaders to support peer-to-peer learning. <p>4. Align professional learning with broader inclusive schooling initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review alignment between inclusive schooling expectations and the GNWT Standards of Teacher Practice to reinforce educator professional judgment and practice. ECE will align professional learning and capacity-building efforts with other inclusive schooling work (e.g., revisions to plan types, staffing approaches, and transition protocols) to support coherence and consistent messaging across the system.
<p>Timeframe</p>	<p>2026-27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage education bodies to identify priorities and opportunities for improved coordination of inclusive schooling professional learning. Identify opportunities for and support interregional collaboration and knowledge-sharing activities. <p>2027-28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to refine coordinated professional learning and inter-regional collaboration efforts based on feedback and system capacity. Align learning activities with evolving inclusive schooling policies and guidance.
<p>Recommendation 5: Work with the Department of Health and Social Services and the NWT health authorities to improve access to specialist services (e.g., assessment and rehabilitation services) by focusing on integrated service delivery models and reducing wait times for assessments and therapies. This includes working across the education and health systems to define roles, responsibilities and communication</p>	<p>AGREE</p> <p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that improved coordination with health system partners is important to strengthening access to specialist services that support inclusive schooling outcomes for JK–12 students. Further to recent joint direction from the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to explore improvements to school-aged rehabilitation services, ECE will continue working collaboratively – within existing departmental authorities – to advance practical improvements in how services interface between JK-12 Education and Health and Social Services.</p> <p>Access to assessment and rehabilitation services remains a system pressure. The Inclusive Schooling Review highlights long wait times, limited availability, and coordination challenges that directly affect schools’ ability to plan and implement supports. Clarifying pathways and improving communication with health partners will help schools and families navigate services more effectively. In many NWT communities, schools function as the primary service hub for children and families.</p>

<p>protocols for service referrals and follow-up, and explore platforms for tracking student referrals, assessments and service delivery.</p>	<p>There is shared readiness to explore improvements within existing mandates. Building on joint ministerial direction to explore improvements to school-aged rehabilitation services, ECE and Health & Social Services are engaged in early planning discussions to identify practical coordination improvements that respect each department’s mandate and decision-making processes.</p>
<p>Management Response Planned Management Action</p>	<p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advance coordinated interface work with health partners (planning stage). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will continue planning discussions with the Department of Health and Social Services and NWT health authorities to identify near-term coordination improvements (e.g. clearer referral touchpoints, feedback loops, and follow-up expectations) that support schools and education bodies in navigating services for students. Actions will be advanced subject to partner agreement and formal approvals. 2. Clarify roles, responsibilities, and communication protocols where systems intersect. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With partners, ECE will seek to define and communicate who does what, when, and how information flows at key points (referral, triage, service delivery, and school follow-up), so that schools, families, and education bodies have consistent guidance across regions. 3. Support education bodies to apply agreed-upon processes. <p>ECE will work with education bodies, where applicable, to embed any agreed protocols into school-based practices (e.g., SBST processes, class profiles, transition planning), ensuring materials are manageable and sustainable for small and multigrade school contexts.</p> 4. Explore information-sharing improvements that respect privacy and partner authorities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With partners, ECE will explore options – using existing tools wherever possible – to improve visibility of referral status and service coordination for schools and families, ensuring compliance with ATIPP, and partner policies, and avoiding duplicative systems.
<p>Timeframe</p>	<p>2026-27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue interdepartmental planning discussions to identify near-term coordination improvements; seek partner alignment on roles and communication pathways; and engage education bodies to surface school level pressure points and usability needs.

	<p>2027-28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where feasible and approved, implement agreed coordination improvements (e.g., updated referral/communication protocols) and assess usability with schools and education bodies; identify further opportunities for collaboration that remain within existing mandates and capacities. <p><i>Note: Any changes that affect partner programs, platforms, or resourcing will proceed only with partner agreement and through established GNWT approval and communication processes.</i></p>
<p>Recommendation 6: Revise inclusive schooling plan types and templates. This includes removing or updating the MEP, developing clear guidelines for selecting appropriate plan types, and exploring territory-wide implementation of class support plans or class reviews.</p>	<p>AGREE</p> <p>The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, under her authority to issue direction to education bodies, will consider revisions related to inclusive schooling plan types and templates in the Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling. ECE will support the Minister by providing analysis, engagement, and implementation guidance to improve clarity, consistency, and effectiveness in student support planning across the JK-12 system.</p> <p>Clear and consistent planning tools support effective inclusive schooling. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified confusion and inconsistency in the use of inclusive schooling plan types, including what information is required, when different plans should be used, and how plans related to curriculum and assessment expectations. Clarifying required elements, standards, and intended outcomes will support clearer decision-making and more consistent implementation. –</p> <p>Planning tools must reflect current curriculum and classroom realities. Educators emphasized the importance of planning approaches that are manageable, aligned with contemporary curriculum, and responsive to increasingly complex and diverse classroom contexts. Strengthening guidance and exploring class-level planning tools can support collaboration, reduce administrative burden, and improve coherence between individual and classroom supports.</p> <p>This work will respect the professional judgement of educators and the operational authority of education bodies. Revisions will focus on strengthening territorial guidance and tools, not centralizing decision-making or changing employer responsibilities.</p>
<p>Management Response Planned Management Action</p>	<p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will support the Minister in the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update inclusive schooling plan types and templates. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECE will review existing inclusive schooling plan types and templates, including the Modified Education Program (MEP), and prepare options (e.g. update, consolidate, or remove) that align with current curriculum and inclusive schooling practice. (Any change to plan types in the Directive would be at the Minister’s discretion.)

	<p>2. Develop clear territorial guidance on plan selection and use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will develop clear guidance to support educators and school leaders in selecting and using appropriate plan types, clarifying how different plans relate to instructional approaches, assessment, and student pathways, while allowing flexibility to respond to individual student needs. • Explore class-level planning approaches to support inclusive practice: in collaboration with education bodies, ECE will explore the territory-wide use of class support plans or class reviews as tools to support whole-class planning, collaboration, and efficient use of resources, particularly in classrooms with multiple individual support plans. <p>3. Work with education bodies to support practical implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will engage education bodies to ensure revised plan types, templates, and guidance are practical, usable, and aligned with school-based processes, with attention to sustainability in small and multigrade school contexts.
Timeframe	<p>2026-27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing inclusive schooling plan types and templates and prepare options for the Minister. • Draft plan-selection guidance and explore optional class-level planning approaches with education bodies. • Coordinate with Recommendation #3 (roles/authorities) and Recommendation #4 (professional learning) to ensure usability. <p>2027-28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to the Minister’s direction, finalize and share revised plan guidance and any associated templates / tools. • Support education bodies and schools to apply updated planning approaches in ways that are manageable and aligned with local context. • Align the Inclusive Schooling Guidelines and related materials as needed to reflect approved changes; ensure coherence with Recommendation #8 and #9 monitoring / data work.
<p>Recommendation 7: Develop inclusive schooling protocols to clarify pathways for students transitioning within and outside the school. This includes strengthening early childhood screening and intervention to address learning challenges early on and promoting a shared understanding of how support</p>	<p>AGREE</p> <p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that clear, system-wide protocols for transitions within and outside the school – from Junior Kindergarten through Grade 12 – are essential to realizing the vision of responsive, respectful, and supportive inclusive schooling in students’ home communities.</p> <p>Transitions are a core implementation gap identified by the Review. Educators and families highlighted the need for clear processes for plan types and transitions into, within, and out of the school system, including the implications of supports for high school programming and graduation. Clarifying these pathways will strengthen continuity of learning and reduce variability across schools and education bodies.</p>

<p>plans affect curricular achievement and graduation outcomes.</p>	<p>Early identification and effective transition mechanics must work together across the JK–12 continuum including school-entry, senior secondary course pathways, graduation requirements, and post-secondary or community transitions. Strengthening junior kindergarten and kindergarten childhood screening and early intervention that is culturally responsive and appropriate to northern contexts must be accompanied by clear high school pathway mechanics to address known bottlenecks in course selection, plan impacts, and graduation tracking.</p> <p>To remove variability and accelerate early supports, ECE will develop options for the Minister’s consideration, under the Minister’s authority in the <i>Education Act</i>, including the established ability to issue Ministerial Directives to education bodies, regarding territory-wide early childhood screening at entry to Junior Kindergarten / Kindergarten. Options will set out implementation pathways, standardized early childhood screening windows, and documentation / communication expectations. Regardless of the option selected, early childhood screening results would be recorded in the student record and used to inform inclusive schooling supports to minimize or avoid future learning gaps.</p> <p>ECE acknowledges feedback that timelines for early childhood screening and transition protocols must be accelerated to avoid impacts on cohorts moving through key developmental windows and senior secondary decision points.</p>
<p>Management Response Planned Management Action</p>	<p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Publish JK–12 Transition Protocols for Inclusive Schooling. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will develop -territory wide transition protocols that clarify student pathways, roles, and information hand-offs at key transition points. The protocols will also be designed to align with options the Minister may consider, such as a potential Ministerial Directive establishing consistent JK/K childhood screening expectation. 2. Strengthen JK/K Childhood Screening and Early Intervention within the Inclusive Schooling continuum. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will create options for the Minister’s consideration – grounded in the <i>Education Act’s</i> provision for Ministerial direction – regarding consistent early childhood screening at JK/K entry. These options will include standardized early childhood screening windows, culturally responsive guidance, and supports for early intervention. Regardless of the Minister’s decision, ECE will continue to enhance early years screening- resources for educators 3. Build a Shared Understanding of Support Plans and Pathways. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will produce clear, accessible guidance and examples that help educators, school leaders, and families understand how different support plans relate to achievement, course pathways, and graduation outcomes. This will include how early years screening- information (if adopted) can inform supports through the inclusive schooling continuum.

	<p>4. Embed Transition Planning in School-Based Support Team (SBST) Processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECE will embed clear expectations for proactive transition planning within SBST processes, ensuring continuity of learning and supports across grades and schools. This includes how early learning information—such as early childhood screening results—should be incorporated into planning where relevant. <p>5. Light-Touch Monitoring for Continuous Improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECE will implement feasible, non-onerous checks that ensure transition expectations are being applied consistently and inform broader inclusive schooling improvements. Should the Minister choose to adopt a JK/K childhood screening- requirement, ECE will integrate corresponding monitoring aligned with the <i>Education Act</i> provisions enabling program evaluation and student progression- oversight.
Timeframe	<p>2025-26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> June 2026: Draft JK–12 Transition Protocols (for discussion with education bodies) and prepare options for the Minister’s consideration regarding mandatory territory-wide JK/K early screening (e.g. via Ministerial Directive, etc.), accompanied by a high-level guidance and implementation approach. <p>2026-27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2026: Finalize materials and readiness supports so that, should the Minister choose to proceed, consistent JK/K childhood screening expectations can be launched in the 2026-27 school year and be reflected in protocols and guidance. October 2026: Release finalized JK-12 Transition Protocols and any companion materials for early childhood screening. If a Ministerial Directive is adopted, the final protocols and guidance will align with it. March 2027: Embed transition expectations into SBST processes and initiate light-touch monitoring to support continuous improvements in inclusive schooling.
<p>Recommendation 8: Develop a comprehensive monitoring framework for inclusive schooling. This includes developing a performance measurement plan (PMP) and logic model, identifying meaningful indicators to assess quality and effectiveness. Revise the reporting requirements in Operating Plans and Annual Reports as needed</p>	<p>AGREE</p> <p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees with the recommendation to develop a comprehensive monitoring framework for inclusive schooling.</p> <p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) recognizes that a comprehensive, coherent monitoring framework is required to strengthen accountability for inclusive schooling and to better understand how inclusive schooling supports and practices contribute to student experiences and outcomes across the JK-12 system.</p> <p>Effective inclusive schooling requires meaningful monitoring and evaluation. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified that existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms do not consistently provide information on the quality, effectiveness, or outcomes of inclusive schooling practices. Strengthening</p>

<p>to ensure they are aligned with the PMP and logic model.</p>	<p>monitoring aligns with ECE’s responsibilities to ensure inclusive schooling is implemented as intended and supports continuous improvement across the education system.</p> <p>Alignment and clarity reduce reporting burden and improves system learning. Developing a clear logic model and performance measurement plan will support a shared understanding of inclusive schooling goals, activities, and outcomes, while enabling Operating Plans and Annual Reports to capture information that is purposeful, comparable, and useful for decision-making – without creating unnecessary administrative burden for schools and education bodies.</p>
<p>Management Response Planned Management Action</p>	<p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop an Inclusive Schooling Logic Model and Performance Measurement Plan (PMP). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will develop a territory-wide logic model and PMP for inclusive schooling that articulate intended outcomes, key activities, and system-level indicators across the JK–12 system. The PMP will focus on meaningful, feasible indicators that assess the quality and effectiveness of inclusive schooling practices, informed by NWT context and existing data sources. 2. Identify and phase-in meaningful indicators. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will identify a limited set of indicators that reflect student experience, implementation of inclusive schooling practices, and system capacity, balancing the need for accountability with the realities of small schools, staff capacity, and regional variability. 3. Align planning and reporting requirements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will review and revise inclusive schooling-related reporting requirements in education bodies’ Operating Plans and Annual Reports to ensure alignment with the inclusive schooling logic model and PMP, improving consistency and usefulness of reported information over time. 4. Support implementation and continuous improvement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will work with education bodies to support the implementation of the monitoring framework and will use the resulting information to inform system-level analysis, policy refinement, and continuous improvement of inclusive schooling practices.
<p>Timeframe</p>	<p>2026–27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the inclusive schooling logic model and performance measurement plan. • Identify proposed indicators and conduct engagement with education bodies to ensure feasibility and relevance. <p>2027–28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise inclusive schooling related reporting requirements in Operating Plans and Annual Reports to align with the PMP and logic model. • Begin phased implementation of the monitoring framework and use findings to inform system-level improvement.

<p>Recommendation 9: Develop data collection methods and processes for monitoring and evaluation of inclusive schooling. This includes researching and identifying methods that enable schools and education bodies to meaningfully monitor inclusive schooling in a way that is realistic, achievable, and not burdensome. This also includes identifying methods to capture student and family input.</p>	<p>AGREE</p> <p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that strengthening data collection methods and processes is necessary to support effective monitoring and evaluation of inclusive schooling across the JK–12 system, that this work must be undertaken collaboratively with education bodies, and that it must be sequenced carefully to ensure that expectations are clear, tools are streamlined, and unnecessary reporting is reduced before any new data requirements are introduced.</p> <p>Effective system monitoring must be grounded in school and education-body realities. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified that existing data collection and reporting processes do not consistently capture information on the quality or effectiveness of inclusive schooling practices. At the same time, educators and administrators experience reporting fatigue and frustration when data expectations are layered onto existing processes without clear purpose or alignment. Addressing this gap requires simplifying and rationalizing current reporting expectations first, then introducing targeted data collection that clearly supports decision making and system learning.</p> <p>Sustainable data collection depends on collaboration and proportionality. ECE recognizes that monitoring approaches must support system learning and improvement without creating additional administrative burden for educators or education bodies. Working collaboratively to identify feasible methods – including leveraging existing processes – will support consistent implementation and long-term sustainability.</p>
<p>Management Response Planned Management Action</p>	<p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Co-develop feasible data collection methods with education bodies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will work collaboratively with education bodies to research and identify data collection methods that support meaningful monitoring of inclusive schooling practices at the school and regional levels. This work will prioritize approaches that are realistic, achievable, and that make use of existing data sources and processes where possible. 2. Identify practical approaches to capturing student and family perspectives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In collaboration with education bodies, ECE will identify appropriate and manageable methods to capture student and family input on inclusive schooling experiences, ensuring approaches are accessible, respectful, and feasible for schools and communities across the territory. 3. Align data collection with existing planning and reporting processes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will seek to align new or revised data collection methods with existing planning, reporting, and school-based processes to minimize duplication and additional workload, and to support consistency across the education system.

	<p>4. Implement a phased and adaptive approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECE will take a phased approach to implementing new data collection methods, allowing for testing, refinement, and adjustment based on feedback from education bodies, with the goal of supporting continuous improvement and long-term sustainability.
<p>Timeframe</p>	<p>2026–27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with education bodies to identify feasible data collection methods aligned with the inclusive schooling monitoring framework. Identify options for capturing student and family input that are realistic and appropriate to the JK–12 context. <p>2027–28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase in selected data collection methods and processes in alignment with Operating Plan and Annual Report cycles. Refine approaches based on implementation experience and feedback to support ongoing system learning and improvement.
<p>Recommendation 10: Conduct a financial needs assessment for inclusive schooling in collaboration with education bodies and the federal government.</p>	<p>AGREE</p> <p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment agrees that a financial needs assessment is necessary to better understand the resourcing required to support inclusive schooling across the JK–12 system and to ensure that funding approaches reflect the realities and complexities experienced by schools and education bodies.</p> <p>Inclusive schooling needs have evolved and increased in complexity. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified that the volume and complexity of student needs in NWT schools have increased over time, placing pressure on existing staffing models and funding approaches. A financial needs assessment will support a clearer understanding of the resources required to meet inclusive schooling expectations as outlined in the Ministerial Directive.</p> <p>Credible, sustainable decisions require shared evidence with NWT education bodies, who are best positioned to describe on-the-ground realities across diverse contexts, including small schools and multigrade settings. Findings will feed into establishing planning and accountability processes used by education bodies, ensuring system alignment.</p> <p>The assessment will remain within the NWT JK–12 system, will not imply a transfer of jurisdiction, and will not prejudice future intergovernmental arrangements. Where external programs (e.g., time-limited funds accessed by education bodies) affect pressures experienced in schools, ECE may gather contextual information to inform analysis; this will not constitute shared jurisdiction or joint decision-making over JK–12.</p> <p>ECE will stage the assessment to provide early cost insights to guide near-term implementation, followed by a comprehensive analysis to support sustainable, territory-wide funding arrangements.</p>

<p>Management Response Planned Management Action</p>	<p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Launch a phased financial needs assessment with education bodies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will collaborate with education bodies on a two-stage assessment: an Initial Scan to inform near-term decisions, and a more comprehensive assessment to support longer-term funding structural and funding improvements, leveraging existing data first and using light-touch validation only where needed. 2. Use Initial Scan findings to inform early decisions and implementation supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary cost bands will guide early rollouts connected to other recommendations (such as transition protocols and early-years guidance) without predetermining the long-term model. 3. Complete a comprehensive assessment to support sustainable arrangements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The comprehensive phase will refine costs with validated utilization data and diverse operating realities, acknowledging intersecting external programs without implying shared jurisdiction. Findings will inform territorial policy and funding arrangements for inclusive schooling, aligned to existing planning and accountability frameworks.
<p>Timeframe</p>	<p>2025-26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set the scope of the needs assessment with education bodies. • Confirm existing available information (staffing, finances, planning data), confirming specifics with education bodies as needed. • Produce an initial scan that provides a preliminary picture of inclusive schooling costs to guide decisions being made for 2026-27 school year. <p>2026-27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the initial scan findings to make early adjustments that support other inclusive schooling initiatives rolling out across the system. • Continue the deeper assessment work, gather more fulsome information and confirm what was learned in the initial phase. <p>2027-28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish the full needs assessment, bringing together everything learned in both phases. • Use the results to shape long-term decisions about how inclusive schooling should be funded and planned across the territory. • Fold the findings into education bodies' regular planning and reporting processes.

<p>Recommendation 11: Review and revise the inclusive schooling funding formula to reflect student needs and complexities. This includes providing increased funding for inclusive schooling staff positions and flexible allocation of funds based on actual school needs.</p>	<p>AGREE</p> <p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that reviewing and revising the inclusive schooling funding formula is necessary to ensure funding more accurately reflects student needs and the realities of delivering inclusive schooling across the JK-12 system.</p> <p>Current funding approaches do not fully reflect need or complexity. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified that the volume and complexity of student needs vary significantly across schools and regions, and that existing funding approaches – largely population-based – do not consistently align with inclusive schooling expectations or on-the-ground realities.</p> <p>A sustainable funding model must prioritize instructional capacity as the primary driver of inclusion, require collaboration and a clear understanding of system capacity. ECE recognizes that education bodies experience inclusive schooling pressures differently depending on school size, staffing stability, and community context. While additional Support Assistants (SAs) are needed, inclusive schooling outcomes depend most on the strength of classroom teaching, access to teacher specialists, and educators’ confidence to use UDL-aligned strategies and flexible learning options for students with disabilities.</p> <p>ECE recognizes that education bodies experience inclusive schooling pressures differently depending on school size, staffing stability, and community context. Revising the funding formula in collaboration with education bodies will support a more responsive and sustainable approach, while avoiding unintended administrative or operational burden.</p>
<p>Management Response Planned Management Action</p>	<p>The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use the phased financial needs assessment to guide the funding formula review. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will use findings from both phases of the inclusive schooling needs assessment to inform revisions to the funding formula, ensuring decisions are based on real pressures, school contexts, and resource requirements. 2. Collaborate with education bodies to refine funding model options. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will collaborate with education bodies to explore funding formula options that better reflect student needs and complexities, including considerations related to staffing, specialist access, and flexibility for small, remote, and multigrade schools. 3. Prioritize sustainability and manageability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE will assess potential revisions for clarity, long-term sustainability, and administrative feasibility. The aim is a model that supports consistent territory-wide implementation without increasing reporting burden.

	<p>4. Align revised funding with existing JK-12 planning and accountability processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any updated funding approach will integrate with the existing territorial planning, budgeting, and reporting cycles to ensure coherence with broader JK-12 initiatives and implementation supports.
Timeframe	<p>2028–29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate findings from the comprehensive needs assessment to develop a small set of feasible, evidence-based funding formula options with education bodies, and complete internal analysis in order to identify a preferred option. Conclude collaboration with education bodies and seek the necessary government approvals through GNWT planning and approval processes. <p>2029–30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If approved, implement the revised funding formula for the 2030-31 school year and integrate it with existing planning and reporting cycles. <p><i>Note: Any adjustments to staffing expectations or funding mechanisms will be considered by the Minister and the GNWT through established planning and approval processes and are not pre-determined by this management response.</i></p>

Appendix A: Management Response – Actions Implementation Schedule

Recommendation	Action (Summary)	Start	End	Status	Responsibility	Approvals / Dependencies
Recommendation 1: Revise the inclusive schooling definition in the Ministerial Directive. This should include clarifying the meaning and application of the “common learning environment,” including its scope beyond the classroom, and integrating key elements identified by participants such as mental health, life skills, and flexible learning environments.	Definition in Ministerial Directive	2026-27	2027-28	Not Yet Started	ECE	Ministerial decision on Directive changes; updates to guidance follow decision
Recommendation 2: Develop resources and supports to aid parents and guardians with navigating inclusive schooling supports and services. This could include the development of a plain-language guide to explain supports (for example, plan types, access to Support Assistants, and rehabilitation services) and establishing a systems-navigator to assist families and schools.	Family-Facing Navigation and Resources	2026-27	2027-28	Not Yet Started	ECE (with education bodies)	Materials must align with the Directive; navigation approach subject to capacity and fit with school/body roles.
Recommendation 3: Develop a territory-wide inclusive schooling staffing approach that better reflects the realities of inclusive schooling and ensures alignment between staffing levels and inclusive schooling expectations. This should include establishing a minimum staffing ratio for inclusive schooling staff; clarifying inclusive schooling roles, responsibilities, and authorities; and contingency planning for staff turnover.	Territory-wide Staffing Approach	2026-27	2027-28	Not Yet Started	ECE (with education bodies)	Any future staffing expectations or funding impacts proceed through established GNWT approvals; not pre-determined by this response.
Recommendation 4: Improve support and coordination for professional learning and capacity building in collaboration with Education Bodies. This	Professional Learning & Inter-regional Collaboration	2026-27	Ongoing	Not Yet Started	ECE (with education bodies)	Respect decentralized delivery; ensure alignment with teacher

includes establishing opportunities for inter-regional collaboration to support educators through sharing inclusive schooling practices, challenges, and solutions that are grounded in NWT realities.						standards and local implementation.
Recommendation 5: Work with the Department of Health and Social Services and the NWT health authorities to improve access to specialist services (e.g., assessment and rehabilitation services) by focusing on integrated service delivery models and reducing wait times for assessments and therapies. This includes working across the education and health systems to define roles, responsibilities and communication protocols for service referrals and follow-up, and explore platforms for tracking student referrals, assessments and service delivery.	ECE-HSS Interface (School-Aged Children Rehabilitative & Related Services)	2025-26	Ongoing	In Progress	ECE (with HSS)	Joint work advances only within mandates/approvals; any platform or resourcing changes require partner agreement and GNWT approvals.
Recommendation 6: Revise inclusive schooling plan types and templates. This includes removing or updating the MEP, developing clear guidelines for selecting appropriate plan types, and exploring territory-wide implementation of class support plans or class reviews.	Plan Types, Templates & Guidance Documents	2026-27	2027-28	Not Yet Started	ECE (with education bodies)	Ministerial decision if Directive changes are required; updates to Inclusive Schooling Guidelines/tools after decision.
Recommendation 7: Develop inclusive schooling protocols to clarify pathways for students transitioning within and outside the school. This includes strengthening early childhood screening and intervention to address learning challenges early on and promoting a shared understanding of how support plans affect curricular achievement and graduation outcomes.	Transition Protocols & Early Childhood Screening (Options)	2025-26	2026-27	Not Yet Started	ECE	If Minister proceeds, early childhood screening expectations formalized via Directive; light touch monitoring aligned with Education Act authorities.

<p>Recommendation 8: Develop a comprehensive monitoring framework for inclusive schooling. This includes developing a performance measurement plan (PMP) and logic model, identifying meaningful indicators to assess quality and effectiveness. Revise the reporting requirements in Operating Plans and Annual Reports as needed to ensure they are aligned with the PMP and logic model.</p>	<p>Monitoring Framework (Logic Model and Performance Measurement Plan)</p>	<p>2026-27</p>	<p>2027-28</p>	<p>Not Yet Started</p>	<p>ECE</p>	<p>Phased indicator adoption; revisions to reporting templates scheduled with annual planning cycles.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: Develop data collection methods and processes for monitoring and evaluation of inclusive schooling. This includes researching and identifying methods that enable schools and education bodies to meaningfully monitor inclusive schooling in a way that is realistic, achievable, and not burdensome. This also includes identifying methods to capture student and family input.</p>	<p>Data Collection Methods (including student/family input)</p>	<p>2026-27</p>	<p>2027-28</p>	<p>Not Yet Started</p>	<p>ECE (with education bodies)</p>	<p>Sequence after recommendation 8 scoping so expectations are streamlined before adding new asks.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10: Conduct a financial needs assessment for inclusive schooling in collaboration with education bodies and the federal government.</p>	<p>Financial Needs Assessment (Phased)</p>	<p>2025-26</p>	<p>2027-28</p>	<p>Not Yet Started</p>	<p>ECE (with education bodies)</p>	<p>Remains within JK–12 mandate; contextual info on external programs does not imply shared jurisdiction.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11: Review and revise the inclusive schooling funding formula to reflect student needs and complexities. This includes providing increased funding for inclusive schooling staff positions and flexible allocation of funds based on actual school needs.</p>	<p>Funding Formula Review & Revision</p>	<p>2026-27</p>	<p>2029-30</p>	<p>Not Yet Started</p>	<p>ECE</p>	<p>Subject to Minister’s direction and GNWT approvals.</p>