

Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Renewal Progress

Mr. Speaker, in 2013, we tabled the Education Renewal Framework, a 10 year strategy to help us and our partners rethink the way our education system supports the teaching and learning of our students. We have been methodically transforming the education system in the North, and I would like to share with the Members some of our successes.

Junior Kindergarten is now a part of our territorial education system. I would like to thank Members for their oversight and input in this important initiative. Junior Kindergarten is now available to every family, in every community within our territory. I had the opportunity to visit one of the Junior Kindergarten classes in Yellowknife earlier this month, and I was pleased to witness how excited the children were, the types of activities that they were engaged in and the overall energy of the classroom. Junior Kindergarten will help our students build language and comprehension skills through play, and give them the confidence and social skills to succeed in school.

We recently completed the third New to the North Educators' Orientation Conference. Approximately 50 teachers participated in the three-day conference in Yellowknife, Dettah and N'dilo. They learned about the history and legacy of residential schooling, and they gained information about the Education Renewal strategy. The conference gives newcomers the opportunity to network with other teachers and learn about the north and the communities and people they will serve.

We have also expanded the high school Northern Distance Learning program, now in its fourth year, with a proven successful track record. Begun in East Three Secondary School in Inuvik, the program has now been expanded to eight small community schools across four regions, with a plan to continue adding communities in the upcoming school years.

This initiative ensures that our small community high school students have the opportunity to take grade 10-12 academic courses if they wish.

In addition, we have introduced the *My Blueprint* platform to interested schools this year. The purpose of this career development and post-secondary preparation program is to provide grade 8 to 12 students with access to information and resources about postsecondary education programs of study and employment opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, one of the important areas of focus for Education Renewal is student and teacher wellness. We are in year two of implementation of the new Inclusive Schooling Directive. There will be an increase in Program Support Teachers in schools, to assist the classroom teachers. There will be more training opportunities for those Program Support Teachers, as well as for classroom support assistants, principals and all staff that assist teachers in meeting student needs.

After two years of Self-Regulation implementation support in selected schools, all Northwest Territories schools are being invited to apply for a variety of supports for Self-Regulation. These supports will assist teachers in providing activities and options for their students to develop ways to manage their energy both in and out of the classroom.

The Strengthening Teacher Instructional Practice program is now in its first pilot year, thanks to a committed partnership between the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association, and the Northwest Territories Superintendents' Association. While the pilots look different from school to school, the common thread is that teachers will have more time embedded into their school year to prepare lessons, assess student work, collaborate with other teachers, and develop and strengthen their overall teaching practice. Over the course of the next three years, we will be evaluating the success of this territorial pilot.

Mr. Speaker, we have some new curricular supports in place. There is a new grade 4-6 health and wellness curriculum, and mental health training is available for school staff.

We also held an LGBTQ2+ Rainbow Conference earlier this year. We made sure the conference was a safe place for students to learn, talk, and be heard. Students came from communities across the North to participate, and was a resounding success.

Mr. Speaker, we are all passionate about education. We all want the best for the children of the Northwest Territories. I believe the transformational changes we are making in education are taking hold, and that we will see our students becoming capable and successful people.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.