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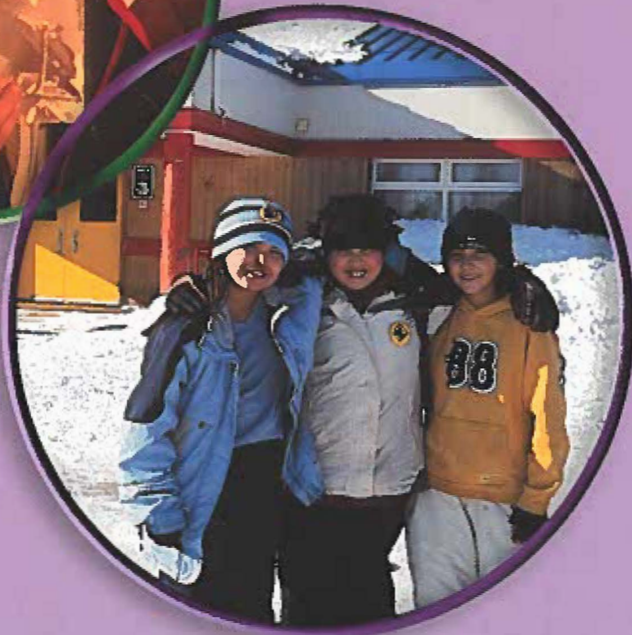
Goal 2

Early Childhood and Schools

Education of Children and Youth



One of Five Goal Summaries of
Building on Our Success – Strategic Plan 2005-2015



Minister's Message



I am very pleased to introduce *Building on Our Success*, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's third Strategic Plan. This plan provides a framework for our activities over the next decade until 2015, and sets out a series of goals that reflect the concerns of the people of the Northwest Territories.

Our Territory is changing quickly. More than ever, it is clear that a solid education is essential for all Northerners. Effective early learning and school programs are needed to give children opportunities to grow and develop. Further education and training must be a priority for adults, so all Northerners can take advantage of employment opportunities.

At the same time, it is critical to nurture and protect our cultural heritage so that we do not lose the knowledge, skills and history that make us unique. Given the rate of change in the North, our languages and traditions are under considerable pressure. We must work together to celebrate and strengthen the cultures that have served generations of Northerners.

The goals in this Strategic Plan are the result of extensive consultation with Northerners. Over the past few years, you have told us what you want and need through survey responses, focus groups, public meetings and other correspondence. I appreciate your response. You will see in this plan that we have heard what you had to say.

This plan builds on two previous plans. The recommendations of our first plan in 1984, *Learning: Tradition and Change in the Northwest Territories*, led to the creation of our divisional boards of education and Aurora College, both essential parts of our education system today. Our second plan, *People: Our Focus for the Future*, was developed in 1994 when the Department of Education had expanded to become the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Goals set out in that plan led to extension of culture, education and career development services in Northern communities.

This 2005 Plan recognizes both the strengths and weaknesses of our past actions. It celebrates the success enjoyed by many who have accessed our programs and services, and proposes ways to build on that success.

We are looking forward to working with our partners and the citizens of the Northwest Territories to address the challenges and celebrate the successes that the next decade will bring.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Dent". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles Dent

Minister of Education, Culture and Employment

2005



Early Childhood and Schools

Introduction

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment recently released a strategic plan titled, *Building on Our Success*. The plan describes the goals and actions that the Department plans to undertake during the period 2005 through 2015. To support the release of the Plan a series of five booklets have been prepared – one on each of the key areas of Departmental responsibility.

This booklet, *Early Childhood and Schools – Education of Children and Youth*, lays out the Department of Education, Culture, and Employment's goal, objectives, priorities and actions related to Education of Children and Youth.

A summary of the goals and objectives for the complete plan is provided on the following page. This summary illustrates how the activities of the Department are linked together.

For further detail, please refer to the complete document *Building on Our Success – Strategic Plan 2005-2015* which can be requested from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment or found on our website at <http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/>.

Goals	Pride in Our Culture	Education of Children and Youth	Education of Adults	A Skilled and Productive Work Environment	People Participating Fully in Society
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservation and knowledge of our heritage 2. Promotion of the arts 3. Support and promote our official languages 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A strong foundation for learning 2. Students achieving their potential 3. A results-based education system 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Access and choice for adult learners 2. A responsive college 3. An integrated adult learning network 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Northerners making informed career choices 2. A skilled workforce 3. A productive work environment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An integrated system of program supports 2. A comprehensive system of financial supports 3. A responsive income security system
Cross-Goal Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong and Effective Partnerships ECE is committed to strengthening local, territorial and federal partnerships, and working collaboratively to address problems and achieve results. 2. High Quality Human Resources ECE is committed to developing a skilled, productive civil service that represents the people it serves. 3. Responsive Information Systems ECE is committed to the collection, analysis and provision of information about its programs and services through systems that are responsive, reliable, available, and serviceable. 4. Facilities that Match Program Delivery Requirements ECE is committed to defining and addressing additional facility requirements. 5. Effective Performance Planning, Monitoring and Measurement ECE is committed to managing itself effectively, ensuring that it spends responsibly, develops transparent decision-making processes, monitors and reports on its progress, and is accountable for results. 				



Early Childhood Education of Children and Youth



There is a perception that the current education system is not producing the types of results that the public would like, particularly in comparison to southern jurisdictions with long established education systems. The reality is that today the education system has made significant progress over the past 10 to 15 years as more and more students have access to education, particularly among Aboriginal students who make up about 64% of our student population.

The challenge is to build on this success to ensure that the NWT education system continues to promote learning, and enhance skills, attitudes and behaviours in ways that help students establish a solid foundation for their future.



and Schools

Objectives

- 1. A Strong Foundation for Learning*
- 2. Students Achieving Their Potential*
- 3. A Results-based Education System*

Vision

Northern families developing a strong foundation for their children's learning.



21st Century Environment

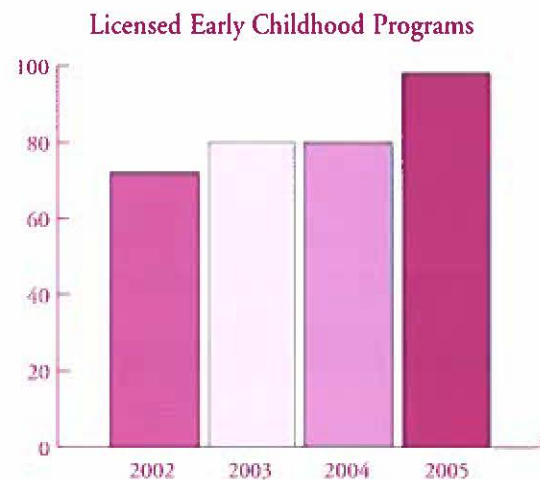
“48% of students enrolled in kindergarten to Grade 12 programs participate in Aboriginal Language programs”

Early Childhood

We expect the demand for high quality childcare will grow as more NWT parents enter the workforce. In early 2005, there were 99 licensed early childhood programs in the NWT, providing 1,403 infant, preschool and after school care placements.


The goal of our early learning and childcare programs is to support parents and caregivers in their efforts to nurture their child’s development between birth and the time the child enters school. A better start in learning leads to greater success in life. It leads to the formation of socialization skills, improved health, and better economic prospects. Good childcare is an investment that is returned many times over.

ECE has already made substantial investments in early childhood initiatives, through developmentally appropriate programming which emphasizes social interaction, language development, learning through play, and large and small motor development. Although families are the foundation for the high quality care and development of young children, community programs also play an important role by providing education, resources, and support. The challenge in the future will be to continue to build the early learning network and to improve program quality to meet the needs of the growing number of children who will need care.



Schools

More NWT students than ever before are completing high school and graduating with diplomas. Graduation by Aboriginal students and by students in smaller communities has increased substantially. Although there is some variation from year to year, the overall rate has increased by 9% over the past five years.



At the same time, the NWT graduation rate of around 45% still falls well short of the national graduation rate of about 70%. Some students are not completing the basic requirements they need to be successful in high school, and as a result are not completing secondary education. We still have much work to do in this area.

“It should be a priority of this government to fully assess every child either at age 3 or 4 and prior to entering kindergarten”

- Survey Respondent

Instruction

With the exception of unique elements such as the inclusion of Northern Aboriginal cultures as a fundamental aspect of learning, the course selection offered to students in NWT schools is similar to that found in schools in other parts of Canada. Students who complete their schooling in the NWT should be able to access college, university and certified trades and occupational programs anywhere in the world.

The NWT has, in cooperation with Western provinces and the Northern territories, collaborated in the development of a wide range of curricula for elementary and secondary school. In addition, we have developed curricula and courses, such as Dene Kede, Inuuqatigiit and Northern Studies, that address the unique needs of the NWT. Regular review, selection of appropriate resource materials, and curricula updates are required to ensure that the school program is kept up to date.

At present, there are pathways of study at the senior secondary level. One prepares students for university or college entry and the other prepares students for apprenticeship and trades training. Students may enter apprenticeship programs while they are still in high school, accumulating time credits towards an apprenticeship while simultaneously completing the requirements for high school graduation.

ECE has been working to develop and offer additional courses at the high school level to prepare students for certified occupations, the workforce or to make other productive choices. To effectively implement these new pathways for students, we will need to develop courses, resources, teacher supports, and appropriate career counseling.

While established curricula provide the basis for school instruction, learning is also dependent to a great extent on the skill and abilities of the teachers and other instructional support staff. Ensuring that teachers have the necessary skills and continue to build their skills throughout their careers is an essential element of effective instruction.



“We need to give high school students more choices – maybe if we offered shop classes in our communities they would stay in school longer and get a trade”

- Survey Respondent

Language and Culture

Approximately 64% of students in the NWT school system are Aboriginal. Past experience and research has demonstrated that students learn most effectively if their learning is firmly grounded in their culture and language. It is essential that appropriate language and culture-related activities form the foundation for learning in the NWT school system.

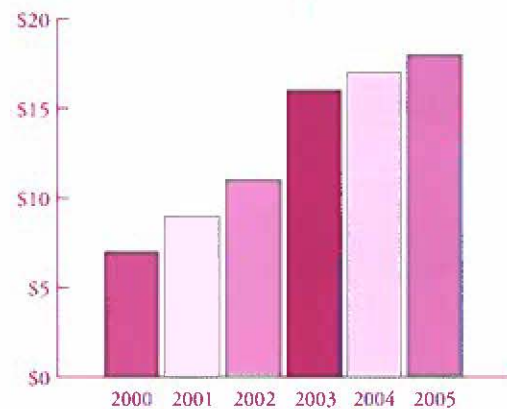
It has been challenging to adapt Aboriginal learning systems to schools and develop appropriate programs in language acquisition and maintenance. Schools, Aboriginal governments and language community organizations must work together to strengthen language and cultural programs. Some progress has been made, but there is much more work to be done if the students of the NWT are to effectively benefit from our rich language and cultural mosaic.

Student Support

Since 2000, the GNWT has increased student support funding by more than \$10 million—an increase of 8% to 15% of total school contributions. This funding is used to provide supports, such as specialized programs and staff. However, even with these advances, limited access to specialized diagnosis and intervention services and resources makes meeting the needs of students a significant challenge for parents, teachers, schools, boards, and ECE.

During the period covered by this Strategic Plan, it will be important to expand support services for students with both short and long term needs. Delivery of these services will require close collaboration between teachers, health and social services professionals, parents and children. If all students are to achieve their potential, this collaboration must be based on the specific needs of the children.

**Student Support Funding
(\$Millions)**



Family and Community

A healthy education system relies on the active participation of parents and the community. It leads to improved attendance, positive attitudes, higher grades, and increased participation in postsecondary education. Strengthening and supporting parental involvement is critical to the long-term success of students.

However, not all families are able to support students in the same way. The effect of family problems can create barriers to education success, and students affected by these difficulties need other support to continue their studies.

“Local needs and national standards are equally important, and not mutually exclusive. In order to meet national standards, children need to develop a strong sense of who they are and where they come from”

- Survey Respondent

Accountability

ECE and elected regional and local education authorities have made great strides over the past decade in strengthening accountability within the school system. These changes include additional reporting, a greater focus on meeting the needs of students and increased public involvement in educational decisions. For example, the Department has improved the public reporting of results from the education system through the biannual publication of the *Towards Excellence* report which shows us how the school system is changing over time. We have improved our data collection so that we have a more comprehensive view of student success, and this has provided a more solid basis for planning. In addition, standardized student testing will be introduced to ensure a meaningful way to measure and monitor how students are doing in our education system.

However, more work needs to be done and education authorities and the Department have identified the need to further improve accountability, particularly to parents.

Measuring Success

We will measure our success by the number of children who enter school ready to learn, by the quality of educational experiences available to youth while they are in school, and by the number who leave school prepared for further education or employment.



Objectives, Priorities and Actions

Objective 1:

A Strong Foundation for Learning

Priority: Increase access to and support for programs

Actions: • Assist communities to develop or expand early learning and childcare programs for children from infancy to preschool, according to their needs.



- Increase subsidy supports available to parents and licensed providers.
- Improve monitoring of the quality of early learning programs.
- Expand the number of affordable licensed programs and spaces.
- Provide guidelines for the development and implementation of a variety of early childhood development programs using successful programs in the NWT and other jurisdictions as models.
- Work in cooperation with other GNWT, federal and Aboriginal governments to improve program coordination.
- Support family literacy programs offered through and in association with early learning centres.
- Develop an evaluation framework to support early language immersion programs.
- Support the integration and inclusion of children who require additional assistance in early childhood programs.

Priority: Increase the skills of early childhood educators

- Actions: • Offer staff development and training to early learning and childcare educators through the Aurora College certificate program.
- Increase certification requirements for early learning and child

Objective 1 cont' ...

care workers.

- Provide professional development for frontline staff during site visits by Departmental programming experts.

Priority: Regulate and monitor program quality and effectiveness

- Actions:
- Establish mechanisms to support self-evaluation of programs by operators.
 - Provide opportunities for operators to share knowledge and experiences with a goal to improving program quality.
 - Conduct routine program monitoring in all regions and communities.
 - Conduct quality-based monitoring and licensing in addition to monitoring health and safety requirements.

Objective 2:

Students Achieving their Potential

Priority: Involve family and community

- Actions:
- Regularly seek input and comments from parents regarding programs and services offered by ECE.
 - Support parental understanding of the education system and build linkages between schools, teachers and parents.
 - Increase information available to parents on early learning and school programs.
 - Encourage community involvement in program development.
 - Report to the public regularly on ECE supported programs.



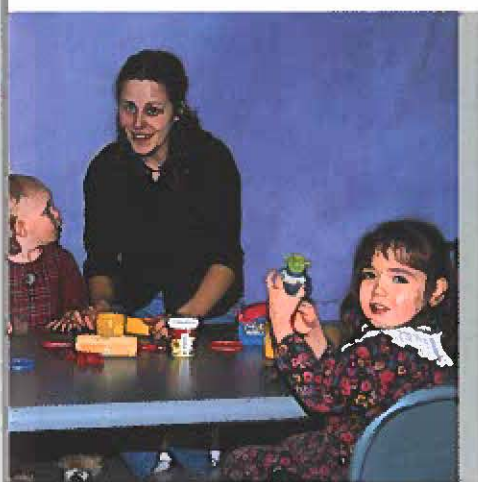
Objective 2 con't ...

Priority: Focus on language and culture

- Actions:
- Develop Aboriginal language curriculum and resources.
 - Review Aboriginal second language delivery.
 - Increase in-service and professional development for teachers in the area of Aboriginal Languages and culture.
 - Develop resources and supports for language and the *Culture Based Education (CBE) Directive*.
 - Review the structures and functions of the Teaching and Learning Centres (TLCs) to increase linkages between language communities, TLCs and schools.

Priority: Increase the availability of student support

- Actions:
- Develop a service delivery model in collaboration with other GNWT departments and support partners to ensure that children's needs are identified and addressed at an early age and throughout their educational careers.
 - Conduct the third Student Needs Assessment.
 - Identify priority recommendations in the Student Needs Assessment and develop an implementation plan to address needs.
 - Identify requirements for additional counselling and other required support services.
 - Identify current use of student support services and increase accountability requirements of education authorities with respect to spending under the *Inclusive Schooling Directive*.
 - Report, at least biannually, on spending related to student services.



Objective 2 cont' ...

Priority: Expand course offerings in schools

- Actions:**
- Remove legislative barriers that prohibit full-day kindergarten.
 - Develop a program for full-day kindergarten.
 - Continue regular renewal of existing curriculum at all levels.
 - Maintain linkage of high school curriculum with that used in the Province of Alberta.
 - Provide a broader range of choices at the senior secondary level - particularly those related to preparation for occupations.
 - Support the development of Aboriginal language and culture materials linked to the Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit curricula.
 - Complete a review of small high schools with the goal of defining best approaches to programming and funding.
 - Complete an analysis of senior secondary enrollments.
 - Examine alternative models of senior secondary delivery.
 - Research, promote and test innovative approaches to support student achievement and success.

Priority: Provide pre-employment and in-service professional development for educators and other school staff

- Actions:**
- Identify key areas in which additional training is required to support the availability of staff.
 - Work with education authorities and professional and employee representative organizations to design and implement pre-service training programs.
 - Target improvement of the instructional skills for teachers and other staff that support student learning.
 - Increase teacher skills in the assessment of student literacy.



Objective 2 con't ...

- Evaluate current in-service and professional development models and research alternatives.
- Implement the Teacher Growth and Development Model to assess teacher performance and plan further development of teacher skills.
- Maintain a teacher induction program for new teachers.
- Review the structure of the Educational Leadership Program delivery model to ensure school principals are well prepared for their tasks.
- Open a dialogue with the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association (NWTTA) about a coordinated plan to increase student achievement.
- Double the number of Aboriginal teachers, senior managers, and principals in the school system.

Objective 3:

A Results-based Education System

Priority: Strengthening educational leadership

Actions: • Create a human development strategy that brings together the following initiatives to strengthen educational leadership in the NWT school system:

- *Teacher mentorship*
- *Educational Leadership Program*
- *Aboriginal Language Acquisition Professional Development Fund*
- *Aboriginal Educators Leadership Institute*

Objective 3 con't ...

- *Education Authority Development*
- *NWT Teachers' Association*
- *Professional Development (PD) coordination.*
- *Student success initiative PD funds.*
- *Development of consistent definition / criteria for professional development.*

Priority: Assess system performance

- Actions:**
- Gather student performance information from functional grade level assessment, Alberta Achievement Test scores, and senior secondary analysis.
 - Report to the public on a regular basis about how students are doing in our school system.
 - Set requirements for school and education authority planning.
 - Review and confirm the roles and responsibilities of schools, education authorities and ECE with respect to planning and reporting.
 - Assess student progress through the *Student Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting Directive*.
 - Conduct regular reviews of key Departmental policy and operational matters.
 - Renew the education authority review process.



Early Childhood and Schools

Conclusion

This booklet summarizes the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's planned activities related to Education of Children and Youth. It is one of a series of booklets that have been developed to illustrate the goals, objectives and priorities of the Department during the next ten years. There are similar guides available that review planned actions related to the four other Departmental goals: Culture, Heritage and Languages, Adult and Postsecondary Education, A Skilled and Productive Workforce, and People Participating Fully in Society.

The Departmental Strategic Plan was prepared based on broad consultation with the public and various stakeholders. It outlines a framework for Departmental activities that builds upon the successes of the past decade. Within the scope of the Plan, the Department will continue to work closely with a wide range of organizations and individuals to develop detailed actions that will strengthen current programs and services and improve overall results. The Department is committed to reporting on a regular basis to the public on achievements and advances related to the Plan.

The complete document *Building on Our Success – Strategic Plan 2005-2015* also includes five cross-goal strategies. For those interested, the complete Plan can be requested from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment or found on our website at <http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/>.